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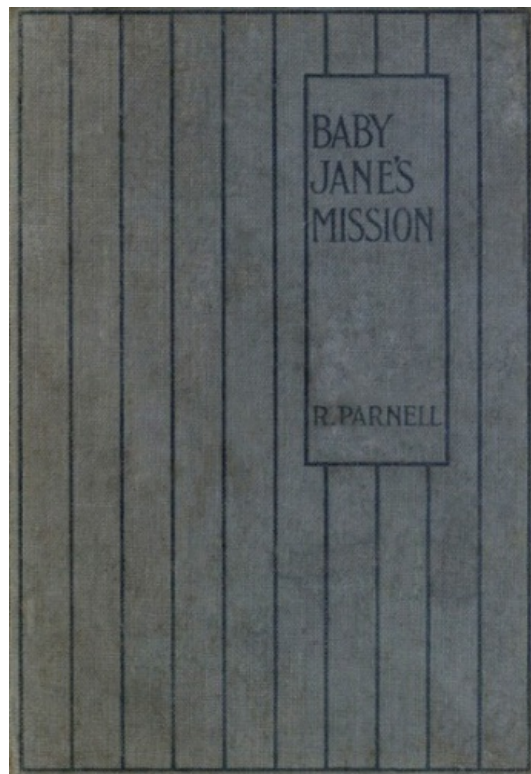
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BABY  
JANE'S  
MISSION  
R. PARNELL

The Larger Dumpy Books  
for Children

[ii]

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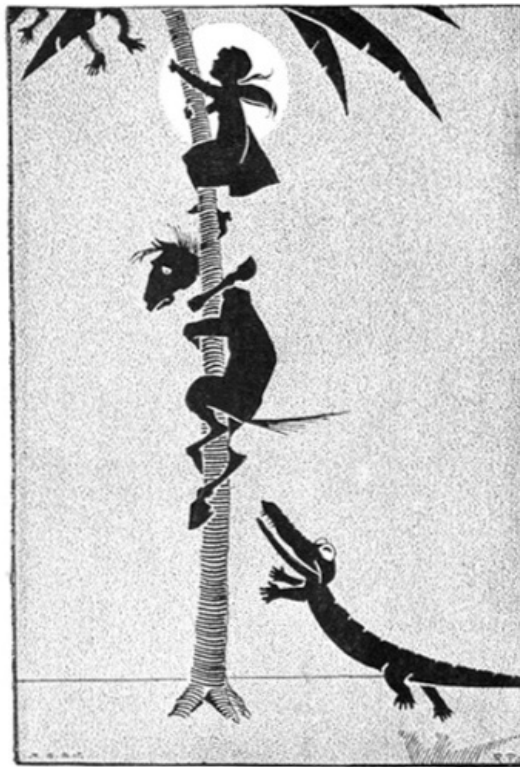
*Illustrated in Colours*

LONDON: GRANT RICHARDS

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[iii]

[iv]



Up she went in hot pursuit of Baby Jane (p. 40).

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## Baby Jane's Mission

[v]

BY

REGINALD PARNELL

*ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR*

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1902

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## INTRODUCTION

[1]

ADDRESSED SOLELY TO GROWN-UPS

Baby Jane is eight years old. She has grave grey eyes and straight, heavy, dull gold hair. She is very reserved, but those who have the honour of her friendship know her for a very fine lady with

a tender heart and a loyal conscience. Because her conscience is sometimes obvious, and because she looks at you as if she were thinking of you rather gravely, some mean grown-up has said she was a prig. Perhaps she is—I have always honoured a prig.

She cannot see clever jokes—mine for instance—but laughs beautifully, so that all who hear laugh too, when perhaps Pat, the puppy, pretends to eat his big chum, Radical, the cat.

She is a friend of mine, and sometimes invites me to tea with her. On one such occasion, for lack of other talk, I told her of some of my adventures in Patagonia (where I have never been). She was deeply interested, but at some more than usually strange incident she grew red, and with much hesitation said, 'I'm sorry—it's rude to interrupt—but—'

She said nothing more, but I understood that she did not believe me. Now I did not answer in words, and expressed myself only in a deep and subtle look; but, after a long and serious gaze, a light shone in her intelligent eyes and she gave one of her lovely little laughs.

'We understand one another?' I asked.

She nodded smiling, pleased with herself and me for understanding one another so cleverly.

Soon afterwards she invited me to tea again, and greeted me eagerly over the bannisters when I arrived in her dominions, but she said nothing except in the way of courteous hospitality until tea was well begun. Then with a very rosy face she said:

'Shall I tell you some of my adventures this time?' I was charmed with the idea, and privately proud, for it proved what real friends we were that she should so confide in me.

What follows is my free version of her account, which I can only hope is not quite spoiled in the re-telling.

---

## CHAPTER I

### THE DANCING CLASS

Ever since she had been a baby—a good long while, for she was more than eight years old—it had always troubled the heart of Baby Jane to hear, and later on to read, how rough and rude and wretched the wild beasts and niggers of the African desert were.

The black children *always* came down to breakfast without their pinafores on, and ate with their fingers, and never washed—though, perhaps, that did not matter, as they had to be black anyhow—and were altogether naughty and, therefore, very miserable.

And the wild beasts did nothing but kill and eat until the sand was strewn with poor white bones that had once belonged to little bounding gazelles, and missionaries, and gentle, spotted giraffes, and monkeys. At night the big ones had no cosy stables, and the little ones no basket with a rug in it; so they wandered about in the cold woods and roared and went on eating things.

And all this unhappiness was because there was no one to teach them and look after them. Poor creatures! If only they knew of all the fun there was to be had—dancing and games and the rest—they would no longer spend their time so miserably.

And this was why Baby Jane came to Africa.

Stories of mere travels are often very dull, so I will not bother you with the long account of how she got there.

Now, dancing was the amusement that Baby Jane thought pleasantest; so upon the stem of a shady palm beside a gurgling stream that ran through the middle of the wide, white desert, she stuck up a notice:

*Dancing Lessons Given.  
Nobody need Pay Anything.*

And then sat down to wait for pupils.

By and bye a big brown Bear, holding a green-lined umbrella over him and smoking a great drooping German pipe, came strolling along. He saw the notice board and stared at it a long time as if he were reading, then he turned towards Baby Jane and stood there smiling in a friendly, but rather silly way.



**The Bear looked up at the sky and began whistling.**

She thought he was considering how he should ask about the dancing lessons, but he only said, with an air of joyful pride—

'What do you think of my pipe and my umbrella?'

'Where did you get them?' asked Baby Jane, fixing her round grey eyes severely upon him.

The Bear looked up at the sky and began whistling, pretending not to hear, but his ears grew very red. [7]

'Where did you get them?' asked Baby Jane again.

Then the Bear gave up his pretence of deafness and blurted out his excuses.

'Well, he *would* talk German, and you cannot believe how fat he was!'

'But even then you should not have eaten him,' said Baby Jane, guessing the part of the story that he had left untold.

The Bear looked very crestfallen, and tender-hearted Baby Jane felt so sorry to have had to spoil his pleasure, that she changed the subject altogether.

'Shall I teach you how to dance?' she said sweetly. 'It's great fun.'

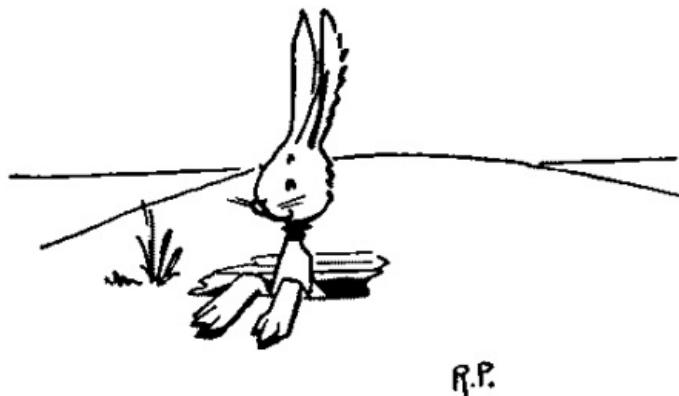
The Bear was quite delighted with the idea, and wanted to begin at once, but Baby Jane said she would collect a little class before she began.

'Come along!' said the Bear excitedly; 'I know some more. Jump on my back!'

And off he set. Every now and then he would give a funny little clumsy hop and ask her, 'Is that [8] how you dance?' as if he were thinking of the coming pleasure all the time.

During one of these quaint little capers he stumbled heavily.

'Drat that Rabbit!' he said. 'He's always digging his nasty holes all over the place.'



**Up popped a little fluffy head.**

From another hole a yard or two away, up popped a little fluffy head, and a squeaky voice said—

'Drat that Bear! He's always dropping his clumsy paws down my area.'

By a swift dart, the Bear knocked the Rabbit out of his hole and fixed him on the sand under his great paw.

'Looks as if I was going to be eaten,' said the Rabbit, trying to speak cheerfully, though his pretty black eyes were very moist. 'It's rather a bad day for being eaten—so sunny and fresh, and all the young shoots are just sprouting now, and I was just going out with Fluffie'; and he buried his little nose in the sand. [9]

'If you did happen to want to let me go this once,' he said, in a muffled, jerky voice, 'I wouldn't be saucy any more. But it doesn't matter.'

'Eaten?' cried Baby Jane, choking with tears; and she slid over the Bear's shoulder into a heap upon the ground beside the imprisoned Rabbit, and struggled to force her little slim fingers between it and the great paw, and she succeeded. Perhaps the Bear was ashamed, and allowed it.

Then she hugged the rescued one close in her arms, with his fluffy head between her little motherly shoulder and neck, and, sobbing, rocked to and fro, making his drab fur quite dragged with her tear-drops.

'And he shall learn to dance—so he shall, the dear,' said Baby Jane when her sobs had died away into an occasional sniff, and her mind had turned to more cheerful ideas.

'Such a fuss about a Rabbit,' said the Bear under his breath. 'Why, I eat rabbits spread on my bread-and-butter like shrimps.'

Then, in a louder voice, he said sulkily—'Here comes the Lion: he looks as if he wanted to learn to dance.' [10]

As a matter of fact, the Lion looked very cross.

'Mornin'!' said the Bear genially as he approached. 'We were just coming to teach you which hand to use when you say, "Howdy-doo," and how to play "Here we go Round the Mulberry Bush," and how to dance "Sir Roger de Coverley."'

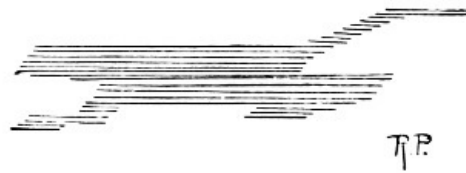
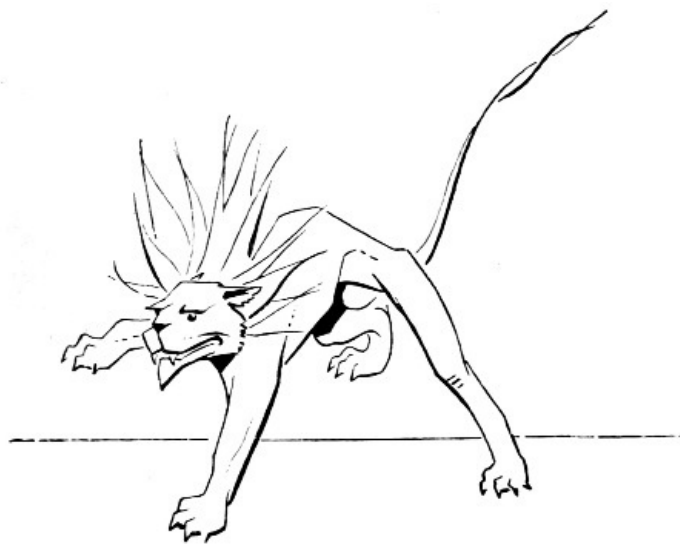
The Lion could not speak for rage, but sharpened his claws once or twice on the sand and then charged.

It was a terrible struggle. The great beasts clutched one another round the waist and wrestled furiously. The Lion made frantic attempts to twist his leg between the Bear's two and so overthrow him, but the Bear was as firm as a rock.

Then the Lion let go, and, retreating for about thirty yards, flung himself from that distance at his enemy.

If he had been struck, the Bear must have been knocked headlong; but he stooped, and the Lion passed over him and fell upon his back some twenty yards farther on. Before he could get up, the Bear was upon him.

'Oh, you will suffocate him!' cried Baby Jane, and, indeed, it seemed likely, for all of the Lion that was not covered by the Bear was seen to be in violent motion. [11]



**The Lion flung himself ... at his enemy.**

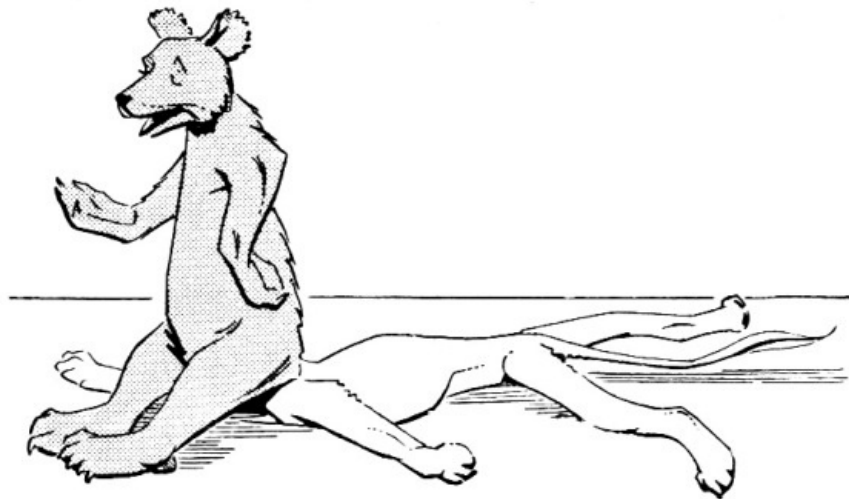
But instead of showing any sympathy for his fallen foe, the Bear hit him a sounding thump on the ribs.

'He's trying to bite,' he explained. 'I'll let him up when he says he'll learn to dance.'

[12]

'Get off my head,' said the Lion in smothered tones.

'Oh, Lion, say you will!' pleaded Baby Jane. 'Get off my head,' said the Lion.



**'Get off my head,' said the Lion.**

'Do as the young lady tells you,' said the Bear.

'Get off my head.'

'I will promise for him, Bear,' cried Baby Jane in despair.

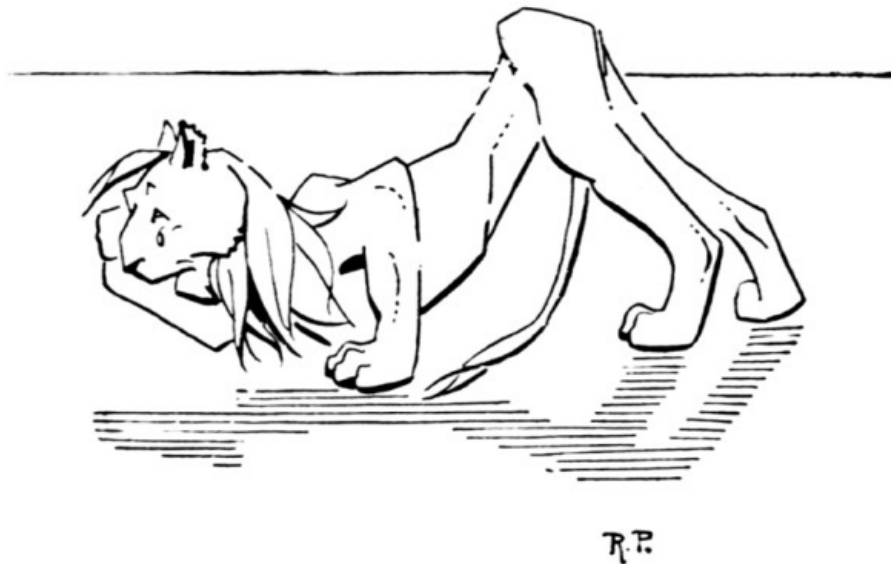
'Oh, all right,' said the Bear, and he arose.

The Lion got up, looking very crushed and humble. He came crawling to Baby Jane, and said—

[13]

'You saved me from being smothered, for I could never have obeyed that Bear; but I *will* learn to dance if *you* wish it.'





**Looking very crushed and humble.**

'That's right,' said Baby Jane briskly. 'Now we only want two more to make a big enough class.'

'I know of another,' said the Bear, following Baby Jane's cheerful lead, and off he set for a distant bend of the little river.

Very soon, with an amiable-looking lady Crocodile on his arm, he came pacing back.

Although the lady Crocodile looked amiable, she seemed rather stupid, and would answer no questions, but only smiled. Baby Jane noticed that she seemed to have something on her mind— [14] or in her mouth—and so it proved, for when the Bear whispered something funny in her ear and made her laugh out loud, a little nigger boy dropped out of her mouth.



**With an amiable-looking lady Crocodile on his arm.**

Baby Jane was horrified, but still the little nigger was safe, now, and to make a fuss would break up the whole party; so she said calmly—

'That makes six; now we can begin.'

For a class-room she chose a smooth patch of sand with no stones on it.

'Sit down in a row,' she said; 'the Bear and I will first show you a few steps of the Gavotte.' [15]

While she was doing up her hair into a knot—an arrangement that she considered indispensable for that dance—the Bear stood brushing his beautiful fur and preening himself like a clumsy canary, and then shambled up looking very nervous. The others sat down awkwardly beside one

another, trying to be at their ease, but they were the oddest row of creatures that ever sat down together, and not very likely to be friendly. However, the Piccaninny and the Rabbit soon began a firm friendship by playfully jogging one another over.

'Now!' said Baby Jane to the Bear, rather sternly, to cover the uncertainty she herself felt in teaching the Gavotte. 'Take my hand. One—two—three!'

'Oh, please, please stop,' said the Bear, 'I have got my legs so mixed. Which is my right foot?'

And, indeed, you could hardly imagine how those short legs could have got in such a muddle.

'Please tread on those toes,' he asked Baby Jane. 'No—those over here, and then I shall know by the feel which is which.'

Baby Jane trod lightly.

'Left!' shouted the Bear. 'That is just as I thought!'

[16]

But, even having found out which was which, it took a little time and the use of a palm branch as a lever to unmix them.



R.P.

**'I have got my legs so mixed.'**

After this the Bear did much better, and, indeed, put on quite a dainty powder-and-brocade air.

All this while the others were turning slowly from a state of wondering admiration to fidgetiness, and the Rabbit and the Piccaninny were beginning to grow rough; so Baby Jane thought of something that everybody would like. [17]

'Now,' said she, 'I will teach you an easy Highland Schottische step.'

It was simply astounding—the way those creatures picked it up. As for the Lion, for whom she made a little kilt and sporran of palm leaves to make him more real, you could not believe how like a true Scot he looked, and how Scottishly he bounded in the air and snapped his fingers and yapped—you would hear no wilder yap in the Highlands.

Of course the Bear had a mishap. It was through treading on the Crocodile's tail that he came down on a poor little Porcupine who had crept out from a neighbouring cactus thicket and was dancing a little fling all by himself. However, the Porcupine was not really hurt except that he came out quite smooth—all his bristles having stuck in the Bear. But, apart from this, everybody enjoyed it immensely. To be sure, they had to sing the tune themselves, but that added to the fun.

'There's something else just as nice!' cried Baby Jane when they had stopped, breathless, but eager for more. Then, with the Lion, she led off in the Washington Post. [18]



**The Washington Post.**

Speak not of dancing in a room. What room is large enough when the romping begins? What you want is a good large desert. That is what Baby Jane and her pupils had, and it was grand. The Lion bounced so high that Baby Jane was swung about like a leaf on a bough on a windy day, and had nothing to do but waggle her toes in the air.

Afterwards, all rather tired, the creatures came and Baby Jane arranged them round her, the Lion and the Bear on each side with her arms round their necks, the Piccaninny and the Rabbit at her feet with their little heads on her knees, and the Crocodile round the whole party like a rampart.

[19]

'Isn't that better than being cruel, dears, and going about roaring and fighting?' asked Baby Jane.

'Lots!' said the Lion, and the others all grunted approval.

And Baby Jane went to sleep in the midst of her pupils very proud and happy, for she knew now that her plan would really work, and had found what dears wild beasts were when you only knew them.

---

## CHAPTER II

[21]

### NUTS IN MAY

Baby Jane was slowly waking up, with the gentle morning sun shining on her face.

'What is this silky, furry thing under my head?' she murmured to herself. And then it all came back to her.

'Oh yes, of course,' said she. 'I've come out to the African Desert to teach the poor dear creatures nice things to do, instead of fighting and howling and killing one another. And I've been asleep with my head upon my dear, naughty old Bear, with all my animals and the Piccaninny round me. And yesterday I gave them a dancing lesson.'

'There now, dears,' she said, sitting up and nodding wisely at the gently snoring circle, 'wasn't it nicer to sleep properly through the night by me, after being tired out with playing, than to wander and howl and be wicked in the dreadful woods and the lonely desert?'

[21]

Her little speech waked them, and they sat up and rubbed their eyes and smiled sleepily at her.

'Now,' said Baby Jane briskly, 'we'll go and wash our faces in the river.'

Her pupils, except the Crocodile, who tried to look as if she were very brave in obeying, all made excuses, but Baby Jane was firm, and there was soon a great spluttering and screwing up of eyes, and they became very lank and dank and shiny.

Then came breakfast under a spreading palm—a fine breakfast. There was bread-fruit—which always grows ready toasted in this part of the world because of the heat of the sun—and butter-nuts and cocoa-nuts with fresh milk in them; and any one who knew more of these wonderful African plants would probably tell you of the shrimp shrubs, and of the whiting-fried-in-egg-and-breadcrumbs-with-their-tails-in-their-mouths bushes.

'Do you know,' said Baby Jane confidentially when they had finished, 'it *is* nice that I'm going to teach you something that is great fun this sunshiny morning, instead of being taught myself in a stuffy school-room—and perhaps put in the corner.'

At this point she grew red, and looked round to see if they looked shocked, but they were all grinning affectionately. A great reformer loses nothing by little admissions like this. [22]

'Come along, now,' said she; 'I'll teach you some games on this smooth patch.'

The animals and the Piccaninny all frisked around in high excitement.

'First we'll play blindfold "Cat and Mouse,"' said Baby Jane, after a moment's thought. 'Lion, you are "mouse," and, Rabbit, you are "cat." Now I want two handkerchiefs.'

The Bear retired and came back with a large spotted handkerchief. This time Baby Jane did not ask how he got it—she only sighed.

It was old, so they tore it in half, and, having blindfolded the Lion and the Rabbit, they spun them round three times and then kept very quiet to watch the fun.

The Lion was dreadfully nervous at first and crept about on tiptoe, and listened quaking to the sound of the Rabbit as he scuffled around snorting fiercely and making savage grabs at the air. Once they bumped their heads together, but, with an ear-splitting yell of terror, the Lion bounded away before the Rabbit could grip him. [23]

By-and-bye the Rabbit, having run up against Baby Jane, whispered to her, 'I reckon he's gone up a tree; I'll go after him.'

Then he felt about till he came to the stem of a palm, and up he went, hand-over-hand.

In a little while the Lion, who was still tiptoeing about on the ground, also ran up against Baby Jane, and said in a quavering whisper, 'I reckon it's not safe down here; I'm going up a tree.' And he felt about till he came to the very tree up which the Rabbit, or, I should say, the 'cat,' had just climbed, and up he went.

The Rabbit had reached the top, and was meditating on the ease with which we deceive ourselves, when he heard a scratching sound below him, and pricked up his ears. Nearer and nearer came the sound.

'Sure enough,' said he, 'it's that "mouse" coming up after me,' and with a triumphant squeak—'Caught!'—he let go with his four little paws, and down he dropped plump on the Lion's head.

The Lion shrieked aloud with terror and dismay, and fell heavily to the ground; and there he lay with the Rabbit sitting smiling on top of him. [24]



**Down he dropped plump on the Lion's head.**

Then the others tried their hands at being 'cat' and 'mouse,' until the whole party was weak with laughing.

'Now we'll have a three-legged race,' said Baby Jane when they had at last subsided into giggles. [25]  
'It is rather a boys' game, but I'm only going to do it to teach you.'



R.P

### Baby Jane and the Piccaninny.

There were three couples—the Lion and the Rabbit, the Bear and the Crocodile, and Baby Jane and the Piccaninny.

The Bear and the Crocodile made a splendid race with Baby Jane's couple. The Bear took tiny steps to suit the shortness of the Crocodile's legs, and their feet pattered as fast as a fly flaps its wings; but the children won by two yards. [26]

As for the Lion and the Rabbit, they sat down to quarrel half-way, the Rabbit recommending big kangaroo-like bounds, while the Lion was for hopping on the joint leg.

After this came a game of 'Gathering Nuts in May,' and the creatures nearly went wild with excitement.

It is to be feared that they were so anxious for their side to win that they did things that were not quite honest.

Now, Baby Jane had decided that the Rabbit and the Piccaninny might always pull together, being each so small.

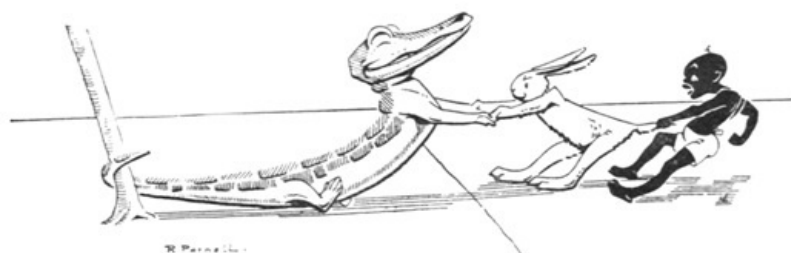
On a certain occasion her side had declared in song that they would

'Have Miss Crocodile for Nuts in May,  
Nuts in May, Nuts in May';

and also that they would

'Send Bunny and the Piccaninny to fetch her away,  
Fetch her away, fetch her away.'

Then that little couple went out, and the Rabbit, having caught the Crocodile's hand, and the Piccaninny having gripped the Rabbit's little tail, they tugged and they tugged for the honour of their side to pull Miss Crocodile over the line, until their little hearts nearly burst and the Rabbit's tail nearly came off. [27]



She had anchored the end of her tail to a stout young palm tree.

And all the while Miss Crocodile calmly sat and smiled, and never budged.

Why? Because she had anchored the end of her tail to a stout young palm tree, and it would have needed a steam-engine to 'gather' her.

Even after this, the creatures were eager for more, and Baby Jane thought of 'Hide-and-Seek.'

She would go and hide, and they would sit in a row with their eyes tight shut while they counted sixty.

She ran off as fast as she could over a little hillock, so that the animals could no longer see her, even if they were unfair enough to open their eyes, and towards a clump of trees that looked like a capital hiding-place. [28]

She little thought into what terrible danger she was running.

On she went till she had reached the corner of the little wood. There, behind it, she saw with startled eyes a horde of mounted Cannibals lying in wait.

For the first moment she thought she could dart back behind the trees, but no, they had caught sight of her, and with a horrible sound of smacking of lips the cloud of Light-Horsemen swept towards her. She noticed that they had only one Horse, but he was densely crowded with a villainous crew of blacks, and then, as they rushed upon her brandishing their spear, she clasped her hand over her eyes.

The next moment she was seized roughly and swung high into the air and on to the shoulder of a Cannibal, and then she felt the Horse turn and gallop madly—as madly as could be expected of an animal so overcrowded—across the desert, and away from her dear creatures still sitting in a row with their eyes tight shut behind the hillock. Oh, it was dreadful! Her plan had just begun to succeed, and her animals were growing more and more kind and happy, and now it was all over. [29]

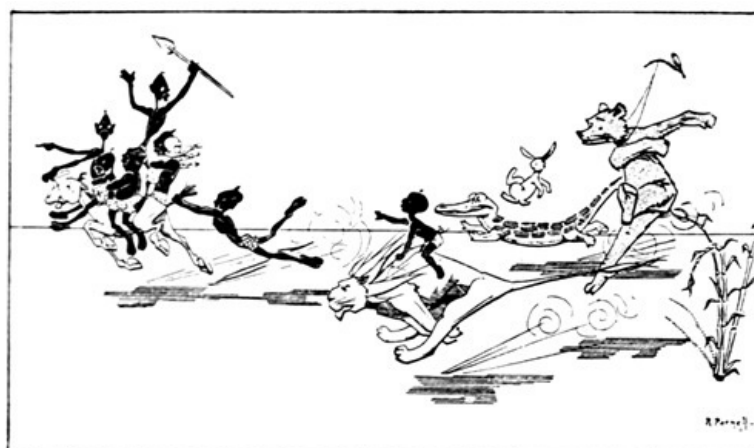
Poor Crocodile and Lion, they would miss her dreadfully and have nothing to do but go back to the old, bad, miserable ways. Poor dear old Bear, he would cry. And here Baby Jane herself began to cry loudly, hopelessly.

After a while she tried to stifle her sobs and to speak coaxingly to the Nigger who carried her, but he took no notice.

There was evidently no hope, and she began to think whether she would rather be a cutlet dressed in egg and bread-crumbs with little paper frills round her ankles and wrists—or soup.

Suddenly she heard a faint sound more beautiful to her than the silver music of fairy bells. It was the roar of a Lion.

Ah, there they were! Over a sandy wave they came flying in pursuit. The Lion, ridden by the Piccaninny, sped across the desert with huge bounds, and dust and stones shot up wherever his flying feet struck the sand; away to the right, with his head and tail up, the Crocodile was bouncing bravely along, the Rabbit, who rode her, bumping sky-high; and close behind the Lion strode the Bear, leaping bushes and bamboos as if he were running a hurdle-race. [30]



**They came flying in pursuit.**

The Light-Horsemen heard the sound of galloping feet behind them, and the rear-guard, turning his head, gave a howl of horror. The tables were turned; instead of lunging on Baby Jane, they themselves would now adorn the festive board. Wildly they thrashed the Light-Horse, but it was of no use, the galloping Lion was close upon their heels.

Then, as the sledge traveller throws out his companions one by one to the pursuing wolves, the Light-Horsemen began by throwing out Baby Jane. [31]

In a moment she felt herself whisked into the furry arms of the Bear, and nursed and petted as

gently as if it had been by Nurse herself.

When she felt better and looked round, the Cannibal Light-Horsemen had disappeared, and the Light-Horse was sitting on a stone fanning herself with a palm-leaf. As the Crocodile and the Lion, both looking quiet and sleepy, came up to inquire if Baby Jane was unhurt, the Bear, who was rocking her to and fro, whispered bitterly to them, 'Well, you *are* pigs. You might have left me a *little* one.'

It was a long time before Baby Jane had any heart to play again. It was so nice to shut her eyes and sniff away the last trace of tears, lying contentedly against the silky coat of the old Bear.

But after a while she began to brighten up and to make friends with the Light-Horse, who was a nice animal, though she wore such a dreary expression.

'I daresay you are tired,' she said kindly; 'so I will tell you what we will do next. We will make a "Tableau Vivant." We shall only have to stay still in that.' [32]

The creatures all were delighted with the idea, and the Bear retired once more to his treasure-store for odds and ends of clothes to dress up in.

'The Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots' was the subject chosen, and it was a dreadfully real and touching picture that they made.

The Bear was Queen Mary; his sweet, sad, resigned air, and his little lace handkerchief, wet with tears, would have moved any heart less stony than Queen Elizabeth's, but she sat in the background and smiled triumphantly.

The Crocodile was Queen Elizabeth—chosen for the part because her mouth was best for smiling.

The Rabbit, with his head tucked in and his legs out stiff, was the block, and the Piccaninny the executioner, with a horrid scowl and a large axe. Behind the Queen came her weeping ladies, the 'Queen's Maries.' Baby Jane, the Lion, and the Light-Horse were all 'Queen's Maries.' The Lion looked especially well with his mane done up in a chignon. He said he was Mary Beaton, and the Light-Horse was Mary Carmichael.

It was not till they had posed stiffly for a quarter of an hour that they remembered that there was no audience to tell them by the clapping of hands when it had had enough. [33]

'Next time,' said the sharp Rabbit, 'we'll get a lot of tortoises and turn them on their backs so that they can't run away, and make them look on and clap.'

'But they will see everything upside down,' said the Lion.

'And we'll have to act on our heads to make it right,' said the Light-Horse gloomily.

'Oh, we won't bother about that,' said the inventor of the plan. 'They will be there just to clap, and they won't be turned right side up until they do clap.'

And this was the end of Baby Jane's lessons for that day.

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## CHAPTER III

### SANTA CLAUS

[34]

They had just finished a hearty breakfast, of which home-made pineapple jam and the crisp, crusty rolls that grow on a certain palm had formed a part, when Baby Jane suddenly remarked:

'I do believe it's Christmas Eve!'

The creatures had no idea what that meant, but they knew when she spoke in that way there was more fun coming, and they eagerly crowded round her to hear about it.

'And now,' she went on, 'as it is Christmas Eve, to-night we must all hang up our stockings, and Santa Claus will come and fill them with presents.'

The creatures set up a shout of delight, and catching one another round the waist danced a wild polka round Baby Jane.

All of a sudden they stopped as if turned into statues; a chilly silence fell upon them, and they looked aghast into each other's eyes. Then the Light-Horse, looking in her horror-stricken paleness more like a night-mare, whispered to Baby Jane, 'But we don't wear stockings!' [35]

'Oh, that's all right,' she said; 'I will make something for you that will do. Santa Claus is an old dear, and will pretend to think that they are all real stockings. Bear, bring some woolly stuff from that store of yours, if you please!'

And then they all sat in a ring, contriving queer bag-shaped things and fitting them on—all except the Rabbit. He sauntered round for a while among the creatures picking up a bit of stuff here and another bit there, and then he disappeared behind a tree.

By-and-bye all the other animals were proudly marching around, each with one leg in a stocking, but it was some time before the Rabbit strolled up from behind his tree with his stocking wrapped round him like a plaid.

'Let us see it,' said Baby Jane.

With a slight blush and some hesitation the Rabbit laid it on the sand—it was big enough for a hippopotamus.

'Nonsense,' said Baby Jane severely; 'you can't wear that.'

[36]

'Oh,' said the Rabbit, 'you don't know how my toes swell when I've got chilblains!'

'You shouldn't try to cheat Santa Claus,' replied Baby Jane, and the Rabbit had to cut his stocking down.

It was now some time since tea, and growing dark. It was not an English Christmas Eve, with holly and snow, and darkness lit and warmed by cosy flickering fires, but it seemed to Baby Jane that at that time all over the world as the darkness deepens there spreads everywhere one same feeling of coming happiness growing and growing until, as the dawn breaks, a great loving kiss falls upon the poor world to comfort and bless it, so that it awakes with its heart full of warmth and joy on Christmas morning.

'Now, before we hang up our stockings and go to sleep,' said Baby Jane, 'we have got to go out and sing carols, and the people we sing to will give us hot things to drink, and cake.'

'Oh, will they?' said the Lion. He loyally believed everything that his mistress said, but knowing the folk who lived in this neighbourhood, he had his doubts of this.

[37]

'Now, whom shall we sing to?' she asked.

'Well,' said the Lion rubbing his chin doubtfully, 'there are the Ourang-outangs, a decent family—at least, now and then.'

'O'rang o'tang!' said Baby Jane. 'I can't say that word. I used to know some people called O'Flanagan; let us call them the O'Flanagans.'

'You are always so clever!' said the Lion admiringly. 'Well, let us go and sing to the Flanagans. They live in the third palm tree on the left in the riverside avenue.'

So they set off under the starlit sky, Baby Jane on the Bear's shoulder, and the others close round her, all practising their voices and all very merry.

It was rather undignified of the Lion to sing falsetto, but he seemed to fancy that he did it well, and so he kept it up—a shrill squeal that now and then broke down suddenly into his own deep roar.

When they were still some way from the riverside avenue they heard distant sounds of a terrible riot.

'I do hope it is not the Flanagans,' said Baby Jane.

But unfortunately it *was* the Flanagans. The screeching and hurroing and thwack-slammings that was going on up that tree was marvellous.

[38]

Now and then down came a shower of cocoa-nuts and little Flanagans, but the little Flanagans went scuttling up the tree again to join once more in the fray.

Baby Jane was afraid and trembling, and longed to tell the Bear to gallop away with her; but that was not what she had come out to do, so she gathered her scraps of courage and said:

'Let us sing a carol: in the story-books bad people always turn good when they hear a carol'; and she struck up in a shaking voice, 'Heav'n rest you, merry gentlemen!'

And all the animals joined in—not properly of course, but still as each kept up one note—the Lion's falsetto rising high above the rest—it made a fairly good accompaniment to Baby Jane's tune.

After the first few notes the hullabaloo up in the palm tree ceased.

'Oh,' thought Baby Jane, 'it has made them gentle, and the story-books are right—oh, I am glad!'

But at that moment a storm of cocoa-nuts came pelting down upon them, and a voice exclaimed:

[39]

'Ah, it's no manners you have at all to come disturbing a decent family at this time of the night. Go away with you!'

And with that the riot began again.

'They all want to thrash little Patsey at once,' shouted the Lion in Baby Jane's ear; 'that is what they usually quarrel about.'

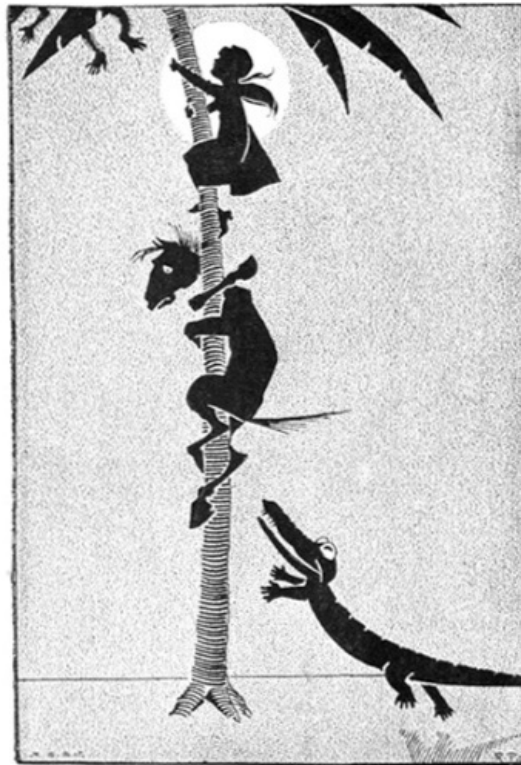
'Oh, how cruel!' she sobbed. 'I am going up to save him.'

And before any one could stop her, she was climbing up the tree with a skill only given her by her



pity for little Patsey. The Light-Horse happened to be nearest to her, and though equally unused to climbing trees, up she went in hot pursuit of Baby Jane, with all the creatures after her.

The fight that followed, words will not describe. You must imagine for yourself a combat in the branches of a palm tree between a family of ourang-outangs and a lion, a light-horse, a bear, a rabbit, a crocodile, and two little mortals. Thrice were the invaders driven down the tree, and thrice, with Baby Jane and the Light-Horse in the van, they scaled it again. But with that last attack came victory. [40]



[41]

### Up she went in hot pursuit of Baby Jane.

Disputing every inch of the branches, the Flanagans were forced back until they broke and fled.

Triumphant, though rather scratched and ruffled, Baby Jane rode off in triumph, bearing in her arms the rescued Patsey, who was a quaint little brown ape, all hands and feet, with bright inquisitive eyes.

All the way home they sang lustily, and then, having hung up their stockings—Patsey should share hers, said Baby Jane—with their little queen in the middle of them, they curled up and went to sleep.

It should be said that, now that the nights had grown more chilly, they slept in a hollow in a great bush, and had to crawl in by a narrow tunnel. So thick were the leaves and branches that neither rain, nor enemies, nor even sunlight, could enter through the roof, and the floor was carpeted with soft moss. The Lion always slept in the doorway.

. . . . .

'A merry Christmas to you all,' said Baby Jane, as the new-risen sun shone straight down the tunnel, and she clapped her hands. Patsey, who had been nestling to her, clapped his hands and tried to say 'A merry Christmas.' That was his way. He would watch her with his head on one side, and thought it his solemn duty to do everything that she did. [42]

The creatures all nodded and smiled and rubbed their eyes. Then some one said the word 'Stockings!' and there was a wild rush and then a joyful hubbub.

Every one wanted every one else to look at his presents and see how they worked. The Rabbit was the happiest of all. Though his stocking was empty there was a huge pile of presents underneath, for the reason that he had made it without any toes, so that Santa Claus had gone on trying to fill it up until he grew tired. The Rabbit did not seem a bit ashamed of his deceitfulness, and protested with indignant squeaks when Baby Jane picked him off his pile of ill-gotten gains by the ears with one hand and took as much as she could hold with the other and gave them to Patsey.

This was the only touch of unpleasantness.

Out of the presents each chose one favourite plaything. The Light-Horse had a skipping-rope, and she and the Bear, back to back, soon steadily hammered the desert for a hundred skips at a time. [43]

And even then the Light-Horse, calm almost to sadness, was ready for another cool hundred.

The Rabbit's favourite was a clockwork mouse, but unfortunately he used its powers for bad purposes.

Among the presents that Baby Jane had taken from the greedy Rabbit and had given to Patsey was a wooden Dutch doll, and it was the darling of Patsey's heart. Now the Rabbit cast jealous eyes on that Dutch doll, so while the others were playing he decoyed Patsey into a quiet place and then whispered in a tone of cold, cruel ferocity:

'The very worst pain in the world is to be gnawed by mad clockwork mice. Now you will give me back my Dutch doll, or I'll set my mouse on you!'

Patsey made no answer, but burst into a roar of terror and grief, and holding the doll above his head for safety, he pattered away as fast as his little legs could carry him.

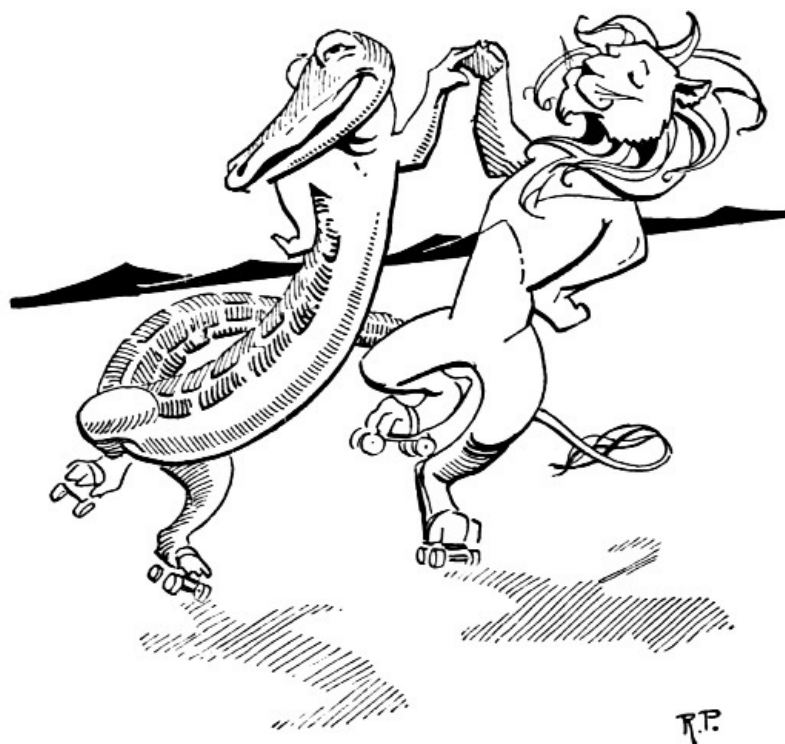
After him, straight and swift as a motor-car, with a cruel gleam in its bead eyes, hissed the clockwork mouse, with the Rabbit racing behind, holding it by a string. [44]



**The Rabbit racing behind, holding it by a string.**

But when Patsey already felt the mouse's whiskers tickling his legs, a strange thing happened. There was a click inside it and it suddenly wheeled round, and, to the Rabbit's horror, made straight for *him*. He dropped the string and ran faster than he had ever run before, because, to his guilty conscience, it seemed that it was some spirit of Justice and not clockwork that propelled that mouse.

While this was going on, the Lion and the Crocodile were learning how to use their new roller skates upon a smooth hard patch of sand, and soon were swaying round and round like swallows on the wing. To see them link arms and, with the other hand on the hip, sweep along on the outside edge was wonderful, and Miss Crocodile's slender and flexible figure was shown to great advantage. [45]



**Miss Crocodile's slender and flexible figure was shown to great advantage.**

Baby Jane and the Piccaninny also had the very presents they had wanted, but Baby Jane had no time to play with hers just then.

The creatures played with their things all the morning until the time for dinner, which was as fine as you ever saw. In fact, the only thing wanting was a sprig of holly to stick in the rich fruit of the plum-pudding plant. And the cooking? Oh, there is no difficulty about cooking in a place where you use your window-sill for an oven and where you only use dish-covers to keep the food from being burned. [46]

After dinner, Baby Jane and the creatures prepared a fine Punch and Judy show, with living figures.

'Nobody but relations, or tortoises laid on their backs, will watch tableaux, but everybody likes a Punch and Judy show,' said Baby Jane.

By using palm-stems with bamboos tied across and draped, they built a very passable Punch's house, and soon all were crowded inside ready to bob up and act while Baby Jane did the squeaky talking.

It is wonderful how soon a crowd collects round a Punch and Judy show. Here in five minutes there were five hundred beasts and niggers seated in rows—all too curious and excited to think of eating one another. And at the last moment up came the Flanagans in a body and took front seats. For it was good-hearted souls that they were, and they bore no malice. Perhaps they were a trifle excitable—that was all. [47]

The excitement reached its highest point when Joey the clown (Master Rabbit) outwitted Punch (Mr. Lion). The Policeman (Mr. Bear) and the Black Man (Master Piccaninny) had popped up and had been promptly knocked on the head, and then the wily Joey appeared and was apparently slain also—a dozen times Punch reckoned to have knocked the stuffing out of Joey, but each time that cunning rascal caused the Policeman or the Black Man to receive the whacks.

Then Punch began counting up his slain, 'One, two, three——'

'And four!' squeaked Joey, hitting Punch a sounding crack and laying him flat.

All this was as it should be, but when the much battered Bear and Piccaninny saw the Lion laid low, they arose and rushed at him and pummelled him until he roared again.

'Now we are going to do some of the hitting,' they said.

At this the Flanagans in the front row cheered wildly, and would have stormed the stage and joined in the fight if the whole of the characters had not disappeared downwards with a jerk. [48]

Then there was a great heaving of the curtains, and the sound of argument within.

'I don't believe that "Exit" is Latin for being jerked off the stage by the legs,' said a voice.

'If you don't behave, it will be Latin for being fed on dry bread-fruit for a week,' replied the voice of Baby Jane.

But soon afterwards the actors popped up again, though rather breathless and rumped, and the rest of the show went splendidly to a triumphant close, and Baby Jane had to climb up and make a speech before the crowd would disperse.

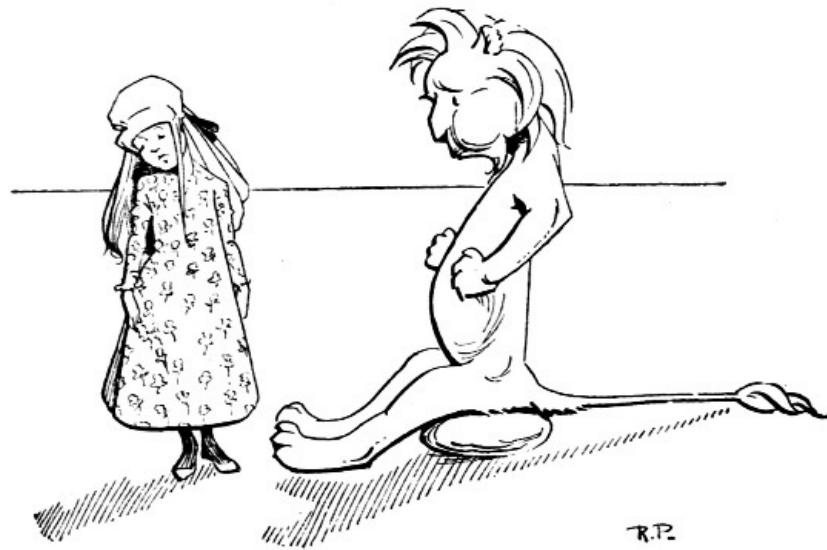
'Ladies and Gentlemen,' she said, whereupon the audience, unused to being so addressed, cheered loudly; and then her feelings of joy and pride at the success of her Christmas effort to soften and teach these neglected creatures so overcame her, that she fell backwards on top of her company of actors, who bore her home in triumph.

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## CHAPTER IV

### OLD JANIES *v.* JUNIOR OAKDENE ATHLETIC

'Do you know,' said the Lion suddenly to Baby Jane the next day, 'we are growing very fat.'



**Puffed out his cheeks.**

It was certainly true, though he took in a big breath and puffed out his cheeks to make it seem worse.

'Tableaux and Tom Tiddler's Ground don't give us enough exercise,' he went on.

[50]

This remark made Baby Jane sad and thoughtful.

'Oh, I wish I were a boy,' she said, 'and could teach you big rough games. No wonder you strong creatures think my girls' games silly; and you would be more fond of me if I were a boy.'

Then she hung her head and pinched a bit of silk out of the pattern on her frock.

All the other creatures glowered at the Lion for his stupidity, and he allowed all the breath to go out of him, and collapsed into a very mean, awkward-looking animal; but after a little shuffling he began bounding round the little girl with the wildest show of gaiety, licking her face and patting her with his paws to coax her to hold up her head and come for a romp. The other creatures gradually allowed their scowls to soften into grins, and joined in the dance.

Baby Jane turned away her head for a moment to rub her eyes, and then held out her arms and put them round the Lion's neck.

'Oh, you are dears,' she said, 'and I'll try hard to remember some big boys' game. I did use to crawl through the hedge and play football with the Williamson boys in the next garden to ours, but it always ended so soon. They always used to charge me and knock me into the laurel-bushes, and then I used to run back crying with bruises on my legs, and my frock all earthy, and when I complained of them to Mother she used to punish me. That always happened. But I'll try to remember—I'll try to remember.'

[51]

She sat staring anxiously at the sky for some minutes.

'Yes,' she cried, 'I remember—oh, I am glad!'

'Now, you all go out and get a lot of animals to play against us—gently, mind!—coax them; tell them it is splendid fun—and I will teach you football.'

It was a very quaint set of animals that shyly allowed themselves to be led up. They were mostly ostriches and ant-eaters, with a sprinkling of elephants, hippopotamuses, and such-like.

But they grew more interested and less self-conscious when Baby Jane showed them how to fix up two posts at each end of the chosen ground, and explained how each side had to try to kick the ball between the other side's posts.

'And one side must be called the "Old Somethings,"' she told them, 'so we will be the "Old Janies," and the other side must be the "Junior Something Athletic," so you shall be the "Junior Oakdene Athletic," and that is all I know, except that one player must be called "full back," and another "left wing." Rabbit, you are our "left wing," and you, Lion, are our "full back."'

[52]

These two creatures flushed with pride to be picked out for these honours.

A little rattlesnake had wanted to play too, but he had no legs so they made him the umpire.

It was the sound of his rattle that began the game, and at that signal the two teams rushed upon the cocoa-nut—that was what they used for a ball.

The first to distinguish himself was an agile young elephant, who, with the ball before him, dodged in and out among the Old Janies with terrible skill, every moment getting nearer to their goal. At last only a few yards remained, and with agonised faces Baby Jane's team looked for the

last fatal kick.

Then suddenly there was a squeak and a flash of brown fur. Struck full upon the chest, the Elephant went crashing down. The Rabbit had charged him with the dash and fury of a regiment of cavalry, and the goal was saved. [53]

But no; not yet! On came the enemy again, and the Rabbit's splendid deed seemed all in vain. Struggling like heroes, Jane's men were forced back, until at last by sheer weight they were driven headlong into their own goal.

The Junior Oakdene Athletic raised a shout of triumph, but it died away in doubt and disappointment. The ball had disappeared, and there was nothing to show that they had sent it between Jane's goal-posts.

They made an anxious search all over the ground. Miss Crocodile seemed to think that it might be at the other end of the field, and she went there to look for it. Nobody thought it possible, and yet, when she had got within easy distance of the enemy's goal, there it was just under her nose. With a deft kick she shot it between the posts. The Old Janies had won a goal!

The Junior Oakdene Athletic did not take their misfortunes like men. Indeed, they said that Miss Crocodile had had the ball in her mouth all the time. But the enemy soon brought the ball back close to Baby Jane's end of the field, and, in spite of the goal her side had won, the game seemed hopeless. [54]

Then Baby Jane saw a gap in the ranks of the foe, and out she shot with the ball before her, and went scampering up the field with a puffing crowd at her heels.

And away on her right out shot the Rabbit, and keeping level with her at a distance of twenty yards, he scuttled desperately.

Whenever Baby Jane was pressed she neatly patted the ball to the 'left wing,' and when he felt two or three elephants and an ostrich or so close upon him he passed it back to her.

In a moment there was no one but the Junior Oakdene Athletic 'full back,' a burly Hippopotamus, to be passed. He went out to meet the Rabbit. There was a scuffle, and the Hippopotamus arose, alone, slowly and heavily, a very full back indeed.

Baby Jane stood as if frozen, and as pale as snow.

Her Rabbit gone? It was impossible. The world would be empty without the Rabbit.

Just as she had begun to be sure that he had been eaten, the Hippopotamus put on a pained, choky expression, and opened his mouth a little. [55]

Out popped the Rabbit's head and forepaws. Twisting round and resting the paws on the Hippopotamus's nose he poured upon that animal a shrill torrent of bad language, ending thus:

'Swallow me, would you? Ha, ha! I like that! I've burrowed in bigger hills than you before now, though in none so ugly. Swallow me! Why, for two pins I'd burrow back of my own accord, and make you believe that you had bolted twenty helps of crab and crumpets and cream.'

Here he made a pretence of darting back into the Hippopotamus's mouth, which so alarmed that animal that he gave a violent whistle, and out flew the Rabbit like a pea from a pea-shooter, and rolled far along the sand, which stuck to his damp fur, so that he arose like a little walking sand-pie.

All this while the Light-Horse was sitting unnoticed on the cocoa-nut in the middle of the Junior Oakdene's goal whistling a sad little melody to himself.

Two goals for the Old Janies!

At this the other team were so disgusted that they marched off the field and disappeared. [56]

'I see trouble in the air,' said the Light-Horse, looking darkly from under her eyebrows. 'Since the fame of Princess Jane has spread around there have been stealthy gatherings, every day growing greater, in yonder Black Mountains. All the worst characters of the Desert are there. I heard mutterings among the defeated band. The triumph of the "Janies" this day will set a match to the powder. I see trouble in the air!'

'She wants her dinner, that is all,' said the others, and certainly at the sound of the word dinner, the Light-Horse looked much brighter.

The ending of the football match had made Baby Jane a little sad, but during dinner a happy thought struck her.

'This afternoon we'll go fox-hunting,' she said.

'Hurray!' shouted the creatures in chorus.

'Now, who will be my horse?' said Baby Jane.

All the creatures cried out at once. The Rabbit was the most eager of all. He left his place, and, rushing round to Baby Jane, humped his back and begged her to try him.

'The Rabbit had better be the "Fox,"' said Miss Crocodile, with her mouth full (which, by the way, was saying a good deal). 'Why, he isn't strong enough to—' [57]

'Strong!' squeaked the indignant Rabbit. 'Huh! I'll box any three of you,' and he put himself in a fighting attitude, and bounced up and down like an india-rubber ball in front of the creatures, who had now risen. With his palm-leaf bib flapping as he bounced he looked very absurd.

'Oh, no larks!' he said more gently. 'You can hunt my clockwork mouse if you like, but mind he doesn't turn nasty and hunt *you!*'

After a little persuasion, however, he consented to be the 'Fox,' and Miss Crocodile beguiled a dozen little nephews and nieces from the rivers, by the promise of an apricot each if they were good, to be the hounds.

It was a splendid afternoon, with little clouds, warmed by the yellow sunlight, romping like lambs across the blue sky-fields, and the sound of a pleasant wind in the shady palms.

The awkward affair of the football match was forgotten, and four eager steeds of various shapes pawed the ground, while Miss Crocodile's nephews and nieces were barking very respectably at the Rabbit, who sat making faces at them from a little distance. [58]

The Light-Horse had wanted to ride, but finally had to go alone on foot, wearing a sash to show that she was not a horse.

It was some time before Baby Jane could make the Rabbit start—he would try to be funny, but at last he set off.

Then from the huntsmen and horses there arose a thrilling shout, and a yapping from the pack as they streamed away after the 'Fox.'

Tally-ho! Hark, forward!

Now the little river appeared before them. Baby Jane was very much afraid the Rabbit would refuse to wet his paws by trying to jump it, but he took it bravely, and the nephews and nieces went splashing after him. Baby Jane upon the Lion gave a scream of delight as he cleared the brook with a mighty bound, like the flight of a swallow. The Light-Horse landed heavily beside them, and raced them neck and neck across the plain. Not far behind, the Bear and the Crocodile were also running a desperate race. Of course the terrible pace soon began to tire the nephews and nieces, and some of them sobbed loudly as they ran.

After a while the Rabbit, who had got some way ahead, had dived into a clump of trees, and they had no doubt that he was now galloping away on the far side, so they plunged in one after another. [59]

Suddenly from behind a tree right in front of them there emerged an awful little bogey. It seemed to have enormous military moustaches, and upon its head was a wild wreath. The nephews and nieces at once went into hysterics, and the hunters collapsed backwards in a neat line like a set of dominoes—all shrieking horribly.

'Do you know,' said the Rabbit calmly—for it was he—taking the feathers out of his mouth and removing his head-dress, 'I'm getting rather tired of this game. I don't think it's so very good.'

But he had to cut short his remarks, for the hunters, horses, and hounds arose and rushed at him in a body, and continued the chase in grim earnest, Baby Jane leading on foot with a switch in her hand, and the Light-Horse and the Lion close behind her, in a state of boiling indignation.

By-and-bye they all stopped, out of breath, and noticed, for the first time, how near to the foot of the mountains their long hunt had taken them.

They felt tired, and the weather had now changed. Misty clouds, drizzling faintly, had come driving up on the wind, and had so wrapped themselves round the heights as almost to hide them. But now and then, when the wind tore the fleecy mist, Baby Jane could see a jagged mountain-top appear high up in the sky, where she had never expected it. These were the mysterious Black Mountains to which the Light-Horse had referred a little while ago. As they all looked, they recalled her words of warning, 'All the worst characters of the Desert are there.' [60]

The lower slopes of the mountains were only dimmed and made grey by the drizzle.

There was something strange about them. Was that movement only the passing of the wind over the long grass? But the rivers of movement that flash across the grass go one way—the way of the wind—and in the strange greyness that clothed the hillside, there was a troubled swaying and eddying every way.

Then the wind held its breath for a moment, as if it, too, had caught sight of the strange thing, and out of the mountains a draught came creeping back, and bore with it the mingled wail and shriek and yell of ten thousand savage animals.

As they watched with their blood running cold and their hearts thumping heavily, the swirling greyness began to slide down the hillside towards them, and then a misty cloud dipped lower and hid it. [61]

Most of the creatures were too frightened to know what to do—only the Lion, the Bear, and the

Light-Horse remained calm. The Light-Horse, indeed, even took a gloomy pleasure in having prophesied truly.

As for Baby Jane, she squeezed herself close to the Bear, and, hiding her face in his fur, trembled and sobbed. She did not want to be a Princess any more. She wanted only to be protected.

'Bear,' said the Lion sharply, 'take her home. You others, keep round him. I'll come on behind. Now, with all your might, gallop!'

And so they went flying home, the Light-Horse with all the twelve nephews and nieces crowded upon her back.

It was a delicious comfort and relief to be once again in their great hollow bush, through which no enemy could break. They stopped up the entrance of the tunnel from within with branches and leaves, so that no one could guess that the bush was hollow.

Before Baby Jane went to sleep, nestling close to the Bear, she saw the Lion yawn and stretch himself, not as if he were tired, but as if to pull the twists out of his muscles to be ready for work, if need be. Then he went and lay down in the tunnel. [62]

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## CHAPTER V [63]

### TWO NEW FRIENDS

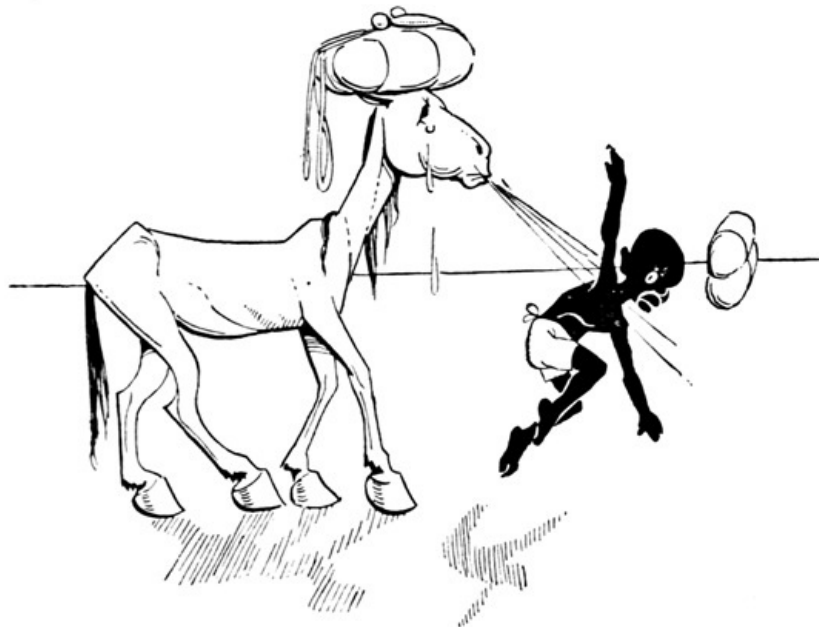
Baby Jane was waked up by the Lion giving her a gentle lick on the cheek.

'We must pack up our luggage and be off early,' said he. 'I have looked out, and there is nothing in sight, but there was the sound of hundreds of stealthy footfalls round the bush in the night.'

Then he waked the others, and they set to work to pack up their belongings—there were all the Bear's belongings, and, of course, their toys.

While they were having breakfast—it was lucky that everything grew ready cooked, so to speak, and even the bread-fruit grew ready toasted in this very hot country—they held a council of war.

'We must go far away from the Black Mountains until we have got together a big army of beasts with good natures. Then we will come back,' said Baby Jane, who was brave enough now that the sun was shining and no enemy in sight, 'and if the Black Mountain creatures won't be good, well, we shall have to make them.' [64]



**Whistling 'Lochaber No More.'**

On they tramped, without speaking, all the morning, with their bundles on their heads, and the Light-Horse did not make matters more cheerful by whistling 'Lochaber No More,' breaking the sad tune now and then with a stifled sob.

It must be here remarked that this animal was now addressed as 'Mary Carmichael,' after the tragic part she had taken in the tableaux vivants, for to call such a dark and heavy-minded creature a 'Light' horse was absurd. [65]

Later in the morning they were suddenly startled by a strange apparition that came up over a

hillock towards them. They all made a rampart of their bundles and prepared for the worst, but it was nothing more terrible than a small costermonger driving a donkey in a barrow, piled full of bits of glittering rock. The donkey kicked violently after every two or three steps, and at every kick the barrow-load of stones rattled fearfully, and the small coster brought down a flat piece of wood on the donkey's back, and abused it in the rudest way.

'What ho, there!' squeaked the driver on his approach after the manner of the olden times. 'Where's the tent for the circus?'

'We're not a circus,' said Baby Jane indignantly, 'and you are much more odd-looking than we. What are you doing here?'

'Well, you see,' said he, 'the geranium business at home is overcrowded, and so Edouardo and I—his name in full is Edouardo de Frisky, because of his voice; there is a singer named that or something like it—have come out here and gone into the gold-mine business. There's a little gold-mine in the cart now; we gave one-and-tenpence for it, and we are going to sell it—all except the good parts—for sixpence a piece. I tell you it is better even than the strawberry business, with eight strawberries on the top and all the rest leaves. And what game are you playing?'

[66]

Baby Jane said she was not playing any game, and rather shyly explained her mission, expecting the little coster to jeer; but, though he was only moderately honest and very ill-mannered, he was a good-hearted little fellow.

'Now that's a fine thing to do,' said he warmly, 'and I'm your man. I'll tip the rubbish out of my barrow and come along with you.'

Then he added confidentially, 'But we might turn them into a circus afterwards and make a lot of money.'

And so Sammy and Edouardo joined the family, and they journeyed on together.

At first the other creatures looked askance at Edouardo, but after a while they found he was an animal of great character, and made friends with him—all except Mary Carmichael, who chose to be jealous—but the Bear was his great chum.

[67]

Of course the barrow was a great delight to the party, but they were so eager to ride in it that they nearly broke it by all crowding in together. They took it in turns to put on the harness and pull, except the Rabbit, Patsey, and the Piccaninny, and they, not being able to take their turn in pulling, were not allowed to ride properly, but had to hang on at the back on the sly, until Miss Crocodile noticed them and cried 'Whip behind!'

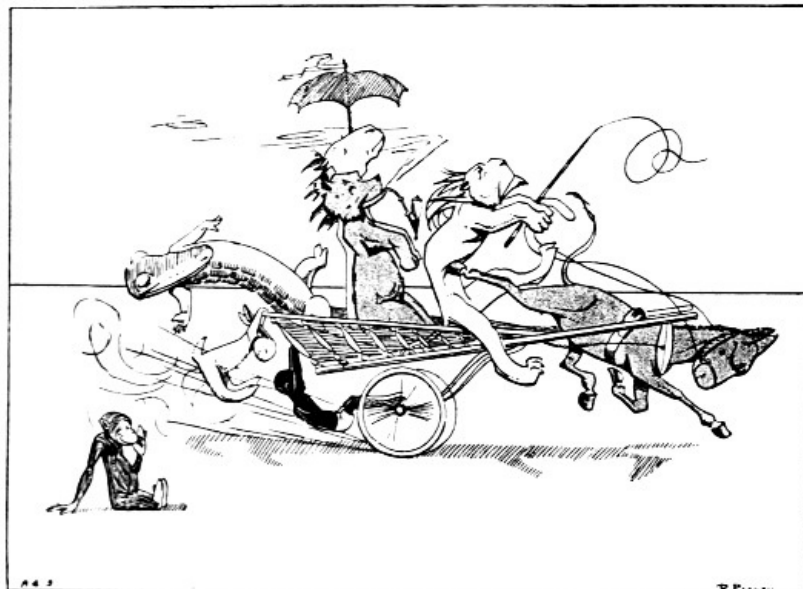
The Lion was too much engaged with Edouardo to hear her, and so she had to slap them herself.

This seemed very unjust to the three, and Miss Crocodile's slaps hurt them still more, so they lagged some way behind and plotted together to be avenged on Miss Crocodile.

Of course, if Baby Jane had seen, she would have set things right, but she was walking on ahead with Sammy, discussing how they should collect an army, and planning new instruction for the creatures in the meantime.

They had got so far ahead as to be almost out of sight of the party in the barrow, who steered a very roundabout course, when they came upon a young but vicious-looking hippopotamus lying in wait behind a cactus bush—evidently a spy sent after them by the Black Mountain band. With its mouth wide open it made a rush at them, and Baby Jane in terror collapsed on the ground and covered her face. But the fierce brute had not considered that it had to reckon with an English boy, and with one who knew how to box.

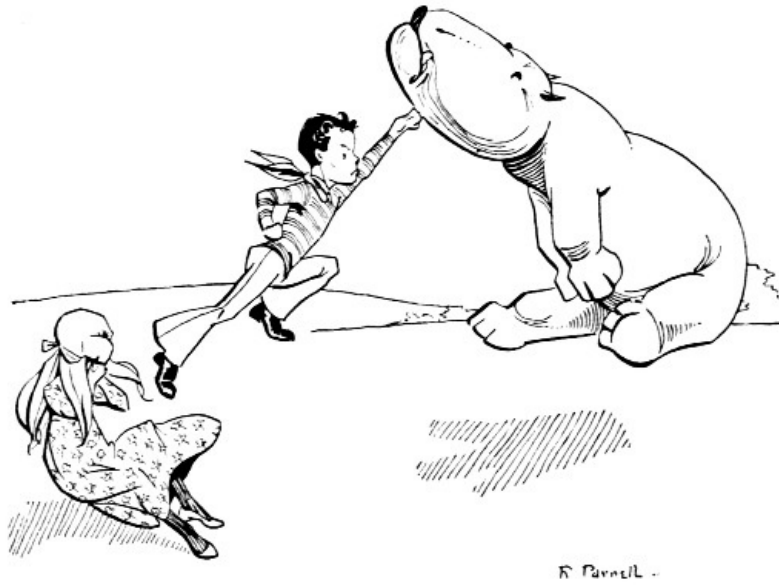
[68]



**She had to slap them herself.**



Standing before the little girl in a skilful attitude of defence, as the hippopotamus came on, Sammy chucked it under the chin, as it were, with all the strength of his arm, and down it went with a dull bump that shook the ground, the most surprised hippopotamus you ever saw. No second blow was needed; the beast rolled itself on to its feet, and muttering dreadful threats—quite indistinctly, for it had bitten its tongue in a painful way—rushed away across the desert towards the Black Mountains. [69]



**Sammy chucked it under the chin, as it were.**

'You are a brave boy,' said Baby Jane softly, looking up at Sammy.

'Oh, it's nothing,' he said, but he turned very red with pride. [70]

When the creatures came to hear of this deed they were all mad to learn how to box, so, at the halt for dinner, Sammy produced a set of boxing gloves and gave them lessons. After they were taught they practised among themselves. Then, as Baby Jane had feared, there was a squabble. No gloves could temper the hardness of Mary Carmichael's hoofs, and when, with an irritating sadness of expression, she hit the lion in the eye, that creature could stand it no longer. So they had to be forbidden to use their skill except against an enemy. Of course they all longed to do so, but the Rabbit was very wrong to do as he did. It was the act of a bully.

Searching about among the sandhills, he came upon a little duck squatting beside a pool, and without any reason whatever, for the duck was perfectly inoffensive, he made the most insulting remark, and, when the duck mildly retorted, he set upon it and pummelled it cruelly.

Luckily Baby Jane caught him in the act, and, picking him up by the scruff of his neck, gave him such slaps that his fat little ribs sounded like a drum.

When she set him down he rushed in a bad, sulky mood to his friends. [71]

Now for some time Miss Crocodile had been dozing beside the barrow, for her arms were too short to protect her long nose, so that boxing was an unpleasant amusement for her. This was the three conspirators' opportunity.

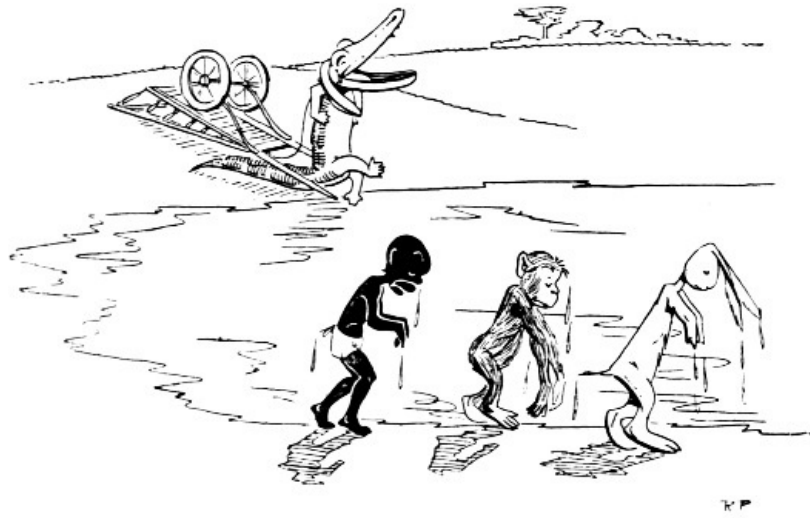
A little later Baby Jane and the others, who were some little way off, were startled by the loud rattle of the approaching barrow and by wild, triumphant shrieks.

Then, with her eyes starting out of her head—even more than ever—Miss Crocodile, fully harnessed, went flying past, and behind, clinging together in the barrow, sat the three conspirators wild with excitement and delight.

They had slipped the shafts over her and harnessed her while she dozed. Then they perched in a row upon the seat, and when all was ready—one—two—three—and all together!—they brought a board down on the full length of her back with a clap like thunder.

Startled from her beauty-sleep, she sprang away like a hare, and scoured the plain in whirling circles.

Unluckily for the Rabbit and his friends, in one of these wild whirlings, the very pond beside which he had ill-used the duck suddenly appeared before them. [72]



**Three dragged little creatures crawled out.**

Crash! Splash! Miss Crocodile, now cooled and quieted, came out on the far side, drawing the overturned barrow behind her, and then three little round heads appeared in a row above the water, all driving for the shore, and a moment later three dragged little creatures crawled out amid the laughter of the others.

Baby Jane dried them for fear they should catch cold, but, except that she rubbed them till they squeaked, she forebore from adding to their punishment. [73]

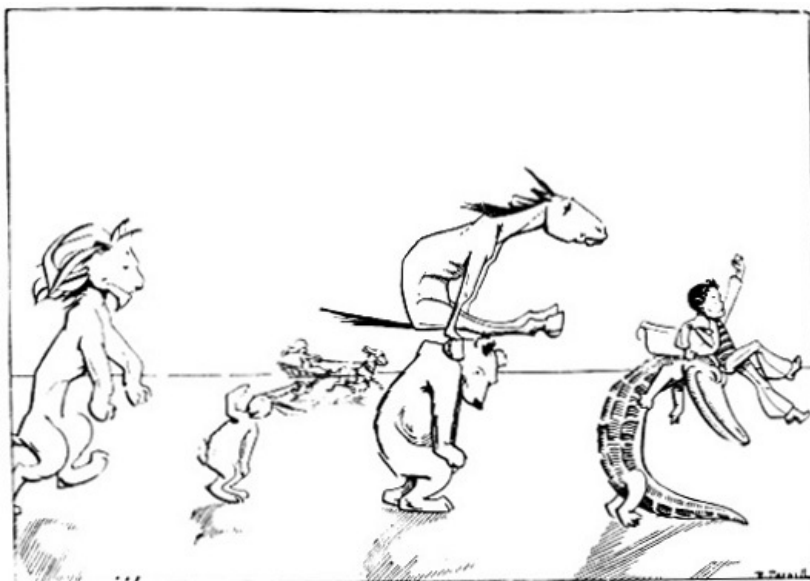
After that, they set the barrow straight and proceeded quietly, pausing every now and again for Sammy to explain a lecture on hop-sotch by examples. Baby Jane herself had never played the game, and thought it fun, for a change, to be a pupil. They soon grew so excited that they had to stop and play a little hop-sotch tournament.

Coolness is half the battle in games, and again Mary Carmichael proved her prowess, and was proclaimed champion hop-schotcher of the Southern Sahara. Perhaps Sammy himself could have won easily, but Baby Jane made him a little sign, and, like the young sportsman that he was, he did not spoil the game, but allowed himself to be beaten.

'But *you* know I could have won, Miss?' he asked anxiously of Baby Jane when it was over.

'Of course I do,' said she; 'you were very unselfish!'; which quite satisfied Sammy.

This caused a good deal of delay, and they made up for it by hurrying at a great rate afterwards. Nevertheless they contrived even then to amuse themselves as they went, for the ingenious Sammy had thought of leap-frog. [74]



**It was a picturesque sight.**

It was a picturesque sight. Like a river of living waves they flowed across the desert—occasionally a wave broke, but generally they pursued the even tenor of their way. Poor Baby Jane felt that it would be unladylike to play, so had to keep company with Eduardo, who had a mind above leap-frog, with the barrow.

'If only I had my gymnasium things with me!' she sighed.

By this time it was growing dusk, and they could not clearly see their way. It must have been partly for this reason, and partly because they were carried away by the excitement of the game, that—horrible to relate!—a gully suddenly yawned before them, and, before the leading leapers could give warning, the living river was changed into a living cascade, which poured over the brink and down with a rush and rattle to the bottom. Luckily, there was a thick bed of ferns and moss to receive them; but as it was, the lowest layer of creatures had all the breath bumped out of them by the shower of heavy bodies that dropped plump upon them. [75]

You may know how it rains cats and dogs, but you can hardly imagine it raining the whole 'Zoo.'

Edouardo, who was drawing the barrow, pulled up on the very brink of the precipice; but with such a jerk that, alas for Baby Jane, she performed a wilder somersault than she had dreamt of, even in a nightmare, and landed on the top of the pile.

It took some time to unbuild the pyramid, because the lowest layer heaved so strongly that it upset the upper layer as they tried to rise.

But, after a while, they were all upon their feet again, bruised, panting, possibly a little flatter and wider than before, but otherwise unhurt. [76]

Then they began to look about for a way out of the gully. It was very deep and narrow, but not very long, and they had soon explored it thoroughly, and made a terrible discovery—there was no way out but up the smooth, upright sides. Up above they saw Edouardo's head cut out in black against the darkening sky, as he peered helplessly over the edge.

Mary Carmichael set up a shrill wail, but the others all looked very solemn and stood in a circle round Baby Jane gazing at her, as she stood with her hands over her face trying to make her little brains work more quietly and calmly. Now out of all the hours of her life she most needed all her little stock of memory and knowledge. What would a grown-up person do in such a plight? But no thoughts would come, and her chin sank lower on her breast.

'Only magic can save us,' said the Lion at last. 'Does any one know of a spell?'

The party all racked their brains, but nothing came of it.

Suddenly Baby Jane uncovered her face.

'Yes, I know of a *real* spell,' she said smiling, and then with her face turned frankly up to the narrow sky she uttered a few words, which the creatures could not understand, and which puzzled Sammy. 'Now we have only got to wait,' said she. [77]

Soon afterwards a most wonderful thing happened. Overhead suddenly there came the sound of rushing wings, and a gigantic eagle, who had seen the disaster from afar, swooped into the ravine, and, clutching the Bear, was rising with him, when the Lion made a grab at the Bear's feet, and he too was borne upwards. Then Mary Carmichael clasped her forelegs round the Lion, and she ascended also. One after another they seized the last pair of legs, and rose until the whole band was dangling from the Bear's legs. Still the eagle rose, now very like a kite with a long tail, and would have soared with them all into the air had not Edouardo on the top of the precipice seized the last pair of legs as they swayed towards him. That was the last straw, and the eagle let fall the string of creatures with a flop upon the open desert—they were saved! [78]



Still the eagle rose.

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[79]



A string of 'sandwich-men.'

## CHAPTER VI

### THE GREAT CIRCUS

On the morning after the wonderful escape from the ravine, the whole company were, for a while, rather quiet and subdued.

Nothing was to be seen of Baby Jane but the top of her golden head. Her boys and beasts were huddled close round, trying to help her with sleepy suggestions, mostly silly, for raising an army to convert the Bad Band of the Black Mountains.

But as they squatted there on the soft sand in the drowsy warmth of the sun, the councillors [80] began to grow sleepier and their counsels sillier, till suddenly—

'What ho!' said Sammy, and they all woke up. 'Let us have a "greatest show on earth," with a circus and gymnastics, and a play-act to follow. That will catch 'em all alive like a fly-paper, and Miss Jane can enlist the lot! But first we must crawl along in a string in a gutter, if we can find one, rigged out with boards with fine words on them:

'BABY JANE'S GIGANTIC JUBILEE CIRCUS

BUNNY THE FUNNY  
AND CROCKY THE FAIR  
MOUNTED ON MARY THE MUSICAL MARE.'

'No, I won't!' interrupted Mary Carmichael angrily; 'I don't mind being a tight-rope dancer, but I *won't* be a spotted horse!'

Sammy went on calmly:

'COMICAL CAPERS  
AND MARVELLOUS FEATS,  
*Two shilling, shilling, and sixpenny seats.*'

'Splendid!' said Baby Jane. 'All except the last words, which are wrong. The seats are all *nothing* [81] seats.'

Sammy looked crestfallen—he had thought of the circus an hour before, but had spent all that time in inventing those beautiful lines.

A little later a string of 'sandwich-men' might have been seen walking in step slowly and solemnly across the desert, each bearing before him a beautiful poster (drawn by himself, with a bit of burnt wood on white stuff stretched across four sticks).

'Don't let us tell any one we are sandwich-men,' whispered Mary Carmichael nervously; 'they might think we meant it and take a plateful of us!'

At the end of the procession came Edouardo and the barrow as a caravan.

'It's a pity,' thought Baby Jane with a sigh, 'the barrow has no looking-glasses and gold things and a Britannia on the top and a band inside; but they won't know what a real circus is like, so perhaps we can amuse them.'

It is little wonder that a procession, so rarely seen in those parts, should attract the creatures who saw it from afar, and, as each one ran round the corner and beckoned and shouted to his

friends to come along quick, the solemn line of sandwich-men was soon escorted by an expectant rabble. They all seemed of the right sort—beasts really bad at heart despised harmless fun like this. [82]

Greater still was the curiosity aroused when Baby Jane and her troupe came to a stop in a shallow round hollow with sloping banks like the rising tiers of seats in a real circus. Round the bottom of this hollow Sammy drew a line in the sand, and the following crowd were marshalled into their seats outside it.

Then the circus began. The Bear had just the proper fat figure and gruff voice for a ring-master, and he cracked the whip (ordinarily used to encourage Edouardo) in the most correct way. The Rabbit made an excellently idiotic clown.

The first item was a tight-rope dance by Mary Carmichael. She *would* do it in spite of every one's advice that she was being too ambitious. Dressed in a silly little muslin skirt and carrying the umbrella coquettishly over her shoulder, she skipped up to the rope that had been stretched between two posts, and, with the help of the Bear, clambered on to it. For a moment all went well. With a simpering smile she went trip-tripping along the rope; but then she gave a frightful stagger, swung out her legs in all directions, twisted her back cruelly in a wild effort to recover herself, and fell with a clatter to the ground, smashing the umbrella beneath her. [83]

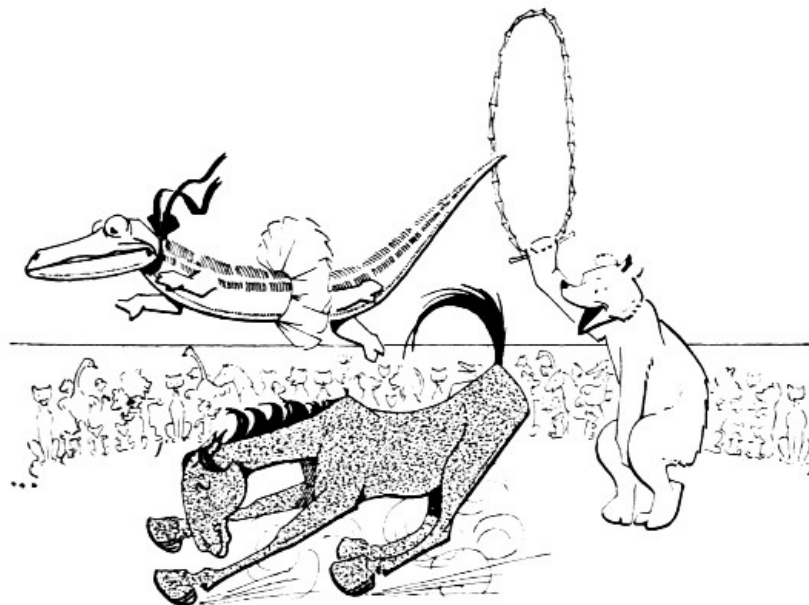
The whole audience roared with delight, thinking it part of the fun, but there were tears in Mary's eyes as she limped out of the ring.

'I am afraid I have spoiled the whole show with my silliness,' she said in a choking voice. 'I had better be a common spotted horse now.'

As it was Miss Crocodile's turn to appear as the Queen of the Ring, they took Mary at her word, though she had not meant it, and, having taken away her skirt and put it on Miss Crocodile, they spotted her like a leopard and she had to canter round the ring, watering the sand with bitter tears, while Miss Crocodile, looking very winsome with her little legs crossed, sat sideways upon her and smiled at the audience.

Miss Crocodile was at first quite a brilliant success. Twice she leapt nimbly through the hoop of bent bamboo held aloft by the Bear, but by the third round Mary's sadness had turned to spite.

As before, Miss Crocodile rose into the air and shot through the hoop, but to her dismay she found no horse on the other side for her to come down upon, and she alighted on her chin, balanced for a moment with her tail pointing to the sky, and then fell flat on her back. Mary Carmichael had stopped short under the hoop! [84]



**Mary Carmichael had stopped short under the hoop.**

At this moment the Rabbit came racing into the ring mounted on a curious four-legged animal which looked strangely like the Piccaninny and Patsey joined together and covered with a rug.

'A race!' squeaked the Rabbit. 'My pony Joey against old Spots-and-corners!' [85]

The spotted Horse appealed to the Ring-master to stop the Rabbit's rudeness, but all the same began to gallop furiously to show that she could do at least one thing well. But the Rabbit, being nearer the middle of the ring, had a much shorter course, and would have won easily if only Patsey, who was the hind legs, could have run as fast as the Piccaninny. As it was, the strange pony grew longer and longer, until the Rabbit, who had a foot on each, was nearly pulled in half. Suddenly the Pony broke in the middle, and both halves and the Rabbit, all mixed up in the ring, joined in a fearful battle on the ground.

'The silly little cuckoos!' squeaked the Rabbit breathlessly, as he arose from the tangled heap. 'I warned them about that.'

After that the three children were led in with ropes round their necks and let loose within a little fence, which represented a cage. Then 'Leo, the heroic Baby Tamer,' trembling visibly, entered, and holding out a stick for that ferocious creature Baby Jane to jump over, tried to subdue her by the power of the eye. But she seemed to consider his magical gaze merely rude, and, looking as like Miss McColl in a temper as she could, she crept towards him. She must have looked very like, for, with a screech of real fright, the Lion fell flat on his back. Before the wretched creature had time to rise the three savage brutes were upon him. [86]

It was a fearful scene and caused a panic in the audience. Mother-bears clutched their baby-bears, young lady crocodiles fainted, and young lions stood up bravely—and shouted for the police. They were only reassured when the children and the Lion came out of the cage and publicly shook hands to show there was no ill-feeling.

'Oh, that was fun!' cried Baby Jane, pushing aside the golden locks that, now unbound, hung like curtains against her flushed cheeks.

'Oh, was it?' said the Lion, ruefully rubbing himself, but smiling affectionately at her.

When the circus was over there was an interval for dinner, and such was the good-nature called forth by that enjoyable show that as many of the audience got up from dinner as had sat down.

They followed the example of Baby Jane's family and dined on the delicious foods that grew in the groves and thickets. An ill-mannered cub may have inquired 'Who's for pudding?' but he was instantly cuffed and made to ask '*What's* for pudding?' [87]

'It is so economical too!' whispered the matrons to one another. 'Of course, one must have a missionary at Michaelmas and so forth, but at other times I shall try to make my family keep to it.'

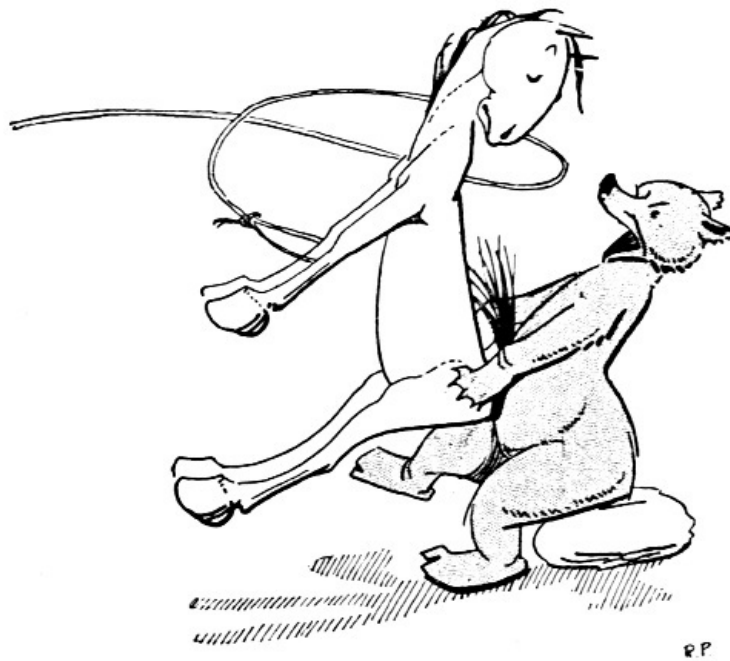
It was a much larger audience that returned to the arena after the meal, for youngsters had been despatched, grumbling and whimpering, to bring in distant relatives, and the far-reaching whiffs of the dinner itself had brought in other beasts full-pelt.

And now began the Great Gymnastic Display. Baby Jane had been only a beginner in the gymnasium of her school, and Sammy's knowledge was of the kind gained on park-railings and lamp-posts, but the spectators knew nothing at all and thought it very fine.

First the Lion and Patsey, under Sammy's direction, had a trial of skill on the Parallel Bars. Sure, and it was a sweet sight to see Patsey with his little shillelagh brandished in one foot and his hat in the other, dancing a jig wrong side up. On the other hand, the Lion tried to be stately. Now, it is nearly always a mistake to try to be stately while standing on your head, and so the Lion found, for in straightening himself out a little too far he slowly toppled backwards and fell flop on top of Patsey, who, not having eyes in the part of him then uppermost, could not see what was coming. [88]

They rescued Patsey and found him crushed in body but not in spirit; on the contrary, he struggled to go and fight a duel with the Lion.

Next, fixing up a post in the middle of the arena, they fastened ropes to the top of it, and then, holding the other end of these ropes, they swung round and round at a giddy pace, touching the ground lightly with their toes. Of course this sport, especially with the slender pole that they had, was only for the graceful little ones, and Baby Jane, the Piccaninny, and the Rabbit were growing breathless with the delightful sweep and swing of it, when that Mary Carmichael, who was as vain as she was sentimental, and thought herself an airy young thing, came tripping across the ring, and, hooking her great hoofs in the loop at the end of a rope, struck the ground with her hind legs as if she were starting at omnibus. Twice she went slinging round after the others and then—crack!—the pole gave way, and the four performers were slung like stones amongst the crowd. The other three landed safely and softly on broad backs, but heavy, bony Mary descended in the lap of a cross old spinster bear, who was gossiping with two cronies. [89]



**Mary descended in the lap of a cross old spinster bear.**

'Now, can't you look where you are going?' snapped Miss Bear, bundling Mary off her lap on to the ground.

'Oh, I'm sure I beg your pardon!' said Mary hotly; and then, losing her temper—'You don't imagine I want to join in the conversation of persons who certainly aren't ladies, and don't look it!' [90]

And then she flounced away, while they made scathing remarks to one another about her at the top of their voices.

It can easily be understood that she was much too upset to play the part of a vaulting-horse as it should be played, but she had to do it, trembling all over with spite, and occasionally, to the great inconvenience of the gymnasts, jerking half round to glare at the three spinsters, who were laughing loudly at her undignified position.

Sammy led the line that raced nimbly up to the vaulting-horse, placed his hands upon her back and turned a neat somersault over her. The others all got over in some way or other, and all went well until Miss Crocodile lost her head.

Instead of running round the horse and vaulting from the same side as before, she turned straight back, bounded lightly into the air, and—*met the Bear as he turned a somersault in the opposite direction!* There was a terrible collision, and, worse and worse, the other vaulters could not stop themselves and joined in the crash. It was an awful sight—a whirling mass of heads, legs, bodies, and tails high in the air! [91]

Mary Carmichael thought that a blizzard and a thunderstorm had met overhead, and made for shelter. It was well for her that she did so, for the next two seconds it rained beasts and babies on the spot where she had stood.

This succession of disasters, though painful to the performers, called forth thunders of applause from the spectators—indeed, they would not stop clapping, and it turned out they wanted the tumbles all over again.

But Baby Jane and her troupe sadly needed the rest they enjoyed at tea-time, during which they made plans for the play that was to end the day's pleasure.

'It is growing dark,' said Baby Jane; 'we shall have to have something that happens at night. I know! I've read some stories from Shakespeare. *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* both have nice night-scenes; they would mix beautifully into one play. Oh yes, this is it! Prince Hamlet, who is unkind to Ophelia because he is really in love with Juliet, has a sort of tame ghost, and, when he finds Romeo saying loving things to the window of Juliet's room, he sets his tame ghost on to him. Then, of course, Romeo runs away chased by the ghost, and Juliet, who has heard the loving things, comes out and sees Hamlet and thinks it was he who said them, so she tells him to climb up and kiss her, and they are married and live happily ever afterwards.' [92]

'But what happens to that other poor lady, Ophelia?' asked the chivalrous Lion.

'Oh, she doesn't appear,' said Baby Jane, 'so it doesn't matter; but I expect she marries Romeo or the ghost and *they* live happily ever afterwards too.'

The play went off splendidly. The crowd was now immense, and there was no need this time to

have tortoises laid on their backs for spectators. A number of tortoises, who probably had been used for the tableaux, did come and turned over on their backs of their own accord, but they were promptly turned right-side up and chased out of the place.

The audience took everything very seriously; indeed, it was lucky no actor had to play the part of a villain, for they would certainly have paid him the compliment of eating him.

How they roared with excitement! 'Go it, ghost! Go it, Romeo!' as the ghost scuttled round and round after Romeo until he laid his paw on a tree and cried 'Touch wood!' when the spectre uttered a shuddering shriek and faded away into the night. [93]

'And a capital match for her,' said the matrons, when Hamlet married Juliet. 'Fancy a prince so grand that he keeps a ghost as you or I might keep a canary!'

All were pleased at this happy ending, and just in the mood to hear Baby Jane's speech.

She began as she had heard a recited speech begin at school: 'Friends, Romans, Countrymen, I hope you've enjoyed yourselves. I want you to come and be my beasts. You only want to be shown how to be nice and happy, but there are some poor beasts who can't be nice of their own accord. Of course, it's much best to make things so good for the good ones that everybody wants to become good; but if that won't do, then you *have* to make things so bad for the bad ones that nobody wants to stay bad. Now I've got to make things awfully bad for the poor Black Mountain Band, so that they shall be happy afterwards. Will you help me? I want a regiment of Lions (loud cheers from the Lions present), and a regiment of Bears (prolonged applause from the Bears), and a regiment of Rabbits (enthusiastic squeaks). Here are my Captains!' and she held out her hand towards her own body-guard. [94]

At this point the vast audience rose as one beast and waved their paws and shouted:

'We will die for our Queen, Baby Jane!'

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## CHAPTER VII

### BABY JANE'S ARMY

Baby Jane's first thought when she opened her eyes in the early morning was of her army, and she scrambled to her feet and stared before her.

It was a splendid sight. The great line, all shining in the new-risen sun, stretched away from her, regiment after regiment, until it was lost far away in the morning mist, and before each regiment stood its Colonel, casting a long blue shadow behind him.

Cheerful shoutings and the fluttering of many flags in the cool air helped to make Baby Jane feel very elated, and she clapped her hands and laughed, and took several dancing steps. Sammy must have been up very early to marshal the army.

At this moment that youth came galloping up mounted on Edouardo, waving his cap, and, while yet some way off, shouted breathlessly to her: [96]

'Something like an army, isn't it?'

'Oh, Sammy, you are a general!' said Baby Jane. 'I wish I could help more. Perhaps I could disguise myself and go out as a spy while you are teaching the army. But, anyhow, let's all have breakfast, and we will talk as we eat it. Do you know how to drill them?'

'Oh, easy as eating this muffin,'<sup>[1]</sup> said Sammy, who was always quite sure about everything. 'Suppose they are all in a line, doing something; well, you just shout at them, "Ow-row-row, rahee, urra-ub!" and they suddenly do something else.'

'Why not shout in English?' asked Baby Jane.

'What, and let the enemy know what you are going to do next?' said Sammy scornfully. 'Not much!'

'But do the soldiers themselves know what you mean?' the puzzled Baby Jane persisted.

Sammy winked.

'Not a bit of it!' said he. 'When the Colonel shouts, they have got to do *something* all together, it doesn't matter what, and the Colonel has to look as if it was just what he meant.' [97]

'But what is the good of it anyhow?' asked she.

'Well,' said he, 'if they surprise their own Colonel, they're bound to surprise the enemy much more!'

Breakfast being ended, the manœuvres commenced. Baby Jane did not take part herself, but, sitting beneath a palm upon a little knoll, with the deepest interest she watched her regiments



wheel and turn and form into columns and squares before her.

'If it doesn't frighten that Black Mountain Band,' thought she, 'to see my army doing these odd things on the sand, they *must* be brave!' But here her reflections were painfully interrupted.

The second regiment on the right, a little brown regiment, that had been performing brilliantly, though rather noisily, and had just at that moment formed an elegant hollow square, suddenly broke up, and, with deafening yells, piled itself in a heap, like a swarm of bees, upon its Colonel.

Then Mary Carmichael, with a terrified face, came galloping up to Baby Jane, and pulling up on her haunches, panted out the words:

'The Flanagans have mutinied!'

Baby Jane sprang upon her back, and galloped her across the desert straight at the shrieking pile of monkeys. At her approach they fell apart, and leaving their Colonel sitting crushed and forlorn, they rushed at her with a volley of explanations. [98]

'Ah, the spalpeen! He said his poor ould father was a standing disgrace to the regiment, and, as he couldn't look decent on his feet, he'd make him do his drills on his head. And as for his mother, poor ould soul, he's made her a drummer-boy!'

Clearly Patsey had been misusing his military authority to get even with his parents for past thrashings, and it took some time before Baby Jane, holding the bruised Colonel in her arms, could make peace between him and his rebellious regiment. She had to be very severe with them.

'You're not a bit of good as infantry,' she said. 'Just fancy a regiment that ought to be stretched out in a thin red—I mean brown—line, piled in a heap on top of the Colonel! No, you are not infantry any more—you're artillery, and will have to stand in rows and throw cocoa-nuts for cannon-balls.'

At this moment Sammy came up, and he was charmed with the idea.

'What ho!' he cried. 'Splendid! Talk of batteries of four-inch field-guns! Just wait till those Black Mountaineers see our batteries of four-inch field-monkeys!' [99]

It was the Rabbit's regiment of scouts that was being drilled next to the Flanagans, but he allowed them all to 'stand at ease' to watch the disgrace of his friend Patsey, and professed to think their new title exceedingly funny.

'Oh, who'd be a four-inch field-monkey?' he squeaked, and he slapped his knees and laughed till the tears ran down his whiskers.

'Well,' said Baby Jane, turning sharply upon him, 'you seem very pleased with yourself, but what can *your* regiment do?'

The Rabbit dried his tears with his paw. 'Do?' he said shrilly. 'Why, look at this!'

Truly it was magnificent. Squatting still as statues, at the word of command five hundred bunnies cocked their thousand ears in unison. 'Up—down—right—left!'

'And that's nothing,' said the Rabbit calmly; 'they can do the same with their tails!'

'Wonderful!' said Baby Jane. 'And now, as Sammy says that Miss Crocodile's regiment, and the Lion's, and the Bear's have been doing wonderful things, every one has done a good morning's work—' [100]

'Except the four-inch field-monkeys,' interrupted the Rabbit spitefully.

'And drill is over for the day,' went on Baby Jane. 'This afternoon my army shall sit down and keep cool and see a military tournament.'

As to the beginning of this tournament there was a good deal of puzzling and trouble, for the army sent a solemn deputation, headed by Miss Crocodile and Mary Carmichael, to Baby Jane during dinner to pray that proceedings might open with a war-dance.

Now Baby Jane had not the least idea how a war-dance went, and, after a long consultation with Sammy, she had to tell the deputation so.

'Do you know how it goes yourselves?' she asked.

Miss Crocodile said the niggers always did it before they went out collecting missionaries. You jumped up and down and waved sticks and shouted. Here Miss Crocodile made a few shy steps to illustrate her meaning.

'Of course,' said Baby Jane, upon whom a light had dawned. 'An Irish jig! The very thing! I danced it in a play once, and I will show you. Come along. What fun!' [101]

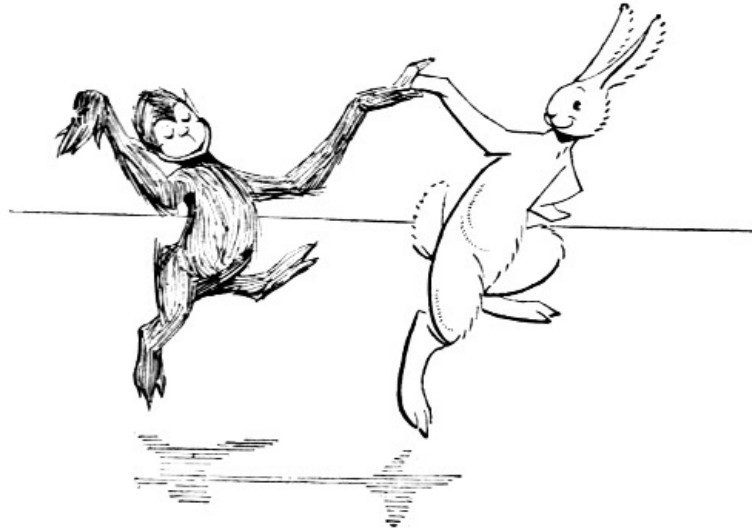
It required but little practice, and, with two pretty hoods for the ladies and a couple of sprigs of blackthorn for the gentlemen, they were presently equipped and ready to dance before the army, which was now spread out in a huge semicircle facing the open desert and the distant Black Mountains. And they might have stepped straight from the fair at Coleraine, for the Lion looked the broth of a boy, and even the Bear threw off his Scottish manner and was for the time a roaring blade; while as for Mary and Miss Crocodile, no saucier colleens ever peeped from

beneath a hood.

Baby Jane, flushed and smiling, holding a bit or frock in each hand, led them into the middle.

'Now,' she whispered over her shoulder, 'one—two—three—whistle!'

Then to the romping air of 'St. Patrick's Day in the Morning' five light figures tripped it gaily up and down, every footfall pat to a note. Now, with a bang and a yell, dancing defiance at one another, the boys met in the middle, each with his lady under his lee. Then, shooting roguish glances right and left, Miss Crocodile and Mary, hand-in-hand, would trip between the warlike ones and take the floor. And the army marked time with whoops that must have echoed in the distant mountains. [102]



**A little mocking measure.**

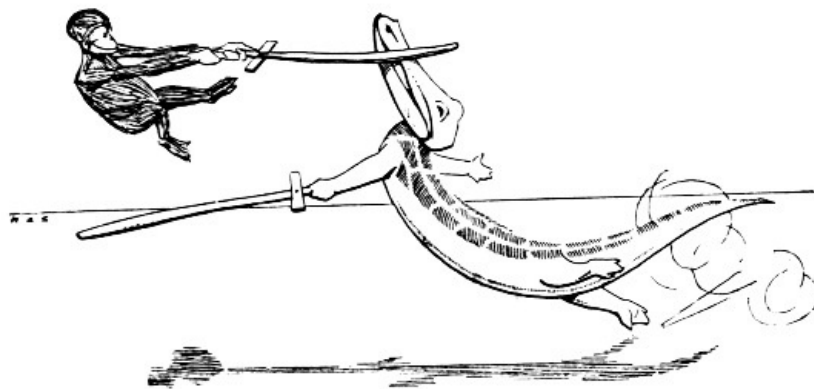
It was glorious—worth a month of life—or at any rate it would have been if the Rabbit and Patsey had not been observed dancing a little mocking measure of their own device about twenty yards from the real dancers.

Now it is a difficult thing to look thoroughly arch and roguish while some one is imitating you, and though Mary and Miss Crocodile struggled fiercely to keep up their saucy smile, they could not help casting an occasional glance of bitterness and rage at the Rabbit and Patsey, who were mincing and curvetting with an artless coquetry twice as winning as their own. [103]

They could barely restrain themselves until the dance had ended in a roar of applause, and then, cutting short their graceful curtsy of acknowledgment in the middle, they sprang after the little beasts, and, with hoods flying out behind, chivied them round and round until they took refuge in the skirts of Baby Jane, who had hardly noticed the mocking dance, and thought that the chivying was merely an innocent romp.

But Miss Crocodile was not to be put off, and assuming a pleasant smile, she went up to Baby Jane and suggested a playful combat with wooden broadswords between herself and Patsey. It seemed rather a good idea, and as Patsey raised no objection, it was arranged to take place at once.

Patsey appeared first in the arena, and there he sat on his sword, looking very small and innocent, like a little brown bumble-bee roosting on a twig. Miss Crocodile soon followed, with a nasty smile on her lips. (A three-inch mouth can display a great deal of nastiness; consider, then, the possibilities of a three-foot mouth!) She wasted no time, and rushing up, swung her sword to knock the bumble-bee off its twig, but as the sword reached Patsey, he fluttered a yard into the air, and, before Miss Crocodile could recover herself, his weapon had whistled twice round his head and landed—*thwack!*—upon her tenderest row of teeth. It was cruelly painful, and Miss Crocodile rolled on the ground and wept aloud, while Patsey skipped chuckling round her, until Baby Jane caught him and cuffed him severely. If he could not play without being rough, she said, he should not play at all. She was very fond of little Patsey, but felt that she must be a stern mother to him. [104]



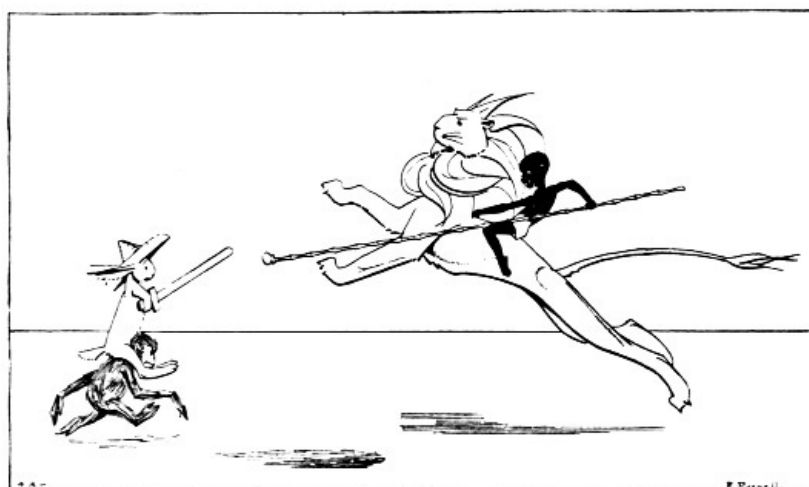
**He fluttered a yard in the air.**

Now the Lion had also observed Patsey and the Rabbit's little mocking dance, so when the Piccaninny, armed with a lance, was mounted on his back to engage the Rabbit, who had a sword and rode pick-a-back on Patsey, he thought it a good opportunity of serving out a little stern justice on that couple. [105]

It was arranged that the Piccaninny and the Rabbit were to charge together from a distance and see which could unhorse the other. The Lion's idea was to take no notice of the sword-and-lance business, but simply to rush at the offending couple, knock them head-over-heels and generally maul them. But the Rabbit also had his notions, and contrived that the course should pass close to a fox-hole, of which there were several around.

'Nothing like arranging your port in case of a storm,' he remarked to Patsey.

Well, the course was cleared and the signal given—'Charge!' With a roar and a rush the Lion came thundering down the line, and, to the admiration of the whole army, the Rabbit went bravely out to meet him. But he was watching the Lion's face keenly, and at the last moment he caught a gleam in his eye. At that instant they were passing the fox-hole, and the Lion was but a yard away. [106]

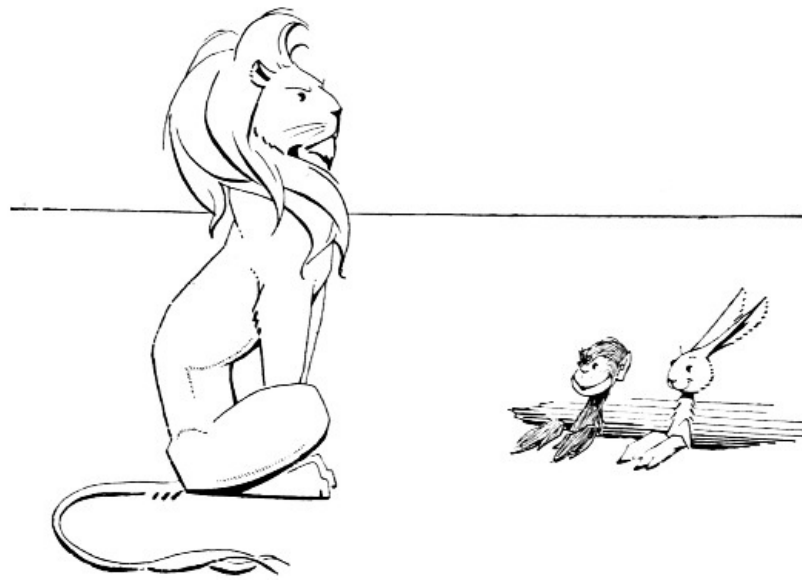


**The Lion came thundering down the line.**

'Down, Monkey!' shrieked the Rabbit, and down the hole they shot together feet foremost. The Lion was astounded at the mysterious disappearance of the couple, and in his struggles to pull up he caught his foot in the Piccaninny's lance, shot that child twenty yards away, and himself came bump on his chin. He got up slowly, trying to retain his dignity, and looked haughtily round.

Two little smiling faces were regarding him from over the edge of the hole. They nodded pleasantly to him. [107]

'How's your Auntie Lou?' asked the Rabbit, as if to break the ice.



**Two little smiling faces were regarding him.**

The Lion had no Auntie Lou, and he stared stonily in front of him without reply. There was a long pause, and then the Rabbit inquired:

'Say, Mister, are you going to be rough if we come up?'

'Yes,' said the Lion, promptly and gravely.

'How many kicks do you reckon to give us?'

[108]

'Ten each,' said the Lion.

'Could you make it seven?'

'No.'

'Eight might suit you?'

'No.'

'How about nine?'

'No!' roared the Lion in a temper.

'Well, now, don't get angry,' said the Rabbit; 'we are only asking for information. We aren't coming up this way at all.' And with that they retired below.

Baby Jane had nothing to say in this affair, for the reason that she was consulting Sammy and the Bear on the very important project of which she had spoken to Sammy earlier in the day.

'You remember how King Alfred went among the Danes disguised as a harper,' she said.

Nobody had the faintest recollection of the incident, but they took her word for it, and she went on:

'Well, I mean to disguise myself and go with you, Bear, to the Black Mountains to try and coax away the less bad beasts that may be there, and to find out all the enemy's plans. I shouldn't be afraid with you, Bear, and Sammy would be left in charge of the army until I came back.'

[109]

'H'm, it might be done,' said the Bear, 'and I know of a little black bearskin not far away that would just cover you, clothes and all.' He did not mention that at the time there was a little black bear still in the skin.

'Well, that's settled; and,' said Baby Jane, 'Mary shall come with us and be our horse.'

It was pitiful to see how Mary's jaw fell on hearing this.

'But—but—but,' she said in a choking voice, 'I want to be a Major-General—and—and—I've got the cocked hat all ready—and—and—and—I've been learning lots of things. Just look here! This is one thing I've learnt.'

And the poor creature went through the motions of preparing to receive cavalry very creditably. But Baby Jane was stern, and in a little while Mary Carmichael, carrying the adventurous couple, was slouching off.

Here the cunning old Bear whispered loudly to Baby Jane, 'Perhaps, after all, perhaps you had better make her a Major-General. She is no good as a horse—can't trot a little bit.'

Mary began to hum loudly to pretend she hadn't heard, but her ears grew very red, and she [110]

began stealthily to quicken her pace until she was slinging out her hoofs in a thundering fourteen-miles-an-hour trot—straight for the enemy's country, the Black Mountains.



**Straight for the enemy's country.**

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## CHAPTER VIII

[111]

### IN THE ENEMY'S CAMP

When they had gone a few miles, the Bear told Mary Carmichael to stop (which she was very glad to do, being breathless and having a bad stitch in her side), and climbing down he walked off gaily and rapidly towards a neighbouring wood.

In a wonderfully short time he came back, carrying over his shoulder a little glossy black bearskin.

Baby Jane danced round him with delight. In a moment she had packed herself and her petticoats into the skin, but she was almost too excited to stand still while the Bear skilfully fastened up the opening—she felt so delightfully safe and cosy, peeping forth at the outer world through the little eye-holes.

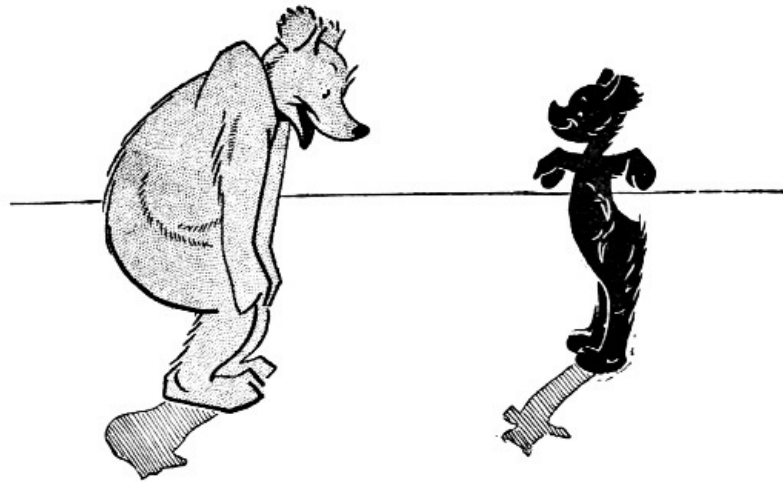
'But how did you get it?' she asked. It was always an unwise question to ask the Bear. However, [112] he did not seem to hear her, but began talking as if to himself in an absent-minded way.



**Baby Jane danced round him with delight.**

'What to do with our boys! Yes, that's a puzzle. Now, there was my nephew Billy. Ah! a bad sort was Billy; his heart was as black as his hide. No sort of good for anything, and so unkind and rude to his poor old Uncle. And yet it was his dear old Uncle that found some use for him!'

You will probably understand why it was lucky that Baby Jane was prevented from asking any more questions by a strange appearance, which altogether turned her thoughts from the little black bearskin. [113]



R.P.

**She was almost too excited to stand still.**

Just as they made Mary kneel down like a camel so that they might settle themselves comfortably upon her back to continue the journey, they heard a loud squeaking and whistling behind them and the patter of galloping feet, and who should pull up alongside but the Rabbit mounted on a fox!

'My eye! What a guy!' was his first remark as he pointed rudely at Baby Jane in her new disguise, and then he stuffed his paw into his mouth as if to stifle his laughter. [114]

'What, you Rab——' cried Baby Jane, but the Rabbit cut her short by clapping one paw to his lips, while he pointed at the fox with the other and frowned heavily. Then he winked, and, craning his neck, whispered in Baby Jane's ear:

'Sh! sh! *He thinks* I'm a wolf!'

'Thinks you're a wolf?'

'That's it,' said the Rabbit calmly. 'I was coming after you and getting pretty tired, when I met him. He looked rather nasty, so I asked him if he had just met a rhinoceros disguised as an ostrich and a lion disguised as a walrus. All my friends were travelling in disguise. He looked more respectful after that, and he asks politely, "And what may you be?"'

'What did you say?' asked Baby Jane.

'Oh,' said the Rabbit lightly, 'I just barked at him and told him that I was a young wolf in disguise, and that he might give me a lift, and look lively about it. And here I am!'

Then he held up his arms to be picked up by Baby Jane; and the Bear, having picked them both up, clambered on to Mary's back. The whole party then moved off, leaving the Fox gazing after them in bewilderment. [115]

'Good-bye, Foxy,' cried the Rabbit, waving his paw over Baby Jane's shoulder. 'I'm a wolf, ain't I? But you wouldn't guess what this is!' (Here he pointed to Mary Carmichael.) 'You might think it was a bony 'bus-horse. But it isn't; it's a hairy antelope in disguise!'

This was too much for the Fox's powers of belief, and it suddenly dawned upon him that the Rabbit had been utterly untruthful from first to last. For the next few minutes he was the wildest animal ever seen, even in that land of wild animals.

After this Baby Jane's cavalcade trotted steadily on, and the Mountains rose higher and higher into the sky before them. It was hard to think that they were inhabited by bad creatures, for they were very beautiful. From rounded foot-hills of olive velvet, embroidered with glowing red-stemmed, black-capped pine trees, broad cliffs flanked by pinnacles, all of black marble veined with white, rose, step by step, to the snow-clad heights piled up against the sky like thunder-clouds passing away. [116]

They had wondered why they had met none of the enemy; and now they saw the reason, for up the foot-hills a never-ending line of beasts was winding among the pine trees and disappearing into a great cleft in a marble cliff. With the Bear leading, and now all on foot, the little party calmly joined in the procession, and such was their air of self-possession that nobody suspected

them in the least. To be sure, Baby Jane was shaking in her bearskin on finding herself walking among these terrible creatures, but she kept close against the Bear. It was Mary and the Rabbit who really were in danger, but the Black Mountain Band evidently had something important on hand and had no thought of eating for the moment.

By-and-bye, keeping in the stream of animals, they passed into the great pointed cleft in the face of the cliff. For some little way it ran like a tunnel, but then it grew higher and wider, how high and how wide they could not tell, but in the dim light from the entrance they could follow huge marble pillars up and up until they were lost in darkness a hundred yards above their heads, and the blackness in the depths of the cavern was faintly jewelled with thousands of pale green eyes —it seemed to be an infinite distance. [117]

Along the wall near the entrance ran a ledge about ten feet high, and up and down this a gigantic Leopard prowled restlessly, as if he were in a cage.

At length, when the stream of shadowy creatures had ceased to flow through the entrance, he came to a stop in the middle of the ledge, and, raising his head, cried in a horrible, snarling voice:

'What news of those tame sheep in the plain?'

'Meaning us!' whispered the Rabbit behind his paw.

'Nobody seems to know anything. I'd better give him a little news myself'; and then, to the horror of Baby Jane, he stood up and snapped his fingers to attract the Leopard's attention. For some moments the Leopard's eye, roving over the dim assembly, did not catch the little figure. The Rabbit gave a shrill whistle between his fingers, and shouted 'Hi, Mister!'

Then the Leopard turned his head haughtily towards the little beast, and the many thousand green eyes in the depths of the cavern also turned slowly altogether upon the impertinent animal, whom no one had eaten merely because he was thought to be the big Bear's supper. [118]

'Here you are!' squeaked the Rabbit, 'extry special news from our own correspondent'; and then he struck a fine attitude, and went on: 'Disguised as a duck-billed platypus, coolly I strolled into the enemy's camp. I thought they were the most trumpery tadpoles that ever I saw until I met their generals. They were ten times worse. First there was that girl Baby Jane, funniest thing you ever saw! Those freckles on her nose, oh my!'

'There are only two,' whispered Baby Jane fiercely, 'and they are little ones!'

'Then there was a Bear. Well, ha, ha! it called itself a Bear. I thought it was a moth-eaten hearthrug come to life. And as for the Horse, her bones stick out so they catch in the creepers and things, as she goes along, and they have to stop every minute to unhook her. But the Rabbit —he's the one bright spot in that shabby lot, a well set up young fellow, and clever as he is good-looking; yet they say that that Baby Jane slaps him cruelly at times.'

'And will slap him twice as cruelly when she gets him outside,' whispered Baby Jane again. [119]

Here the Leopard made an impatient movement.

'How many are there?' he snarled.

'Oh, say half each for the ladies and gentlemen present,' said the Rabbit, affecting to count off the steady green eyes with his paw; 'and they are just ready for the table!'

'That horse—think of grilled bones, your lordship, a splendid lot of bones for grilling she has! And that Bear, fat as pork. Think of the crackling! But mind that Rabbit. Fried, fricasseed, roast or raw, don't you have nothing to do with him. He lives on cod liver oil and crumpets, and tastes even worse!'

'To-morrow I give a banquet in the plain!' roared the Leopard, and in answer, from the depths of the cavern came a great juicy, 'Thlap, thlap!' of smacking lips.

'Drop in at tea-time!' said the Rabbit. 'They can't move then. You should just see the amount they put away. That Horse always has six cups!'

'I never did!' said Mary.



**Baby Jane slaps him cruelly at times.** [120]

There was an ominous silence. Baby Jane trembled in her bear-skin as she saw the Black Leopard's glittering green eyes fixed upon the little band. The Rabbit then seemed to see that there was something wrong. But it was too late! It was done! They were betrayed!

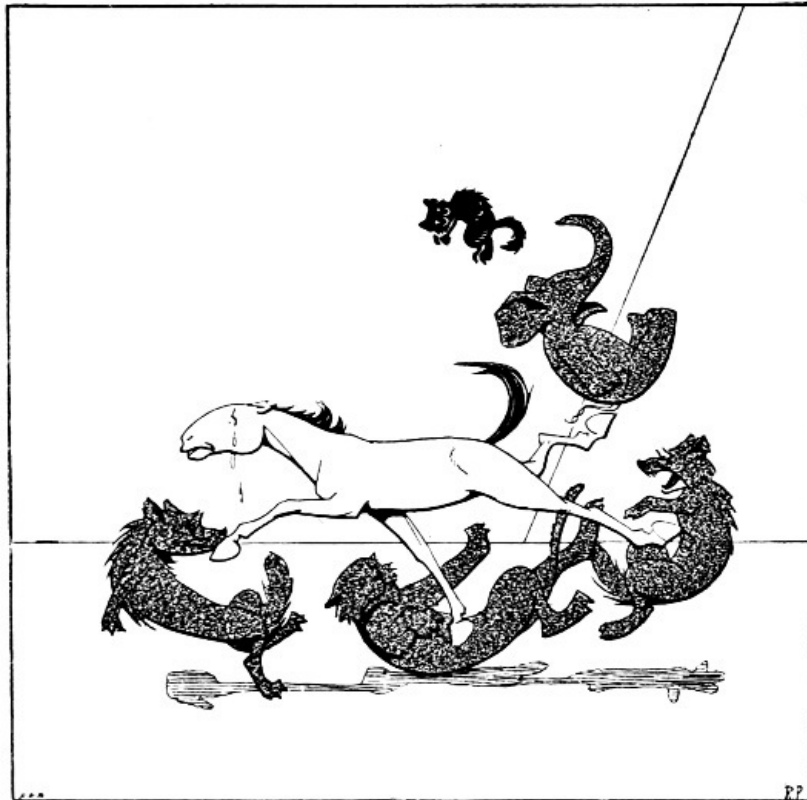
## THE RESCUE

A dreadful stillness fell upon the dim assemblage, and the thousand green eyes turned together slowly upon Mary and her comrades. But the eyes of the Leopard were more dreadful than all. Grinning savagely, with his head stretched out towards them and his ears flat back, he glared at them for some minutes as if about to spring.

Suddenly he uttered a yelling laugh that echoed a hundred times among the distant pillars of the cave.

'They are not spies,' he whined mockingly. 'The fat Bear and the thin Horse have come to enter my army; and so they shall to-morrow at breakfast-time. But I have been a fool, and for a penance I will eat that ill-flavoured Rabbit—*now!*'

'First catch your Rabbit,' said that animal, and, nimbly dodging the heavy paws that slapped at him, he vanished through the entrance. [122]

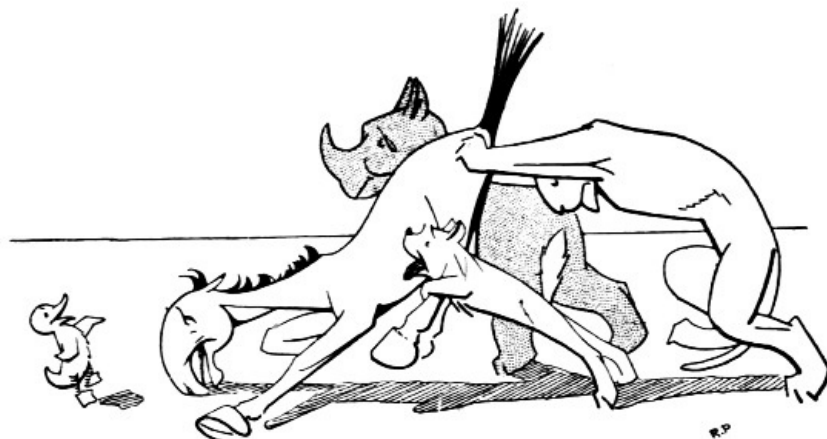


**Kicked savagely at all who tried to seize her.**

The Leopard was in a foaming rage.

'Seize the spies,' he howled. 'Away with them to the high camp.'

At that moment the awfulness of her mistake dawned upon Mary, and she set up a loud 'Boo-hoo!' and, still weeping, struggled and kicked savagely at all who tried to seize her—jumped in the air, and kicked with all four legs at once. But in the end she was firmly clutched, and, with a strong beast holding each leg and three more pushing behind, she was hurried after the others. The big Bear had gone quietly, for fear of





damage to the little black  
bear whom he carried  
tight in his arms.

**She was hurried after the others.**

Then, to the melancholy accompaniment of Mary's wailing—and she gave an awful yell whenever they pushed her on to her nose—surrounded by a glowering throng of wolves and hyænas and hippopotamuses, they were hustled upwards in the deepening dusk by steep ravines and precipice paths, until, through a narrow pass, they entered a wide grassy plain, walled on three sides by encircling spurs, and on the fourth by the steep snow-slope of the mountain summit itself. [124]

From the snow-slope a stream sprang, and twisted through the plain until it slid, deep, transparent, ice-green, down beside the entrance path.

After the prisoners poured the whole of the Black Mountain Army, who, having set a guard at the entrance, all lay down to sleep, covering the plain closely with their dark forms.

Baby Jane was usually a hungry child, and liked sometimes to fall asleep thinking of breakfast, but now she did not like the idea at all. It was horrid to think that she was now, as it were, a little sausage waiting on the pantry shelf; indeed, the idea was so uncomfortable that she could not sleep, but nestled close to the Bear and watched the stars come out from behind the faintly glowing snow peak.

But what had happened to the Rabbit? If only he could come and take a message to her army! He would not leave her of his own accord, but would wait about near her. [125]

At that moment she felt a curious heaving of the ground beneath her back; it was like a tiny earthquake. What could it be? She moved away from that spot, and with her hand felt the earth rise in a little mound higher and higher. Then the mound divided, there was a sound of a sneeze, and the Rabbit's head emerged. He brushed the earth off his ears and whiskers, and then remarked, complacently:

'If you know a rabbit who thinks he can burrow, fetch him along, and I'll teach him what proper burrowing's like. Down I went just outside the entrance, and up I come here!'

Baby Jane was so overcome with delight that she hugged the Rabbit's head in her arms and nearly smothered him with kisses. Then she quietly wakened the Bear and Mary, and the whole party held a whispered council of war.

After sitting with a puckered forehead for some minutes, Mary sagely suggested:

'Of course, all we've got to do is to burrow back after the Rabbit.'

The Rabbit sniggered behind his paw:

'I'd like to see you burrowing about in a hedgerow, you beauty. Fancy a warren of cab-horses!' [126]

'You mustn't all be silly,' said Baby Jane. 'You won't laugh when you find yourself being laid for breakfast to-morrow morning. Run, Rabbit, as hard as you can, and tell my army to march here faster than ever an army marched before.'

But even at this desperate moment that wild Rabbit must play his pranks, and, instead of at once departing down his hole, he went loping off into the darkness among the sleeping beasts.

'I must wish my little Leopard good-night,' he explained over his shoulder as he went.

In a few minutes they heard a shrill voice at some distance singing:

'Bye, Baby Bunting.  
Didums go a-hunting?  
Didums chase a rabbit?  
Didums try to grab it?  
Didums want a rabbit-skin  
To wrap his baby tootsies in?'

Then there came a fierce growl and a rush, and the Rabbit shot past them, into his hole, like a flash of lightning.

Long hours of waiting followed. In thought Baby Jane saw the Rabbit racing furiously mile after mile across the dark desert, growing tired and panting till his heart was nearly bursting; but galloping, galloping on. Now his little muscles gave out utterly, and yet he went galloping on—with his soul. At last, with eyes growing dim, he saw a palm slender and black against the starlit sky, and round it wide dark shadows—the sleeping regiments of Baby Jane's army. [127]

Then, it might be, he gathered his last shred of strength for that last mile, and came galloping desperately in among the startled beasts, to fall head over heels as if he were shot dead.

Then Baby Jane fancied she heard Sammy and the colonels calling out their troops in proper style, and a moment later there was a dull, steady sound, as of the sea on a distant shore or of five thousand galloping beasts. In her imagination this sound came steadily on. What! *Was* it imagination? She had been fancying so long she could hardly tell. For a long minute she strained her ears eagerly. Then a faint night air came up from the plain, and suddenly the sound grew real

and distinct. *It was no fancy.* Her army was coming!

The others had heard it too, and they huddled together, hoping that none of the Black Mountain band would wake and hear it. No one stirred. [128]

'The sound has stopped!' whispered Mary.

'They have reached the foot of the mountain, and are climbing,' whispered the Bear.

With her heart thumping in her chest, Baby Jane listened without breathing. The silence was as dead as if the two armies upon the mountain were boulders of its own rock. Minute after minute went by....

A deafening roar rang out. The sound of bodies hurled to the ground. A rushing sound—and the Lion came flying out of the darkness. He seized Baby Jane in his mouth, and, turning sharp round, raced for the pass.

But now the whole Black Mountain army was awake, roaring, yelling, screaming, trumpeting, and the Lion found a close rank of them barring his way. With poor Baby Jane over his shoulder, he flung himself against them. He went hurtling through, and the dark pass was open before him; but, alas, even as he reached it he stumbled on to his knees. A hundred great paws and talons had struck at him as he went through, and he was broken somewhere. [129]

But instantly he got up again, and pushing Baby Jane behind him in the narrow path, with a cliff on one side and a deep stream on the other, he faced the Black Mountain army alone. He had far outstripped his own regiments, and the Bear and Mary had been lost in the scrimmage.

In twos and threes the horrid beasts of the enemy flung themselves upon him. To Baby Jane, crouching behind him, every fight was alike, and she could not count them. There was a silence, a threefold snarl, and a scrambling rush; and then the Lion rose high and struck as many blows as there were assailants. At each blow the rock shook on which they stood, and the walls of the ravine rang with the deafening crash. Each damaged beast was swept into the deep stream and carried away. But out of many hundred assailants one now and then would get in a blow, and the Lion himself was damaged and broken in many places.

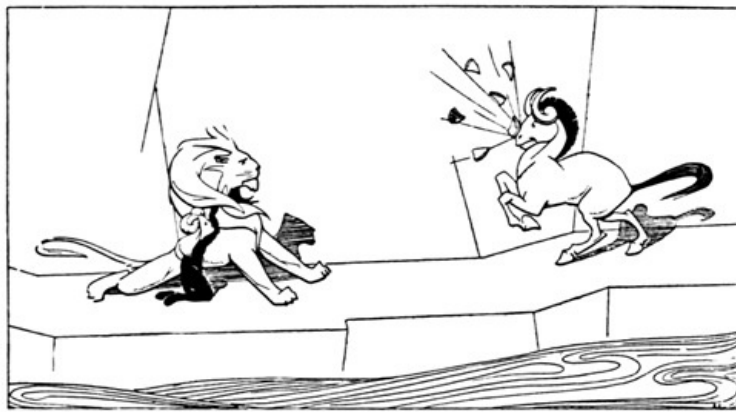
Suddenly, above the sound of fighting, Baby Jane heard the wicked yell of the Leopard. At once the lesser assailants all drew off, and, peeping round the Lion, she saw the lord of the Black Mountain Band slouching across the now open space towards him. The Lion watched him steadily, but he kept his head sideways as if he did not know there was anything before him. In this way he came within a few yards of the Lion, and there paused to lick his shoulder. But then, with frightful suddenness, he turned and launched himself at his foe. The Leopard was fresh, and the Lion was tired and damaged; but the Leopard had nothing but his muscles and his horrid rage, the Lion had a great heart. For a few moments they grappled; then the Lion managed to shake himself free, caught the huge Leopard behind the neck, and, with a mighty effort, slung him forward high into the air. You might have counted four slowly before you heard him crash to the ground. Baby Jane did not hear that horrible sound—she pushed her fingers into her ears, and shut her eyes so that she might not see what happened when he fell.



**Patsey's artillery ...**

Then the monotonous fights began again, and the Lion, in spite of his courage, was growing feeble. In a little while they would both be seized and eaten. The sky overhead was now growing a pearly grey, the first sign of a day they might never see, and their hearts were growing chilly, when suddenly from the cliffs overhead a clattering hail of cocoa-nuts rattled upon the skulls of the astonished foe, and a loud hurroo filled their two hearts with comfort—Patsey's artillery had come into action! [131]

But wolves and rhinoceroses are not to be driven off with cocoa-nuts, and again the foe pressed forward. Again, in spite, of the friendly shouts and heavy fire of the field-monkeys overhead, Baby Jane's heart sank within her. Would it not be better to fall into the river, where you might swim, than into the inside of a rhinoceros, where you certainly could not? As she gazed at the stream it struck her that it had a strange, dark, streaky look. Then she gave a great start, for an eye had slowly risen above the water and solemnly winked at her. It was Miss Crocodile leading her regiment stealthily up the stream. [132]



**... had come into action.**

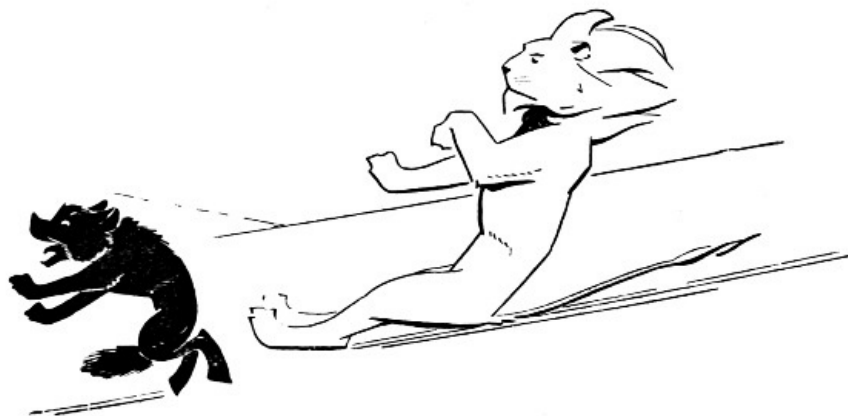
The eye disappeared, and the next that was seen of Miss Crocodile was at a point where the river ran through the densest masses of the enemy. There, all in a line, as if worked by one machine, a hundred crocodile heads rose above the bank, seized, each of them, the nearest leg, and disappeared with their prey under the water. This manoeuvre was repeated three times with beautiful precision before the dazed Black Mountaineers had the sense to rush from the river bank. At last the Lion, now broken in every breakable place, had rest, for Baby Jane was safe. [133]

But only safe for the time being, for the enemy were still in great force and desperate with rage. Indeed, even now they were gathering at the foot of the great snow-slope for a last charge upon the Lion and the crocodiles. But none of them had looked up at the crowning ridge of that slope. There they would have seen a long dark line standing out against the paling sky—it was the entire brigade of lions and bears, under Sammy! They had missed the path that led into the plain, and now, having reached the very crest of the mountain, at last saw the foe beneath them. The Black Mountaineers were at that very instant preparing to charge the devoted band in the entrance of the pass. Not a second was to be lost.

'Sit!' shouted Sammy. 'Prepare to coast! Go!' And with that word the whole brigade went sliding down the snow-slope in a dense line.

'Sh—sh—sh—sh!' (But I cannot 'shish' loud enough to represent three thousand beasts coming down a snow-mountain on their tails!)

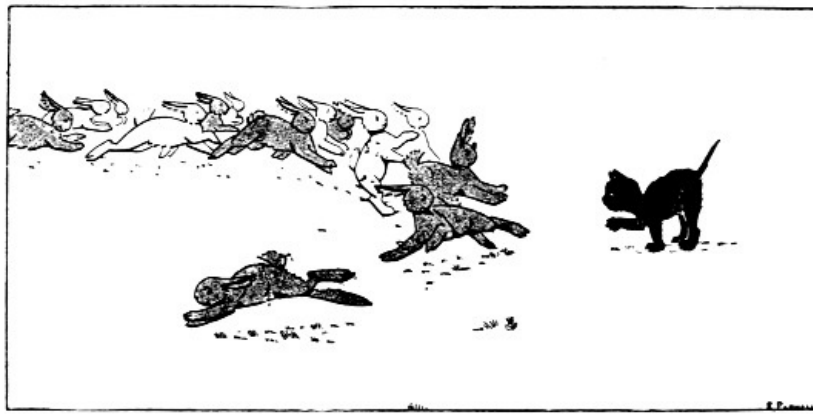
Gathering speed as they went until they were whistling downwards through the air like a living hailstorm, they struck the Black Mountain army from behind with an awful bump, and sent them flying headlong on their noses. Before those wretched creatures could regain their feet a true-hearted beast was sitting on the head of each. The battle was over. There was no longer a Black Mountain army! [134]



**They struck the Black Mountain army from behind.**

At the moment of victory, from the middle of the field, as if by magic, up poured the regiment of rabbits, led by their gallant colonel. (He had been waiting at his hole until that moment arrived.) They wheeled smartly into line.

'Charge!' cried the Colonel, and with a hurricane of squeaks they swept across the field. Unluckily they met a baby leopard in their course, but with great presence of mind they turned about and charged the other way. [135]



**They met a baby leopard in their course.**

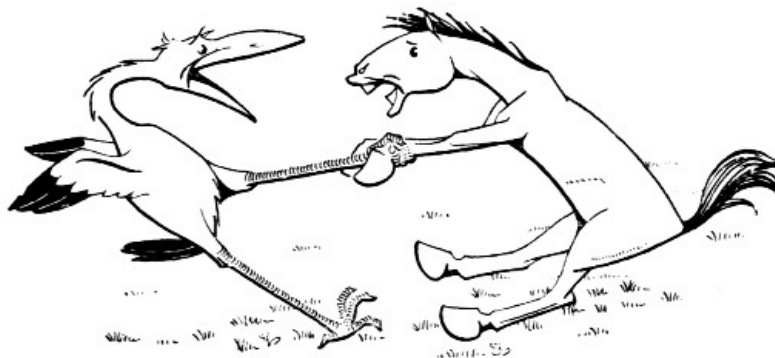
This was a fortunate change of plan, for in a far corner they found Mary and the Bear tussling with a gnu and a stork, each couple gripping the other by the wrists (so to speak) and claiming them as prisoners.

At a safe distance the Rabbit halted his regiment, and squeaked in a loud voice:

'In the Queen's name, I arrest you all—for brawling. Come with me!'

The unreasonableness of this announcement for a moment stunned the four fighters; then the impertinence of it struck them even more strongly, and they *did* come with him—that is to say, he and his regiment ran for dear life, and they ran after him. [136]

Thus, followed by the four frantic beasts, he rushed into the middle of Baby Jane's army, squeaking triumphantly, 'Victory! Victory! Two comrades rescued! Two prisoners taken!' Luckily the cheers of the army drowned the heated explanations of Mary and the Bear.



**Mary and the Stork.**

And now Baby Jane, no longer a black bear, but a pretty little girl again, stood with one arm round the neck of the broken Lion, and all her loving beasts around her, like a queen before her conquering army. And the morning sun, looking through the pass, gilded her locks, and made a crown of them, and, for her Majesty to walk upon, laid a golden carpet across the cool, shaded grass. [137]

Down the golden carpet she came, her people flocking after her, through the pass, and out into the open morning upon the mountain side, where the sun made everything beautiful and comfortable.

---

**CHAPTER X**

[138]

**THE FINISH**

In the warmth of the sun upon the mountain side anger and fear evaporated, and the morning breeze blew away all memory of that horrid night.

Every one's spirits rose sky-high. 'Come along!' cried Baby Jane. 'Breakfast.' And the Queen, her court, and the army took hands and skipped to a dancing tune all the way down the mountain. The very prisoners under escort, even the crossdest camel—though they tried to look proud and cold—could not resist a little sulky hop between each step; and the damaged Lion, riding pick-a-

back on the Bear, joggled gaily up and down till he nearly upset his steed.

Upon the velvety slope of the foot-hills that ran out into the flat white desert the breathless multitude all sat down to breakfast. Of course, the Black Mountain beasts had to pretend they did not like vegetarian fare; but, for all that, they gobbled in a way that shocked the well-brought-up pupils of Baby Jane, especially the Rabbit—in fact, that creature kept up a continual flow of shrill reproof—'Small mouthfuls!' 'Shut your mouth!'—and rapped all the knuckles he could reach with a long stick when they were stretched rudely for food, until Baby Jane boxed his ears and told him to mind his own business. [139]

When they had all finished and were brushing the crumbs from their laps, Baby Jane thought it a good time to speak seriously to them.

'I *am* so glad you're all good now,' she said. 'Do you know, even when I was quite little I always thought some of you *looked* so nice and thoughtful in your cages; and as you don't know how to *pretend*, of course you must *really* be nice if you could only be understood and taught better.

'But I really never thought that all you great wild animals would listen to a little girl; and yet, after all, it has come true! Oh, there *is* something in the world besides fighting and crying. Poor dears, you shall know it now. I and my old friends the Lion and the others know such a lot of fun, and we will teach it to you. [140]

'And if any of you *aren't* good,' she couldn't help adding to herself, 'we'll teach you something nasty,' for she did not sincerely like the look of the rhinoceroses and hippopotamuses. 'Come along,' she cried aloud, forgetting her suspicions. 'Now let us have a dance.'

And with that she and her friends, who were bursting with pride at the idea of helping to teach, came skipping down the slope, and began arranging the beasts for a sort of country dance.

'Choose your partners,' cried Baby Jane, 'and don't be shy!'

Of course her little voice was never heard by the more distant creatures; her messages were passed from mouth to mouth, and it was odd to hear a gruff buffalo roaring in the distance—

'Choose your partners, and don't be shy!'

At first no one would venture, and it was the Rabbit who gave them a lead. He walked up to the tallest lady giraffe he could find, he did, crooked his arm to lead her out, and—

'May I have the pleasure?' said he, as bold as brass.

But right away up there she did not hear him, so, growing impatient, he grasped her leg, and up he went hand over hand. Then he proceeded up her neck, and when, after five minutes' climbing, his face was level with hers, he squeaked at the top of his voice— [141]

'May—I—have—the—pleasure?'

The giraffe started violently.

'Oh, my gracious!' she said. 'I thought it was a beetle running up me!'

And then, unluckily, the Rabbit's whiskers tickled her nose, and she sneezed him twenty yards away on to the ground.

'That's the worst of these tall girls,' said he. 'They make a man feel so small.' And he picked himself up and went and danced with a merry little marmoset.

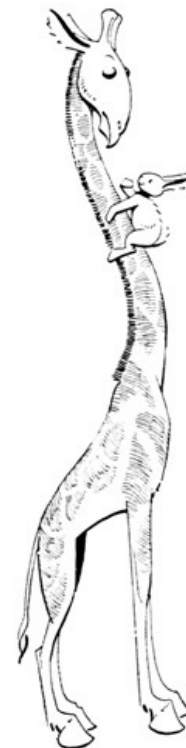
The Bear danced with a pleasant but homely zebra, and Mary with an ostrich, with whom she flirted scandalously. Sammy said he was not a dancing man, and, quietly departing, he loaded his barrow with oranges; and later on, sad to relate, drove a roaring trade among the poor heated beasts, taking all their little valuables in exchange for his goods. He was not selfish, simply a born man of business. However, you can imagine he took marvellous good care not to come near Baby Jane. [142]

When the last nervous gnu had led out his bashful bustard the dance began. Whichever way Baby Jane turned she looked down long lines of swaying dancers with light feet leaping all in time—it made her head swim with excitement; and the tune of the whistling rabbits came lilting and trilling across the plain, and filled her heart with glee.

She had been only watching the fun to keep her poor bandaged Lion company, but her feet were twitching to be off. She glanced at him, and found that he was glancing at her.

**'May—I—have—the—pleasure?'**

'Come along!' said he suddenly; and the next instant they were dancing as if for dear life. And,



strange to say, though the Lion's bandages all slipped off, his bones remained quite straight. So wonderful was the air of this land and so splendid his constitution that they had mended themselves already! [143]

The puffing of that crowd when it at last came to a stop sounded like a stationful of shunting engines. They were all very hot, and also very thirsty.

'Let's race for the river,' cried Baby Jane.

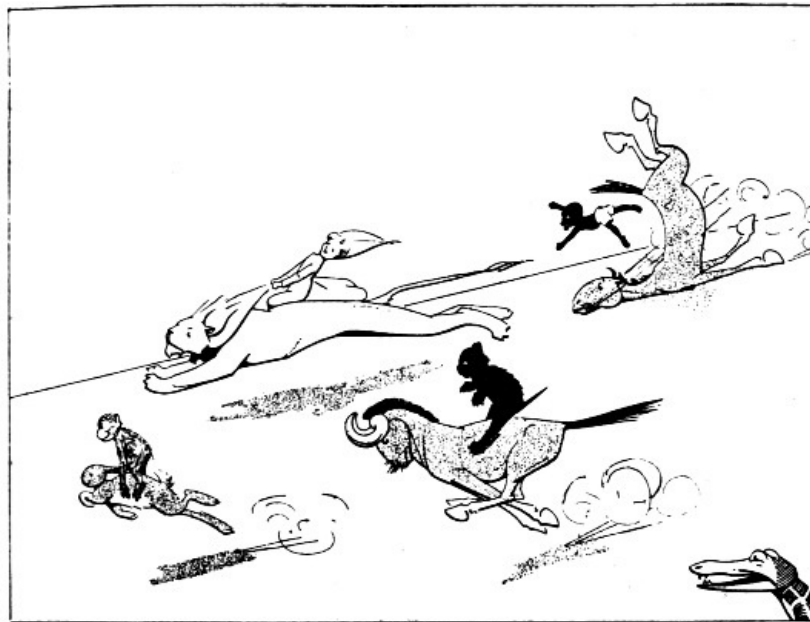
Then the Lion tossed her on to his back, and half of the others having got on the other half's backs—sometimes two beasts each tried to get on to the other's back at the same time—the whole army started off at a tearing gallop.

Miss Crocodile led for a short distance, for she was wonderfully quick on her legs, and had rather meanly refused to carry any one. After a while, inch by inch, the Lion, who was the fastest creature on that desert, overhauled and passed her.

'Anyhow, I've beaten that Rabbit!' she screamed. 'He thinks he's a regular race-horse.'

'And so he is,' said that creature, jumping off her own tail, where he and Patsey had been riding unnoticed. 'Why, just look at this!'

And with that, being fresh as paint, he sailed away from her, and left her gasping all the rude things she could think of after him. [144]



**She tripped on to her chin.**

Of course the Lion and Baby Jane came in first, but the Rabbit and Patsey were second. Mary Carmichael would have been third, but she tripped on to her chin and grazed it badly, and was passed by a little black panther riding a gnu.

When they had all refreshed themselves, in high delight with the pleasure Baby Jane had given them, they swarmed round the foot of a hillock, where she stood beneath a palm that hung its boughs like a canopy over her, looking up at her and waiting for more fun. [145]

Suddenly the Lion came out of the crowd, and, followed by the other friends, rushed half-way up the slope towards her; then, turning to the great multitude, he swung aloft a cocoa-nut goblet and roared in a voice that echoed among the mountains—

'A health to her Majesty!'

Surely never before had human child seen the sight that followed! Ten thousand wild animals—fifty 'Zoos' let loose—crowding nearly to the horizon, flung up their paws and roared her name with one tremendous voice.

. . . . .

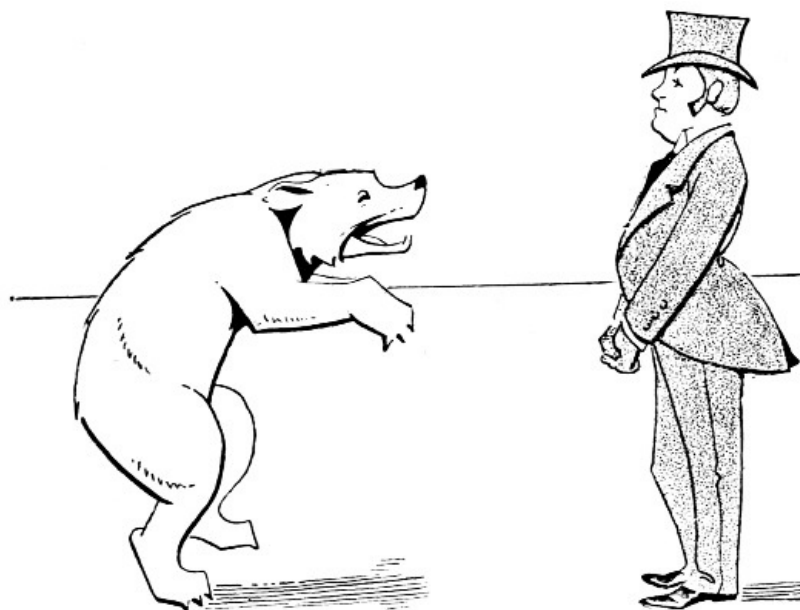
It was ever so: at the moment of triumph comes the fall, and the royal Queen becomes the no-account nursery child.

Before the last echo of that great shout had died away among the distant cliffs an agitated animal came pushing through the crowd with the tidings that a fat man was coming along from the eastward. With one accord the whole company ran out to have a look at him. [146]

There he was—a stout, stately man, pacing soberly over the desert; and at the sight of him Baby

Jane cried in a tone of bitter annoyance—

'Why, it's Markham!'



**'Why, it's Markham!'**

Then, after standing for a moment with face bowed down, trying to restrain her tears, she rushed behind the Lion and the Bear, and, crouching between them, burst into loud and decidedly unqueenlike weeping. [147]

'Why do they send for me?' she sobbed, 'just when everything has come right, and I am having such fun and have grown so fond of my beasts?'

Her two big friends were much disturbed by her grief. 'Oh, don't cry, please, don't cry,' they said, and tried to dry her eyes with a corner of her own frock. 'We aren't very hungry, but, if you like, we will try and manage him.'

In the meanwhile Mr. Markham, the butler (for such he was), was equally upset.

'Mercy on us!' he said, 'what mischief will that child come into next? There she is, now, just going to be eaten up by roaring lions, as sure as I'm alive!'

But he did not seem sure of being alive very long, for he found himself in a square—or as near it as could be got by one naturally formed in a circle—and prepared for his last dinner party.

After a little while, seeing that the terrible beasts did not seem immediately inclined to dine on him, and that Miss Jane was actually hiding among them, his natural self-possession returned to him.

'Miss Jane! Miss Jane!' he called, speaking slowly and with dignity, 'your mamma wishes you to come home at once. She is very vexed with you being out so long—and without your hat, too! And I don't think she would at all like your playing with strange animals.' [148]

'Who's a strange animal?' cried Mary Carmichael sharply.

'Oh, no offence, no offence,' said the butler, making a stiff little bow, 'but my instructions is that the young lady is to come home at once. Your mamma says,' he went on slowly, addressing Baby Jane, 'that she has allowed you to spend your holidays where you please, but you should have been home when lessons began again. They are looking for you everywhere. Peter has gone to Peru, and Miss McColl is in the Western Hebrides. But I said to Mrs. Cook, "When young ladies who is as fond of lions and bears as our Miss Jane goes travelling, those who aren't quite devoid of intellect will know where to find them. Miss Jane is in Africa."'

'I suppose I must go,' said Baby Jane, with dismal little sniffs for commas. 'Oh, my dear beasts, what lovely times I have had with you! I will come back; oh yes, I will come back, or you shall come to me, and we will all live together in a cottage in the country and have great times and astonish all the neighbours. Oh, send me a message by the Swallows—I know they come over the sea from here—if ever you want me badly.' [149]

She patted Miss Crocodile, and kissed the Piccaninny once on his forehead; then she put her arms round the neck of the Lion, and of the Bear, and the Rabbit and Patsey, and kissed them twenty times, and then walked unsteadily away towards Mr. Markham.

He in the meanwhile had been in close conference with Sammy, Mary, and Edouardo, who had all applied for situations in Baby Jane's household, and he had promised to recommend them—Sammy and Edouardo to help the gardener, and Mary as a 'stylish horse to draw a victoria'—as

she described herself.

Then, with Baby Jane and Sammy in the barrow, and Markham riding Mary, the little party wended its way back towards the tame ordinary world.

When Baby Jane last saw her well-beloved beasts they were standing upon a knoll like a row of black statues against the setting sun.

'Be very good. I'll come back soon!' she cried. And they answered like an echo—

[150]

'Come back soon!'

. . . . .

Now, you may wonder that Baby Jane's mother should allow so young a person to spend her holidays where and how she chose, but you will agree with me that if all parents were as liberal-minded there would be many exciting adventures to relate. For instance, if you were given this liberty, what would you do?

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## FOOTNOTES:

[1] The fruit of the *Palma muffinifera*.

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## TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE:

Inconsistencies in spelling and hyphenation have been retained from the original.

Punctuation has been corrected without note.

Obvious typographical errors have been corrected as follows:

Page 101: *or* changed to *of*

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\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BABY JANE'S MISSION \*\*\*

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