

Janie's Bouquet

Lucy Maud Montgomery
1907

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Janie's Bouquet

L. M. Montgomery.

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Janie was down in the garden behind the sweet-pea trellis . . . crying! It was not often Janie cried, but when she did . . . if it was summer time . . . she always hid behind the sweet-pea trellis and had it out. Nobody could see her there until it was all over, and the sweet peas were usually splendid comforters. They were always so bright and light-hearted that they simply cheered small girls up in spite of themselves.

But even the sweet peas could not comfort Janie this time; she didn't even want to see them, they looked so provokingly happy. They had never been disappointed in the dearest wish of their hearts; why, sweet peas simply did not know what trouble was!

Dear knows how long Janie would have sat there and cried if Aunt Margaret had not found her out. Perhaps Aunt Margaret, from an upstairs window of her house next door, had seen a small disconsolate figure behind the sweet peas; but that is neither here nor there; Janie thought that Aunt Margaret had just happened along.

"Why, what is the matter, Janie-girl?" asked Aunt Margaret.

"O, Aunt Magsie, I'm so—so—d-d-disappointed," sobbed Janie. "O, I am sure I shall never get over it."

"Tell me all about it, dearie," said Aunt Margaret sympathetically.

"Papa was going to Raleigh to-morrow . . . with Aunt Ethel, and they were going to take me. I've never been to town, Aunt Magsie, but that isn't what I'm crying about. It is because I wanted to see Miss Edna so much. You don't know Miss Edna, Auntie, 'cause you didn't live in Hexham last summer, but she is a teacher in the city and she boarded in Hexham last summer in her vacation . . . right across there at old Mrs. Fraser's. She was just lovely, Aunt Magsie; we were the most intimate friends. She was going to come again this summer, but she can't because she's sick in the hospital. And that is why I wanted to go to Raleigh, 'cause papa said he would take me to see her. And now papa can't go and of course I can't either, 'cause Aunt Ethel isn't coming back. O, I'm so disappointed that I just can't feel cheered up."

Aunt Margaret smiled as she patted the curly head of her little nine-year-old niece.

"It's too bad, sweetness. But never mind. I'll tell you something to do. Pick a nice sweet bouquet of your very nicest, sweetest flowers and send it to Miss Edna. Aunt Ethel will take it . . . she has to spend four hours in Raleigh. Perhaps you might write a little note to go with it, too."

Janie jumped up smiling through tear-stains.

"O, Aunt Magsie, you're a splendid hand to think of things. I hope I'll be as clever as you when I grow up. That is just what I'll do. I'll send Miss Edna the loveliest bouquet I can pick and I'll write the note, too. I can't write very well and my spelling isn't very good, but I know Miss Edna won't mind that.

She's as good at understanding as you are, Aunt Magsie."

On the afternoon of the next day two of the hospital doctors were anxiously discussing the case of a patient in Ward Three.

"I'm not satisfied," one of them was saying. "She isn't making the progress she should. The operation was successful and there is no reason why she shouldn't recover rapidly; but there seems to be a lack of vitality. I should say the girl doesn't want to live . . . doesn't seem to have any interest in living, in fact. If she can't be roused soon there is no hope for her. Such a case is the hardest we have to deal with. When nature refuses to aid us we can do very little. The girl is dying simply because she isn't trying to live."

Meanwhile, Edna Bruce was lying on her cot with closed eyes and a listless white face. She felt, O, so tired; she didn't care whether she got better or not. There was nothing to get better for . . . there was nobody who cared whether she lived or died. She was quite alone in the big city where she had not lived long enough to have made any friends. No, she didn't care; she was too tired and lonely to want to live; it wasn't worth while.

Presently one of the nurses came to her. "Miss Bruce, here is a bouquet for you. It was left by a lady a few moments ago."

Miss Bruce opened her eyes to see a lovely bouquet of pink and white sweet peas . . . a bouquet that suddenly recalled to her mind a big, old-fashioned garden in which she had spent many happy hours in the summer of a year ago, and a little blue-eyed, curly-haired maiden with whom she had had many an interesting chat. A new light replaced the languid wistfulness of her eyes as she opened and read the little note that came with it.

"My dearest Miss Edna," it ran in Janie's rather uncertain handwriting, "I wanted so much to go in and see you, but I couldn't because papa has so much bus'ness. You know bus'ness is a very important thing and has to be attended to. I went out and cried behind the sweet peas when I couldn't go. But Aunt Magsie said to send you some flowers, and I thought it would be nice too. I picked them all off my own sweet peas. Mother has lots more and hers are bigger, but I wanted to give you some of my very own because I love you so much, Miss Edna. I'm so sorry you're sick and I want you to get better right away. I pray for you every night and lots of times through the day when I think of it. You promised to come and see me this summer and you must get well and keep your promis', because you told me that people ought always to keep a promis', and Aunt Magsie says so, too. Good-bye with ever so much love. Yours respectkfully,

Miss Janie Miller."

Miss Edna wiped the tears from her eyes with her thin white fingers. But she was smiling. Something glad and happy stirred in her heart. Somebody did care . . . somebody loved her . . . somebody thought of her. She must get well;

she wanted to get well and go back to work and visit that dear old garden again. After all, life was worth living . . . worth striving for. The hopeless, indifferent look was quite gone from her face.

A few days afterwards the same doctor was talking of the same patient. "She's coming on all right. Will be as well as ever shortly. She seemed to rouse herself all at once and take an interest in life again and that was all that was necessary. It was one of those cases where everything depends on the patients themselves."

Before the summer ended Miss Edna had redeemed her "promise," for she spent a fortnight in Hexham before going back to work. She and Janie had delightful times together and Janie learned to her delight and astonishment the part her flowers had played in Miss Edna's recovery.

"O," she said happily, "I'm so glad that I have an Aunt Magsie. She suggested it, you know. It's a splendid thing to have an Aunt Magsie in a family."

"Yes; and it's a splendid thing to have a little girl with a warm, loving heart in a family, too," said Miss Edna with a kiss.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

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