

# JOY MEREDITH

BY

DORA OLIVE THOMPSON



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**MEMORIES**

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

LIZZIE ANNE  
A DEALER IN SUNSHINE  
ADELE IN SEARCH OF A HOME



OF ALL BOOKSELLERS

# JOY MEREDITH

*by*  
Dora Olive Thompson

Author of "A Dealer in Sunshine,"  
"Adele in Search of a Home,"  
"Lizzie Anne," etc.



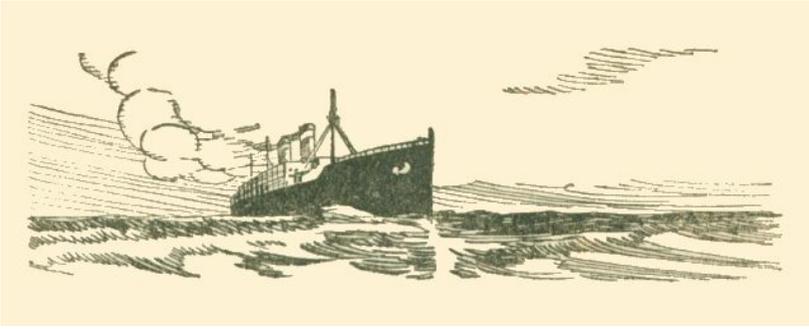
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# JOY MEREDITH

## CHAPTER ONE THE MAGIFFINS AT HOME

**T**he little Magiffins were all a-quiver with excitement. It was so astonishing as to be almost incredible. They faced their mother across the supper-table and—as Billy Magiffin put it—“listened hard with both ears!”

“But, ma,” it was Alice-Marie, her china-blue eyes wide and eager, “tell her not to come. Tell her we don’t want her!”

“Tell her,” this from Benjamin, “we don’t want any more girls”—he glanced somewhat contemptuously at his sisters—“tell her we’ve enough of them now. If she’d been a boy it’d have been different.”

“I can’t.” Mrs. Magiffin’s high-pitched voice was sharp. “She’s coming, I told you. She’s on the ocean now.”

Billy Magiffin, a round-faced boy of nine or thereabouts, breathed hard and stuck his hands deep into his pockets. “Thrillinger and thrillinger!” he assured

himself.

But Mother Magiffin was quite evidently experiencing no pleasurable thrill over the prospect. She glared accusingly across the table at her husband. “I don’t see why the child should be foisted on to us, just because you happen to be her mother’s cousin.”

There was a worried frown between Peter Magiffin’s eyes as he looked across at his wife. He was a tall, big-framed man with the stoop of his thin shoulders and the deep furrow on his forehead indicating that the struggle for daily bread had been hard and weary work. Peter Magiffin was a man of few words, but his wife unhesitatingly supplied the shortage. He spoke slowly now.

“It’s a matter of duty, Jennie,” he said; “we are the little girl’s nearest of kin.”

“Nearest of kin! Nearest! And you only her mother’s cousin! Why didn’t her father provide for her I’d like to know? And his folks, why don’t they do something instead of putting her off on us where she don’t belong?”

Her husband shook his head. “I know very little about any of them. I lost touch with the old land soon after I left, forgot the folks I left behind me—a boy does that unthinkingly. I’ve been sorry ever since. I never knew the man cousin Lucy married, though he wrote me after she died. I think he was a writer, a bit of a poet——”

“A bit of a ne’er-do-well, I guess.”

Peter Magiffin straightened his thin shoulders as if answering some inward challenge. “The little girl is coming to us,” he said; “we must make her welcome.”

“Then you can do the welcoming,” his wife assured him sharply. “I’m not going to pretend to be glad to see her when I’m not.”

“But, ma,” the boy Billy leaned forward, his black eyes anxious, “you won’t tell her you’re sorry she came?”

“Chances are she’ll find out for herself. I can’t act on the outside like I don’t feel inside.” Mrs. Magiffin, who prided herself on outspoken frankness, gave her head a virtuous nod. “It’s all very well for your pa to talk about welcoming her. A man always gets off scot free when there’s extra work to be done. I’m at my wits’ end to know where to sleep her with the house crammed full as it is. The only corner left is that place in the attic. And then to talk about *welcoming* her as if I had the patience of Job! Job!” Mrs. Magiffin sniffed indignantly; “he may have had boils, but I’ll be bound he never raised a family

of five like I've done, and then at the end of it all had somebody else's girl foisted on him!"

"I fancy," her husband interposed, with a little glint of amusement in the depths of his eyes, "that Job's family may have numbered considerably more than five. Weren't there ten of them, seven sons and three daughters?"

Mrs. Magiffin dismissed Job and his family with a wave of her hand and, still bristling with indignation, moved toward the kitchen. "You can welcome your relations to our house," she flung back over her shoulder; "but I shan't!"

A few minutes later that indignation was evident as Mrs. Magiffin vigorously washed up. Above the clatter of dishes rose Alice-Marie's voice, clamorously insistent, "An' oh, ma, what's her name? When'll she come? And'll she go to school with us? And where'll she sleep? She can't have my bed——"

"Nor mine!" this from six-year-old Henrietta.

"But she c'n have my old red dress"—the voice of Alice-Marie was consciously kind and self-satisfied—" 'cause then I can have a new one."

But at that moment the baby created a diversion by upsetting a tin of water, and for a few minutes the little unknown traveller on the far-away ocean was forgotten in the imminence of an incipient Niagara close at hand.

Perhaps, after all, there was some excuse to be offered for Mrs. Magiffin's indignation in this particular case. For it *was* cramped, that house where the Magiffin family lived at No. 5 Victory Avenue, cramped and inadequate within, smoke-grimed and ugly without.

Victory Avenue was victorious only in name. It was a drab uninteresting street that led from one main thoroughfare to another. The houses, for the most part, were semi-detached, red brick, with a porch at the front door and a window at the side, curving outward in a bow. No. 5 did not deviate from the general rule. No. 5 had its porch, its bow window. But No. 5 possessed something which the others did not—the vigorous, lively young Magiffins. And under the ever-increasing demand No. 5 Victory Avenue was proving sadly inadequate.

The Magiffins rejoiced one and all in high-sounding names bestowed on them by their aggressive, ambitious mother. The two boys, Benjamin—"From the Bible itself!" their never-failing exhibitor was wont to explain; William, or, as his mother put it, "Will-i-am"; and the three little girls, Alice-Marie, Henrietta, and, crowning achievement, Queenie Victoria, the baby.

But the best-laid schemes of mice and mothers “gang aft agley,” and the young Magiffins—as they were known collectively in the neighbourhood—were reduced to simple terms. Henrietta was shortened by urgent brothers and sisters to Hen; Alice-Marie to Al; Benjamin to Ben; William, by all except Mother Magiffin herself, to Billy.

He was a funny-looking little boy, was Billy Magiffin. Black, twinkling, button-like eyes, bright red cheeks, black hair that kinked into tight little curls all over his head; chubby and round as to general outline—that was Billy.

And it was Billy who was really tremendously elated over the prospect of the unknown cousin who was coming to make her home with them. After that evening when his mother had told them of the expected guest he gathered together all the crumbs of information possible to obtain. No one, not even his father, had mentioned her name. “Perhaps,” Billy decided, “perhaps it’ll be Sarah, or”—more hopefully—“Pansy!” There was a girl in school by that name and secretly Billy rather liked it. But his father had proved quite satisfactory about her age after he had done some mental calculating. “I should think between fourteen and fifteen,” he had said. And Billy was more than content. Not a little girl that he would have to “keep an eye on,” as he did with Hen; or yet a littler one still to be wheeled up and down, up and down, after school like Queenie. But a big little girl of fourteen or so, in Billy’s eyes almost grown-up, who would tell him things about that ocean she had crossed, the ocean that in geography lessons had exercised such a curious fascination over Billy.

He even drew a picture on a piece of blotting-paper of a ship with the waves dashing over the side. But that had a natural and disastrous result. Alice-Marie found it, waved it aloft for the others to see. “Look!” she cried, in that teasing little way of hers; “look at Billy’s queer horse with the funny tail!”

And Billy, disdaining to explain that those wavy lines were not the tail of a horse but waves of the ocean, stuck his hands in his pockets and stalked out of the room.

He climbed up one morning to investigate that “place in the attic,” referred to by his mother as the only corner for the expected guest. The attic was “unfinished.” Most of it was used as a store-room for trunks, boxes, discarded clothes, hats, beheaded dolls, broken toys, a mouse-trap, a bird-cage—all of which Mother Magiffin often promised herself she would clear up some day.

But “that place” she had referred to, Billy discovered to be at the back of the store-room, a queer-shaped little place with a ceiling high at one side and sloping to the floor at the other. There was a window under the sloping roof,

and a pipe that evidently ran up from the kitchen, for it was warm to his touch.

He descended to the kitchen to question his mother. “Are y’ goin’ to put a bed ’n things in there?” he asked.

Mother Magiffin wrung the dish-mop and shook it vigorously so that Billy was showered with warm water. “Am I goin’ to put a bed in?” she repeated. “Don’t be so silly! Do you suppose I’d let anyone sleep on the floor in *my* house?”

All Billy’s suppressed delight over their forthcoming guest culminated the night before her arrival. He lay awake in bed, sleepless with excitement. Ben was asleep beside him, but then Ben wasn’t excited, not a bit of it. He had looked surprised when Billy had said, trying to make his voice sound natural, “She’s comin’ to-morrer, I guess.”

And Ben had stared at him and answered, “Well, let ’er, *I* don’t care!”

Billy, as he stared up into the darkness, was repeating it over and over, almost unbelieving. A girl from across the ocean was coming to live with them! From across the ocean! And she would tell him about it—that wonderful ocean with its waves, its tides, its delightfully mysterious “coral reefs”; its whales and sharks and porpoises; its shells, its stores of hidden treasure.

“Hurray!” he shouted suddenly.

Which roused Ben to immediate protest. “Shut up!” he growled. “What d’you think you’re doin’ anyway!”

Billy subsided. But his round, black, button-like eyes were still a-twinkle with excitement.



## CHAPTER TWO

### OVER THE WIDE-FLOWING WATERS

Joy Meredith stood on the second-cabin deck of the big steamer and gazed out over the waste of grey waters. It was all grey that afternoon—a dull, lowering, ominous grey, with no welcome glint of sun on the waves. “It looks like I feel,” Joy Meredith thought, and shivered a little as she pulled her coat closer about her.

Perhaps it was but natural that her thoughts should centre themselves about the events of the last few months—events which had made such drastic changes in her own young life.

The death of her father had come unexpectedly, had cut with tragic suddenness into their happy comradeship. Perhaps if there had been more warning John Meredith might have made provision for the future of his little girl, but his thoughts had always turned, with that irrepressible buoyancy that was so characteristic, to the things of the imagination—to the hero of his next story, perhaps, one of those stories that paid the rent and provided the necessities of life. So he had given little thought to the practical side of things and had laid nothing aside for the future which on his death loomed so darkly before his young daughter, Joy.

For a little while the young girl had felt that it was impossible to face that future, impossible to go on, alone. But life, she found, did go on, unfolding itself into an ever-revolving cycle of moments, hours, days.

It was with the idea of getting things settled that Uncle Sidney and Aunt Harriet Hallman had come up from the country. They were, it seemed,

intending to take rooms in London for the autumn and winter months, so, instead of further search, installed themselves in the Meredith flat.

“Which I am sure no one would say was anything but generous on our parts,” Aunt Harriet had pointed out to one of the neighbours, “for this place isn’t really what we want at all.”

But the neighbour, knowing that the poor dear gentleman who had died so suddenly, and who was reported to have left next to nothing for his daughter, had, at least, paid his rent in advance, held her own opinion of Aunt Harriet’s generosity.

The Hallmans were distant relations. “Very distant, hardly relations at all,” Aunt Harriet made haste to point out, “and we don’t feel called on to shoulder any responsibility for Joy.” She made that clear, very clear, to all inquirers.

And so for a little while matters had drifted. “What we’re going to do with the girl,” Aunt Harriet was fond of declaring, “goodness only knows.”

Then, quite suddenly, she remembered that a cousin of Joy’s mother, Peter Magiffin by name, had gone out to Canada years before. “So he’s sure to be rolling in wealth by now,” she declared, “and it’s up to him to look after Lucy’s daughter.”

Inquiries had been made and Peter Magiffin finally located. He answered their letter by another of somewhat unpromising tone. “If it’s our duty to take Lucy’s little girl, we must, I suppose. But we have a family of our own to provide for and it is hard to make ends meet as it is.”

“That’s just his way of putting it,” Aunt Harriet declared; “everybody’s rich out there.”

It was Aunt Harriet, of course, who engineered it all. Aunt Harriet loved engineering things. She made minute inquiries and then wrote Peter Magiffin as to the exact steps he must take with Immigration officials on his side of the ocean. She booked Joy’s passage on a boat on which Mrs. Crocket, a friend of hers, was sailing, and then asked Mrs. Crocket to keep an eye on the girl, to which request that good woman somewhat reluctantly consented. Finally, Aunt Harriet wrote Peter Magiffin telling him that Lucy’s daughter would arrive soon after the letter.



And then one evening she broke the news to Joy, putting it quite clearly and concisely.

“It’s settled,” she said; “you’re going to a new home across the ocean, in Canada. You have relations there who want you”—inherent honesty in Aunt Harriet’s nature made her pause—“at least they’re expecting you. And Mrs. Crocket is going to take care of you going over.”

Joy Meredith stood up and stepped back to the wall behind her, a wall which afforded comforting support at the moment, and faced her aunt defiantly.

“Leave England?” she said. “Leave England? I won’t!”

There was something triumphant in the glance which Aunt Harriet threw across at her husband. Hadn’t she told him just the night before that there was a strain of contrariness in the girl? And hadn’t he denied it?

“Not leave England?” she repeated aloud. “You most certainly *are* going to leave England. It’s settled. That’s what I’m telling you.”

“I won’t go!” the girl said. Then, suddenly, her voice and defiance broke.

“Everything I love—is—here.”

Aunt Harriet and Uncle Sidney stared at each other, obviously perplexed.

“You’re not thinking what you’re saying,” Aunt Harriet told her, not unkindly; “except the graves of your father and mother you’ve nothing particular left here so far’s I can see.”

But the girl pressed the palms of her hands tightly over her eyes and answered never a word.

Through the long sleepless night that followed Joy Meredith faced the significance of her own words “Everything I love is here.” How could they understand—how could she expect them to understand—that the memories held by that little flat were all she had left? Memories of her father, of their life together, companionable and happy. Memories he had given her of the mother she could not remember. Memories of his keen interest in her studies, of his eager, vigorous joy in his own work. Memories of their explorations together through the gateway of books into the land of romance. Memories too of those more tangible explorations into their much-loved Museum, or among the storied tombs of Westminster Abbey. And memories of an occasional quiet hour in St. Paul’s when the voices of the choir-boys echoed sweet and high.

In the business-like mind of Aunt Harriet it had, by that time, been definitely and irretrievably settled. She made all necessary arrangements, packed Joy’s meagre little store of personal belongings, and with obvious relief hustled her off to the boat. “You just do what Mrs. Crocket tells you, and you’ll be all right,” she said.

Mrs. Crocket, of uncertain age and ample proportions, eyed the young girl with open hostility.

“I never did like looking after other folks’ children,” she said.

“Oh, don’t worry,” Aunt Harriet told her, suddenly light-hearted under the sense of shifting responsibility; “she’s not exactly anybody’s child now, you know.”

Mrs. Crocket proved quite content that the girl she was looking after should walk up and down the deck while she herself sat with kindred spirits in the cabin, lingering over choice titbits of the ship’s gossip. “It beats me why that girl doesn’t get her death of cold out there,” she remarked sometimes, but made no effort to prevent such a catastrophe.

But to Joy Meredith the cabin was hot and stuffy and the never-ceasing talk of the women unutterably dreary. Outside the air, salt-smelling and vigorous,

slapped her cheeks, stinging them to lively response. And occasionally—oh, it was worth while being on deck to catch those moments—occasionally the November sun would shine down from a sky gloriously clear, and would spread a wide golden gleam across the face of the waters.

But there was no glint of gold in the world which presented itself on this particular afternoon, a sombre world it was, which found a dull echo in her heart. She was trying at that moment to find some shred of comfort in the thought of the future which stretched before her with all the terror of the unknown. Perhaps the shores of this strange new country held a welcome; perhaps there would be home-life again, companionship and sympathy, for evidently these relatives had been willing to have her come. “So they must be kind,” Joy thought.

But a little of the sanguine expectation faded as she called to mind Aunt Harriet’s answer when she had questioned her. “There’s quite a family of them, I believe, the best thing in the world for you, Joy, after being an only child and having everything your own way.”

The little gleam of comfort vanished, and it was at that moment that a voice, clear and gay, came suddenly out of the shadows behind her. “My dear little girl, I should think you’d be half frozen standing there so long.”

Joy turned. The owner of that voice was standing on the other side of the division that separated the first from the second cabin deck, and was smiling at the girl’s very evident astonishment. “Did I frighten you? I’ve been walking up and down ever so long while you’ve been standing there. I just couldn’t help speaking.”

“I’m not cold,” Joy told her; “at least, I hadn’t noticed it. It was kind of you to ask.”

The lady was looking reflectively at the young face confronting her, and thinking, though she did not voice the thought, that those brown eyes were made for laughter, not for the unhappiness they held.

“I’ve seen you almost every day since we sailed,” she said aloud; “are you alone?”

Joy shook her head. “I’m supposed to be with Mrs. Crocket, but I’m alone most of the time.” Then suddenly—perhaps the sympathetic interest on the lady’s face broke down the little barrier of reserve—“My father died,” she added, “and I’m on my way to relatives in Canada.”

“Oh!” the lady said, sensing the loneliness and heartbreak behind the words. “So you’re coming out to our Canada? Yes,” she nodded, answering

Joy's unspoken question, "I'm a Canadian. We've just been over for a little visit to the old land, my two kiddies and I."

Joy's face lighted up. "Are those two kiddies yours? The two little things that look like twins, who wear green coats trimmed with grey fur?"

The lady smiled. "They *are* mine. And they *are* twins. And they *do* wear green coats trimmed with grey fur."

"One of them offered me a sweet through this railing——"

"That would be Donald, he's such a generous little soul. Dimples goes on the principle of what I have, I hold."

"Donald and Dimples!" Joy repeated.

The lady nodded. "Donald after my husband, who died when the twins were three. Dimples' real name is Lois, like mine, but she's always been such a dimply little thing that the name just stuck." She laughed suddenly outright—a laugh that in after years Joy was to learn carried always that clear and buoyant ring. "I seem to be sharing my family history with you, and we don't even know each other's names. I am Mrs. Langford, Lois Langford."

"And I'm Joyce Meredith, but Dad always called me Joy."

"Joy?" Lois Langford repeated. "Joy? Oh, isn't it a happy little name!"

And so then and there, as they smiled at each other through the division that separated the first from the second cabin deck, was laid the foundation for that friendship which, unknown to either, was to extend far into the years.

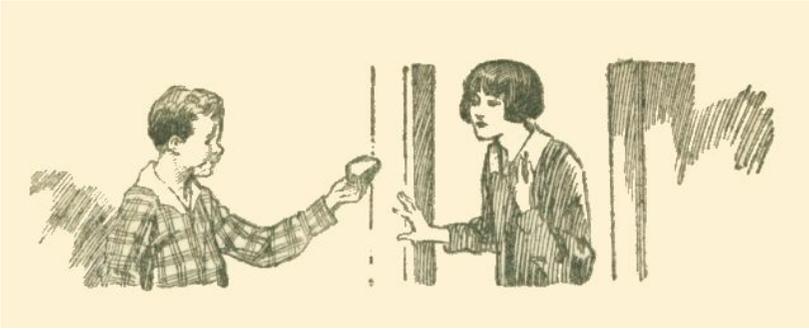
Lois Langford glanced down at the little watch on her wrist. "I must be getting back to the kiddies. Perhaps we'll see each other to-morrow before we land. But if we don't, I wish you happiness in the new land, though, of course"—she paused thoughtfully—"it will be lonely at first, but even so, whatever happens, you'll be of good courage, little girl?"

"Oh," there was a perceptible catch in Joy's voice, "Dad used to say that. He loved those words."

Lois Langford nodded. "One does love them. Oh, look, look, Joy, isn't it beautiful?" She pointed out over the ocean and softly, almost under her breath, though Joy heard the words quite distinctly, she repeated:

“. . . the God of the Glory draws nigh,  
Lo, over the waves of the wide-flowing waters,  
Jehovah as King is enthroned on high."

Down near the horizon the clouds had parted, were touched to vivid beauty as the sun sent across the waters a shining path of gold.



## CHAPTER THREE

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

It was the day that the unknown cousin was expected, and Billy Magiffin had skipped out of bed in the morning with an eager bounce. “To-day’s to-day, an’ she’s comin’!” he had told his brother, nothing daunted by Ben’s repeated, “Well, let ’er, I don’t care!” He had gone off to school in the morning telling himself that, “P’raps she’ll be here when I come home.” He had run all the way home at twelve o’clock, had burst into the house with an eager question, “Is she here?” to be doomed to disappointment. He had been determinedly good in school all afternoon to avoid the catastrophe of being kept in, and then—almost at letting-out time—hadn’t he been overcome by an irresistible desire to stick a pin into the fat little calf of Jimmy O’Hagan’s leg twined so invitingly round the desk in front. And of course Jimmy had let out a howl, and of course the teacher had detained Billy for extra lessons after school.

“Jes’ my luck,” Billy told himself, struggling with those lessons; “ ’twasn’t my fault neither. It was that silly ole pin, and Jimmy’s silly ole leg. I’d never have thought of doing it myself!”

And then, although he was late getting home, he was again disappointed. He threw his school-bag on the sofa in the dining-room, letting it slip down behind, for long ago he had discovered that out of sight meant out of his mother’s mind, and Billy was determined that no such blighting influence as lessons should mar his pleasure on such a night as this.

“D’you s’pose she’ll be here soon?” he asked his mother.

“Goodness only knows I hope so! The train’s late. Your poor pa’s wasted most of this afternoon at the station, waiting. A whole afternoon off work just to meet a girl nobody wants——”

“But, ma,”—the words rushed out—“I’m *glad* she’s comin’!”

“Oh, you are, are you? And a lot of good your bein’ glad does. It’s not payin’ for her board and keep so far’s I can see.”

“She c’n have my rice pudding,” Billy volunteered; “I jes’ hate rice pudding.”

And then hearing a step on the porch he ran out hopefully to open the door. But it was only Alice-Marie, and so he slipped on his coat and went into the street, a street almost picturesque to-night with the lights gleaming through the falling snow. Perhaps, Billy decided, trying to watch both ends of the street at once, perhaps she wouldn’t come after all. Perhaps the ocean had drowned her—the ocean did that to folks sometimes. Or perhaps the train on its way up from Montreal had run off the track—his mother had said it was late—he had heard of trains doing that. Or perhaps she had never started from the other side. Something inside Billy gave a queer little flop. It wasn’t very often that folks got drowned in the ocean, nor very often that a train ran off the track. But a person might easily not start at all.

“Oh, shucks!” Billy said, and trailed disconsolately indoors.

It was when they were at supper that she arrived. “Won’t we wait for her?” Alice-Marie had asked.

“We will not!” her mother assured her.

Just because they were talking all together, after their fashion, no one heard them come in, no one saw her until the door of the dining-room opened and their father’s voice said, “Here’s our English cousin.”

And the English cousin stepped into the light.

A little bit of a thing she seemed by the side of tall Peter Magiffin—a little bit of a girl with a bright colour in her cheeks and a velvety softness in the depths of her dark eyes.

Just for a moment no one said a word, then Mrs. Magiffin, never subdued for long, broke the silence. “So you’ve come at last?” and held out a limp hand.

“Are you Mrs. Magiffin?” the girl asked, in an incredibly soft voice.

“You can call me Aunt Jennie. Would you like to go up and wash before supper? Alice-Marie,” she turned sharply, “supposin’, instead of standing there gaping like you’d never seen a girl before, supposin’ you take her up to her room.”

Silently Alice-Marie led the way upstairs, up the first flight, along the hall, up the steep, dark second flight, across the store-room, her heels tapping the uncarpeted floor. She opened the door of the little room at the back, and switched on the electric bulb that hung by a cord from the ceiling. “There!” she said.

“Shall I—shall I come down when I’m ready?”

“You’d better, supper’s almost over.”

Alice-Marie’s footsteps died away down the stairs, and Joy Meredith, glancing about the bare cheerlessness of the room, gave an involuntary little shiver.

They were still grouped about the table when she went down.

“There’s your seat.” Mrs. Magiffin with a nod of her head indicated the empty chair. “Your name’s Joyce, isn’t it?”

The girl nodded. “They named me Joyce so that I could be called Joy.”

“Joy!” the boy Billy repeated, under his breath, “Joy!”

“Joy?” Mrs. Magiffin was repeating it too and glancing with obvious pride at her much-named young hopefuls. “Whatever did they pick out a name like that for? I’d have done better myself, and me with my handful and your ma with only one.”

It was not an auspicious beginning. There was a little giggle from Henrietta, the beginning of another from Alice-Marie which was strangled by a warning glance from her father.

And then there was silence—a strained and heavy silence. The young Magiffins, who had not been impressed with the necessity of any extra display of politeness, stared at the young stranger with frank, unblinking curiosity.

Mrs. Magiffin herself—smarting under a sense that somebody was taking advantage of her—somebody was, at any rate, thrusting a new and unwanted member into her family—was by no means intent upon extending a welcome. Possibly, too, the fact that the young stranger was pretty aroused unconscious maternal resentment. Not for worlds, of course, would Mother Magiffin have admitted that. “I wouldn’t have my girls thin and delicate-looking like she is

for anything, with that flush on her cheeks and all,” she told herself, with a would-be satisfied glance at her own buxom group.

Across the table Alice-Marie was eyeing that same flush with reluctant admiration. “It’s not *on* her cheeks, it’s *in* ’em,” she decided after lengthy scrutiny. “She’s older’n me, but not such an awful lot too big for that old red dress. I’ll get rid of it on her.”

Under the undisguised curiosity that hung in the very atmosphere, Joy was overcome with almost paralyzing shyness. Would these people never say anything, never do anything to make her feel more at ease? she wondered miserably as her fork dropped from her nervous fingers. Would they just keep on staring, staring? Would that plump little girl directly opposite never take her eyes off her? Or that smaller one farther down? And that funny-looking little boy—but here Joy experienced a sudden sense of relief, for the round, black eyes of the “funny-looking little boy,” encountering hers, dropped shyly to his plate.

Did they always, Joy wondered, eat in this queer silence, broken only by an occasional curt reminder from the sharp-featured woman at the head of the table? Or was it because they were intent only on staring at her?

Overcome at last by something approaching panic she pushed her plate from her and stood up. “Do you mind if I—if I go up?” she asked.

“To your room?” There was disapproval in Mrs. Magiffin’s voice. “What would you be goin’ up there for? You haven’t had your supper yet.”

“Oh, but I can’t eat!” the girl said, and turning, almost ran out of the room.

Just for a moment there was silence, and then Mrs. Magiffin raised those expressive eyebrows of hers significantly at her husband. “You see,” she asked, “you see what it means forcing folks into a house where they don’t belong? Turning up her nose a’ready at the food! Highfalutin ideas she’s got that we’re not good enough for her. Well, she can come down off her high horse, and come down quick!”

“But, ma,” Alice-Marie put in, “she has such lovely brown eyes.” Alice-Marie was seeing at the moment in mental vision her own eyes, round and china-blue.

“And pink cheeks!” Benjamin added, unexpectedly.

“I never did like brown eyes,” their mother snapped, “nor pink cheeks neither. And I never could abide folks who turned up their noses at other folks’ food.”

The boy Billy said never a word, but under the protecting cover of the suddenly animated conversation he quietly slipped a large and sticky sugar-coated bun into his pocket.

Upstairs in the tiny room Joy Meredith was face to face with the sharp terror of heart-breaking loneliness. She had not turned on the light, but finding her way to the bed had flung herself on it, pressing her face into the pillow as if to shut from sight all tangible reminders of this new and unfriendly world.

No one had said they were glad to see her. There had been no word of welcome except the greeting of Peter Magiffin at the station: "So this is Lucy's little girl, this is Joy?" She had liked that, had liked too his firm handshake, his straight eyes, his clear-cut features. But the kindly tone of his voice had not found echo here—in the little girls who had stared and stared; in the sharp-voiced mother who had repeated her name almost derisively: "Joy? Whatever did they pick out a name like that for?"

As if in answer the words of the lady on the boat suddenly flashed into memory: "Joy? Oh, isn't it a happy little name!"

"Happy?" Joy repeated. "Happy?" But something, perhaps the mere voicing of that little word, had a curiously stimulating effect on the girl. She dabbed her eyes with a damp ball of a handkerchief and standing up switched on the light.

It was not a cosy nor cheerful little room that was thus suddenly illuminated.

Swinging from the long cord the light cast distorted moving shadows over the bare, white-plastered walls and ceiling. There was a small window, a narrow bed, a chest of drawers with a mirror above. Joy's eyes fell on her own bag with a sudden sense of relief. It, at least, was familiar and reassuring.

There was a sudden sound in the outside hall, a curious little shuffling sound, and then a timid knock on the door. Joy, summoning her flagging courage, flung it open.

A small boy stood there, the funny little boy she had noticed at supper, the boy they had called Billy. He was holding a bun out toward her. "It's for you," he said, his words coming in little gasps as if he was nervous or excited. "I—I saved it for you!"

"For me?" Joy repeated, gazing in amazement at the small boy and the bun.

He nodded. "It's sort of flat, bein' in my pocket and gettin' a little sat on. And I took a tiny, oh, a very tiny bite out of the sugar on top,"—he eyed that

large and sticky bun regretfully,—“I jes’ couldn’t help it; but you don’t mind, do you?” All Billy’s heart was in his eyes as he looked pleadingly up at the girl. “You don’t mind jes’ ’cause I took a little wee bite out of the sugar part, do you?”

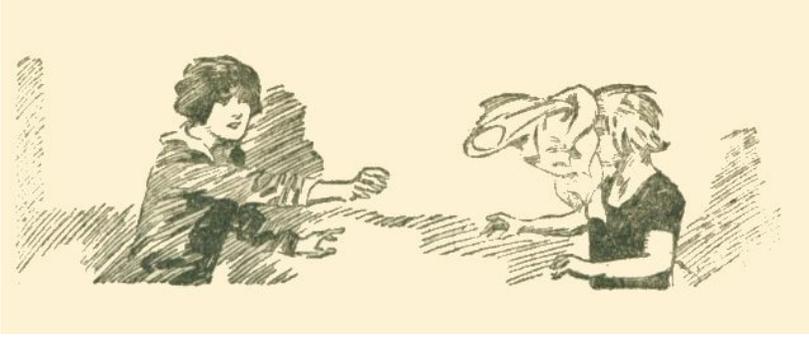
It was not attractive, that squashed and sticky bun. But something else *was* attractive—that little overture of friendship in an otherwise friendless world.

Joy smiled ever so little. “How nice of you. I wasn’t hungry downstairs, but perhaps I could eat something now.”

Billy nodded. “I know. It’s jes’ awful bein’ hungry, isn’t it?”

And so he left her, standing there in the doorway of the dimly-lighted attic room, staring down at the bun in her hand.

With a sudden penetrating flash of insight Joy was seeing straight through that sticky bun into the sympathetic heart of a little boy named Billy.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### “AND THAT’S HOW IT ALL BEGAN!”

**I**t was still quite dark in the little room when Joy awakened early the next morning. At first her memory of the events of the day before was nebulous and uncertain. Then suddenly she remembered all quite distinctly—the train; the bustle at the station; her uncle; the first glimpse of the others grouped round the table; the trying meal when they had stared and stared; the funny little boy and the large sticky bun.

Opposite the bed the window outlined a vague square of light in the dim room. Joy, obeying a sudden impulse, jumped up and looked out. Directly opposite, only a few feet away, was a red brick wall, blank and windowless. But raising the window and thrusting her head out she gave a start of surprise. The sky was gloriously blue this morning, and silhouetted against that blueness, rising out of a cluster of roofs, was the tall, slender steeple of a church, catching the first glint of rosy light from the early sun.

It seemed as if Nature at least was intent on presenting a kindly aspect to Joy Meredith, for that first snowfall of the season had spread a welcome blanket over much that was grimed and unattractive in Victory Avenue. Making her way shyly downstairs she gave an involuntary expression of delight at sight of the snow. “Oh, isn’t it lovely?” she exclaimed.

“You wouldn’t say it was lovely if you had to sweep it off the front steps like your poor little cousin, Alice-Marie, is doing,” Mrs. Magiffin told her.

There was implied if not direct reproach in her tone, and it was just this attitude, Joy was soon to learn, that characterized Mrs. Magiffin's outlook on life in general—an attitude of grim, humourless animosity. Most certainly she made no effort to conceal the fact that she resented the presence of the young stranger in their midst. Joy was left in no doubt on that score during the first day and those of the week which followed—days which, long afterwards, she looked back upon as some of the loneliest out of the multitude of lonely days which followed her father's death.

Mrs. Magiffin's antagonism seemed to centre for the present on the young girl herself, antagonism ready to flare into open hostility on the slightest excuse. Thrifty to the point of stinginess, Aunt Jennie Magiffin obviously grudged what she considered an extra strain on the family purse.

"You'll have to give me more money to run the house," she told her husband, "if you're goin' to start an orphan asylum."

Mrs. Magiffin's generosity ran only to words. Often during those first days Joy would gaze at her wondering if the supply would ever run out, and came to a silent conclusion. "I expect that's why Uncle Peter is so quiet, he's never had the chance to do any talking himself."

But it was Alice-Marie, reflecting her mother's attitude, who was the cause of stirring that undercurrent of resentment into active hostility. With her old red dress over her arm Alice-Marie climbed up to Joy's room one afternoon.

"Look!" She held up the dress, obviously much the worse for wear, for Joy to view. "You c'n have this. It's far too small for you, of course, but you c'n let down the hem and let out the seams like ma does for Hen, she's so fat. Red won't look s' nice on you as it does on me——" Alice-Marie took a step forward and complacently eyed her indeterminate features in the little mirror. "Ma says she wouldn't have me with a red complexshun like yours for anything. 'Tisn't ladylike, ma says. But even if red doesn't look nice on you, ma says that beggars can't be choosers. I'm goin' to get a new dress." She hesitated, and then evidently answered a doubt in her own mind. "Ma'll *have* to let me have it when I haven't got this any more. Here y'are," as Joy made no movement to take the dress, Alice-Marie held it out towards her, coaxingly it seemed.

Something which had been smouldering in the heart of Joy Meredith for the past week flared into sudden flame. She took the dress, rolled it into a tight ball and held it aloft. "Get out," she said, and advanced threateningly, while the surprised Alice-Marie backed towards the door. "Get out of my room and stay out. I'm *not* a beggar. And I *am* a lady. I wouldn't have a face like a half-

baked apple-dumpling like yours for anything! And I wouldn't take your dress, not if you begged me on your bended knees!" Joy's voice rose hysterically. "Get out, I tell you, and"—with sudden, swift, and accurate aim she flung the tightly rolled dress after the retreating Alice-Marie—"take your old dress with you!"

It hit Alice-Marie with a soft thud right in the middle of her dumpling-like face. She grabbed it, turned and fled, almost falling down the stairs in her break-neck efforts to get down and pour the tale into her mother's receptive ear.

By supper-time the account of it all—somewhat exaggerated and embellished—greeted Peter Magiffin. Mrs. Magiffin drew a deep breath and launched in. "Pushed her out of her room and shoved her downstairs. It's a wonder every bone in her body wasn't broke. That's what your relation did to our daughter. Just because our dear little girl, out of her generous heart, offered her a dress." At the magnanimous account of her own action a tear of self-pity squeezed itself out of Alice-Marie's eye and rolled down the side of her nose. "And worse than that, Peter Magiffin, your relation called our daughter names!"

"What kind of names?"

Alice-Marie, directly addressed, hesitated a little. One answered carefully when one's father spoke in that tone of voice. "S-she s-said something about me looking like an—an apple-dumpling!"

"Tee-hee!" This an audible titter from Benjamin.

"Anything else?"

"I don't remember 'xactly what, but I'm sure there was lots more."

Upstairs in her little room Joy had raised the window and the air with welcome freshness fanned her hot cheeks. Some of her indignation had been relieved from fatal repression by her outburst. There was even the beginning of a little twinkle of humour in her eyes. "I told her I was a lady," she was remembering, "and I didn't sound like one. No lady would ever call another a half-baked apple-dumpling."

But the episode marked the beginning of that definite hostility of Alice-Marie.

Perhaps it was just at meal-time that Joy felt most keenly the loneliness and isolation of this new life—meal-time, when the young Magiffins would gather around the table—noisy, clamorous and insistent. Joy's memory, playing

truant, would slip back to the vivid little remembrances of those other meals, gay little meals which she and her father had enjoyed together in the London flat. “Frugal and merry,” he used to declare.

“Listen, ma, listen,” Alice-Marie exclaimed one day, “listen to how she says butter. Buttah, like that.”

“She’d better learn to speak it the way it’s wrote,” Mrs. Magiffin answered, lapsing as she did so frequently under stress into ungrammatical emphasis.

Joy clenched her thin little hands under the table and almost gave way to threatening tears. Almost, but not quite. Perhaps, after all, it was Billy who saved her from that disgrace. For Billy’s black eyes twinkled across the table in such a friendly fashion that one couldn’t give way to tears before such an openly admiring small boy.

Billy, being a normal boy with an inside that constantly demanded more, was eyeing her untasted pudding affectionately. “If you’re not goin’ to eat it ——” he suggested tentatively.

By way of answer Joy raised her plate and held it towards him, which Billy decided was jolly nice of her, understanding so quickly without any weary waste of words.

“Oh, but, ma, that isn’t fair,” Alice-Marie declared indignantly; “I’m far, far hungrier than Billy.”

“Me too!” Henrietta’s little voice was shrill with chagrin.

“Billy never remembers ladies first,” Alice-Marie complained; “he’s a little grab-all, that’s what he is.”

But the little “grab-all” effectually silenced that discussion by making short work of the pudding. He grinned cheerfully across at his sisters. “It was swell,” he told them; “oh, um-mm!”

Thus the little bond of friendship strengthened between Joy and Billy. Years afterwards that bond remained a grateful memory of those first trying days. It was when Billy’s shyness wore off a little that she discovered his curiosity about the unknown ocean.

“If only my father were here he’d tell you lots about it,” she said.

“Was he a sailor?”

“No, but he wrote stories about sailors.”

Billy slid up very close to her on the old dining-room sofa. “Tell me some.”

Then did the round eyes of Billy Magiffin grow rounder still under the spell of Bravedick, the sailor. Bravedick who knew no fear, who struck terror into the crew of iron-hearted pirates.

The curiosity of Alice-Marie was aroused. "What're you talking about?" she demanded.

"Pirates," Billy told her. "Pirates. You're only a girl, you wouldn't understand. Go 'way, Al, you'll spoil it all."

Which was precisely what Alice-Marie intended to do. "Pirates!" she scoffed. "Pirates! There're none of them now. They're silly old-fashioned things. Ma—oh, ma," her voice rose shrilly important, "ma! Joy, she's stuffing Billy with pirates."

It aroused Joy's immediate protest. "I'm not stuffing Billy. That's a horrid expression, horrid!"

But Alice-Marie had been sure of maternal support and it did not fail. Mrs. Magiffin was ablaze with indignation. "Don't you dare—don't you ever dare contradict Alice-Marie!"

"I will," Joy told her; "I'll contradict anyone who says something that isn't true. I'm not stuffing Billy. I'm telling him stories. So there!" She turned and dashed out of the room, a little whirlwind of indignation.

Mrs. Magiffin's amazement was not silent for long.

"That's all the thanks we get," she flung out her hand dramatically, "that's all the thanks for taking foreigners into our family, for taking in other people's children. I told your pa no good 'd come of it. But that girl's not goin' to put anything over me. She can learn, and learn quick, that I'm mistress in this house. She'll contradict me, will she? Well, we'll see who'll do the contradicting. And you, Billy, s'posin' you take your little baby sister for a walk, instead of sittin' around listenin' to stories of savages and the like. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, a great big little boy like you!"

But that was one thing of which he was not ashamed, Billy decided, as he trundled Queenie up and down Victory Avenue. "I could listen to 'em for ever'n ever, always'n always," he told himself; "I love pirates!"

Billy was recalled from the world of romance and pirates by the call of a school companion. "Hello, nurse; oh, nurse!"

"Shut up!" Billy growled, resisting a temptation to ram Queenie's go-cart into a brick wall. But with the taunt the pirates faded and the dull work-a-day

world was reinstated in their place.

Perhaps there was no portion of Billy's daily life that he disliked quite so much as that part of the day when it fell to his lot to push Queenie's go-cart up and down the length of Victory Avenue. Up one side and down the other, up and down, up and down. "Why can't Alice-Marie do it?" he had asked his mother long ago, "it's the kind of thing gurls do. Gurls are nursemaids, boys aren't."

But Alice-Marie, it seemed, was needed in the house. Benjamin had his paper route, and Henrietta, of course, was too little. In fact Henrietta often trotted along too under the resentful protection of Billy. He had once hit upon the plan of being kept in at school, for that made him gloriously late getting home, but his mother had nipped the scheme in the bud by writing a simple but effectual note to the teacher. "Don't keep William Magiffin in. I need him at home."

So there was really no escape. Sometimes he wished that there just wasn't any Queenie, that she'd take herself off into somebody else's family. And yet when the big dog belonging to Smith, the grocer, had dashed out so fiercely straight at Queenie, Billy had grabbed him by the collar and held him back. And when Ernie Hobbs, who was a great big boy and something of a bully, was going to snap an elastic-band against her cheek, Billy yelled "Stop!" and with his chubby fists doubled had squared right up to him, looking so fierce that Ernie, to Billy's intense surprise and relief, pocketed the elastic-band and sauntered off.

Perhaps it was just those gibes of his playmates that made it all so distasteful. "Nursey," they called him, and "Biddy." And Billy could never, never think of a more effective retort than just "Shut up!"

It was after he had resisted the temptation to ram the go-cart into the brick wall that he was startled by a voice behind him. "I'll wheel her for awhile, Billy; wouldn't you like me to?"



It was Joy, of course; Joy with a queer look about her eyes almost as if—but Billy, as he eagerly relinquished his hold on the handle, dismissed the thought at once. A girl named Joy would never cry, never.

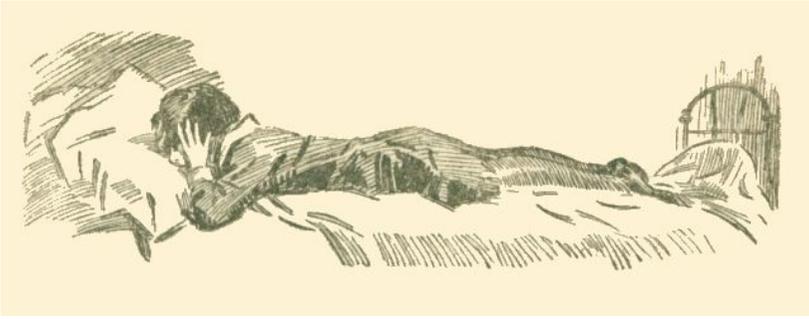
It was really very companionable and friendly walking up and down while Joy pushed the go-cart and stopped every now and then to give the squirming Queenie a surer “tuck in.”

And that’s how it all began. They fell into the way of it quite naturally. Billy would tear home after school, and sometimes Joy and Queenie would meet him at the corner; if not they would certainly be somewhere on Victory Avenue. Billy would hook his school-bag over the handle of the go-cart and they would walk up and down, up and down. But Billy liked it now. Victory Avenue, Queenie and the go-cart, homework, all the drab realities were forgotten, for Bravedick the sailor stalked beside them, Bravedick who knew no fear. “Like me when I grow up,” Billy often told himself, swelling out his chest in anticipation.

“You’ll be something mighty different from a pirate if I have anything to say in the matter,” his mother told him when he carried his hopes and

ambitions into the house.

Perhaps, too, the land of romance into which she was admitting Billy had its hold on Joy as well. Perhaps it meant escape from the dull routine of life in Victory Avenue, from the teasing taunts of Alice-Marie, from the nagging tongue of Aunt Jennie Magiffin—escape to the far-flung ocean spaces where valour rode on the wave, and where Bravedick, the sailor, sailed forth on his fearless quests.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### “AND OF A GOOD COURAGE”

**I**t was January now—January that carried with it all the rigour of Canadian winter weather, snowstorms and blizzards and high keen winds. But there were days of brightness too when the air was clear and still in the white light of the winter sunshine.

Joy, pushing the go-cart, would exclaim, “Oh, I love the snow; don’t you, Queenie?”

And Queenie would say “Goo-goo!” waving her fat little arms about, answering as plainly as possible without the aid of words, “Of course I love the snow.”

They were venturing farther afield these days. The sordid dinginess of Victory Avenue, Joy discovered, was not reflected in the streets to which it led. Busy thoroughfares these were with great high buildings, their tops, it seemed, close against the sky; stores with wide plate-glass windows which flamed with colour and beauty through the thin light of the winter afternoons.

Sometimes she even walked as far as the school to meet Billy. Set far back in ample playgrounds the school was a fine, imposing building, red-bricked, many-windowed, pleasingly suggestive of light within. But when the children came out—a noisy, shrieking little mob of humanity—Joy turned and walked away until Billy caught up to her.

“I don’t want to go to school,” she told him one afternoon; “do you think I’ll have to, Billy?”

“Ma said you’d be going to High School.” Then in little-boy fashion he offered comfort. “School’s all right, Joy; ’t isn’t so bad if you know the lessons, and even if you don’t you c’n guess the answers, and sometimes”—Billy grinned, evidently remembering a recent victorious venture—“sometimes you guess right.”

But “ma,” unknown to Billy, or, for that matter, to any of her family, had other plans regarding the education of Joy Meredith.

Perhaps it was the sight of Joy wheeling the go-cart up and down that gave rise to the idea in her mind. “And,” as she herself often declared, “once I get an idea into my head I can’t get it out.”

Assuredly this idea took forcible possession of her thoughts, and the more she turned it over the more feasible and desirable it became. Finally, she broached the matter to her husband.

He shook his head. “There are other things to consider, Jennie, her schooling, for instance——”

“Oh, school!” Mrs. Magiffin dismissed the unwelcome reminder with a wave of her hand. “I’ll manage the school part all right. She’s over fourteen, and I can get her off if she’s necessary as a wage-earner.”

“But she isn’t necessary as a wage-earner.”

“Neither is school necessary. The girl did a lot of studying with her father and knows more now about books and the like than she’ll ever *need* to know.” To the practical mind of Mrs. Magiffin there was no more to be said.

But her husband was not so easily satisfied. “I am able to give Lucy’s little girl a home and I want to feel that I’m doing it——”

“And haven’t we done it? Aren’t we doing it? Haven’t we shared our last crust with her?”

A rare little sparkle of humour lit Peter Magiffin’s eyes. “There’s generally more in the bread-box, Jennie.”

But Mrs. Magiffin seldom heeded interruption. “Haven’t we treated her like she was one of our own? She’s your relation, Peter, don’t you forget that”—it was not often, in fact, that he was given a chance to forget—“and if you want your wife to scrimp and starve herself to skin and bone while your relation lives on the fat of the land—well, I’ve my opinion of *that* kind of a man!” And her expression at the moment indicated that her opinion of that kind of a man was far from favourable.

But when Mrs. Magiffin set out with a definite purpose in view she generally carried matters with a high hand, and this case was no exception to the rule. Overcoming obstacles which might have proved stumbling-blocks to one less determined, she greeted her husband triumphantly one evening towards the end of the month.

“It’s all settled. About Joy, I mean. She’s going to help Mrs. Bain.”

“Joy is what?”

Mrs. Magiffin’s nods emphasized her words. “I told you I was going to let Joy go out minding babies. Seein’s she could mind ours she might’s well mind someone else’s. An’ right on top of thinking about it didn’t that little Mrs. Bain, along here on Victory Avenue, meet me one day and start tellin’ me how she’s tried to keep a girl to help with those four children of hers, and how none o’ them would stay, just pick up and go off cool as you please. It struck me all of a heap when she was talking, I’d let her have Joy, let her go right in and live there, I mean.”

That expressive little furrow deepened between Peter Magiffin’s eyes. “What about her school?”

“I told you I’d fix it, Peter, and I did. It’s all settled, I’m tellin’ you.”

“I don’t like the idea at all.”

Something in her husband’s tone made her furtively uneasy. There was just the danger, she realized, that her cherished scheme might even yet fall through. That uneasiness heightened the sharpness of her voice. “Whether you like it or not, Peter Magiffin, it’s settled.”

“Then you must understand, Jennie, that every cent the girl earns will be her own.”

His wife’s china-blue eyes flew open. “Indeed it won’t, after me scrimpin’ and savin’ to give her a home, arranging about placin’ her out and all. Her wages, or part of them, would be only a fair return.”

But Peter Magiffin shook his head. “Then she doesn’t go. If she does go out to work, Jennie, every cent she earns will belong to her absolutely.”

It was seldom that he so asserted himself. And in the light of scant but convincing experience Mrs. Magiffin knew that there would be no chance of changing his decision. It was a crushing disappointment, for she had already been lavish in her anticipation of the spending of Joy’s earnings. There was a hat in a milliner’s window—black with a red rose bearing down the brim at one side—“I can just see it settin’ on my head,” she told herself regretfully,

mentally placing the desired hat back in the milliner's window, and tried to cheer her drooping expectations. "Perhaps he'll change his mind after a little, see the sense of it after what I've done for her and all."

It was with Joy herself that the project met with unexpected resistance. Mrs. Magiffin's many-worded explanation left a confused impression on the girl's mind. "You're sending me away, somewhere else to live?" she repeated, evidently incredulous.

Mrs. Magiffin made a gesture of impatience. "You're goin' to help my friend, Mrs. Bain, just along the street. You're to help mind the children, run round the house and make yourself useful. She'll pay you for it."

Joy stared at her aghast. "You want me to go as a sort of—as a sort of—of *servant*?"

"You don't have to put it as plain as all that. You're to help Mrs. Bain."

"I won't go!"

"Oh, you won't, won't you? An' who says so, Miss High'n Mighty?"

"I do. I won't go."

For once Mrs. Magiffin effectually economized in words. "You're goin'!"

"Y'bet y'are when ma says so!" Alice-Marie added, evidently rather relishing the conflict.

It ended in Joy dashing upstairs and throwing herself on the bed, as on that memorable first night, in a paroxysm of grief, face to face once more with that which struck terror into her heart—the horror of the unknown. And as on that memorable first night it was Billy who offered solace.

For after what seemed a long, long time, though in reality it was but a little while, an odd, irregular, compelling little sound attracted her attention. Opening the door she found Billy, woebegone and disconsolate, sitting on the top step of the attic stairs. "You're goin'!" he said, unconsciously repeating his mother's words. "You're goin'. You won't be here no more to go wheelin' the go-cart or tell me about Bravedick."

Joy stared down at him as he sat there. "You'll have to remember about Bravedick yourself, Billy," she said slowly; "you must pretend that *you* are Bravedick and come sailing down to me. I won't be so far away, your mother says, just a little way down the street."

But Billy's imagination had as yet taken few flights of its own. "How could I be Bravedick when I'm Billy Magiffin?" Billy the literal asked. "And

how could I sail down to you when I'd be wheelin' that silly ole go-cart?"

"We can always pretend things." Joy paused, thinking that at the moment her own feelings were a direct contradiction to her words, and added as an afterthought, "or often, anyway. You can pretend that Queenie's go-cart is your sailing vessel and that you, Bravedick, are the captain."

Billy sat a little more erect. "Can I?"

"It's lots of fun, pretending. Of course if you're going to pretend to be Bravedick you'll have to *be* brave—brave about everything."

Billy winked very hard as if to wink away all evidences of un-brave tears. "I *am* brave!" he said.

He went downstairs, and Joy, going into the dark room, switched on the light and faced a rather mournful reflection in the tiny mirror. Playing the comforter to the small boy had at least relieved some of her own rebellious feelings. She nodded emphatically at the reflection which emphatically nodded back. "Whether you like it or not," she said, "as your Aunt Jennie Magiffin and Billy both told you—you're going!"

It was during the night which followed that a memory of her father drifted into Joy's mind—something he had said just two days before he died. "Always hold on to the word Courage," he had told her, "it's a splendid word." His voice, weak by that time, had trailed off, but the phrase came back with startling vividness: "Courage—a splendid word!" Courage, she realized suddenly, had been the key-word of her father's life—a gallant courage with which he had faced rebuffs and hardships. "Be strong and of a good courage," he had loved those words, had repeated them often so that Joy had come to know and love them too.

"And it's courage that I need now," she was thinking, "courage to take me into another strange house, among strange people. I wonder if Dad knew I'd need courage; I wonder if he ever needed it as much."

"Be strong and of a good courage." There was something stimulating in the very repetition of those words as they fixed themselves in her mind with all the fullness and richness of the promise they carried. "Fear not nor be afraid . . . for the Lord thy God, He it is that doth go with thee."

Joy lay very, very still, staring up into the darkness. "Then I'll try." She spoke aloud, and the words cut suddenly into the quietness of the little room. "I'll try to be strong and of a good courage. I'll try."

And it was in the nature of a vow that she said it.



## CHAPTER SIX

### NO. 43

**I**t was at the supper-table the next evening that Mrs. Magiffin looked across at Joy, evidently rather puzzled and resentful.

“You’ve been acting all day like you’re glad you’re goin’,” she said; “seems queer to my way of thinking after what we’ve done for you and all.”

“But I’m going whether I’m glad or not,” Joy answered.

The reply evidently nettled Mrs. Magiffin. “That’s what we get,” she said, the more outspoken because her husband had not come in, “for taking other folks’ children into our family—thanks from nobody!”

“I wouldn’t be you for *anything*!” Alice-Marie was assuring Joy with that little sneer she never failed to make effective in the liberating absence of her father.

Joy shook her head. “You couldn’t turn into me no matter how hard you tried.”

Which retort infuriated Alice-Marie. “I don’t wa-ant to, I tell you, I wouldn’t be you for anything!”

It was Billy who came near to the truth when he found Joy after supper on the old sofa darning a gaping rent in one of his socks.

“Joy,” he asked, half under his breath, for Alice-Marie was doing her

lessons at the table and it would never do for her to hear. "Joy, are you pretending?"

"Pretending about what, Billy?"

"Pretending not to mind goin' to Mrs. Bain's? Pretending that you're sort of glad?"

Joy smiled into those eager black eyes. "Perhaps I am, a little." She spoke softly, with evident regard for those receptive ears of Alice-Marie. "Pretending helps a lot, Billy. Dad told me that the soldiers in the Great War used to say 'Cheerio' to each other, and it had such a cheerful sound that it made them feel ever so much better."

"Sure!" Billy said, throwing back his shoulders and trying to feel very cheerio and soldier-like indeed. "I say, Joy, is it to-morrer you're goin'?"

Joy nodded. "To-morrow!" she said.

"To-morrow—tee-hee!" remarked Alice-Marie unexpectedly from the centre table.

At first sight it appeared that Mrs. Bain's house at No. 43 Victory Avenue conformed to the row of which it formed a part. Semi-detached and of red brick, its porch sheltered the front door and its bow window curved outward just as surely as did those at Nos. 5 or 7 or 9 at the other end of the street. But on second sight it became apparent that No. 43 shared but the lesser part of the roof which covered it, and while No. 45 was slightly larger than the average, No. 43 was but a narrow slip of a house, and a very unprepossessing one at that.

A very different house it was compared with the one in which Mr. and Mrs. Bain had started their married life. That had been an attractively pretty little place on a maple-shaded street far up-town. They had been very much in love with each other, their prospects, and the world in general. And little Mrs. Bain had hung up frilly window curtains and thought how perfectly wonderful it was to have such a good husband and such a dear little house for one's own.

And then had come the first indication of Mr. Bain's erring and unsatisfactory ways.

He tendered his resignation at the office. That was his way of putting it. When that proceeding became a frequent occurrence, Mrs. Bain began to realize that it was another way of saying that he had again lost his job. Always the work carried less salary, but always—as he assured his wife—"brilliant prospects."

“But,” she would answer with the sharpness that became habitual, “we can’t live on prospects.”

Oh, it took shrewd little Mrs. Bain a very short time to realize that she had married a wastrel and a ne’er-do-well. They sold the house as it stood—frilly curtains and all—and rented another. In due time they gave that up and moved still farther down-town, until, just the year before, they had found anchorage in Victory Avenue.

And now, under the struggle that the years had brought, and the vigorous demands of four noisy children, little Mrs. Bain’s nerves were giving way.

She greeted Joy with relief and obvious surprise. “You’re not used to work, are you?” she asked hesitatingly; “I was hoping you’d be a strong girl. You look rather delicate.”

“I’ll help you all I can,” Joy said.

“You may find me a little short-tempered sometimes,” Mrs. Bain remarked rather abruptly; “my nerves are a bit on edge.”

It was this disarming confession which prevented Joy’s protest when Mrs. Bain showed her up to her room. “It’s not exactly a room,” she explained uneasily, “it’s—it’s only part of the landing curtained off, but you’ll find it nice and warm.”

Joy realized that it was warm for the simple reason that there was no window, but by conscious effort she refrained from comment.

Thus, unpromisingly, began the new life. A life which began afresh with the cold dawn of each new day, to unroll itself into a series of tasks—breakfast, dishes, dusting, dinner; dishes again, sewing, supper, dishes. Sewing again, mending, darning, patching—and always, hindering all progress, the dominating voices of the children, undisciplined and uncontrolled.

Only at night came the all-too-brief respite in the airless little room upstairs where one was free to relax, to sink into a dream-troubled, unrefreshing sleep.

And often those insistent demands obtruded into the night hours as well. Mrs. Bain’s voice, sharply querulous from below: “Joy—Jo-oy, surely you hear baby crying. Why don’t you come down and take him for awhile and give me a chance to rest?”

And there were interruptions other than the baby—Mr. Bain coming in late, slamming the door. Joy came to welcome those nights when he was away on one of his vague, mysterious “business trips.” And there were sounds too from the house next door—queer, disturbing sounds, breaking sharply into the

night hours. Oh, those hours were unrestful and unrefreshing at No. 43 Victory Avenue.

Sometimes of an afternoon Joy would notice a small boy with a go-cart hovering around with the Bain children—a round-faced, red-cheeked boy. She would open the window and call out, “Hello, Billy!”

His chubby face lighting up he would answer, “Hello, Joy. Cheerio! I’ve been tryin’ to pretend about Bravedick, but I can’t without you. Come on out, just for a jiff!”

She would hold up a pile of stockings for him to see. “I’ve all these to mend, and anyway I couldn’t tell stories or pretend just now, not if I tried ever and ever so hard.”

Billy, trundling Queenie back along Victory Avenue, would decide that darning socks must be terribly hard work because that was how Joy looked—tired, awfully tired.

To Joy the days seemed to revolve into a never-ceasing cycle—getting up, work, going to bed. Getting up which meant dragging herself out of bed, battling, it seemed, against an unseen force that was holding her down. Work which meant that unceasing scramble to catch up with tasks undone and never accomplished. Going to bed which meant that moment when she was free to lie down—and forget. There was no time for moments of reading, moments which might have carried her mind, self-forgetting, from the present; no time to call to mind those words her father had loved, “Be strong and of a good courage,” words which might have brought comfort and fresh resolve.

One thing alone prevented Joy from voicing the words which came so often to her lips during the days of that month, words which, despite her efforts, almost uttered themselves, “Oh, Mrs. Bain, I’m so tired, so terribly tired, I can’t stay.”

But the one thing that prevented them was just a sound in the night, a sound far more disturbing than the crying of the baby or the bang of the front door. A muffled sound it was, but in spite of that it came quite clearly to her ears. The sound of sobbing. She could hear it plainly if she sat up in bed. “It’s Mrs. Bain,” she would tell herself, horror-stricken, and would grip the bed-clothes tightly with both hands.

It must be terrible, terrible, she decided, sitting there wide-awake and tense in the darkness, to have a husband who stayed out late every night. Why, he might be run over, killed, anything might happen.

Remorseful and filled with pity, Joy would resolve not to tell Mrs. Bain she

couldn't stand the strain of the work, not to tell her that she couldn't carry on, but to be instead ever so much kinder and more willing. "Because it's harder for her," the girl realized, "very much harder for her than it is for me."

But the next day Mrs. Bain would be red-eyed and sharp of tongue, and Joy, as she struggled to peel the skins off knobby potatoes in the prescribed wafer-like shavings, would wonder miserably why it was always so easy to break resolves.

And then one morning Joy called Mrs. Bain. "I can't get up," she said, "I've tried and I can't. I just ache all over."

Mrs. Bain, alarmed, sent for Aunt Jennie Magiffin, who, alarmed in turn, sent hurriedly for a doctor, at the same time voicing strenuous resentment at the expense incurred.

But that morning, at any rate, Joy did not care if she caused alarm or expense, cared for nothing so long as she was left quiet—quite quiet.

"Nothing organically wrong," the doctor declared, "it's a case of nervous exhaustion. The girl must be kept quiet."

And Joy, catching that word, wondered how he knew so exactly what she wanted—to be kept quiet, quite quiet.

His verdict aroused indignation. "You might have warned me she was such a delicate, high-strung girl," Mrs. Bain told Mrs. Magiffin when the door shut behind the doctor; "you palmed her off on me as a girl to help with the work. I'm sure I haven't overworked her."

But Mrs. Bain's indignation was nothing to Mrs. Magiffin's. "I'll be bound you got your money's worth out of her. Oh, it's all very well for you who can shift her off on us now she's sick. But how about us, I'd like to know, us with a family of our own to provide for without having relations flung at us and having them turn into invalids and I don't know what!"

But tongue-battles waging about her meant little to Joy just then. She knew that Mrs. Bain gave her medicine three times a day; knew that Mrs. Bain's hand was unexpectedly gentle and cool on her hot forehead; knew, or thought, that Mrs. Bain whispered once, "Joy, dear, I'm so sorry."

And then she knew for a certainty that her Uncle Peter had come to take her back to their house, was keenly conscious of his strong arms carrying her, of the freshness of the outside air, of coming to rest on the hard little bed in the queer-shaped room in the attic.

But it was quiet up there, Joy was gratefully conscious of that. Quiet at

night save for the roar of traffic, quiet all day too.

Perhaps that very quiet had a part in making her realize that she was better. She began to think again—natural, clear thoughts. Remembered little Mrs. Bain regretfully. Started to feel that she wanted to move, to stretch, to sit up—to stand.

“The normal recovery of a normal girl,” the doctor pronounced one morning two weeks later. So Joy came downstairs into the life of the Magiffins once more—Joy, a little thinner; a little longer—that was Billy’s wondering decision—with dark, purple shadows under her eyes.

And then it was, towards the end of March, when a little colour was returning to her cheeks, a little light to her eyes, that Mrs. Maggie Tibble entered her life.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE OLD HOUSE

There was something appealing about the old house, something rather fine and courageous.

**T**he home of Mrs. Maggie Tibble was in John Street, surrounded by factories and warehouses which threw deep, day-long shadows over the streets below. There were freight-yards not far distant where the engines puffed and snorted and sent up volumes of dense, black smoke which hung like a pall over the neighbourhood.

The house was old, reckoned by the standards of time in the hustling new country of which it formed a part. It had been left to Mrs. Tibble by her father and had been in the family for seventy odd years. "And goodness only knows," Mrs. Tibble was fond of declaring, "how long it was built before that."

Years before there had been a certain beauty about the house—solid, substantial, set far back in spacious grounds of its own. But the last twenty-five years had left a disfiguring record. The face of the house was soot-encrusted now, dingy and weather-beaten. The grounds had been sold and a factory and a storehouse covered those once spacious and picturesque green lawns. Nevertheless there was something appealing about the old house, something rather fine and courageous as it stood forth, alone in that world about it as if defying the encroachment of commerce.

It was known now quite simply as "Mrs. Tibble's boarding-house," and

was noted for clean rooms, good beds, and hot, satisfying meals. Someone had once said in Mrs. Tibble's hearing that she was a good landlady, and had added surprisingly, "And a real good Christian!" Mrs. Tibble had said nothing in reply, but had kept that saying and pondered it in her heart.

Mrs. Tibble's friendship with Mrs. Magiffin was one of long standing rather than of mutual interest. She had even known Jennie West before she married Peter Magiffin, and had had the privilege of prophesying at the wedding that "he'd find that tongue of hers a bit of a lasher."

Unknown to anyone but herself, Mrs. Tibble had watched with keen interest the coming of Joy Meredith into the Magiffin family. "If I'm not mistaken, Jennie will make it hard going for anyone as unwelcome as that girl," she had told herself, with the keen insight into human nature which years and experience had brought.

On her first sight of Joy Meredith, Mrs. Tibble's mind had done a curious thing. It called up an almost forgotten memory out of the mist of years—a fawn she had once seen on the bank of a forest stream, a fawn standing for a moment quite motionless, poised for flight, its great brown eyes startled, beseeching.

"My land!" Mrs. Tibble had exclaimed, rather startled herself at the vividness of the memory, "whatever made me think of that?"

And so, after Joy Meredith had come back from Mrs. Bain's, then it was that Mrs. Tibble stepped forward. "Why not let the girl come to me for awhile?" she had asked casually. To appear eager, she knew, would have the opposite to the desired effect on Jennie Magiffin. "I'll pay her to help a bit, but I won't overwork her, you needn't be afraid of that."

The casual suggestion took root as it was meant to do, Peter Magiffin proving at first—as his wife put it—"stubborn and contrary," but finally, when Mrs. Tibble herself came round to talk it over, Peter Magiffin gave his consent.

It was Billy who trundled Queenie beside Joy when they walked from Victory Avenue to John Street one April afternoon. He had rebelled against pushing the go-cart, quite determined to carry Joy's black bag. That was what men were for, to carry bags. And women were meant to push baby carriages. You saw them doing it everywhere and acting as if they liked it. "Babies," Billy decided from the depths of a hot little heart, "babies are crazy things anyway!"

But his mother had decreed that Joy should carry her own bag and that Billy should push Queenie, "that is, if you're going at all," she said.

Of course he was going, go-cart or no go-cart, and when Joy turned at Mrs. Tibble's door to wave her hand, it was Billy who called, "Cheerio, Joy!"

"Cheerio!" she called back.

It was Mrs. Tibble herself who opened the door to admit Joy, Mrs. Tibble, stout and unwieldy, with tiny, good-natured wrinkles about her tired eyes, and in the blue eyes themselves a kindly light which neither time, nor poverty, nor "the fell clutch of circumstance" could quench.

"Hello!" Mrs. Tibble said, feeling just a little embarrassed and rather puffed with the exertion of coming downstairs—for stairs, either up or down, were wearisome and breath-taking.

Joy smiled in answer, coming to a silent conclusion that there was something jolly nice, something very likeable about this Mrs. Tibble.

And so they smiled at each other across the shadows of that dim old hall, a smile that bridged the chasm of embarrassment, and paved the way to mutual and sympathetic understanding.

The room which Mrs. Tibble allotted to Joy was on the third floor. Long ago the rooms of Mrs. Tibble's third floor had been eagerly sought after, the reason being that they were cheaper than those on the second, and the excuse offered that they were higher and more airy. But Mrs. Tibble's following had diminished, there was no denying that fact, and now the second floor amply accommodated the "regulars" and any chance "occasionals" as well.

Joy's room was large. At first she viewed it with relief after her cramped quarters in Victory Avenue. But she soon discovered that a small room may be cosy, companionable, and its four walls friendly as they close around you and shut you in from an alien world. There was nothing cosy, no friendly feeling about this room. Its ceiling was dingy, remote, and shadowy, the woodwork dingy and drab. The windows rattled noisily in the gusts of spring wind. And in the quiet of night the stretch of uncarpeted floor creaked mysteriously, and from between the walls came the sound of scampering of merry-making mice.

But, despite the depressing influence of the room, sleep claimed Joy for its own as soon as she dropped into bed, sleep that held her unconscious of those creakings and scamperings, of those eerie, mysterious little noises that haunted the old house at night.

Mrs. Tibble, Joy soon discovered, listed all those boarders of hers. There were her "regulars"—Mr. and Mrs. Perkins who went off to work each morning, he to the yards, she to clean offices. There was Bill Hall who worked at the docks. And, incongruous though it seemed, there was an artist, Tobias

Tipkins. Mike Mahoney was an “occasional,” as was also bluff Tom Salt—whether that was his real name no one seemed to know—who blew in sometimes from a vessel that plied the Great Lakes. And among the “occasionals”—oh, those good-natured wrinkles around her tired eyes must surely have denoted an unconquerable little sense of humour deep in Mrs. Tibble’s heart—were those whom she designated as her “floating congregation,” who, arriving out of the shadows to ask for a night’s lodging, would disappear with the morning into the oblivion of the vast outside world.

“I believe,” Joy told herself after listening to Mrs. Tibble one day, “I believe, like Dad, she knows what it is to be strong and of good courage.”

And when Mrs. Tibble started to talk about that subject which, underneath all superficial interests, dominated her thoughts, Joy knew that her surmise was right.

Mrs. Tibble found it an immense relief to confide in someone. And though that someone was a girl, and a young girl at that, there was some quality in her that effectually bridged the gap of years.

It was one morning when they were working together in the kitchen that Mrs. Tibble broached the subject. “Have you ever noticed the picture of a young man on the second landing?” she asked abruptly.

“Wondered who it was ever so many times,” Joy said.

“That,” Mrs. Tibble announced, and there was pride in her voice, “that is my son George.”

It all came out then. George, it seemed, reaching the maturity of his twenty-first birthday, almost twenty years ago now, had quietly decamped.

“You mean he ran away?” Joy asked, wide-eyed.

Mrs. Tibble lifted the lid of a saucepan and gave the contents an admonitory stir. “Ran away,” she repeated, then, mother-like, offered excuse. “There was nothing for him to do here. I couldn’t set him up in business, ’twas all I could do to run my own.”

“Coward!” Joy silently designated the absent George. “And was your husband dead then?” she asked George’s mother.

Mrs. Tibble nodded. It was quite evident that the mellowing influence of time had bequeathed no halo to the shade of the departed Hiram Tibble. “Hiram got himself out of this world long before that,” she said. “Husbands aren’t all they’re cracked up to be, my dear. If I hadn’t married Hiram I might have been fixed right comfortable now. But Hiram, he saw me getting good

returns from my regulars—and I did get good returns in those days—and he found out about the tidy sum I had in the bank, so he just steps up and says, ‘Well, how about pulling in double harness, old girl?’ ”

“But you didn’t have to, you might have said ‘No, thanks.’ ”

“I’d have said ‘No, thanks,’ precious quick if I’d have known as much about double harness as I do now. Hiram, he never did any of the pulling. I pulled for both, and when George came I pulled for him too.”

“But didn’t your husband give you money to run the house?”

Mrs. Tibble emitted an eloquent little grunt. “He took mine.”

“Didn’t he help at all?”

“Husbands and help, my dear, don’t go together.”

“Dad had an old rhyme he used to tell me,” Joy remembered suddenly, “something like this:

‘His wife took in sewing to keep things a-going,  
While he superintended the earth.’ ”

That expressive little grunt of Mrs. Tibble’s made itself heard again. “That was Hiram all over. Hiram was strong on the superintending part. I think George took after him, a little. Anyway, as soon’s he grew up he got restless and went off.”

“He’s never written since?”

Mrs. Tibble shook her head.

Joy leaned forward, her brown eyes alight. “But he will some day. He’ll walk in and say ‘Mother!’ just like that. In books they always do.”

“Books aren’t real life.”

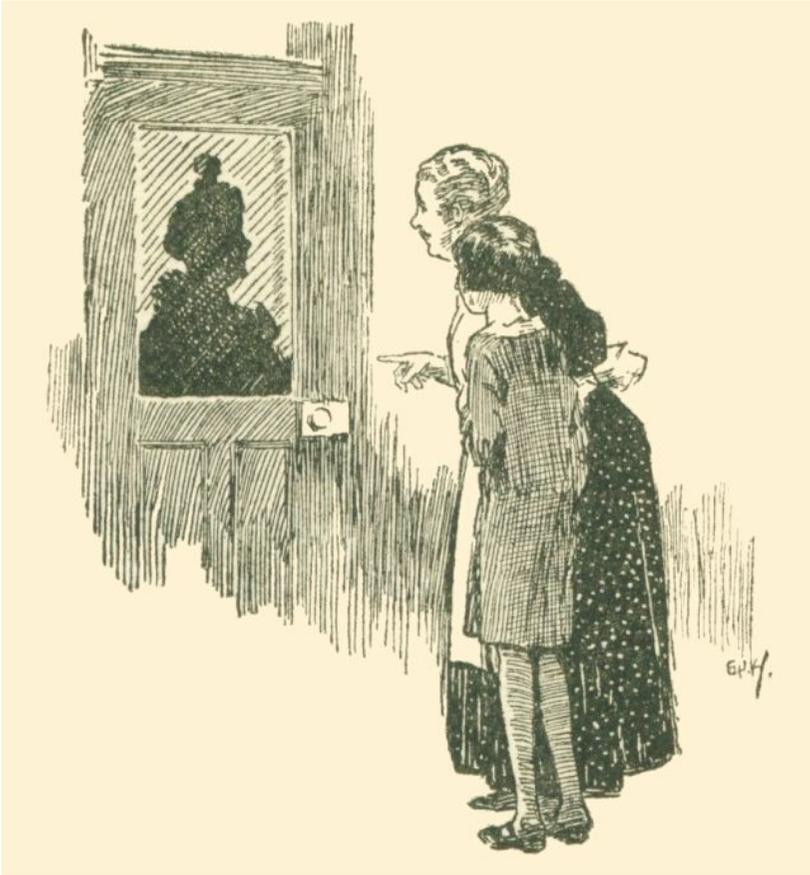
“But that’s what the runaway son in the Bible did.”

“Oh, him! He wasted his substance and then, when he began to be in want, went home to his father. I don’t want George turning up for me to support.”

“But Dad used to tell me that the Prodigal Son went home in the right spirit. Don’t you remember he said, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.’ Oh, I think George will come home like that—in the right spirit, I mean. He won’t want you to support him, he’ll support you.”

Mrs. Tibble sighed. “Seems sort o’ unlikely and not natural-like for a

man,” she said. But it was quite obvious that she did not altogether banish the thought into the realm of the unlikely. Perhaps, after all, the bitter realities of life had not extinguished the hope that springs eternal in the heart of a mother, for a little smile hovered round her lips as she stirred the custard that was to form the dessert for dinner.



“There’s the door-bell,” Joy jumped up suddenly, “and *there*”—her voice fell suddenly flat as she started along the hall and caught sight of the visitor, plainly visible through the glass of the door,—“there’s Aunt Jennie Magiffin’s hat!”

“Come back here!” Mrs. Tibble commanded with unwonted briskness; “if it’s Aunt Jennie Magiffin’s hat, then Aunt Jennie Magiffin must be underneath. I’ll let her in. I want to satisfy her curiosity about—about somebody.”

Mrs. Tibble left her friend, Jennie Magiffin, in no doubt whatsoever on that score. “I’ve taken a great liking to your little relative,” she said, when they

faced each other across the rather stuffy parlour.

“She’s no relation of mine, it’s on my husband’s side.”

Mrs. Tibble’s tongue clucked sympathetically. “Well now, that’s too bad. I wish she was related to me, we all just love her here.”

“Oh?” There was a rising, steel-like inflection in Mrs. Magiffin’s voice.

“And she’s so pretty, Jennie. Why, sometimes when her cheeks get glowing and her eyes shining I can hardly keep my eyes off her. You gave me a wrong impression when she was living with you, almost scared me off having the girl at all. She was quick-tempered, you said, and hard to manage, and ungrateful and disobedient—oh, all sorts of things. And she’s none of them at all. But you’ll want to see her, of course.” Mrs. Tibble rose and went to the door. “Joy,” she called, “here’s your Aunt Jennie Magiffin.”

Now Mrs. Magiffin’s chief motive in coming had been the hope that she might triumphantly carry back to her husband some word of the girl’s contrariness, for there was nothing which Mrs. Magiffin enjoyed more than just being able to say, “I told you so!”

But Mrs. Tibble’s report was distinctly disappointing, and so Mrs. Magiffin’s temper, never long-suffering, was fast slipping from control when Joy appeared. “Well?” she demanded sharply of the girl, “haven’t you got anything to say for yourself? Are you trying to make yourself useful?”

As usual, something in her manner and tone aroused Joy’s indignation. “Of course I’m useful——”

“Oh, you are, eh? And why not leave it for someone else to tell it of you?”

“You asked me.”

Mrs. Magiffin turned to Mrs. Tibble and flung out her hand with an exasperated and slightly dramatic gesture. “That’s the way she shows respect for me, interrupting at every second breath, answering back as no child of mine ever would.”

Joy’s brown eyes were dangerously bright. “You never give them a chance. No one *ever* has a chance to answer back when you’re around.”

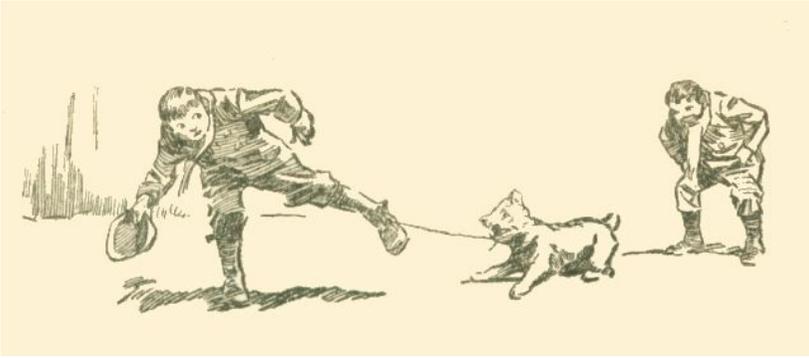
“You ungrateful girl! You naughty, ungrateful girl, talking like that after all I’ve done for you, clothing and feeding you——”

“You didn’t clothe me! You didn’t! You only offered me that old dress of Alice-Marie’s that I wouldn’t be *seen* in——” and then, because those emotions became uncontrollable, Joy turned and took refuge in flight.

But Mrs. Tibble proved disappointingly unsympathetic. “You generally find what you’re looking for,” she said; “life is a mirror, you know! Like we act to other folks, they act to us.”

“What in the world are you talking about?” Mrs. Magiffin stared in amazement at her friend, wondering if she had suddenly taken leave of her senses, then, rather huffily, she took her departure. “Maggie Tibble never called my daughter pretty,” she was remembering as she flounced down the steps. “Well, she’s welcome to Joy Meredith, ungrateful girl!”

The pink flower atop Mrs. Magiffin’s hat trembled with the intensity of her indignation as she marched towards home, where she rubbed her feet vigorously on her own doormat as if literally scraping the dust of John Street from her feet. “Of all the daft old women,” she assured herself, and seemed to take comfort from the thought, “Maggie Tibble certainly takes the cake!”



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### A PICTURE AND A PUPPY

Sometimes after school, or more frequently in the evenings when the May twilights were long and warm, Billy would push Queenie’s go-cart over to John Street.

“There’s the little boy and the baby waiting for you, Joy,” Mrs. Tibble would report from her post of observation in the front window. “Drop what you’re doing and give him one of those currant buns.”

And so Joy would sit on those time-worn steps while Billy would nibble appreciatively at that chunky bun after carefully picking out the currants and ranging them in a row to be kept as a last choice titbit.

Sometimes on a Saturday Mrs. Tibble, just because the kindness in that big heart of hers was stirred to response by the sight of that little trio, would pack a lunch-basket and they would set off for Allison Gardens—Joy, Billy, and Queenie, with sometimes an eager Henrietta in tow.

“Swell fun,” Billy described these expeditions with simple force, though it couldn’t help but be fun, he knew, if Joy was there. She was the most wonderful girl that ever lived, he decided, quite, quite different from any he had known. And she said such queer, unexpected things too. There was that day when they were sitting on the grass beside a lilac bush—one of those purple lilacs for which Allison Gardens were famous.

“You know,” she said suddenly, “I didn’t see much of the spring because I was working indoors most of the time. But what I *did* see I thought was lovely. And I hope if they have spring in heaven it will be exactly like spring in Canada!”

Billy only stared at her. To his wondering small-boy mind it seemed the queerest remark to make.

And she went right on to make another. “Listen!” she held up a warning forefinger. “A robin! It has a different song from the English robin, of course, but it’s one of the sweetest sounds in the world, isn’t it? It always makes me feel,” she laughed, a little apologetically it seemed, “well—sort of courageous somehow.”

Overcome with amazement Billy stared again. A robin! The sweetest sound! A sound that you could hear every day in the spring, so often that you never even stopped to listen. And it made her feel courageous, she had said. He had already noticed that she was very fond of that word. But the thought recalled a more familiar subject to his mind, for Billy, hearing from Joy of Mrs. Tibble’s absent son, had set him up as an object of hero-worship. There was no doubt in the small boy’s mind that he had run away to sea. “Because,” he asked with convincing finality, “where else’d a fellow run to?”

And so, because he had no answer for her remarks about the spring or robins, he went back to the subject of George.

“I just bet,” he said, lying back and squinting up through half-closed eyes at the blue sky, “I just bet George is fightin’ pirates now this minute. Or p’raps he’s already been et alive by them. Oh, shucks!” his black eyebrows drew together in a sudden scowl, “some folks have all the luck! Just think of all that happenin’ to one feller—runnin’ off to sea and then bein’ et alive!”

“Still, he mightn’t have been eaten, they might happen to be kind pirates!”

“Might they?” Billy asked, obviously disappointed.

“I rather hope he’s still alive, for I’d love him to come home.”

“So’d I, for even if he hadn’t been et himself, he might know some fellow what was!”

As Billy pushed Queenie home through the soft dusk of the early June evening the world about him was peopled with pirates. Oh, there was nothing weak-kneed or goody-goody about those pirates of Billy’s day-dreams, strong and hairy pirates they were, with realistic satisfying scalps hung round their belts.

It was Joy who first noticed about Billy something that troubled her those early summer days, something that found a sombre and unhappy reflection in his black eyes, and caused a curious lack of interest and response in his manner.

“He’s worried,” she decided, “and it isn’t natural for a little boy. Oh, I wonder what’s the matter!”

And then, quite unexpectedly, she found out.

She was sitting on the front steps one evening staring thoughtfully at the small boy. She had been talking about his much-loved ocean, trying to arouse his enthusiasm. “A feller like me’ll never be a sailor,” he said suddenly, “a feller like me just wheels babies!”

“You don’t like doing that, do you, Billy?”

He laughed, but it was an odd, unmirthful little sound. “The fellers call me nursey,” he explained simply. “I gave Ernie Hobbs a punch for doin’ it, and he stopped. But he put the other kids on, and they all yell now.”

“Oh, Billy!” Joy said, suddenly sensing the little world of tragedy behind the simple words.

“Of course,” he added, “’t isn’t exactly Queenie’s fault. She can’t help bein’ a baby, but——” He did not finish the sentence, but his eyes were wistful as they stared at the tall, red-brick warehouse across the street.

Joy was very thoughtful as she went indoors after watching Billy push the go-cart down John Street and head it towards Victory Avenue.

“It’s unfair,” she decided, “unfair of Aunt Jennie Magiffin to make him do it. Why doesn’t she make Alice-Marie act nursemaid instead? It’s horribly unfair to make a little boy miserable like that. Oh, I wish I could do something for him!”

Strangely enough it was none other than Mr. Tobias Tipkins, the artist, who made that wish come true.

Mr. Tobias Tipkins occupied the room which Mrs. Tibble designated as her “second-floor centre.” Time was when Mrs. Tibble had been proud of the distinction of housing an artist and had eagerly looked forward to the day when the pictures of Mr. Tobias Tipkins would startle the world and reflect fame upon her old house, when the room in which he had worked would be displayed to eager, sight-seeing throngs. He might—Mrs. Tibble had never dared to voice the hope aloud—even paint a picture of one of her rooms. Didn’t he often talk about “Dutch Interiors,” even keep one or two pictures of

them hanging on the walls of his room? Nothing in those to boast about as far as Mrs. Tibble could see. And while, of course, there was nothing Dutch about the old house, it was certainly Canadian, and a Canadian Interior, Mrs. Tibble decided in a sanguine moment, would sound as well as any other.

During the last few years, however, Mrs. Tibble's high faith in her artist-boarder had wavered a little. Was it just possible that the world was not as appreciative of Mr. Tipkins' pictures as was Mr. Tipkins himself? Was it just possible that he might depart this life without leaving any of those footprints on the sands of time that he was so fond of talking about? Not that she had any cause for complaint, Mrs. Tibble explained to Joy, for Mr. Tipkins was one of the most regular of all her Regulars in his weekly payment of his board bill.

Mr. Tipkins did night work on one of the newspapers, and, with the exception of a few hours' sleep, would spend the day-time hours in front of his easel. Often he would leave the door of his room open when Joy was dusting the hall, not shunning, but evidently rather welcoming the interruption of conversation. "He certainly loves the sound of his own voice," Joy confided to Mrs. Tibble.

To which that lady replied, "All artistic folks do!"

And then one morning Joy, with the floor-mop in her hand, had forgotten for a few moments the dusting waiting on her efforts, and, standing there in the doorway, had leaned her head back against the frame and told him of her father, of their companionship, and their happiness together.

Tobias Tipkins suddenly sprang to his feet, crying, "Hold it! Hold it!"

"Hold what?" Joy asked, alarmed, tightening her grip on the handle of the mop.

"The pose! The pose!" he said, still much excited, mixing paints with great rapidity.

She "held" it for several mornings after that, leaning back against the door-frame with her hand clasped over the handle of the mop.

It was Mrs. Tibble—from whom permission for the forced idleness had been obtained—who objected to this arrangement.

"Being an artist you ought to know better than to paint her with that floor-mop," she declared indignantly. "A bouquet of flowers'd be better, roses or sweet peas, or, if we could scare up the money, orchids."

"No, no," Tobias Tipkins said, impatiently, evidently working at high pressure; "the floor-mop's the thing."

And then, when the sittings, or—as Mrs. Tibble designated them—the “standings” were over, Tobias Tipkins showed a strange perversity about exhibiting the result. “Not yet, not yet,” he would say, forcing Joy to a reluctant conclusion: “I must look just terribly plain and homely or he’d *want* me to see it.”

But it was none other than Mr. Tipkins who had taken a lively interest in Billy Magiffin ever since the day when, coming up the front steps with—as Mrs. Tibble described it—“his feet on earth and his head in the clouds,” he had stumbled over Billy.

“Look out where you’re goin’!” Billy had said indignantly. And Mr. Tipkins had looked down at the small boy with such an alarming frown that he scared him off the steps completely. But suddenly he had paused, and from his pocket had produced a small coin which he held towards Billy, evidently intending it as a peace-offering.

“Here, old fellow,” he had said, quite—in Billy’s own words—“like a regular fellow,” and a very nice one at that, “I’m sorry I walked over you.”

Mr. Tipkins had questioned Joy about the lad afterwards. “He’s an unusual-looking boy,” he said, “with those black eyes and chubby red cheeks.”

Joy smiled. “You and the five cents captivated him,” she said; “he thinks now he’ll be a picture-painter, as he calls it, just like you when he grows up.”

Which implied compliment in turn captivated Mr. Tipkins.

And so it came about quite naturally that Joy should talk to him about Billy, and under the stimulus of Mr. Tipkins’ evident interest she explained it all—Billy’s active little-boy dislike of wheeling the go-cart, his horror at being called Nursey.

“Ha!” Mr. Tipkins brought his clenched hand down with a bang on the table, “the boy is suffering from an inferiority complex.”

“He is—*what?*” Joy gasped.

Mr. Tipkins sprang up and paced round the room, much excited. “He has an inferiority complex. Or, in other words, because he has to wheel the baby and act as a nursemaid he feels inferior to the boys who don’t.”

Joy was smiling as she spread open a crumpled piece of paper she had been holding. “He asked me one day what an essay was, and I told him that when folks were very much interested in something they would sometimes write about it, so Billy wrote an essay on pirates. Here it is.”

Mr. Tipkins smiled too as he read that smudged, obviously laborious effort of Billy's:

"Pirates is our best friends and our worst enemees. Deep sea pirates is the best kind. A pirate is never afraid. If he is scared of things like the dark at night or a noise under his bed, he is drowned ded by the other pirates. You can't be a scared-cat pirate. No Sir."

"Well," Mr. Tipkins said, very thoughtfully, "we must certainly do something for Billy Magiffin."

Two days later, just after supper, Mr. Tipkins appeared in John Street carrying a covered basket. It had been a hot day, the July sun at noon had penetrated down between the factories so that now, though the street was in shadow again, it still cast the heat up from the pavements and back from the brick walls. On the front steps Mrs. Tibble and Joy were trying to find a little relief from the stuffy oppressiveness of the house. "Now what in the world," Mrs. Tibble exclaimed, catching sight of her artist-boarder, "do you suppose he's got there?"

Mr. Tipkins set the basket down on the steps at Joy's feet. "There," he said, "there is something that will give Billy a superiority complex."

"My land!" Mrs. Tibble said uneasily, half under her breath, "the man's talking funny. It must be the heat."

But Joy's fingers were busy with the lid of the basket. Inside—well, just at first she could hardly believe the evidence of her eyes—was a dog. A shaggy, woolly dog with a little pink tongue that licked eagerly at her fingers.

"Well," Mrs. Tibble exclaimed, "I'll be jiggered!"

"Do you think Billy will like him?" Mr. Tipkins was asking.

"Will he?" Joy laughed at the absurdity of the question. "Oh, won't he though?"

Early the next morning they introduced the dog to his new master. It was quite impossible for Billy to express those feelings of incredulous surprise and delight that surged within him. In fact he backed away just at first with an almost frightened expression in his black eyes.

"He's yours," Joy repeated, whistling to the little dog to come nearer. "Mr. Tipkins bought him specially for you."

"For me?" Billy echoed, coming a little closer. "For me?"

But once he had felt the touch of that little pink tongue Billy drew a long quivering breath. “Oh-h, Christopher Columbus!” he said.

“For a little while,” Mr. Tipkins told him, “we’ll let the dog stay here with us; then, when you get used to leading him on a string, you can take him home.”

“Yessir!” Billy said, willing to agree to anything this wonderful being might suggest.

“And we’ll start right away to teach him tricks. Obedience is the first lesson, of course; he must learn to come when he’s called. Then we’ll teach him to do dead dog——”

“Not really dead?”

“Oh no, only pretend.”

The pretend game again, and this time it was a grown-up who seemed to like playing it too.

It was Joy who suggested a name for the dog. “Don’t you think,” she asked Billy, “as Mr. Tipkins gave him to you, it would be nice to name the puppy after him?”

Billy looked doubtful. “Call him Mr. Tipkins?”

“Oh no; his first name’s Tobias——”

“Doesn’t sound like a dog.”

“No, but don’t you see, Billy—Tobias, Toby for short!”

Billy’s face lighted up. “Toby? Oh, say, *that’s* swell, Joy!”

And so it came about that early each morning Billy, glorying in the freedom of holidays, might be seen making short work of the distance between Victory Avenue and John Street, anxious to lose none of those precious moments which might be spent with the new little Toby. Of necessity he was generally compelled to shove Queenie’s go-cart, and Queenie loved those fast runs—the faster the better. But there were times, and he came to love them best of all, when, untrammelled by babies or go-carts, “Me’n Toby” would accompany the artist on one of his long walks.

“I think picture-painters are the swellest things,” he confided to Joy, “far, far better’n pirates!”

And then at last came the great day when Billy was allowed to take his dog home. He had timed his entry into Victory Avenue for the early evening, an

hour when “the fellers” would be about. Fulfilling his expectations, an interested and curious group of boys had clustered around him by the time he reached his own front door.

“Hey,” Ernie Hobbs demanded, “what d’you think you’re doin’ with that there dog?”

“Taking him home,” Billy said; “he’s mine.”

“Aw, g’wan! He doesn’t belong to you. He doesn’t belong to nobody, that dog!”

But as Toby’s master Billy felt very brave and defiant. “Look here, you fellers,” he turned and faced them threateningly, “if any of you ever call me Nursey again I’ll set My Dog on you!”

Ernie Hobbs burst into a loudly derisive laugh. “Ha-ha, you would, would you? Him! Why, he wouldn’t set on a fly!”

And then, as luck would have it, at that moment Toby spied a shoe-lace trailing from Ernie Hobbs’ boot. He sprang for the tantalizing plaything. Ernie Hobbs—like all bullies a coward at heart—let out a yell, turned and fled with Toby in hot pursuit.

“Ha-ha,” Billy shouted, “he wouldn’t set on a fly, wouldn’t he? Ha-ha, Ernie Hobbs!” Then, realizing that Toby must not get out of sight, he called, “Here, Toby! Toby!”

And the little dog, though obviously reluctant, dropped the chase and trotted obediently back to his master.

Awe had enveloped that group of boys. Respect was in their eyes. “I say,” one of them asked coaxingly, “you’ll let us play with him, won’t you?”

“Oh, sometimes!” Billy said, very patronizing indeed, and with that shrill, summoning whistle, which was really unnecessary, for the little dog was almost under his feet, and that proud, “Here, Toby, here, sir!” he turned and disappeared into the house.



## CHAPTER NINE

### THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN

“Oh, I knew he'd come home *some time*,  
when he had a mother like you!”

**O**n a certain morning early in August a man might have been seen alighting from a train and making his way through the station with the air of one who has some definite goal in view. He was rather below the average height and of stocky build. At the present moment he walked briskly, and boarding a west-bound street car gazed about with interest. But as they left the station and its environment his eyes grew puzzled and he emitted a whistle of surprise. “Things have changed a bit,” he thought, as he stood up and went towards the conductor. “John Street?” he asked.

The conductor rang the bell. “We've passed it,” he said; “walk back three blocks and you'll find it.”

The man was obviously puzzled as he walked back rather slowly, looking anxiously at the name-plates at the corners. “Changed?” he echoed his own thought. “Well, rather! I suppose I thought things'd stand still while I roved around. But here we are——” There was relief in his voice as the bold, black letters, “John Street,” met his eye.

As he proceeded, however, he frowned again, and his steps slowed down. “Twenty years has left its mark here too,” he decided; “not a sign of Bill Blake's house, or Tom Lawson's with the big tree in front. Warehouses,

factories instead. I wonder if time has pushed No. 63 out of the way too. Ah!" there was a world of satisfaction in the exclamation, "here's the old house itself!"

Inside No. 63 Joy and Mrs. Tibble—to use that lady's words—were "up to their eyes in preserves." And from the kitchen of the old house there issued forth odours spicy and seductive.

"There's the bell!" Joy exclaimed. "I do wish it wouldn't ring when we're busy."

She opened the front door and rather impatiently confronted the stranger. "If you're an agent, then Mrs. Tibble is busy," she told him, the least bit sharply.

"But I'm not an agent," he said, "and I want to see Mrs. Tibble on a—on a particularly personal matter."

Joy showed him into the dim old parlour, and it was owing to that dim light that Mrs. Tibble stared uncertainly when she first came in. And then she did none of those things which might have been expected of her. She did not faint nor fall backwards; neither did she throw her arms around his neck and cry, "Oh, George, at last!"

She just stood there in the doorway and said very simply, "So you've come home!"

After all, it was no shock of surprise, for, deep in her mother-heart, she had expected it through all those years.

But to the other members of Mrs. Tibble's establishment it came as a great surprise and was the cause of much speculation.

What would George do now he had come home? they wondered, as they met in conclave on the first-floor landing. Would he prove a good-for-nothing for his mother to support? Or would he turn out to be rolling in wealth himself and so prove the prop of his mother's old age? It was possible—it was Mr. Perkins' suggestion—that he was a fugitive from justice and had fled to John Street as a safe hiding-place. Mike Mahoney thought this unlikely. George Tibble's hands, he said, looked like the hands of a workman. "My guess is that he's a mechanic of some sort," he said.

They all gazed rather hopefully at the artist. Surely, being an artist and able to paint all sorts of improbable things, he could imagine something that had really happened. But the artist only shook his head and exclaimed, as all the others had exclaimed, "So he's come home at last!" Which, as Mr. Perkins

pointed out crossly, didn't get anyone anywhere.

But George's return fell bomb-like into the small-boy world of Billy.

"Joy," he asked, almost incoherent with excitement, "have you asked him whether he was ever et by pirates?"

"If so he'd hardly be here now."

"Have you asked him if he was shipwrecked and cast on a desert island with cannibals?" Oh, there was no doubt that Tobias Tipkins and Joy had awakened Billy's imagination. "And did you ask him what whales 'n porpoises really look like; if he ever rode on their backs?"

Joy shook her head. "I haven't had a chance, really. He's been so busy talking things over with his mother. But he said last night that he was very much interested in machinery."

"Machinery? Oh, shucks!" Billy said.

Whether George Tibble offered any reason or excuse for his long silence to his mother, none but herself ever knew. Perhaps her unfailing sense of humour bridged that gap more effectually than anything else could have done.

"So now," she said, when he had told her of his plans for the future, "now you're wanting a housekeeper you've come home for mother!"

At the end of the week George Tibble left the old house, and then it was that Mrs. Tibble offered the eagerly-awaited explanations. There was a certain dignity about her manner when she told them one evening at dinner. George, it seemed, had been appointed foreman of a factory which was opening up in the town of Graybrook. And George—it was noticeable to them all how Mrs. Tibble repeated that name—George wanted her to sell out and go to keep house for him. In the meantime he had gone on to Graybrook. "And," Mrs. Tibble announced it quite finally, "when we get things settled here I'm going too."

Perhaps if anyone had been truly observant they might have noticed a tremor in her voice at the moment, for, when all was said and done, it was, as Mrs. Tibble said, "a regular uprooting." For the old house, despite the disappointments and heartaches it had witnessed, had nevertheless bound itself to her affections with invisible hoops of steel.

But, as George had pointed out with evident truth, the house was dilapidated and in need of repairs. There was commercial value in the property and it was undoubtedly a good time to sell.

“But whatever shall *I* do, Mrs. Tibble?” Tobias Tipkins asked, “I—why, I shan’t know myself in other surroundings. I’m so used to these. Used to my room, to the meals, to you, everything. I won’t feel at home anywhere else.”

“I’m real sorry, Mr. Tipkins,” Mrs. Tibble said, secretly rather flattered. “I hate putting you about so.”

She proved quite communicative to Joy as they washed the dishes together. “George says there won’t be any need for me to go on scrimping and saving. He says”—a little note of pride crept into her voice,—“he says he wouldn’t have come home at all if he hadn’t been able to provide for me and fix me up real comfortable.” It was quite evident that Mrs. Tibble had determinedly banished all remembrance of the loneliness and heart-ache of those long years of waiting. “He says he’ll make up for the work his Dad didn’t do, and for himself running off and leaving me to carry on alone. He says I can sit round and be a lady of leisure. ‘Catch me,’ I says to him; ‘a lady of leisure, she’s not your mother, George Tibble!’ ”

Then, suddenly, she looked rather anxiously at the young girl. “I’m sorry about you, my dear,” she added. “I just hate to think of you going back to Victory Avenue. You weren’t very happy there, were you?”

“Not very.”

“And you’ve made it a lot easier for me since you came here, a lot happier too.” She smiled through the clouds of steam rising from the dish-pan. “They didn’t name you Joy for nothing, did they?”

A little later, when Mrs. Tibble had gone upstairs, Joy lifted a tightly clenched little fist and shook it at an imaginary George Tibble.

“I wish—oh, I wish you hadn’t come home,” she said; “I wish you had been eaten by Billy’s pirates!” Then suddenly her sense of the humorous triumphed and she laughed a little at her own words. “That’s silly and selfish, of course. Mrs. Tibble’s happy, oh, ever so happy, and I ought to be happy too.”

It seemed miraculously by way of answer that she remembered at that moment something her father had said: “We are told to rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” He had repeated the words thoughtfully, she remembered, but with that whimsical little flash of humour in his eyes. “I’m afraid it’s easier to sympathize with sorrow, Joy, than it is with other folks’ happiness.”

And at the time she had answered, “But, Daddy, I’d always be glad when other people were glad—always!”

But now, recognizing the truth of his words, she smiled a little. “Buck up, Joy Meredith,” she told herself severely, “and try to rejoice and be glad with Mrs. Tibble.”

With almost appalling suddenness the old house was dismantled. Curtains were taken down, carpets were torn up, and the passages echoed to the sound of hurrying footsteps. One by one the Regulars left. “Sorry to go!” they told Mrs. Tibble, who watched them leave with undoubted moisture in her blue eyes. The artist, disturbed by the forthcoming change, rushed about excitedly, but finally succeeded in finding for himself a room farther up-town, and immediately took Billy to see his new abode. Between the man and the boy there had developed a curious attachment, with the little dog as a bond of interest.

Toby was proving an apt pupil. He would sit up and beg for a lump of sugar; if commanded to speak for it, he would bark. He would even allow that lump to be placed on his nose and would hold it there until the magic word of release. He was a little tardy at doing “dead dog,” for surely even a human would acknowledge that it is terribly hard to roll over and lie quite, quite still just as if the sugar wasn’t there at all.

Mr. Tipkins seemed to possess a never-failing supply of sugar-lumps. It was noted at Mrs. Tibble’s, and at his new boarding-house, that he always said he didn’t take sugar in his tea, but requested that it be placed on the saucer beside the cup. And then, quite openly, he would slip it into his pocket.



For Billy the news that Joy was to return to Victory Avenue was almost too good to be true. “Mr. Tipkins says I may wake up and find it’s a dream,” he confided; “but I won’t, will I, Joy? It couldn’t be a dream, could it?”

“I’m afraid not!” Joy said.

But Alice-Marie, who had accompanied Billy that afternoon, broke in, “I wish it *was* a dream, and so ought you too, Billy, after what Ma said about it upsettin’ everything having her turned back on us like this all the time.”

Joy’s chin tilted itself to an elevated little angle. “I’m not being turned back. If Mrs. Tibble was staying here she’d want me to stay with her. And I’d want to stay too.”

“As Mrs. Tibble’s servant! It just shows what a queer girl you are. I wouldn’t go out working for anything!”

“No,” Joy retorted, with what must be confessed was a somewhat disdainful glance, “you couldn’t!”

It was Billy who accompanied her to Victory Avenue on an afternoon in September while Mrs. Tibble waved good-bye from the door of the old house. Billy, pushing the go-cart with one hand and leading Toby with the other, had no mournful droop to his lips now; they curved upward in a wide, happy grin.

“The other kids, they says to me, ‘Bring that dog of yours along, Billy,’ and then maybe I bring him out and we have heaps of fun. But Toby, he knows

me, he likes me better'n all the others. Toby, he's a smart little fellow, he is."

Mrs. Magiffin left no doubt that Joy was unwelcome, wasted no time in arousing combative resentment in the girl.

"So you're back?" she greeted her. "I didn't think Maggie Tibble's enthusiasm would last. You ought to be thankful you've got a home to come to when you're turned off like that."

"I haven't been turned off."

"Oh, I suppose you call comin' back here bein' kept on at Mrs. Tibble's? Well, I don't. You don't look specially pleased about it either. Goodness only knows we're the ones to look sour and out of sorts if anyone does. Us being upset and disturbed all over again. Alice-Marie, poor little soul, after using your room, and now having to double up with Henrietta!"

"I didn't want to come back."

"Oh no, of course not. Of course you didn't want to come back to your relations, to your poor overworked aunt and cousins who've done so much for you. Of course you'd rather stay where you were earnin' easy money and eatin' your head off."

"I didn't! It's horrid of you to talk like that—horrid! Mrs. Tibble's a dear—far, far kinder to me than you've ever been!"

"That's it, that's it!" Mrs. Magiffin's voice rose almost to a scream. "Take it out of me, your relation that's scrimped and saved to give you a home."

"I can't help it if you *are* a relation." Joy dashed to the foot of the stairs, then turning, flung back her parting shot: "If I had any choice in relations I wouldn't have picked you—not if you were the only one left!"



## CHAPTER TEN

### “CHEERIO!”

**W**hen Mrs. Tibble had watched Joy and Billy out of sight she had turned back into the house—the old house desolate now, echoing, it seemed, with loneliness. And the moisture in Mrs. Tibble’s faded blue eyes overflowed and ran down her wrinkled cheeks.

But, strange to say, not even then did the Idea occur to Mrs. Tibble. Nor had a ghost of it appeared during those previous busy weeks. Perhaps it was just that busyness which had crowded it out—the stripping and dismantling of the old house, the tearing up and taking down; the packing and crating and selling off. Every night during those weeks Mrs. Tibble had dropped into bed to sleep the heavy sleep of utter exhaustion.

But to-night, because George had come down for the last couple of days to make final arrangements, Mrs. Tibble went up to her own room feeling as if a load had been lifted from her shoulders, knowing that at last someone else was at hand to make decisions and shoulder responsibilities. And so it was with a feeling of immense relief that she deadened the tick of the alarm clock with a stocking, and getting into bed laid her down with a will.

Perhaps the Idea had been there right along, lying dormant under the active, pressing, daily interests. Whether or not that was the case it seemed to come to her quite suddenly. So suddenly, in fact, that the shock of it jerked her bolt upright.

“And why not?” she demanded sharply of herself. “Why not? Why didn’t I

think of it before? I'll do it! Who's to prevent? Of course I'll do it!"

Mrs. Tibble lost no time the next morning in putting her resolve into action. George was confided in, of course. "It's a fine idea," he exclaimed, "we might have thought of it sooner."

"It means I must go over to Victory Avenue right away," she said thoughtfully, "before that Jennie Magiffin is up to anything on her own hook."

"I'll run you over in the car," George said.

His mother stared aghast. She had realized, of course, that this surprising son of hers had actually bought a car when he had come down from Graybrook. "It's quite a run from the house to the factory," he had explained; "in fact they make an allowance for a car. We'll motor up, mother; it's a lovely drive."

As matter-of-fact and casual as that.

Mrs. Tibble had eyed the car with open hostility. Her point of view was that of a lifelong pedestrian—and a rheumatic one at that—to whom motors were a menace.

"Well," she had told him, "you can have your old car, George Tibble, and I'll ride up to Graybrook if I have to, but you needn't expect me to enjoy myself when I'm in that thing!"

And now when she wanted to get to Victory Avenue and to get there quickly, George was saying, "I'll run you over in the car!"

"George," Mrs. Tibble exclaimed, "no!"

George threw back his head and laughed outright. "Mother," he said, "yes!"

Mrs. Tibble had travelled in motors before. Impossible, perhaps, to escape that. But those drives had been few and far between and had been viewed in the light of a necessary evil. Certainly there had been no pride of possession which she felt—much against her will—enveloping her now. The car was not large, neither was it luxurious, but it was new and shiny, and—it belonged to George.

"Not too fast," his mother cautioned, sitting very upright and tense, "and blow your horn before you go round the corners, George, so folks'll know you're coming. I—I don't like it. I feel sort of conspicuous stuck up in this glass cage like a stuffed bird. I feel as if everybody was looking at me. My land! Are we there already? I thought we'd just started."

She drew a deep breath. "I'm thankful that part's over and we're here safe"; then, alighting, she made her way on to the porch of No. 5.

It was Joy who opened the door—Joy with what Billy had described as a "queer look" about her eyes, but who flashed into a sudden smile at sight of the visitor. "You!" she exclaimed. "Oh, I'm so glad!"

"I've come," Mrs. Tibble said, "to——"

Then she whispered something in the girl's ear.

Joy sprang back almost as if she was frightened and pressed her hands against the wall behind her. "Me?" she gasped. "Me? You *are*?"

Mrs. Tibble nodded, and raising her voice asked, "Is Mrs. Magiffin in? Oh," as that lady herself appeared from the shadows of the back hall, "I just wanted to see you for a minute or two, Jennie."

Across the small dark front room Mrs. Magiffin faced her visitor inquiringly. "Well?" she asked, realizing that something unusual must be afoot to cause Mrs. Tibble to come all the way from John Street for a morning call. "Find something wrong after the girl left?"

"After the girl left? Something wrong? Do you mean after *Joy* left?" Mrs. Tibble stared at her, obviously puzzled, then suddenly she decided to dismiss the question and go straight to the point. "I want to ask you, Jennie, if you'll let Joy Meredith go with me to Graybrook?"

"Let Joy go with you? Are you crazy, Maggie?"

"Crazy? I don't see anything specially crazy about wanting her. I'd not be taking her as a servant this time, but more as a companion, for she *is* companionable, that girl, so willing and cheerful. She's like her name, that's what she is." Mrs. Tibble leaned forward eagerly. "Will you let her come, Jennie?"

It was—Mrs. Tibble realized it too late—an unfortunate way of putting her request. "For," Mrs. Magiffin told herself craftily, "if Maggie Tibble wants her as bad as all that I won't let her go. I'll keep her to help me."

So she shook her head. "No, it's time she turned to and made herself useful here. I'm single-handed with Alice-Marie back at school, there's no one to help me at all. It's only fair that the girl should pay back a little of what we've done for her. Not that she ever could—or would."

Instinctively Mrs. Tibble realized that she had made a mistake in the form of her request. A little of that craft in Mrs. Magiffin's eyes found reflection in

her own.

“But it must be a strain on your purse-strings, Jennie, having an extra mouth to feed.”

“It is.”

“And an extra person to dress; all her clothes are wearing out too—I was going to get her a new outfit for the winter. It’d be quite an expense, but then I haven’t young ones growing up like you have, all at the expensive age.”

“You don’t know a thing about expense, Maggie Tibble, you with one child, and him a grown-up son, earnin’ money on his own account. You’ve never had a relation of your husband’s pushed on you whether you wanted her or not. You never had to turn everything topsy-turvy to make room for a girl you’d never seen, and wished to goodness you never would. You never had ungrateful relations hanging round your neck like millstones. You’d think I was the Angel Gabriel himself the way folks put on me!”

Mrs. Tibble might have retorted that if life had not presented her with unwished-for and ungrateful relations, it had given in their place ungrateful boarders; boarders to be considered, warmed and fed. Discontented boarders. Grumbling boarders. Boarders who slipped off slyly without paying their bill. But Mrs. Tibble realized that if she was to accomplish the end she had in view, tact was the supreme need of the moment.

“It is hard on you, Jennie,” she said slowly, “but it would be a help, wouldn’t it, if I took the girl off your hands for awhile? Why, think of clothes alone, you can’t let her go round in rags. They’ll cost a lot, and ’t isn’t as if she was smaller than your own so’s they could hand theirs down, it’s hers that’d have to come down to them.”

“Never.” Mrs. Magiffin’s mouth was set in a straight, narrow line. “Never, while I’ve breath left.”

Mrs. Tibble determinedly held the floor. “And if I take her along and fix up her clothes at my expense and then pay her for coming with me—well, you won’t be out of pocket, Jennie.”

She could see that Mrs. Magiffin was relenting, and so she stood up. “But, of course, if you’d rather not——”

“Oh, well, take her along. Though it beats me why in the world you want the girl, bad-tempered and sullen as she is. If any child of mine had her disposition I’d be in my grave of sorrow long before this.”

“There’s no accounting for folks’ likes and dislikes,” Mrs. Tibble agreed,

outwardly placid, but inwardly jubilant. “Tell Joy, if you’ll be so kind, that we’ll call for her early to-morrow morning. We are motoring up to Graybrook. My car——” Mrs. Tibble coughed, and impressively repeated those words, “My car is waiting for me outside now!”

With all the dignity that her rheumatic joints would permit Mrs. Tibble crossed the room and went out at the front door, realizing that for once she had experienced the supreme satisfaction of “knocking the speech out of Jennie Magiffin.” She sailed majestically—no other words adequately describe her progress—down the steps and across the sidewalk to the car. Then, turning, waved her hand in the direction of the unresponsive curtained windows of No. 5. “Jennie’s pretending not to be there, but she is,” she remarked. “Now, home, George!”

Characteristically Mrs. Magiffin did not tell Joy of her decision. “You’d better set to work and give this room a bit of a clean-up,” she said.

The girl’s brown eyes were two questions. Was it possible that Aunt Jennie Magiffin had refused to let her go? “Did Mrs. Tibble say anything—anything about me?” she ventured.

“And supposin’ she did, and supposin’ she didn’t! Can’t you wait till you’re told?”

It was Billy who told her after he came home from school, having run all the way the sooner to reach Toby, whom he had left tied in the yard by a string—a furiously rebellious Toby.

But Billy forgot even Toby when his mother told him the news. He trailed miserably into the dining-room where he knew he would find Joy, darning socks. “Ma says you’re goin’ away with Mrs. Tibble in the mornin’,” he said, and sat down with a little bump on the edge of the sofa.

“Billy! Am I? Oh, hurray! Are you sure you heard right?”

“I wish I hadn’t.” Billy dug grimy knuckles into his eyes. “Oh, I wish you weren’t goin’, Joy!”

Joy dropped the sock and slipped an arm round the little boy’s shoulders, suddenly sensing what it meant to him.

“You dear kiddie,” she said; “why, I just hate leaving *you*, for we’re such good chums, aren’t we? And it’s always hard for chums to part. But we’ll have to say Cheerio! to each other and pretend awfully hard, won’t we?”

“Pretend what?”

“That we feel brave, no matter if we don’t. If we say Cheerio! to each other, no one’ll ever know how sad and sorry we’re feeling inside. And you’ll still have Toby.”

“I’d rather have you than him—almost.”

“Toby’s going to grow from a puppy into a dog thinking that you’re the bravest boy in the world. No matter what other dogs tell him about *their* masters, he’ll know that *his* is the best of all.”

“Will he?” Then, quite suddenly, Billy squared his shoulders. “ ’Tisn’t so awfully hard bein’ brave!” he said.

It was early that Saturday morning in September when George Tibble’s car turned into Victory Avenue. “Honk!” Mrs. Tibble commanded; “I want Jennie Magiffin to see us.”

At that moment Joy ran down the steps. “Are you ready?” Mrs. Tibble asked.

“Ready?” Joy echoed. “I’ve been ready for hours.”

They clustered in a curious little group on the steps—Billy and Toby, Alice-Marie, Henrietta, and Queenie the baby. Only Mrs. Magiffin was conspicuous by her absence. “But I’ll be bound she’s sight-seeing from behind those curtains of hers,” Mrs. Tibble told herself gleefully. “Honk again, George, just’s we drive off!”

Billy, with Toby clasped in his arms as if to assure himself that he could not be taken too, drew in a deep, choking breath. “G’bye, Joy,” he called. “G’bye! Ch-ch-cheerio!”

“Cheerio, Billy!”

Glancing back Joy saw only the desolate little figure of Billy holding his dog tight, tight, while tears—unabashed, heart-broken, little-boy tears—were running down his cheeks.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### “MAKE ROOM FOR JOY!”

**G**raybrook, among the Caledon hills, in the kindly heart of Ontario, is a thriving, ambitious country town. Its name, of which it is justly proud, was derived from that of the Rev. John Gray, a pioneer minister when the district was wide-flung over the country-side. Down through the years had come stories of his untiring zeal and dauntless courage, so that it was but natural, half a century after his death, when the district grouped itself in the valley, that it should take unto itself his name, adding that of the brook which flowed so prettily through the heart of a near-by wood.

At the present time Graybrook lays claim to those marks of distinction which ambitious towns invariably possess—one of the oldest churches in the province; one of the prettiest of public libraries; the most dangerous level-crossing in all the country-side; a haunted house, and the “exact spot” where a murder was supposed to have been committed.

From a strictly impartial point of view it is but one of many similar Ontario towns. On a Saturday night its Main Street hums with activity; on a Sunday morning the townsfolk go decorously to church. Its stores are well-kept and attractive, the streets wide and gratefully cool in summer under the welcome shade of the over-arching trees.

To Joy Meredith the little town of Graybrook presented a new and delightful world. Delightful the house which George Tibble had ready for them—a house many-windowed, cheerful, sunny. Delightful too the quiet orderliness of the little town itself—its well-kept lawns, its trim flower-beds, and the flaming autumn glory of its maple trees.

“It isn’t at all like England,” she said; “there’s more space to it somehow, and it isn’t quite so tidy or cosy, but I think one might learn to love it very soon.”

From Mrs. Tibble’s point of view this new house of hers on Prince Albert Avenue, just off the upper end of Main Street, was everything that the heart of woman could desire. There was a self-respecting lawn in front, another at the back with ample scope for flower-borders and vegetable plots. Sunlight, which for so long had been excluded from the John Street house, flooded the interior throughout the day.

And as for the street on which it faced—well, wouldn’t the name, Prince Albert Avenue, satisfy the most soaring ambitions of any woman? “It sounds real—real *swanky!*” Mrs. Tibble declared, with a little gasp at her own audacity in lapsing into current slang. “Just the kind of street I’ve always wanted to live on.”

And in the little town itself there was friendliness which with tangible tokens hastened to extend a welcome to the strangers within their gates—a bag of potatoes: a loaf of home-made bread; a luscious lemon pie; a batch of buns, white and flaky.

“Oh, isn’t it fun,” Joy exclaimed, “it just keeps you wondering what’s coming next.”

The gift-givers followed their presents by calls, and over the tea-cups discussed the rival merits of chili-sauce and mustard pickle. “Real friendly like,” Mrs. Tibble put it, “as one lady to another.”

It was then that Mrs. Tibble indulged an extravagant and long-cherished ambition.

“Calling cards?” George exclaimed when she told him. “You’re going to have calling cards printed? But, mother, they’re out of date.”

“Out of date!” his mother echoed indignantly; “you’re out of date yourself, George Tibble! Don’t you forget that I come from the city and I know how things *ought* to be done even if they’re not.”

And Mrs. Tibble nodded emphatically, quite determined that this secret desire of her heart should not be sideswept by any vagaries of fickle fashion. With those cards in view her mind went searching back to the days of her early married life. Hiram, she remembered, had possessed another name, seldom put to use, it is true, but most certainly it was his own. “Ha!” she exclaimed, triumphantly dragging it from the mists of the dim past.

And so when those cards were printed they blazoned it forth for the feminine world of Graybrook to behold and admire—"Mrs. H. Sylvester Tibble."

She confided a little of her satisfaction over it all to Joy as they polished the hardwood floor in the dining-room one morning. "I feel like a different woman up here," she said, "sort of proud of my house and George and myself."

Joy nodded. "I feel different too, ever so much happier than when I first came out to Canada. I thought then that all Canada would be like Victory Avenue, and Canadian women like Aunt Jennie Magiffin."

"Saints forbid!" Mrs. Tibble exclaimed fervently, under her breath.

"And now I know that Graybrook is just as really Canadian as Victory Avenue, and even if Aunt Jennie Magiffin is a Canadian, why, you are too."

Mrs. Tibble's eyes twinkled. "Don't know's I'd be chosen for a Miss Canada. Flat-footed, you know, and a hundred and eighty-two pounds."

"Oh, I didn't mean exactly your outside looks," Joy assured her comfortingly. "You're *very* good inside, you know."

"How'd it be," Mrs. Tibble added suddenly, "if you called me Aunt Maggie? 'Twouldn't sound so stiffish, would it?"

"It would be lovely. Is your real name Margaret? It's such a beautiful name."

Mrs. Tibble shook her head, and the twinkle in her eyes voiced itself in an audible chuckle of amusement. "Plain Maggie. They weren't searching for anything specially beautiful when they named me; something sort of useful was what they were after, I guess."

It was during her round of calls that Mrs. Tibble gleaned facts of local interest which she triumphantly carried home. "Your mother doesn't like gossip," Joy confided to George, "but she does love a good, zippy piece of news."

Graybrook, it seemed, had a Haunted House. Mrs. Tibble was quite radiant when she brought home this titbit.

"Really?" George questioned.

Over her spectacles his mother stared at him suspiciously. "You needn't make fun of it, George. It's a little place out on the Old North Road. A murder was committed under a tree near there, and they think the murderer hid himself

in the house, so no one has lived there since.”

“Then how do they know it’s haunted?”

“George! As if folks ever know anything about ghosts! It’s a sort of—a sort of *feeling*.”

But the next evening Mrs. Tibble was even more triumphant. “What do you think I heard this afternoon?” she asked her little audience of two.

“Another haunted house?”

“Don’t try to be funny, George. You know’s well as I do a town wouldn’t have more than one. Graybrook,” Mrs. Tibble paused to make the announcement more impressive, “Graybrook’s got a Mystery Woman!” She nodded, noting with evident satisfaction the interest she had aroused. “I thought you’d be surprised.”

“And what,” George asked, “is a Mystery Woman?”

“Oh, she’s different, a bit queer.”

“But how different and queer?” George was certainly curious enough to satisfy even his mother.

“Well, she doesn’t do her own pickling, for one thing. Oh, you needn’t smile; no self-respecting woman ever hands that over to other folks. And then, they say, she has all sort of odd-looking visitors half the time. Folks that come on the train. Foreigners, like as not. An outlandish-looking Russian woman once, and just last week a Japanese girl. And then when she hasn’t visitors she goes dashing all over the country in that little car of hers.”

“Mysterious enough to satisfy a detective, but not to keep me awake.” George stood up and stretched his arms. “I’m off to bed. I believe, mother,” he added, “you’d rather like to be a Mystery Woman yourself.”

“George!” Mrs. Tibble gasped, shocked and indignant.

It was just a few days later that Joy started out on what she called a tour of exploration. “This time,” she told Mrs. Tibble, “I think I’ll explore the haunted house.”

“Be careful,” Mrs. Tibble cautioned, nervously; “I wouldn’t go making free with spooks and the like.”

“I won’t,” Joy laughed; “don’t worry, Aunt Maggie.”

She turned along Main Street with a passing glance for the bright displays of the little store windows, and the picturesque little grey-stone church, and

followed the course of the brook out on to the Old North Road. Under the mellow light of the afternoon sun the autumn colours flaming over the country-side glowed, vivid and beautiful. Joy, responding happily to the spirit of the day, ran lightly along as if she was a little girl again. Ah! There it was, she knew it immediately from Mrs. Tibble's graphic description—the haunted house, set far back from the road with the cedar hedge encircling its grounds. The house was unpainted and neglected; its front steps sagged forlornly, and a little pile of bricks from the chimney were scattered over the ground below. The lilac bush, just as Mrs. Tibble had described, had grown high and partly concealed the front door. "In the spring," Joy thought as she gazed in over the little, old-fashioned gate, "it would look almost pretty when the lilacs were in bloom."

At that moment she realized that something was moving on the steps that led up to a funny little side door. Shading her eyes with her hand she could see somebody—a very small somebody it appeared—prancing and bobbing up and down.

And then somebody else—a much bigger somebody—stood up. Joy caught her breath. They were waving, waving in her direction. Beckoning, there was no doubt about it. And then that somebody, followed by two smaller somebodies, came towards her.

Joy resisted an inclination to take to her heels. "Silly!" she thought scornfully and gripped the fence with both hands; "I'm no coward!"

They were quite near now—a girl, so she appeared, and two small children. "Most surely not ghosts," Joy thought, and then, as they came close, stared—amazed, incredulous.



“Hello!” the leader of the trio hailed her brightly as soon as they were within earshot. “We saw you looking in. Won’t you join us? Oh, my goodness me!” it was a sudden exclamation as she saw Joy more distinctly. “I’ve seen you before. Where was it?”

“On the boat last November,” Joy reminded her promptly with a little flush of pleasure running up into her cheeks. “Perhaps you don’t remember. I’m Joy Meredith. And you, I know, are Mrs. Langford and the twins.”

Lois Langford held out both hands. “Joy Meredith! Of course I remember, and I *am* glad to see you again. How odd to meet you here in Graybrook.” She looked keenly at the young girl as she came through the gate. “You’re thinner,” she added; “has Canada been treating you kindly? Tell us all about yourself.”

And so Joy found it quite easy as they sat there in the sun to record the events of those intervening months—Victory Avenue and Aunt Jennie Magiffin; John Street and Mrs. Tibble; and now Graybrook.

Lois Langford sat very quietly as she listened. “Perhaps,” she said when Joy paused, “perhaps you’ll learn to love Graybrook as I do. It’s my home, of course, so it’s only natural that I should love it. You must come and see us, Joy.”

“I’d love to.”

“We must be moving towards home now, for it gets cool when the sun goes down. I’ll give you a lift in the car.”

Joy glanced back over her shoulder at the cottage as they went through the gate. Very peaceful and rather pathetic it looked in the slanting rays of the sun.

“It’s supposed to be haunted,” Lois Langford said, noticing her glance, “so it’s avoided by the townsfolk, but we love coming, the kiddies and I.” She jumped into the car as she spoke and seated herself behind the steering-wheel. “Squeeze up, kiddies, make room for Joy. You don’t mind, do you, if we call you that?”

“Mind?” Joy laughed. “Why, I like it.”

“It’s such a pretty name. Make room for Joy. Hasn’t it a happy sound?”

The twins were losing a little of their shyness. Dimples looked up. “Donald, he can do something,” she said, “something new.”

“Whiffle!” Donald explained, and pursing his lips emitted a thin, pipe-like blast of air. “It’s my own,” he added shyly, “my very own whiffle!”

And so it was Joy who returned to Prince Albert Avenue radiant with news that afternoon.

“My land!” Mrs. Tibble exclaimed when the girl had, rather incoherently, related it all. “My land, child, it’s *her*!”

“Her? Who?”

“Her! Those twins and that car! It’s her herself and no mistake. It’s Graybrook’s Mystery Woman!”



## CHAPTER TWELVE CARVED IN EBONY

Two days later Joy received an invitation to take tea with Mrs. Langford the following Tuesday afternoon. Just at first Mrs. Tibble objected. “I don’t like the idea of you chumming up with the Mystery Woman,” she said, then hesitated before the obvious disappointment on the girl’s face. Perhaps she felt an inward stirring of curiosity as to the interior of Lois Langford’s home. “I know what I’ll do,” she added; “I’ll see what Mrs. Oliver, the minister’s wife, has to say about her.”

Mrs. Tibble brought back a reassuring report. “Mrs. Oliver says that she’s called the Mystery Woman chiefly because of those odd-looking women she has visiting her so much—foreigners and all sorts of folks. But she supports the church regular and has a Sunday School class of some of the poor children of the town. I guess you can go, Joy.”

“Hurray!” The girl flung her arms round Mrs. Tibble’s neck. “That’s jolly nice of you, Aunt Maggie!”

“All the same she *must* be queer, you can’t make her out to be anything else,” Mrs. Tibble added, determined not to back down, “being a church supporter and not making her own pickles.”

Lois Langford’s house was on Main Street, that far end where it forgets to be a street at all but becomes instead a country road—the old Indian trail of pioneer days—and runs out between far-flung fields of thriving, prosperous farm-lands. A little English cottage type of house it was, gable-roofed and

lattice-windowed, giving the impression, somehow, of a friendly little house by the side of the road.

It was a dull November afternoon, that of Joy's first visit, but inside there were soft-toned rugs on the hardwood floors, bright chintz cushions in the chairs, and gold-coloured curtains at the windows caught and reflected the gay colour of the chrysanthemums in a green bowl.

After they had tea in front of the fire Lois Langford clasped her hands round her knees and leaned forward with an eager light in her pretty eyes. "Joy, my dear," she said, "I want your help."

"My help?" Joy repeated. "Dusting, you mean, housework?"

Lois Langford's laugh was pleasant to hear. "Oh, dear me, no. Not quite so prosaic as all that. I want to know if you will help me with my group of children, some of the poorer kiddies of the town—under-privileged, they'd label them in the city."

"But how could I help you?"

"Oh, I'll show you. You're not too busy to spare a little time?"

Joy shook her head. "Mrs. Tibble says I may call every afternoon my own."

"Then as the kiddies are coming, as they always do, on Friday to supper, supposing you come too and get acquainted. Just now we are planning a concert which we hope to give in aid of the new organ for the church. I'm afraid the concert may be rather a feeble affair, but my hope is to give the children some idea of self-expression."

A little later she stood at her door and watched Joy out of sight. "No," she said, evidently to herself, for there was none other there to hear, "if I can help it the future of Joy Meredith is not going to be bottled up with housework and pickles." She nodded that bright head of hers confirmingly. "We'll widen that outlook, my dear."

And with the words Lois Langford, Graybrook's "Mystery Woman," stepped into the life of Joy Meredith.

It was quite evident to Joy that the group of children at Lois Langford's that Friday afternoon came with the preconceived idea of having a good time. It was evident too that just at first they eyed her in the light of a usurper, for they stood apart and gazed at her suspiciously.

"I like the way she smiles, all twinkly in her eyes," Dinty Collins confided

to his chum, Kipps Redman, “but she speaks sort o’ soft and funny.”

“She comes from England,” Kipps explained, “they all speak funny over there.”

“I sort o’ like it,” Dinty admitted; “d’you s’pose she’d teach me how?”

They were a curiously assorted little group, those whom Lois Langford had gathered together and made welcome in her own pretty home. There was Maudie Leonard, whose mother was in jail—Maudie had even been known to boast of the fact. There was Mildred Todd, whose mother, at the present time, had the same distinguished address. There was Clarence Collins, otherwise known as Dinty, whose parents had disappeared altogether, leaving Dinty with his grandmother in the flat over the baker’s shop on Main Street. There was Alan Redman, known to his playmates as Kipps, a ward of the Children’s Aid, who was “boarded out” with Farmer Burns.

And there was Sandy McCoy. Sandy had red hair, bright blue eyes, and freckles across the bridge of his impudent, turned-up nose. Sandy’s mother was an unknown quantity in Graybrook, and his father was a wanderer, so Sandy made shift for himself. He “hung out,” as he termed it, with Manning, the garage man, earning his keep by making himself generally useful about Manning’s Service Station. He was rather a disreputable-looking little chap at the present time, with a patch in the sleeve of his coat and another in the seat of his trousers. Sandy had sewn them in himself with strong white cotton which had mercifully soon grimed to grey. Sandy resented those patches. By virtue of them he became different—undesirably different—from other boys. So to hide those feelings Sandy pulled his cap over one eye and struck out with a “don’t-care” little swagger intended to deceive the world as to the real state of his innermost feelings.

And it was Sandy who, after giving Joy what in his own graphic language he described as the “once over,” dug his hand into his pocket, which held a motley collection of somewhat dubious souvenirs, and brought forth a peanut. “Here!” he offered.

“Oh—thanks awfully!” Joy said, and thereby captivated Sandy McCoy.

There were others, of course, others who stood out less vividly, who made no definite first impression on the interested young stranger.

And then Jemima-Jane walked in. Joy, totally unprepared and losing grip for a moment on her inherent politeness, stared in amazement.

Jemima-Jane was just the blackest little girl you could ever hope to see, with the curliest hair, the whitest teeth, and the widest grin imaginable.

Jemima-Jane led her small brother, Smudge, by the hand. Smudge, it seemed, had another name tucked away somewhere—an important, high-sounding name. But as a very tiny boy in his southern home someone had dubbed him Smudge, and Smudge he had remained.

Jemima-Jane was staring openly admiring at Joy. “Oh, my,” she exclaimed, with a soft drawl. “Yo’ have such pretty pink cheeks!”

Joy was still overcome with surprise and embarrassment. “Are you—are you in the concert too?” she asked, voicing the first question that popped into her mind.

Jemima-Jane shook her curly head. “I dunno all about me, but Smudge he sholy am!”

The others, to whom the arrival of Jemima-Jane and Smudge presented no shock of surprise, were going gaily ahead with their plans.

“We’ll have to have more variety,” Lois Langford was telling them. “So far no one has volunteered to do anything but play the piano.”

“There’ll be lots of snow by that time,” Dinty remarked hopefully; “p’raps Kipps ’n I could have a snowball fight right on the platform.”

“Snowball fight!” Mildred Todd scoffed, “and soak some of the audience in the eye!”

“Not if we didn’t aim for ’em!”

“We can’t have anything quite so original or vigorous as all that,” their leader declared. “Can’t any of you recite?”

“I can say the ten commandments right through,” Kipps remembered hopefully.

By eight o’clock, however, which the hostess decreed as going home time, a few latent dramatic possibilities had been brought to light.

When they had all reluctantly said good-bye she leaned back on the chesterfield and looked up at Joy. “Don’t you love them?”

“I do. Especially the little black ones; they were such a surprise.”

“The Leanders dropped into Graybrook at the beginning of last year. They came from the south, of course, and everyone prophesied they’d be shiftless and would soon be supported by the town. But Daddy Leander has proved a reliable night-watchman in one of the factories, and Mother Leander is a splendid washerwoman. There’s another girl, younger than Smudge, Lily, they call her. Lily Leander—isn’t it pretty?”

She paused a moment and then added thoughtfully, “It’s with Jemima-Jane that I want your help, Joy.”

“My help—how?”

“I want you to be friendly first of all. I’m afraid there have been times when she has been terribly lonely among us, poor little thing. I’ve asked her to our Sunday School class, but she seems backward and shy. You’re a young girl and so is she, so if you ask her perhaps she’ll feel more like coming.”

Joy was very thoughtful as she walked along the streets toward home. “If I had been black it would have made no difference to Mrs. Langford,” she was thinking; “she just sees the good inside people and then tries to bring it out.”

It was Smudge who opened the door of the Leander cottage when Joy called the following afternoon—Smudge, who was evidently appalled at sight of the visitor, for he promptly disappeared, fading quickly into the shadows of the little cottage.

And then Jemima-Jane came forward and, obviously surprised but determined to play the lady, invited the visitor in.

It was a trim, bright kitchen in which Joy found herself, with Mother Leander beaming a cheery welcome over the suds, Lily crowing delightedly from her high chair, and the chubby face of Smudge, still abashed and shy, poking inquiringly from his hiding-place behind the stove.

And when Joy had made known her errand, Jemima-Jane stood quite still, overwhelmed in the face of this sudden, unexpected kindness. “There’s nothing to be scared about,” Joy told her.

Jemima-Jane glanced almost pleadingly at her mother, who nodded and smiled reassuringly. “Sure, Jemima-Jane, sure go, honey, when the young lady asks yo’.”

When the door had closed behind Joy, Jemima-Jane buried her face against her mother’s soft cushiony shoulder and sobbed as if her heart would break.

“What is it, honey?” her mother asked; “don’ yo’ want to go?”

“Want to go?” Jemima-Jane answered with a little gasping breath; “I want to go jes’ awful bad.”

Smudge had emerged from his hiding-place and was tugging anxiously at his sister’s skirt. “What is it she’s a-givin’ yo’, Jemimy-Jane,” he asked; “is it somethin’ to eat? Is it—is it a *water-melon*?”

The next Sunday morning Jemima-Jane was up early, very early. Sunday

School was not until the afternoon, of course, but it was quite impossible to keep her wriggling, excited little self one minute longer in bed. Two hours before the time she was ready, and smiled with shy delight at the vivid reflection facing her. In the reddest of red dresses, the starchiest of white frills round her little black neck, and the brightest of pink hair-ribbons banding her curly fuzz, Jemima-Jane held herself in readiness for Sunday School. Finally, buttoning her coat up to her chin not so much as protection for herself as for the dress, she sallied forth.

It was so early that none of the scholars had gathered. Not even the caretaker was in sight, and the doors were still closed and locked.

Jemima-Jane sat down outside and eyed that closed door with a puzzled, thoughtful expression, an expression which grew gradually into suspicious anxiety. That nice girl, named Joy, had asked her to come, but supposing something had happened so that there wouldn't be any Sunday School this afternoon, or ever again!

And then, just as despair was seizing Jemima-Jane, there was a grating sound as of a key turning, and the door opened.

Jemima-Jane took no chance on the opener of that door changing his mind. She was up the steps and inside, breathless but triumphant. "Heah I am!" she gasped.

"Are you coming to Sunday School?" the caretaker asked.

"I sholy am!" she assured him, a glad, high note in her voice.

And that class was all that Jemima-Jane had hoped it might be. Mrs. Langford held out her hand and said, "Here's our new member," so that Jemima-Jane realized that to be a new member was something rather distinctive. And the others, prompted beforehand by their leader, said, "Hello, Jemima-Jane," to which she answered, "Hello!" and felt very happy indeed. But it was Joy who said, "Come and sit beside me and then we can look on together!"

Jemima-Jane followed the lesson which Mrs. Langford read with every fibre of her intense little nature. Never before had she heard the story of Ruth. "I'll read it," Mrs. Langford told her class, "for one cannot re-tell it half so beautifully as it is told here."

Under the spell of those impressive words Jemima-Jane almost held her breath, "Whither thou goest, I will go; whither thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God."

“That’s just the way I feel about Mom ’way up heah among all these whites,” Jemima-Jane told herself with a sudden mental vision of the much-loved face beaming over the soap-suds. “I’d live anywhere with Mom!”

And so Jemima-Jane carried something home from her first Sunday School, something other than the kindness and friendliness of the class themselves—the stirring, poignant memory of that pledge, “Thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God.”



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### DOCTOR'S ORDERS

**A**bout this time a letter from Billy found its way to Joy, the first answer to several she had written him, and it seemed to reflect a rather unhappy state of mind on the part of the little boy:

“We do mis you a lot, Joy, me and Toby. Al, she says, oh shucks I don’t mis her, I’m glad she’s gone. Wen she says that I pinsh her and then she pinshes bak. Gurls shudnt pinsh bak it starts a fight.

“I wish I didn’t have to go to skul. I hate skul. It makes my hed ake. Anyhow I’m going to be a poit wen I grow up so it’s no use going to skul. Poits don’t ever need to go to skul. Toby wen he sees me coming he wiggles all over.

“I wish you wud cum bak.

“BILLY.”

There was another letter waiting for Joy on the breakfast-table a few mornings later. She stared at it doubtfully. “Do you think it’s really for me?” she asked. “It’s my name, and the address is right, but I don’t know anyone who writes like that.”

“Let’s see.” Mrs. Tibble adjusted her spectacles and stared in turn at the envelope. “Sounds as if it was meant to be you. Now who do you s’pose——”

“The quickest way might be to open it and find out,” George suggested.

His mother let her spectacles slip to their accustomed resting-place far down her nose and handed the letter to Joy. "We intend opening it," she told him with dignity; "that's what letters are for. But I like to snoop around the outside a bit first. You might get a knock-out blow with some letters if you opened them too sudden like."

Joy smiled when she saw the signature, "It's from Mr. Tipkins—oh, about Billy!" Slowly she read it aloud:

"MY DEAR JOY,

"I write to tell you that Mrs. Magiffin has been advised by the school doctor to remove Billy from school for an indefinite length of time. His eyes are troubling him. He must wear glasses, and a complete rest from all eye-strain is ordered. I have been inquiring to see if I could find any light work he might do, something in the nature of a messenger boy, for I realize that a 'complete rest' acting as nursemaid will not have the desired effect. So far my search has proved unavailing."

"Dear, dear!" Mrs. Tibble clucked her tongue sympathetically, "and such nice black eyes the little fellow had!"

"But we must do something for him," Joy said. "Oh, we *must!*"

"I don't see why we should bother. He's Jennie Magiffin's boy, it's up to her."

"Oh, I know what Aunt Jennie Magiffin'll do,"—a little uncontrollable sob broke through the words—"she'll make him useful around the house and, as Mr. Tipkins says, act as nursemaid."

Curiously enough it was a suggestion from George which set the wheels in motion. "Why not talk to Mrs. Langford about him? Sounds like something in her line."

Joy jumped up. "I will. Oh, Aunt Maggie, you don't mind if I do? I can't bear to think of Billy being unhappy."

"All right," Mrs. Tibble agreed; "run along!"

Lois Langford looked rather doubtful when Joy presented the case of Billy Magiffin. "Graybrook's a small town and there are plenty of messenger boys right here. Oh, but wait,"—her face lighted up as she pulled her hat down over her bright hair and slipped into her coat,—"*there is a possibility. I'm going to see the manager of the hotel. I'll drop into Mrs. Tibble's later and let you know*"

the result.”

The Springs Hotel, on the outskirts of Graybrook, had for some years been a favourite stopping place for motorists during the spring, summer, and autumn. But during the last season it had attracted winter visitors as well. There had been the clang of skates on ice, snow-shoe hikes across country, and tobogganing parties, merry on the hills.

Before noon Lois Langford's car stopped outside Mrs. Tibble's house. "There she comes!" that lady exclaimed, having been on the watch for the last hour. "Joy, is my hair all right?"

Lois Langford came in with her eyes alight. "They're wanting a bell-boy," she said exultantly, and laughed at the puzzled expression on Joy's face. "Bell-hop, I think they call them sometimes. I explained that this boy was quite small, but the manager said they had no objection if a boy proved reliable. And if he makes good"—she brought her hands together with a little clap—"they'll put him on as a caddie next summer."

"Hurray! Hurray!" Joy capered excitedly around, and, colliding unexpectedly with Mrs. Tibble, flung her arms around that lady's ample person. "Do you hear that, Aunt Maggie? Oh, Billy will be the dearest bell-hop that ever was!"

But at the present moment Mrs. Tibble was more interested in Mrs. Langford than in Billy Magiffin. There was nothing particularly mysterious or queer-looking about her, she was thinking—perhaps secretly a little disappointed—she was just a very pretty, very attractive young woman. "Well dressed too," Mrs. Tibble decided, with a critical and approving glance at that well-cut coat. "And sort of capable," she admitted, watching Lois Langford start the car and drive off. "Just fancy talking to the manager of a hotel like she did."

With that auspicious beginning it was put through quickly all along the line. A letter was dispatched to Mr. Tipkins, another to Mrs. Magiffin. It was with that lady that the only hitch occurred. Mrs. Magiffin, being constitutionally suspicious that something was being "put over her," was convinced that Billy was being sent away from home, where he might prove useful, to somebody who would get the best of the bargain. It was not, after all, the urgings of her husband, for she habitually balked over any suggestion that came from him; nor yet the persuasiveness of Mr. Tipkins, for she had a deep-rooted distrust of artists. But she gave in when the school doctor wrote recommending a complete change of air and surroundings for Billy.

It was a letter from Joy which set at rest a little fear which had cropped up

in Billy's mind during the discussion of the plans being made for him:

“Bring Toby along, Billy. He won't be able to stay with you in the hotel, of course, but Mrs. Tibble says he can live with us, and then you can see him every day, for you won't be on duty all the time. I've been telling some of the boys here about Toby, and they are very anxious to see your performing dog.”

Billy, spelling out that letter very carefully, breathed forth a sigh of relief. “Do you hear that, Toby?” he asked; “you're comin' with me, and you're a performing dog, that's what you are!”

Toby's stumpy tail thumped the floor.

“And I, I'm goin' to be On Duty, yessir!” A little vague as to the real meaning of the term, but liking the sound of it, Billy repeated it over and over: “On Duty—yessir, that's me!”



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### SAINT GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

**T**here was a new bell-boy at the Springs Hotel—a chubby little fellow named Billy, with a thatch of black hair that kinked into curls, and black eyes that looked out eagerly from behind round spectacles. There was a shining cleanliness about this new boy that was somehow very attractive. Early every morning Billy shone his boots, shone the brass buttons of his uniform, slicked back his black hair with a wet brush until it shone too, and rubbed his cheeks with a rough towel until they resembled shining, hard, red apples.

A polite, alert little fellow he soon proved to be, evincing a willingness, eagerness even, to take those chubby legs of his running on any errand that presented itself.

“Good-morning,” one of the guests greeted him with a twinkle in his eye on one of Billy’s first days on duty. “Are you the boss here?”

“No, sir,” Billy twinkled back; “not yet!”

Truth to tell that eager politeness of his was not so much the result of home-training—where Mrs. Magiffin was wont to declare that she’d never yet said Sir or Madam to anyone, no, nor never would—as it was the effect of Joy’s efforts. “Try to be polite,” she had told him on his arrival, “and say ‘yes, sir,’ and ‘no, sir.’”

“To everyone?”

Joy nodded. “It doesn’t sound much, but it means a lot.”

And so on his first morning when Dick Dawson, the elevator boy, said, "Hello, fatty, you the new bell-boy?" Billy responded "Yes, sir," thereby upsetting the equilibrium of Dick Dawson, who in all the course of his sixteen years had never before been called sir.

Billy thrilled to that work of his, the importance, the busyness of it all. He loved the shrill "ding" of the little bell on the desk, and the summoning honk of a motor outside which meant new arrivals to be met. And the excitement of the mornings when the young and sport-loving guests would set out for skating and fun, for it was late December now and snow had spread a soft white blanket over the country-side. But Billy loved too those evenings on duty when the flames, licking hungrily round the logs in the fireplace, would leap high, and the voices of the guests—laughter-loving and jolly—would rise above the soft music of the orchestra.

And so he forgot that there were such things as babies to be minded and go-carts to be pushed; forgot that he had ever been called "Nursey"; and remembered, instead, that he was a bell-boy—a uniformed, brass-buttoned, important bell-boy—at the Graybrook Springs Hotel.

Also he was Toby's master—Toby, who lived at Mrs. Tibble's and who dashed out to welcome him with quivers of delight. But it was Toby himself who created a disturbance one evening. He had been playing with Billy all afternoon, and when his master went back to the hotel for seven-o'clock duty, Toby followed. When the unsuspecting Billy disappeared into the big house, Toby set out to investigate for himself that mysterious interior which had swallowed his master. Finally, he slipped through the revolving door at the heels of an ingoing guest. It was an easy matter to sniff Billy out after that.

"Toby!" Billy gasped, dismayed.

Toby's eloquent tail wagged, reassuring and joyful.

The eagle eye of the manager had spotted the unwelcome guest. He came quickly over to the bell-boy's bench. "Who's dog is this?" he asked, with a really terrifying frown.

"M-mine, s-s-sir!" Billy said, quite sure that Toby would be put to death on the spot.

The terrifying frown deepened, "How did he get in?"

"He wiggled through the door. He—he can do tricks, s-sir!"



It was a sudden inspiration. For Billy realized Toby doing tricks would surely melt the heart of any grown-up, even a manager.

And Toby, as if surmising what was expected of him, sat up on his hind legs in front of the manager, and then suddenly rolled over and did dead dog.

Perhaps the managerial heart did melt. At any rate the frown disappeared and he turned away. "Take him out," he said, "and don't let him in again."

"Toby," Billy whispered, as he took him out and headed him in the direction of Mrs. Tibble's, "Toby, you're a regular humdinger, that's what you are. Now home, Toby, home!"

The first time that Joy took Billy down to Lois Langford's he was speechless with surprise. He had never, never imagined a house like this before. With bouncy chairs and slippery floors it seemed a house just made for fun. And then this very surprising lady wanted him to come to her story-group on Friday afternoons. "Of course I know you're busy," she said, "but any time you are off duty we will be glad to see you."

Just at first he was a little doubtful about those stories. Big boys didn't listen to stories—Dick Dawson who ran the elevator, for instance—and Billy was feeling very grown-up and responsible these days.

But one Friday afternoon, just after the turn of the year, when he was off duty and there was snow in the air on a cold wind that swept down from the north, he remembered that Joy had said that Mrs. Langford always had a roaring fire in the grate and chelsea buns.

“Chelsea buns?” he had repeated, interested.

“All sticky and gooey and nice,” she had said.

And so, quite suddenly, on this very cold afternoon, Billy, with his dog at his heels, trotted down to test the comfort of a roaring fire and chelsea buns—“all sticky and gooey and nice.”

There were other boys there, he found, boys as old as he, even a little older—a chap by the name of Sandy with red hair and funny freckles; one who went by the name of Kipps, another they called Dinty. “Regular fellers!” Billy sized them up. And there was actually a young coloured girl and her small brother. Fascinated, Billy forgot his politeness and stared and stared, then voiced his surprise to Joy. “How'd they *get* black like that?”

But then the stories began, and Billy forgot the little black girl and her brother; forgot Sandy and his freckles, forgot that he was a big boy listening to little-boy stories—just listened with a dawning light of interest in his black eyes.

There was the story of Twinkle, first of all—the boys begged for that—Twinkle, who, living in the Land of Mouse, had gone forth one night with his adventurous friend Rudolph Mousine into the Great Outside World where lived, so they had been told, big things like trees on legs, called Humans. Of how they got separated from each other and lost until Twinkle was found by his mother and taken home, never to run away again. Of how the death of Rudolph Mousine was reported in the daily paper, “The Cheese and Chocolate News,” having come to an untimely end in that horror of horrors, a Trap.

And then the girls demanded the one about Tickleribs, the Official Tickler, the little fairy whose hair, because it was like spun gold, caught the moonbeams, and the brightness wakening her so much earlier than the rest of the fairy band, she was appointed Official Tickler to even the Fairy Queen herself. “For the fairies, you know,” Lois Langford told them, “only wake at moonrise and come out to dance around the fairy-rings during those quiet, beautiful hours when we foolish mortals are asleep.”

There were legends too, legends out of the past that seemed to exercise a curious fascination over both boys and girls. And it was the story of Saint George and the Dragon which enthralled Billy, as he listened eagerly, intently, missing not one word. He tried to act it out the next day with Toby as the Dragon and himself Saint George. But it was not satisfactory, for Toby, on being told, "You're the Dragon—charge!" promptly rolled over and became "dead."

But before the end of the afternoon the chelsea buns came on. Just at first, despite the anticipations which Joy had raised, Billy eyed that glue-like substance over the top a little suspiciously. Then bit into one tentatively; demolished it quickly and needed no urging to have another. This time he saved that delectable glue-like substance until the last.

Suddenly Lois Langford spoke to him. "Would you like to join in our concert?" she asked in her brisk, almost abrupt manner. "Have you any speciality? Anything, I mean, that you could do to help?"

Billy blinked those round black eyes of his very solemnly and said, "No, 'm!"

"Oh, yes." Joy came quickly across the room. "Excuse me if I speak to Billy a moment, Mrs. Langford," then, bending, she whispered something into Billy's ear.

His face lighted up. "Oh, Joy, could we? D'you think really we could?"

She nodded reassuringly. "Why not?"

"Me'n Toby," Billy announced, "we'll do tricks if you like."

"We certainly would like," Lois Langford assured him. "Hurray for you, Billy Magiffin!"

There was a lack of enthusiasm in the group over this, explained, perhaps, by a little resentment or envy. "Y' needn't think you're so smart havin' a dog what'll do tricks," Dinty told him, "I've got one too. And if your ole dog's goin' to do tricks at our concert, so's mine."

Dinty did not explain that Rover was old and infirm and long past the trick stage, but that from puppyhood he had carried over the ability to hold a folded paper in his mouth and hang on to it until commanded to drop it. Most certainly, Dinty decided, if that Billy's dog was going to perform, Rover was going to show off too.

Joy went with Billy as far as Main Street while she read aloud the Chorus they were to sing at the concert. "See, I've written it out large and plain," she

told him, “and you must read it over and over. Listen:

‘It comes from the misty ages,  
The banner of England’s might—  
The blood-red cross of the brave Saint George,  
That burns on a field of white!’

“I like to think of that,” Joy added, with her eyes on the flag that was streaming out so gaily over the post-office, “whenever I see the Union Jack. ‘The blood-red cross of the brave Saint George.’ ”

“It’s swell,” Billy agreed. “I like hearin’ about regular fellers like that Saint George. He makes me feel brave inside and sort of punchy.”

Late that night when Billy came off duty he pinned that little piece of paper by the side of his bed. Already those words had burned themselves into his receptive and impressionable little brain:

“The central gem of the ensign fair,  
Is the cross of the dauntless Knight.”

Billy screwed up his eyes and voiced an audible little petition: “Oh, God, make there be another Saint George, and, if you don’t mind, make me be him. And oh, God, please don’t forget the Dragon!”



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### PERFORMERS—FOUR-FOOTED AND OTHERWISE

**T**here was no doubt about it. Mrs. Tibble—as she put it herself—was in two minds about Mrs. Lois Langford. “I *do* like her,” she admitted silently, “but I feel as if I shouldn’t.”

There were two most decided opinions about the lady in question. The Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Oliver were frankly friendly and enthusiastic, had even been heard to declare that she was one of the finest young women they had ever known. And there was no doubt about the regard in which she was held by her little class of children, “She’s *swell!*” Dinty Collins said, briefly summarizing the sentiments of the group.

But Mrs. Tibble’s newly-acquired circle of friends in the Monday Afternoon Club reflected and intensified the hostile point of view, for Mrs. Langford did not conform to the standards of the Graybrook housewives at all. She did not make her own pickles and preserves; she did not do her own spring-cleaning, but had been known to slip off somewhere south to the sea with those twins of hers, leaving the cleaning to the tender mercies of hired help, and then return radiantly—and to the housewives of Graybrook, irritatingly—fresh when the cleaning was all over. And those queer visitors—why, they alone would stamp her as peculiar. And didn’t she drive that little car of hers around the town at an hour of a summer morning when the unwritten law proclaimed that woman’s place was in the home?

One winter afternoon Farmer Burns overtook her on a country road. She

had parked the little car at the side where the snow was quite deep and was sitting atop a fence.

“Car broke down?” the farmer asked, preparing to play the gallant and rescuing hero.

“Oh, no, no,” Lois Langford responded quickly, “I’m just watching the clouds.”

Farmer Burns cast his eyes skyward. “Hey? Clouds? Are they doin’ anything special?”

Lois Langford laughed outright. “Oh, no, only I love clouds when they’re so grey and low. They make me feel very reverent, almost as if I was in church”; then, smiling, she added:

“ ‘A poor life this, if, full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare.’ ”

Without another word Farmer Burns climbed into his wagon and drove off, rather quickly. He repeated it to his wife: “Sittin’ there on a fence, watchin’ clouds! D’you s’pose she’s a bit off? Sort of—of *batty*?”

“Of course she is.”

“But”—a softer gleam crept into his eyes—“she looked uncommonly pretty like.”

“Pretty?” his wife snapped. “Pretty? It’s you who’re gettin’ *batty*, Barton Burns!”

It was all over town in a few days. Mrs. Langford had been seen sitting on a fence in the country on a cold winter day—watching clouds!

But there had been another listener to that conversation. Kipps, Farmer Burns’ boy, had been in the wagon. Kipps, wide-eyed, had heard it all. And unlike Farmer Burns he had understood what she meant—exactly. Those grey, low-hanging clouds, that chased each other across the sky, called forth within him, often, just such a feeling of awe, as if he too was in church. And sometimes—oh, Kipps knew the varying moods of the sky above him—sometimes the sun touched them to a rosy-red, flamed them into sudden vivid beauty, beauty that found an echo and an answer in the boy-heart of Kipps.

Mrs. Tibble was certainly very indignant one afternoon when she reached home after a round of shopping on Main Street. Her indignation made her quite short of breath. “I met Mrs. Langford,” she told Joy, “and she was driving back from the station in that little car of hers with a—with a——”

dramatic impulse and shortage of breath both had their part in making Mrs. Tibble pause, “with a Chinese girl beside her! I just stood there and gaped while she swooped around the corner on two wheels.”

“She told me she had a guest coming for the night.”

“For the night? My land! Depend on it there’ll be something queer happen one of these times with all those yellow and black foreigners of hers running wild round town.”

“I must ask her who they are,” Joy decided silently. Inherent politeness had made her reluctant to force confidence, and Lois Langford had remained uncommunicative in regard to her “queer visitors,” though she smiled at the question in Joy’s eyes the following afternoon when she was looking at a photograph of a very lovely Japanese girl. “Lyola Shen,” she said; “some day I must tell you about her. But I want to talk just now about Billy. We must try and help the little chap while we have the chance.”

Joy looked at her rather keenly. She was leaning forward in that favourite attitude, her hands clasped round her knees and her eyes on the embers of the fire as if she was finding day-dreams there. “Is that why you are so interested in this class of yours,” Joy asked; “because you can help them?”—she smiled a little—“because you can help *us*?”

Lois Langford nodded. “I love dealing with futures, Joy, and all these kiddies—Jemima-Jane and Smudge as well as the rest—have the future before them. And there is always a chance of that future going wrong, especially when mothers get themselves put in jail. I like to feel that I’m helping to make the future safe and happy as I think God intended the futures of boys and girls to be.”

“You are,” Joy told her intensely; “you *are* helping.”

Lois Langford shook her head. “I’m trying, that’s all. One of the modern writers has said that ‘to-morrow can only be what you have made to-day.’ It’s so true, so *appallingly* true sometimes. That’s why I’m trying to help these children live to-day so that their to-morrow will be safe.”

“That’s the way Dad used to talk,” Joy said, with a sudden rush of memory: “that’s the kind of thing he used to tell me.”

“And did he tell you too that he loved to think of his little girl as the embodiment of her name—Joy?”

The girl’s brown eyes were startled. “Why, he did. How could you ever guess?”

But such moments of confidence were of necessity rare, for Lois Langford was a very much engrossed and busy young woman—managing her home, training and teaching her children, carrying on a large foreign correspondence—Miss Pounce at the post-office reported that it was large and foreign—entertaining “queer” visitors, and incidentally moulding the to-morrow of Graybrook’s youth.

Preparations were going gaily ahead for the much-talked-of concert which was to come off in the big Sunday School hall. The chorus, under Lois Langford’s skilful guidance, was developing quite a tuneful swing. Billy spent most of his spare time in drilling his dog, and Dinty rushed home from school each day to drill his. The tinkle of pianos was heard in the land from all the houses that harboured a musically-inclined son or daughter, which meant, of course, that for a strictly well-balanced programme there would be too many piano solos. “If playing the piano is the *only* thing you can do,” Lois Langford had said, “then do it.”

It was Joy who discovered that Smudge possessed a hidden and unexpected talent. After the discovery it took a great deal of coaxing to persuade Smudge to forget his shyness and consent to blossom out before the world of Graybrook.

“You’ll be the most wonderful surprise,” Joy told him delightedly.

Whereupon Smudge hid his face in his sister’s skirt and refused to emerge. “Thah, mah honey,” Jemima-Jane encouraged him, “a s’prise is something sholy lovely; don’ yo’ be afraid of bein’ a s’prise, honey-boy!”

Little by little that bashfulness was overcome, and one afternoon he walked with his sister and Joy to Prince Albert Avenue to get the “piece” which Joy had written out for him.

Jemima-Jane and Smudge were left in the hall while Joy went upstairs. It was, unfortunately, just then that Mrs. Tibble returned from her afternoon walk, and so came upon them, suddenly and unexpectedly, as they formed part of the shadows of the dim hall.

Overcome with surprise and not a little frightened, Mrs. Tibble opened her mouth and let out a shriek.

Jemima-Jane and Smudge, frightened too, cut through the open door and fled down the street.

Joy, coming downstairs, took it all in at a glance and dashed after those swiftly-retreating figures. “Jemima-Jane, Smudge,” she called. “Stop—listen!”

But when she finally caught up she gazed at them rather helplessly. Excuse, she felt, must be offered. Mrs. Tibble must be let down easy, and at the same time Jemima-Jane's ruffled feelings must be soothed. "That was only Mrs. Tibble," she gasped, rather breathless with the run. "There's nothing to be frightened about." She paused, searching for excuse. "Perhaps—perhaps she felt queer or something. But don't worry about her, she'll be all right."

It was not in Jemima-Jane's mind to worry about Mrs. Tibble, but the suggestion bore fruit and the new angle helped her to offer solace to Smudge. "Don' yo' fret, mah honey," she comforted him; "de po' ole lady jes' went queah. Fits, I guess."

But the outraged feelings of Mrs. Tibble were not so easily soothed. She related it all with gusto to George that evening. "And what should I walk into, in my own hall, but a whole regiment of——"

"Aunt Maggie! There were only two."

"Well, they looked like a regiment staring up at me there. My land! They gave me a turn! Don't you go bringing any of Mrs. Langford's foreigners into my house, Joy Meredith; I don't want to wake up in my bed some night and find myself dead as a doornail!"

But there was little danger, for the present at any rate, of the return of those particular little "foreigners." Smudge, in fact, kept a good distance between his dusky little self and that house on Prince Albert Avenue where lived the "po' ole lady who had fits."

Snow lay deep in the valleys now and white over the hills, a-glitter under the winter sun, or reflecting in myriad points of light the starry brilliance of the heavens when silence and frost held the visible world in a bondage of beauty. Against the snow the fir trees stood out straight and dark; the slender tops of the maples and elms traced delicate, lace-like patterns against the sky; and the rugged wide-branching oaks bent and swayed to and fro under the winds that swept down from the hills and roared through the valley in swirling, stinging blasts.

There were happy youthful voices over the hills those days; there was snow-shoeing, ski-ing, and bobbing; merry-making, laughter, and fun.

The night of the concert was clear and lighted by stars. The Sunday School hall was crowded, filled, in fact, to capacity so that a fringe of dauntless spectators were forced to line up against the wall at the back and stand, which they did quite patiently, through it all.

But they were, of course, intensely interested. Were not their own sons and

daughters among the performers? Had they not been practising, painstakingly and perseveringly, for weeks? Was not the object a worthy one—that of raising money for the new organ for the church which was urgently needed despite the opinion of Farmer Burns, who declared that what was good enough for his father was good enough for him. But Farmer Burns, of Scotch descent, and considered painstakingly “close,” was not an authority on matters pertaining to expenditure.

As a matter-of-fact the curiosity of the audience had been aroused. For there had been rumours of a performing dog and of the little dusky Leander boy taking part as well.

The piano solos predominated. Six little girls and two boys had been chosen as exhibitors of this particular talent. Their pieces were brief, a trifle jerky of execution, but one and all tided themselves over the hard and tricky parts by vigorous, corrective nods of their heads, thus informing the audience that all was not as it should be. But most of them were supported by proud families in the audience and so were ensured emphatic encores.

The chorus which closed the first part of the programme was an overwhelming success. The voices of the children rose high and sweet as the beautiful strain filled the hall:

“It comes from the misty ages,  
The banner of England’s might—  
The blood-red cross of the brave Saint George,  
That burns on a field of white!”

And after the interval there was another piano solo and then the dogs came on. Rover was first because his scope of talent was limited. But Rover, to Dinty’s immense relief, answered right up to the demands of the occasion and trotted around the platform with a folded paper in his mouth until commanded to drop it, which he was always a little reluctant to do. It wasn’t much of a trick, of course, but both boy and dog were well known and received generous and satisfying applause.

Then came Billy and Toby—Billy with his cheeks round and red and shining; Toby with a festive pink bow—which he secretly despised and resolved to do away with before long—tied to his collar behind his left ear.

Toby was out to do honour to his master, there was no doubt about that. Just for a moment he sniffed suspiciously at the foot-lights, and then very obedient, very alert, went through his tricks—sat up and begged; barked “please”; bowed to the ladies; did dead dog—all with that expressive little tail

of his a-wiggle. But it was when he came to standing on guard that the trouble arose. He was “on guard” over a bone—a luscious meaty sort of bone—and he was quivering with suspense while he waited for the magic word, “Released!” But Rover, with his master, was watching it all from around the corner of the screen, and suddenly smelt that bone lying so tantalizingly out there just in front of the little dog, who, for some reason or other, was not touching it. A silly little dog he seemed to be, from Rover’s point of view. Rover was not on guard, far from it. He walked out, very deliberately, but with great sureness of purpose, calmly picked up the bone and walked back to enjoy it in peace and comfort.

Then the uproar arose—an unofficial uproar. Peals of laughter from the audience. Yelps from Toby. Cries from Billy. Whoops—it must be confessed of pride—from Rover’s owner. And long, low growls from Rover himself, confident in his possession of that precious, meaty bone.

Peace was finally restored and it all ended in the traditional happy-ever-after fashion. Another bone was brought forth from Billy’s pocket—stored there against the event of an encore—and the audience clapped and cheered while Billy, his hand gripping Toby’s collar, grinned and bowed, and Rover’s master, nothing daunted, holding his dog, came out and bowed too.

Before the night was over the two dogs, under the mellowing influence of their respective bones, became fast friends. Rover eyed his new acquaintance with sleepy approval through half-closed eyes, while Toby—his despised pink ribbon hanging in triumphantly chewed shreds—thumped his eager little tail in emphatic approval.

It was at the end of the programme that Smudge appeared. He came forward very slowly with little backward glances in the direction of Jemima-Jane standing at the side of the screen, nodding and smiling. But the voice of Smudge Leander, once started, gathered confidence and strength:

“ ‘O l’il lamb out in de col’,  
De Mastah call you to de fol’,  
O l’il lamb!’ ”<sup>[1]</sup>

Very slowly and sweetly he sang right through the quaint little song, and in the hall there was a deep silence:

“ ‘An’ af’ ah while de lamb he heah  
De Shepud’s voice a-callin’ cleah—  
He answah f’om de bramble thick,  
“Oh, Shepud, I’s a-comin’ quick”—  
O l’il lamb!’ ”

There was a moment of silence when he finished, the hush of surprise. Then, suddenly, it came—a sharp clap at first, swelling quickly to a burst of sustained applause. “Encore!” someone called, and all took up the refrain. “Encore, encore!”

But encores had no attraction for Smudge. Safe in Jemima-Jane’s arms, he was pressing his chubby face deep into her shoulder, while, comforting and reassuring, she hugged him tight. “Don’ yo’ fret, mah honey-boy,” she crooned. “Yo’ done fine. Yo’s the big boy in de ole town to-night!”

[\[1\]](#) Paul Lawrence Dunbar.



## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### DAY-DREAMS AND GOLLIWOGS

“Listen!” Joy exclaimed, “listen to this, Aunt Maggie.”

They were reading the weekly papers in the sitting-room at the time—a very cosy, colourful sitting-room it was that February night while a blizzard raged outside. The red-shaded lamp found echo in the chintz curtains, sofa cushions, and the bright roses of the gaily-coloured rug. For Mrs. Tibble, after years of the sordid dullness of John Street, had indulged her colour-starved senses and surrounded herself with brightness—vivid, glowing, satisfying brightness.

Her head came up with a jerk when Joy spoke. Occasionally Mrs. Tibble indulged in forty winks of an evening over her paper or knitting, but never could she be persuaded to acknowledge the fact. “Listen to what?” she asked, the least bit crossly.

“Why this—

‘Under the will of his uncle, the late Wilberforce Tipkins of Leeds, England, Tobias Tipkins of this city has fallen heir to a considerable fortune. Mr. Tipkins, when interviewed by the Press, stated that he had nothing to say, but that he had been engaged in artistic work for some time, and will, he says, continue to pursue this calling.’ ”

“Well, I never!” Mrs. Tibble was very wide-awake now. “It’s him!”

“Do you think it is, really?”

“ ’Tisn’t likely there’d be two Tobias Tipkinses, is it? Of course it’s him. Just my luck not to have it happen when he was in my house. Did you ever! Joy, doesn’t it say how much?”

Joy shook her head. “A considerable fortune, that’s all. It is exciting, isn’t it? I wonder what he’ll do?”

“Chances are he’ll go on painting pictures. Funny, wasn’t it, Joy, that he never showed us the one he painted of you?”

It was a letter from Alice-Marie a day or two later which confirmed the news:

“Ma says to tell you that the man who used to board at Mrs. Tibble’s and gave Billy the dog, why, he’s got a lot of money. He didn’t steal it, it was left to him by an Uncle in England. Ma says she’d like to go back there if money’s lying loose like that, instead of living here where there isn’t enough to go round. Ma says she guesses he’ll stop painting pictures now he’s got money to pay for his meals without. Ma says to Pa that she wishes his relations had sent us money instead of girls.”

“Meaning me!” Joy said.

But the next move of Tobias Tipkins surprised them all. A week or so later he walked into the Springs Hotel at Graybrook, so that it was Billy who saw him first. Scarlet and well-nigh speechless, the small boy took his bag. “S-s-sir!” he gasped.

“Hello!” Tobias Tipkins said. “My, how fine you look! Surprised to see me, eh?”

Billy carried that new and shiny bag up to the luxurious little suite of rooms which had been assigned to Tobias Tipkins. As a matter of fact everything about him was blatantly new—his overcoat, hat, muffler and overshoes; his grey tweed suit, soft blue shirt and smart bow tie.

Apparently he was anxious to rest after the strenuous excitement of the last few weeks. No one in the hotel appeared to have heard of Tobias Tipkins, the artist, but no one had the moral courage to say so. Several had heard of the Tobias Tipkins who had fallen heir to considerable fortune, and those in possession of the fact passed it on to others. Perhaps he was quite aware that he was the observed of all observers, of the interested glances cast in his direction

when he entered the dining-room, or strolled into the lounge. Perhaps he was quite consciously “playing up” when, with a gesture of impatience, he would toss that long unruly lock back from his forehead. But perhaps, after all, there was excuse after those years of toiling obscurity.



“Are you sketching while you are here?” he was asked.

He threw back the lock. “A little,” he replied evasively.

In the eyes of the boy Billy it was all very wonderful. “And it *could* happen to anyone, couldn’t it?” he asked Joy one day, with a world of pleading in his voice. “Somebody over in England or Africa might die and leave me money, mightn’t they?”

“Anything *might* happen,” Joy told him, “but I wouldn’t depend on it. After all, there are lots of folks in the world who haven’t been left money, Billy, but there are not so many who are willing to prove that they are the best bell-boy the Springs Hotel ever had.”

He looked up at her. "Are you talking about me? Anyhow I love bein' a bell-boy. And some day——" he drew a deep breath, "some day I'm goin' to run the elevator. Dick's showin' me how. He even lets me run it sometimes when the folks are havin' dinner. It's the swellest fun!"

Mr. Tobias Tipkins, would-be artist, heir to considerable fortune, settled down apparently very happy and contented in the Springs Hotel. Early every morning his long legs might be seen striding along Main Street towards the end where it straggles out over the hill into the country beyond. "Just going exploring," he would tell Billy if he happened to be on morning duty, "for spring is coming, you know."

There was no doubt about that. Mr. Tipkins was quite right. Spring was coming. There was abundant and tangible proof of it though the snow still lay deep where it had drifted in the valley; and the cold air of night still held the world in the icy grip of frost. But there were crows in the bare branches of the trees; there were skipping ropes on Main Street; there were "dibs" jingling in small boys' pockets; and a seed catalogue captured Mrs. Tibble's thoughts by day and her dreams by night.

And there was a blue light in the air—a blue that rested over the hills at sunset which the boy Kipps was quick to notice. But he kept the beauty of it to himself until unexpectedly he spoke about it to Mrs. Langford one afternoon just before the story-group. "You like clouds 'n things,"—he brought the words out quite suddenly—"I heard you tellin' Farmer Burns one day. D'you ever see the sky now that spring is coming?"

She looked at him as he stood there, his two eyes burning questions in an intense white face. "You feel it too, then, Kipps, the beauty of it all?"

"Oh, don't I!" the boy said, "don't I just!"

"Do you ever try to express it—put it down on paper, I mean?"

"With a pencil, a brush?"

She nodded.

He grinned—a shy, rather sheepish little grin it was. "Sometimes I do. I snatched some paint when the old man was painting the barn, but what I got down don't look like pictures. They don't look like nothin' at all. They don't look like I feel. I keep 'em—my pictures I mean—under my mattress, for if the old man found them——"

His voice trailed off, but Lois Langford could finish the sentence. From Farmer Burns' point of view it would be a matter of waste—waste time, paper,

effort.

“Did your father paint?”

The boy shook his head. “Dunno!”

“Or your mother?”

Again that negative shake. “Dunno ’bout her neither. Never had no Dad nor Maw like other kids far’s I know, ’cept the Children’s Aid.”

“But you’d like to learn how to get it down on paper, wouldn’t you, Kipps; all that you see and feel in the clouds and sky?”

“You’ve said a mouthful, Mrs. Langford!” the boy assured her, almost solemnly.

And that day—very, very odd it seemed to Kipps—the story-hour centred itself about a boy, an obscure little ragamuffin, who, finding beauty in the world about him, worked and studied until he could express on canvas the beauty he had found, converting it into pictures, great masterpieces they proved to be. “He is dead long ago,” Lois Langford added, “but his pictures are living beauty still.”

To most of the group it was rather a disappointing story. “I’d rather have Saint George and the Dragon,” Billy decided, but because politeness was becoming part of his very nature he forced himself to listen intently while the others squirmed impatiently.

“ ’Tisn’t anything special bein’ a painter,” Dinty confided to Sandy McCoy afterwards. “I’ve been painting the hen-coop, and, say, you should see it!” Dinty did not add that he was considering trying his skill on Rover as well. Rover just looked as if he needed a coat of paint or varnish.

But something within Kipps had leaped in response to that story of the obscure little ragamuffin boy who had found beauty. Kipps returned to the farm with his eyes alight. “If another chap’s done it,” he said, racing along the country road and flinging out the words, almost, it seemed, as a challenge, “if another chap’s done it, then I can do it too!”

And that night Kipps slept with those cherished little daubs of his, not, as usual, tucked away under the mattress, but under his pillow instead.

Oh, the boy Kipps might resolve, and hope, and dream, but he could not know that those smeary little drawings were the first outpourings of that artist’s skill which was some day to find expression in pictures which the world was to know and love.

Joy had missed that particular story-hour, spending it instead, as she sometimes did, with the twins upstairs. "They are just a little young for our group," their mother explained, "for they get restless and disturb the others."

On this afternoon the twins were unusually cross. They possessed a Golliwog—very black and staring as to face, very softly-stuffed and gaily-coloured as to body; while with bells on his fingers and bells on his toes he was a musical, ugly, much-loved Golliwog.

It was over the Golliwog that the discussion arose.

"He's mine," Donald explained, half tearfully, "and Dimp says he's hers."

"He is so mine." There were tears of chagrin in Dimples' voice.

"We might divide him," Joy suggested, her mind reverting to the Bible story of Solomon's decision.

"No!" Donald said crossly.

"No!" Dimples echoed.

"Then there's only one thing to do," Joy told them so decidedly that they stared in surprise, "and that is to give him away to someone else."

"Give our Golliwog away?" they chorused.

Joy nodded. "To little Lily Leander." She paused to let the suggestion take hold. "Lily Leander is three years old, and because they are very poor she hasn't got one single toy of her own." And then she told them of the little black Lily, of Smudge and Jemima-Jane, and in the telling the young Leanders were glorified into ebonized martyrs.

Dimples' blue eyes were undoubtedly sympathetic. "But our Golliwog \_\_\_\_\_"

"Is black. So is Lily Leander. Don't you think she would love it?"

They eyed the Golliwog regretfully as he sprawled on the floor, his tinkly arms outstretched.

"Oh, Don!" said Dimples.

"Oh, Dimp!" said Donald.

Obtaining permission from their mother, they took the Golliwog down to the Leander cottage without delay. Jemima-Jane let them in, Jemima-Jane who flashed into a brilliant, toothsome grin at the sight of Joy.

"A present fo' our Lily?" she repeated wonderingly, eyeing the tissue-

wrapped parcel in Dimples' hand. "I'll sholy get her."

Lily gazed hard at the black-faced Golliwog, then opening her arms, took him to her heart.

"Say ta-ta, honey," Jemima-Jane prompted, "to de deah little girl and boy fo' their kindness."

But Lily Leander only held the black-faced Golliwog in a tightly-possessive hug and said, "Me-me-me!" which being interpreted seemed to mean, "Mine-mine-mine!"

"I'm glad—sort of—that we gave him to her," Donald confided to his mother later on; "she ought to have him, for she looks just like a little Golliwog herself!"



## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### SIR GHOST

“Merrily, merrily shall I live now,  
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.”

SHAKESPEARE.

**I**t was Billy who brought the news to Prince Albert Avenue, and being very breathless and excited, he found it hard to explain. But Joy, by dint of questioning, finally understood.

Mr. Tobias Tipkins, it seemed, becoming enamoured with the beauties of the surrounding country in general, and of the little town of Graybrook in particular, had become the owner of the Haunted House.

“An’ he’s goin’ to live there,” Billy told them; “he says it’d take more than ghosts to scare him.”

“Well, I never!” Mrs. Tibble exclaimed; “the man’s got nerve.”

Mrs. Tibble’s opinion found echo among the townfolk. The Monday Afternoon Club even went so far as to wonder if the money he had acquired had not—as the term goes—gone to his head, and made him perhaps a bit soft.

Mrs. Tibble was very insistent in her questioning of the members of the Club.

“You’ve all lived here a long time,” she said; “now exactly what happened in the Haunted House? You ought to know.”

“A murderer hid there once.”

“Go on, what happened next?” Mrs. Tibble prodded, thirsting for details.

But details were meagre. “There are noises in the house at night——”

“But who says so? If nobody lives there, nobody knows,” Mrs. Tibble pointed out, remembering George’s argument and feeling quite detective-like and clever. Finally, however, she was forced to desist from what seemed to be futile probing for information, and gave herself over to the enjoyment of looking gloomy and mysterious whenever the Haunted House was mentioned.

Tobias Tipkins smiled in the face of all criticism, and tossing back the wayward lock explained that he had always wanted to live where he could commune with nature.

“He’ll be communing with more than nature in *that* house!” Mrs. Tibble prophesied.

Nothing daunted, Tobias Tipkins went ahead with his plans. They had evidently taken definite form in his mind, for, now that spring had come and outside work was possible, he lost no time in putting them into execution. Once he was settled Mrs. Winters was to come in daily to cook and clean, and her husband, One-eyed John, was engaged for garden work. In the meantime, under the onslaught of workmen within and without, the cottage was renovated. Water was laid on; electric light installed; fire-proof shingles, of a picturesque red-brown colour, took the place of the weather-beaten roof; the chimney was rebuilt and a larger fireplace put in. A latticed window was thrown out over the front porch from the one upstairs room which was to be Tobias Tipkins’ own. Gaily-patterned paper went on to the walls, and fresh paint inside and out, until the house stood forth one April afternoon as fresh and brave and shining as the April day itself.

“It doesn’t look haunted now,” Joy remarked to Mrs. Tibble when George drove them down that Saturday afternoon to see the transformation.

Mrs. Tibble was understood to sniff. “Whoever heard yet of ghosts being scared by fresh paint?”

“Mr. Tipkins says he never heard of a man-sized man being scared by ghosts.”

Mrs. Tibble nodded sagely. “We’ll see who’s scared. Drive on home, George; he’s welcome to his haunted house.”

But when, after one night in his newly-acquired cottage, some of Tobias Tipkins’ professed courage *had* ebbed, he had no intention of telling the world

of Graybrook, waiting, as he knew so well, anxious to say, "We told you so! We knew!"

He had gone to bed in a determined frame of mind. He was not going to have his pride and delight in his new home dashed at the outset by whispers of ghosts. Nevertheless—Mr. Tipkins was forced to admission—it was quiet as he undressed, with none of the cheery bustle which marked retiring-time in the Springs Hotel. Perhaps it was with a view of dispelling that quietness that he started to sing "Dare to be a Daniel" in a brave bass voice. It was years since he had sung it, but the words came quite readily and reassuringly now:

"Dare to be a Daniel,  
Dare to stand alone,  
Dare to have a purpose firm,  
And——"

the old Sunday School emphasis came back:

". . . *dare* to make it known."

About the middle of the night he sat suddenly bolt upright in bed, tensely alert. Something had wakened him. Something had caused him to jerk bolt upright like that. It was very quiet, uncannily quiet it seemed, a quietness that was somehow terrifying, as if it too—the very quietness—was listening.

Then quite suddenly he heard again the sound which had wakened him.

Tap—tap—tap—whirr-r!

Tobias Tipkins—yes, for the sake of truth it must be confessed—Tobias Tipkins ducked down and pulled the bed-clothes high. After a long, long time—or so it seemed—he uncovered one ear and listened again to the hollow echoing quietness. "I wish——" he thought, but did not complete the sentence. A momentary desire it had been that he could be once more in the Springs Hotel where the hall light burned cheerfully all the night through.

Tap—tap—tap—whirr-r!

The sound seemed, however, to dwindle with each repetition, to grow gradually fainter until with the first flush of dawn in the sky it died away altogether.

With the broad reassuring light of day Tobias Tipkins' courage returned. He even laughed a little at the ignominious memory of himself in bed with the sheets pulled high. But, after all, though he had heard noises as the townsfolk had foretold, nothing alarming had happened. "And a noise," he assured

himself, "can always be explained," and felt himself enveloped by a glow of possessive pride as he stood by his gate and looked at his snug little cottage standing forth so white and fresh in the morning sunlight.

A little later he tramped off into the woods and returned just before lunch, armed with a stout branch of a tree which he trimmed down into a strong, club-like stick. "Now," Tobias Tipkins exclaimed, brandishing it round his head and glorying in the feel of his strengthening muscles, "now!"

"Lands sakes alive, Mr. Tipkins!"—Mrs. Winters poked an inquisitive head out of the kitchen window—"whatever are you tryin' to do?"

Mr. Tipkins was about to retort, "And pray, what business is that of yours?" but remembering that her cooking left little to be desired, and that her temper was notoriously short, caught the words back before they were uttered. "Just exercising my muscles a bit," he explained pleasantly: "they're flabby."

Mr. Tipkins took the club-like stick to bed with him that night. "Forewarned," he assured himself, "and forearmed."

It was soon, very soon, after his light was out that he heard it—fainter, more irregular to-night: Tap—tap—whirr-r—tap! A few seconds and then another faint whirr-r.

Grabbing the stick, Mr. Tipkins sprang out of bed and switched on the light.

Excepting himself the room was empty. No person. No cat. No entrapped bird. He opened the door and advanced threateningly on to the landing. "Anything wanted?" he called in a would-be daring voice which, despite his efforts, rose to a funny little squeak and cracked on the last word. But determinedly grabbing his courage, as it were, with both hands, he advanced along the passage and descended the twisting little stairs into the living-room. It too revealed nothing out of the ordinary under the sudden glare of light. Mr. Tipkins listened intently. All was quiet. The tick of the clock over the fireplace and the far-away rumble of the midnight train in the valley were the only sounds that broke the stillness. Thoughtfully he turned out the light and, after a glance into the dining-room and kitchen, went back up the stairs, perhaps a little too quickly for dignity, as if afraid that someone might grab his retreating leg. He entered his own room, where he stood quite still and listened again.

Tap—tap—whirr-r!

Fainter, much fainter. Rats or mice in the walls? No, it was too regular, too rhythmical for them. Whirr-r—tap!

On a sudden impulse Tobias Tipkins moved across to his window and looked out. Tap—tap close at hand, whirr-r distinctly in his ear.

Suddenly he threw back his head and laughed outright in sudden, eager relief. “Aha,” he said. “Aha, Sir Ghost!”

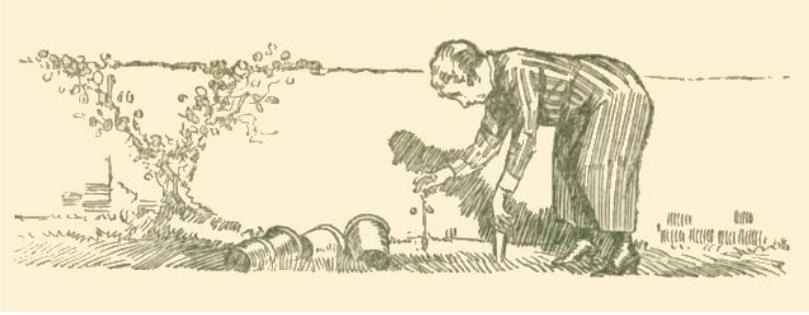
Early the next morning Tobias Tipkins descended into what was eventually to be a garden of riotous bloom and accosted One-eyed John, who was beginning his day’s work. “John,” he said, “we must trim that lilac bush, the one that has grown up over my bedroom window. It scrapes the roof when the wind blows. Bothers me a bit at night.”

One-eyed John looked thoughtfully at the lilac bush grown so tall and scraggy, then turned with a knowing wink to his new master. “Ghosts, sir?”

Tobias Tipkins nodded. “Ghosts, John,” he said.

Then, turning, he walked back towards the cottage, where the curl of smoke, blue in the morning air, and the savoury smell of bacon proclaimed that the business of the morning had begun. And softly under his breath Tobias Tipkins was repeating:

“ ‘Merrily, merrily shall I live now,  
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.’ ”



## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### “WHEN DUTY WHISPERS”

“So nigh is grandeur to our dust,  
So near is God to man,  
When Duty whispers low, ‘Thou must,’  
The Youth replies, ‘I can.’ ”

EMERSON.

**I**t was Miss Pounce who handed Joy the letter through the wicket at the post-office—an innocent-looking little envelope it was, with power to work such havoc.

“You’re getting popular,” Miss Pounce remarked, rather as if she grudged the admission: “that’s the second letter you’ve had lately, and both with city postmarks too.”

“You don’t miss much, do you?” Joy asked.

Miss Pounce glared. Was the girl trying to be funny, or impertinent? Or, worse still, did she imagine she was stating a fact? “I make a point of attending to my business,” she said sharply, “which is more than most folks do.”

“I suppose,” Joy told herself as she went through the swing-door and down the steps, “that I ought to be subdued, or, as Billy would say, squashed. I wonder who this is from? It isn’t Alice-Marie’s writing.”

She slipped her finger under the flap of the envelope and tore it open. It was a short letter, but long enough to make the colour fade from Joy’s cheeks.

“Oh!” she gasped, letting it flutter to the ground. “Oh!”

Just for a moment it seemed as if she wanted to crush that letter under her heel, to grind it out of existence. She stared at it lying there, then suddenly picked it up and slipped it back into the envelope. The colour had returned with a rush to her cheeks and burned there in two round red spots. “I won’t! I won’t!” she said, as if answering a contradictory statement. “I won’t! So there!”

She walked on along Main Street, slowly at first, then gradually quickening her steps until they broke into a run. It would at least be a relief to share the contents of that letter. “But I won’t,” she kept repeating, “no matter what anyone says!”

Mrs. Tibble was in the garden. As a matter of fact, now that the warm, glad days of May had come she spent many hours out there where the seeds which George had planted were stretching up into lanky, weed-like plants. A bit disappointing yet, Mrs. Tibble admitted, eyeing them doubtfully and wondering if they would ever bear any resemblance to the brightly-coloured blooms depicted in the cherished seed catalogue.

“If I’d only been able to put them in myself,” she was thinking regretfully, “I’m sure they’d be looking better now.”

But her rheumatic joints had forbidden such strenuous exercise, so that George had done the necessary planting. He had been so casual about it, careless almost, as if he was doing something quite ordinary instead of planting a garden, which to his mother, after long expressionless years, assumed the proportions of a sacred rite. At first, after daily excursions into the garden to see if anything was showing above ground and doomed to continual disappointment, Mrs. Tibble had been afraid that George had planted them upside down, although he had laughed at her fears. “Why, mother,” he had said, “I couldn’t do that!”

Unconvinced, Mrs. Tibble had held firmly to her suspicions, relieved at last when those tiny green shoots had broken through and made their appearance right side up.

Mrs. Tibble loved that garden of hers—the fresh green leaves of the apple tree, it would be in blossom in a week or so now; the lilac bushes over by the fence; the lily-of-the-valley in bud under the shade of the house; and the grateful heat of the sun over all.

“And just to think,” she was telling herself on this particular afternoon, “that if it hadn’t been for George I might have been in John Street yet.”

Mrs. Tibble did not add, did not even think, that if George had not been so tardy in awakening to his sense of duty she might have been released from the John Street prison many years before. Mother-like, Mrs. Tibble never lingered over that phase, dwelling rather on his present kindness and generosity.

“He let me have Joy to live here,” she thought; “seem’s if I couldn’t get along without her now.”

It was Joy herself who came down the back steps at that moment.

“What’s the matter?” Mrs. Tibble asked, alarmed, sensing immediately that something was wrong.

Joy held up the letter in fingers that trembled. “This!” she said.

“Well, what of it?” Anxiety sharpened Mrs. Tibble’s voice as she took the letter and pushed her spectacles upward into place, then read the letter through, laboriously, word for word. “Well, I never!” she exclaimed “of all the cheek!”

“I’m not going,” the girl said.

Mrs. Tibble’s indignation found expression in a snort. “Of course you’re not. If that isn’t just like Jennie Magiffin to go and break her leg and then expect you to come home and take charge of things.”

“It’s hard on Uncle Peter; he’s written himself, you see. Everything is upside down, he says.”

“I’ll be bound everything *is* upside down. Jennie always was lazy and slipshod; she isn’t the kind of housekeeper that ought to go and break her leg.”

Joy took the letter and stared at it thoughtfully. “It’s hard on him, though, isn’t it?” she repeated. “If I would come back, he says, and help out——”

“Help? It’s a full-size job he’s wanting you for, Joy, and you’re not going. That’s flat.”

Joy sighed, a little sigh of relief it seemed to be. “Then if you say I can’t, I can’t, of course. Oh, I’m so glad, Aunt Maggie; I was afraid perhaps you’d think I should.”

“We’ll write that uncle of yours to-night and tell him——” Mrs. Tibble nodded emphatically. “Oh, we’ll tell him a thing or two!”

But none of the girl’s professed relief showed in her step as she went back into the house. “Anyhow,” she was assuring herself silently, evidently answering some question in her mind, “Alice-Marie’s there; she can take charge.”

Very slowly she went into the house and up the stairs to her own room, where she sat down on a chair close to the window, and opening the letter read it again. It was evidently written hastily and under pressure. But the writer was troubled—that was quite evident. “Your aunt fell and broke her leg . . . a bad break . . . everything upside down . . . will you come and help us out?”

“Will you come and help us out?” Why, it was almost a command, written abruptly like that, leaving no room for choice. “No, I won’t,” Joy assured her absent uncle again; “I won’t!”

“Your uncle, Peter Magiffin.” The sharp black letters of the signature seemed to stand out from the rest of the letter. “Your uncle, Peter Magiffin.” Peter Magiffin who had met her that day when she had alighted from the train, feeling small and strange and lonely. And Peter Magiffin’s handshake had been strong and comforting, and his eyes kindly. “And so this is Lucy’s little girl,” he had said, “this is Joy!” Vividly she remembered the words.

“And I know he wasn’t glad to see me,” she realized now in the illuminating light of experience; “he had plenty to look after without me.”

She sprang to her feet and paced up and down the little room, then suddenly sat down again and, with her hands clasped about her knees, stared out into the leafy green of the apple tree touched to beauty by the light of the western sun. “He didn’t want me, but he made me welcome,” she repeated in an oddly level voice.

Very quietly she sat there, though the knuckles of her hands, clasped about her knees, showed white. “And now,” she added in the same level tone, “now he’s asking me to help out.”

With the thought those lines flashed into memory—lines her father had so often repeated:

“God uses us to help each other, so  
Lending our lives out.”

“ ‘To help each other,’ ” Joy echoed, “ ‘to help each other!’ ”

“I believe,” she said aloud, voicing the words slowly with obvious reluctance, “I believe Dad would say I ought to go back, that I ought to help out. No, he wouldn’t either; he’d just say, ‘God uses us to help each other,’ and then let me do my own thinking. And I’d know at once what he meant. Oh, Dad,” she added in a whisper as if he was really there to hear. “Oh, Dad, I don’t wonder you said we needed courage.”

Her hands dropped as she stood up. Her eyes were resolute now. Her head

held high. “Of course,” she said, still as if answering someone, “of course you know jolly well what you ought to do, Joy Meredith. And you know too that, whatever happens, no daughter of your father could *ever* be a shirker.”

Mrs. Tibble stared at her when she made known her decision, as if doubting the evidence of her ears. “Are you crazy?” she asked.

The girl shook her head. “I’m not crazy, Aunt Maggie, only trying to be brave.”

Perhaps deep in her secret heart Mrs. Tibble acquiesced with that decision, for she gave in with surprisingly little argument, though outwardly she was mightily indignant. “You can tell Jennie Magiffin,” she said, “that if I break *my* leg there’s no question of who you’re going to help then.”

Billy shed a few honest tears over the news. “If Ma’s broke her leg, and you’re goin’, Joy, then I want to go too.”

“But you can’t,” Joy told him; “it means something to be on duty, and you can’t run away from that.”

Billy blinked his tear-filled eyes and squared his shoulders. “No,” he agreed readily, “a feller on duty can’t run away.”

Lois Langford smiled when she heard. “Joy,” she said, “that’s so like you.”

“Like me?” Joy gasped. “Oh, but it isn’t, Mrs. Langford; I almost said I wouldn’t go. Now I’m going, not because I want to, but just because—well, I can’t be a shirker.”

“No.” Lois Langford shook her head thoughtfully. “No, you couldn’t be a shirker, Joy.”

But Tobias Tipkins was looking very serious, solemn almost, when he met Joy and Mrs. Tibble on Main Street. He had already heard from Billy of Joy’s impending departure. “I’m afraid,” he remarked, “that you are a ‘rose that’s born to blush unseen and waste its sweetness on the desert air.’ ”

“My land!” Mrs. Tibble exclaimed in Joy’s ear, glancing nervously around to see if anyone had overheard, “the man’s talking poetry, and right on Main Street too. Let’s get on before he talks any more. But it was nice, rather,” she added, after Tobias Tipkins had turned in the opposite direction. “What was it, something about a rose blushing in the desert? I don’t see what that’s got to do with you, or the desert either. I never heard of roses there. Still, it’s poetry, and you can say all sorts of queer things in poetry and get away with them.”

Thirty-six hours after the letter had arrived, Joy sat in the train and watched

that little group of familiar figures, and the Graybrook platform itself, slide back out of sight. They had all been down to see her off—Mrs. Tibble, hot and perspiring; Mrs. Langford and the twins; Tobias Tipkins and Billy, both of them hanging on to Toby's collar, for Toby had manifested a strange antipathy to that snorting engine and indicated a desire to be up and at it. And Dinty was there, and Sandy McCoy with the freckles over his nose very pronounced and freckly indeed under the vivifying warmth of the May sun. And Jemima-Jane and Smudge too, with unabashed tears rolling down their dusky cheeks.

But they were no longer to be seen. There was a glimpse of Main Street as they passed over the dangerous level-crossing at the lower end; a glimpse of the town-hall clock, of the library and public school; and then out into the fields where, glancing back, one could see only those well-known landmarks—the tall, tall elms near Tobias Tipkins' cottage.

Joy took off her hat and leaned back against the green plush seat. She was headed for the city, for Victory Avenue once more. She had turned her back, for the present at any rate, on all that she loved in this new country.

With the thought a sudden, unexpected little tear welled up in the corner of her eye, and raising her hand she dashed it away impatiently.

After all, it was possible, she comforted herself, probable even, that the accident might have had a subduing effect on Aunt Jennie Magiffin. Perhaps she would welcome her gladly, gratefully. "And I," Joy assured herself, "I'll be sweet and kind and forgiving."

It was a reassuring little picture, that of herself as a forgiving, ministering spirit.

"Anyway," she said decidedly, and right out loud so that a lady in the next seat looked up inquiringly, "I've said I'm not going to be a shirker—and I'm not!"





## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### “LENDING OUR LIVES OUT”

“God uses us to help each other, so  
Lending our lives out.”

BROWNING.

Perhaps it was not altogether a surprise to Joy that the attitude of Aunt Jennie Magiffin answered the fears rather than the hopes in her heart. Most certainly there was nothing of a grateful welcome in her greeting.

“So you’ve come, have you? Well, it’s about time. I reckon you were glad to get away from Maggie Tibble or you wouldn’t have come at all.”

“But I *didn’t* want to get away from her,” Joy interposed; “I came because ——” She stopped, remembering that when all was said and done Aunt Jennie Magiffin was in bed with a broken leg and in such circumstances one must have patience.

Her aunt’s voice was high-pitched and fretful.

“I never expect or get any return from folks like you that I’ve done so much for. As I said to your Uncle Peter, it’s nothing but right, I said, that the girl should come down and try to pay back a little of what she owes us.”

Mrs. Magiffin did not repeat that she had added that she was not going to hire help when there was someone who ought to do the work for nothing.

She was staring fixedly at Joy as she stood there at the foot of the bed.

“Goodness me!” she exclaimed, “but your cheeks got redder than ever up there. I’m glad Alice-Marie’s aren’t like that. As I told her long ago, red cheeks like yours aren’t exactly ladylike.”

Joy’s cheeks were undoubtedly rosy at the moment as she tried to subdue all the old-time fires of resentment.

“What would you like me to do first?” she asked.

“Sakes alive, girl, do you expect me to lie here and tell you what to do? Haven’t you eyes in your head to see for yourself? Haven’t you sense enough to know without bein’ told, without plaguing me with questions—a girl your age?”

And so Joy went downstairs to take upon her young shoulders the burden of housekeeping for the Magiffin family.

It is just possible if the work which bound her to the house for the next few weeks had not engrossed all her thoughts and efforts, Joy might have found the change from the sunny atmosphere of Prince Albert Avenue almost unbearable. There was no time to dwell on it, no time to remember the joyous beauty of spring-time in Graybrook. Here—though the sky overhead was of a tender spring-like blue, and tufts of grass had turned green in the hard unfriendly soil which fronted the rows of houses—spring might come and spring might go and make but little impress in passing. Only a few blocks away in Allison Gardens the tulips were abloom, and lilacs shook their scent abroad. Even those thoroughfares which Victory Avenue connected reflected spring-time brightness in their windows. “Things of loveliness for the June Bride,” “Suggestions for the Summer Girl”—suggestions of beauty they were, deep blues, soft violets, and cool jade greens.

But Joy saw nothing of these, held as she was in the house by work—hard, unceasing work. Work which started with the early breakfast and carried on, in continuous, strenuous routine. Meals, meals, meals, three of them each day—heavy, solid, substantial meals.

And punctuating the preparing of them would come the recurring “ding” of the bell by her aunt’s bed. “Joy,” the querulous voice would greet her as she ran up to answer the summons, “something’s burning down there. You’ll set the house afire yet with your carelessness.”

Usually she was right, of course. Joy was forced to admit that. Once the kettle had boiled dry, and a hole in the bottom of a saucepan told its own story. “How in the world can she smell them when I can’t, though they’re right under my nose?” Joy wondered, puzzled.

With the exception of her uncle, who had questioned her closely, none of the family manifested any interest in her Graybrook life, though all were eager to hear about Billy.

“How’s the kid getting on?” Benjamin asked, trying to look as if he didn’t care.

Joy’s face lighted up. “Oh, you should see him! He makes the dearest bell-hop——”

“Bell-hop!” A derisive little snicker from Alice-Marie.

“Well, bell-boy then, though I think bell-hop’s just as good. They’re supposed to hop when the bell rings.”

“Does he get tips?” This from Benjamin.

“Oh, rather! He’s such a jolly, willing little chap that everyone likes him. Of course he gets tips.”

Benjamin turned and walked off, feeling somehow resentful and chagrined. He had always looked down rather patronizingly on his kid brother, had laughed when Billy complained that the fellows called him “Nursey.” “Well,” Benjamin had asked irritatingly, “you *are* a sort of nursemaid, aren’t you?”

But now Billy apparently was making good. Little Billy!

Only when Joy went to bed at night—often too tired to sleep—was there time to think over the vividly poignant Graybrook memories, memories of those nights when she had flung her window wide to let in the clear night air, to let in that deep, deep quiet itself. Here the night was strident with the throbbing hum of traffic. Noises that blared, it seemed, intermittently all the night through.

And Joy would remember those words her father had loved. “Oh, Dad,” she would say, “it sounds so easy, but it’s so *hard* to be strong and of a good courage!”

Often it was long before sleep came, and then it seemed but a moment before the insistent whirr-r of the alarm heralded another long day of work.

At the end of the second week much of the rosiness had faded from Joy’s cheeks, and there were dark lines under her eyes. Evidently Mrs. Magiffin noticed.

“You needn’t be tryin’ to play on our sympathy,” she complained one morning in the familiar, rasping tone; “you know’s well’s I do that you’re not workin’ as hard here as you did for Maggie Tibble on John Street. I haven’t

forgotten that you were all smiles there. Because you were gettin' paid, I guess. Well, you can take it straight from me, Joy Meredith, you're not gettin' paid here. Y' ought to be willin' to work, y' ought to be glad to work for your poor uncle and aunt who've done so much for you. Takin' you in when you was a waif with no one belongin' to you at all——”

Mrs. Magiffin stopped for the simple reason that there is little satisfaction in talking to an empty room. The girl, clapping her hands over her ears, had suddenly turned and vanished through the door.

It was just about this time that Joy came to a silent decision about Alice-Marie.

“There is no reason she shouldn't help,” she thought; “it's not playing the game at all to leave me single-handed every evening.”

Accordingly she broached the subject. But Alice-Marie had no intention of “playing the game” in that sense of the phrase. Her mother's accident had come as something of a liberating factor in her selfish little life, leaving her free to escape each evening after supper and join “the bunch” at the corner.

And so when Joy spoke out very decidedly and said, “I think you might give me a hand after school and in the evenings,” Alice-Marie only grinned—a derisive, impish little grin—and retorted, “Oh, you think so, do you? Well, you can go on thinking, Joy Meredith. *I don't care!*” and dashed out of the house with shrill “hoo-hoo's” of greeting to the girls.

But Joy was not to be put off like that. She appealed to her uncle. “It isn't quite right that she shouldn't help at all, Uncle Peter.”

“It isn't,” he agreed thoughtfully. “I should have noticed, Joy, and thought of it myself. But I'm lax about such things. Of course Alice-Marie must help.”

But Alice-Marie was not the stuff of which helpers are made. She followed Joy into the kitchen the next evening, closed the dining-room door behind her, then, taking hold of Joy's arm, nipped the flesh between vicious little fingers. “Tattle-tale,” she whispered between clenched teeth. “Tattle-tale! Telling Dad like that. There—there”—with each repetition the nips increased. “There!”

But Alice-Marie had reckoned without knowledge. An ominous little flush ran up into Joy's cheeks. “Stop it!” she commanded sharply. “Stop it! There, take that, and that”—in turn she nipped Alice-Marie's arm, “and that!”

“Oh-h, oh-h!” Alice-Marie's voice rose to a squeal of alarm. “Dad—Ma—Ben—she's hurting me!”

She experienced no difficulty in creating the desired disturbance. A

moment later and Peter Magiffin was in the kitchen. The voice of Mrs. Magiffin was heard and Ben brought back the message, "What was the matter now?"

"She pinched me!" Alice-Marie told her father shrilly.

But Joy had no intention of backing down. "Not until after she pinched me. Alice-Marie needn't think she's the only pincher——" She stopped, her own words sounding somehow suddenly childish and futile. "Perhaps," she added more calmly, "perhaps we'd get on better if we worked separately."

It ended in an arrangement of that kind. Alice-Marie was to clear off the dishes, tidy the dining-room and put Queenie to bed, while Joy was to reign supreme in the kitchen.

"Aha, aha!" Alice-Marie flung tauntingly over her shoulder when the restraining influence of her father was removed. "You didn't do much good by tattling, did you? You'll have to wash up same's ever. You *are* smart, aren't you?"

"Oh, keep quiet!" Joy retorted in a suddenly spiritless and very tired young voice.

The month of June was hot—unusually and breathlessly hot. Towards the end of the month Mrs. Magiffin had so far recovered as to be able to come downstairs. If Joy had entertained any hopes that without the exasperating interruptions of the bell upstairs, and with possible assistance from her aunt, matters might be made easier for her, she was doomed to disappointment. Aunt Jennie Magiffin was not there to help, but to oversee. Her eye was vigilant and eagle-like, her temper short and irascible.

"Land sakes alive, girl, do you call that dusting, swishing around the four legs of a chair with one flick like that? 'Tisn't the way I taught my daughter to do her work."

Joy's temper was likewise strained near the breaking-point. "Work—Alice-Marie! I'd like to see her!"

"Joy Meredith! Don't you dare speak of my daughter like that! You ungrateful girl!" Mrs. Magiffin's voice cracked with the intensity of her emotion. "You, who aren't fit to black her shoes!"

Joy marched out of the room with her head in the air and relieved her overwrought feelings by giving the door a vigorous and unladylike bang behind her.

Letters from Billy occasionally broke the monotony of those days, and it

was at the end of June that an afternoon mail brought Joy one of his welcome epistles and another which she recognized had come from Lois Langford. She slipped them into the pocket of the apron she was wearing, to take them out later when the work of the day was over and she was able to enjoy them without interruption in the quiet of her own room.

Billy's spelling, as usual, left much to be desired, adhering strictly to the phonetic type:

“DER JOY

“I mis you, so does Mrs. Tibbel, so does Mr. Tipkins.

“Tell Ben my hare dusnt stand up on my hed like it used to. Dic Dawson gave me sum stuf out of a bottel. It is called slick and that's what it does to my hare. Tell Ben I run the elivator swell now and call out 'Going up,' 'Going down,' like Dic does, and once I sed, 'Step livley, please,' but Dic sed I musnt do it agen becaus it wasnt pilite to gests.

“Mr. Tipkins and Toby and me, we all go fishing sumtimes. Mr. Tipkins dusnt like puting on the wurms, so I put them on. I like to feel them wiggel.

“Yur old frend, BILLY.”

Joy was smiling as she finished. “Dear little Billy,” she was thinking, “I'd like to see him again, all slicked up and shining.”

Still smiling, she opened the other letter:

“JOY DEAR,

“Have you been thinking about me?”

“I have, I have,” Joy assured the invisible writer of the letter.

“Because I have been thinking about you, a lot. About your decision in going back to help your aunt. And I want to tell you that I think it was a very fine thing to do. It is a difficult lesson for most of us to learn—learning to live for others instead of merely existing for ourselves. I went through the temptation to do that, just exist, after my husband died, for I had money to travel, to do all those things which people with means are supposed to enjoy. And then suddenly I seemed to realize that life in its deepest sense meant more than that.

And it was then that I started to help young folks through College, and to make them welcome to my home—as friends. It has been gloriously worth while. One of them, Lyola Shen, a little Japanese girl—you were admiring her picture one day—is graduating in medicine this year and going back to her own country as a Christian doctor. A Russian girl who was lonely to the point of heartbreak has turned to literary work and is doing well. And I could go on and on \_\_\_\_\_”

“And these,” Joy assured the four walls of her little attic room, “are the people Graybrook folks call queer foreigners!”

“I hesitated about telling you this. It sounds so egotistical somehow, but I think you will understand when you have begun to live for others, not merely exist for yourself.

“I love that stimulating little thought of Bliss Carmen’s:

“ ‘Not counting the cost of being,  
Living to dare and be glad.’ ”

The letter ended abruptly. Joy’s brown eyes were thoughtful as she slipped it back into its envelope and pressed it against her cheek as if it was something very precious.

“Dad might have written it himself,” she was thinking, “they’re just the kind of things he said so often. He would have loved that thought too—‘Not counting the cost of being, living to dare and be glad.’ ”



## CHAPTER TWENTY ON DUTY

“The greatest gift the hero leaves the world is to have been a hero.”—GEORGE ELIOT.

**B**illy was brushing his hair and smiling at himself in his mirror. He always smiled when his hair looked like that—sleek, shining, close to his head.

Behind him there was a patch of sunlight on the floor. Billy loved that little square of brightness that was there every morning the sun shone. For it heralded another day, a day which held those hours “on duty” which never lost their zest. And a day which held its off hours too when he would be free to hike down to the creek with a hook and line over his shoulder, a tin of juicy, wriggling, fish-beguiling worms in his hand, and his dog at his heels.

Some day, he knew, he would be taken away from this life and sent back to school—school which he had never liked. “Wen a fella’s a bell-boy on duty,” he wrote Joy, “he dusnt need to go to skul.”

But there was no immediate prospect of school for these summer days at any rate, and Billy had dismissed the thought as a remote possibility that might never take place.

This was one of his favourite kind of days. He would be on morning duty, off for the afternoon, and on again at night. He liked morning duty best of all, for an afternoon off, of course, meant a glorious romp with Toby—Toby, who,

so they told him, stationed himself on Mrs. Tibble's front steps each noon, obviously on the watch for his young master, disappointed when he failed to appear, and in a frenzy of delight when he came. Night duty of necessity was a little harder, easy and pleasant enough for the first part, but very trying for the last hour or so, when one got just dreadfully sleepy and tried to keep an eye, if it could be persuaded to stay open at all, on the clock, wondering if those hands would ever crawl round to the relieving hour of twelve.

The only disturbing factor in the programme for to-day was that his hours on duty would not fall in with Dick Dawson's, the elevator boy. Billy liked Dick, liked his sleek straight hair which he was trying so hard to imitate; liked his honest eyes and merry grin. To-day, morning and evening, Mike Murphy would be on elevator duty. Billy's dislike of him dated back to that first morning on duty when Mike had stuck a pin inquiringly into Billy. "Just to see if you'll bust, bein' so fat," he had explained pleasantly. Which was characteristic of Mike Murphy, who, in his own words, took a special delight in "ragging the small fry."

Most certainly there was nothing to mark out this particular morning from any other, nothing to indicate that this day was to stand out from all others in Billy Magiffin's life.

It happened at night, about half-past eleven, they said afterwards. Most of the guests had gone up to bed, and Billy was sitting on his bench wishing, as he had wished so often before, that twelve o'clock would "hurry up and come." He had leaned his head back and half closed his eyes, watching the cluster of lights blur and shimmer through his lashes.

Then suddenly something made him spring up. Something not clearly defined. Someone was speaking loudly, sharply. Somebody was running. A door banged. A bell rang.

Then someone said "Fire!" And the alarm clanged out, insistent, terrifying.

"Fire!" Someone repeated it. "Fire!" The alarm clanged on. There were footsteps, hurrying. And voices, high-pitched and frightened.

And then smoke. Just at first Billy scarcely noticed that it was tickling his throat, smarting his eyes, until it came swiftly, blinding.

Quite clearly he heard Mike Murphy say, "I'm goin' t' beat it!" And someone else, quite near him too, said, "It's pouring up the stairs."

It—that must mean smoke. Pouring up the stairs! Billy put his hand up to his eyes as if to push it away, took a step forward, and hesitated. There was only one thing to do, of course, to "beat it" as Mike Murphy had already done.

To get out of the way of that fire just as quickly as possible.

But it came to Billy suddenly, as things do in such a moment, that if the smoke were pouring up the stairs the people could not get down. Not now that Mike Murphy, the elevator boy, had run away.

Perhaps it was for this specific moment that Billy's imagination had been awakened, for it was all pictured for him quite clearly—those people on the floors above, trapped, frightened, rushing this way and that, unable to get down with the smoke pouring up the stairs and the elevator boy off duty.

Suddenly, as if compelled to action, Billy sprang across to the empty lift, pressed the lever and shot up to the top floor. There his voice rang out, shrill, compelling. "Going down! Going down!"

They crowded in, half-dressed, dazed, panic-stricken. "Step easy," he warned them, "that's enough. I'll come back."

He came back, again and again. And then to the second floor while the smoke, belching in terrifying columns, spread along the passages. But something else had spread too—those glad, glad words of relief: "The elevator! The elevator's running!"

Few of them noticed the boy himself, though they remembered afterwards how his voice rang out so clear and unafraid: "Going down! Going down!"

Someone did notice, and that someone said, "Why, it's not one of the regular lads, it's only a little boy!"

But it was a little boy who, in that moment of crisis, had drawn about his shoulders the mantle of a hero.

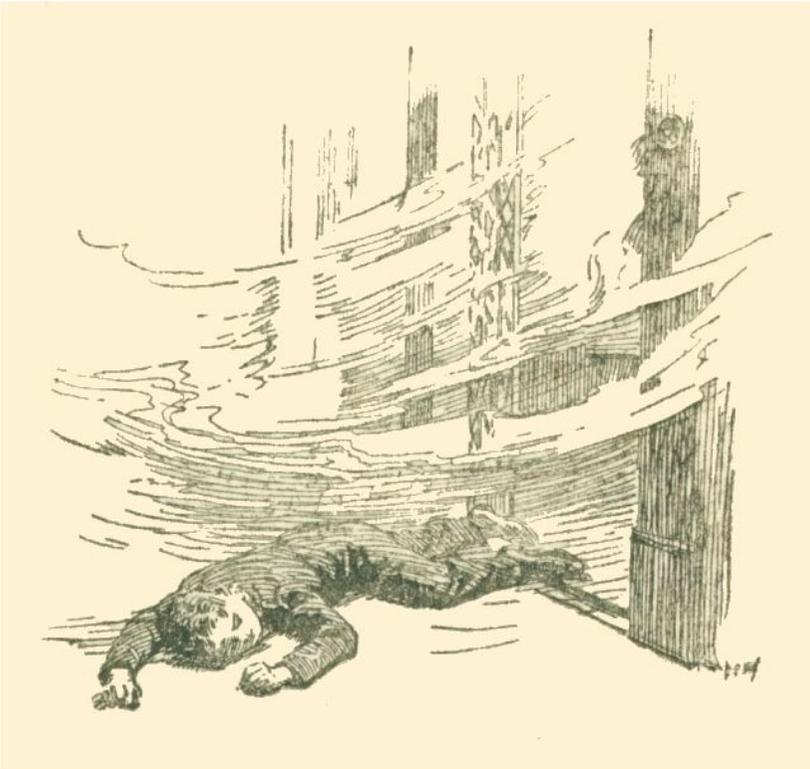
Again and again he returned. Again and again his voice rang out. Again and again he brought them down, load by load, through the dense and blinding smoke, to safety.

He was gasping for air now, was taking long sobbing breaths into a wet towel someone had thrust into his hands. Someone called him, he heard his name. "Come out, you can't go up again!"

"I'm on duty!" he tried to say; "on duty!" and shot up once more.

But this time he was alone when he came down. And then, and only then, after he had brought down his last load, did he fall senseless across the doorway of the elevator.

Billy had been released from duty.





## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### “OUR DEAR LITTLE HERO!”

**H**e couldn't understand at all. There seemed to be clouds about him, around, below, above, pressing against him, hurting as they pressed until he wanted to cry out with the pain—wanted to cry and couldn't.

Then for a long, long time he seemed to drift on those clouds, resting, floating, until the clouds themselves vanished and the pain lessened a little. He was in bed somewhere, held down in a tight, vice-like grip.

And then he remembered. The fire. The elevator. The people. Himself. And after that flash of memory he drifted into the mists again. But once more memory returned, clearer, stronger. He had gone up in the elevator, he remembered now, for the last time, and had found that there were no more people to bring down. Then he had come down himself, but after that everything was blank.

Perhaps he was dead. But surely being dead wouldn't feel like this. And the voices he heard about him certainly sounded very un-dead. Human voices, they were, curiously comforting.

And then there came another voice, one that detached itself from all others and seemed to speak directly to him. “Oh, Billy,” it said. “Oh, Billy, our dear little hero!”

That was what it said, he was quite, quite sure. “Oh, Billy, our dear little hero!” But what it meant was a different matter. Puzzled, he turned those words over and over in his mind and tried to recall the owner of the voice.

Then he knew. Why, it was Mrs. Langford, of course; Mrs. Langford, who had told them about that chap—who was it? His mind groped after the missing link—oh, Saint George and the Dragon, of course. And now she was calling him, Billy Magiffin, a hero.

About this time he realized that there was a bandage over his eyes, and after he knew that he seemed to understand it all much easier. He could even ask questions and receive satisfactory—and startling—answers. He was in a hospital. He had been burned in the fire but was going to be quite well again soon. A fireman had stumbled over him as he lay at the door of the elevator and had carried him out to an ambulance which had brought him to the hospital.

“An amb’lance!” Billy gasped on hearing this; he was really very much better now. “An amb’lance! Oh, shucks! Just my luck wantin’ to ride in one o’ them things all my life, and when I did I didn’t know I wuz!”

And his father had actually come all the way from the city to see him. “He and your family are very proud of you,” Lois Langford said.

“Proud o’ me?” Billy repeated wonderingly.

It took a long, long time and a great deal of telling before he understood. Somehow it was easier to grasp when they took the bandage off one eye so that he could look out on the world about him once more. Even then he was incredulous, though apparently it was quite true. That there had been no lives lost in the fire had been very largely due to the efforts of one Billy Magiffin. He had been the hero of the fire. Lois Langford told him that over and over again. “There were big headlines in the papers,” she said; “the hero elevator-boy they called you.”

“ ’Twasn’t nothin’ I did,” he said.

“But what made you think of doing it, old chap?” Dick Dawson asked, the first time he was allowed to come; “what made you remember and think about those folks?”

“They couldn’t get down the stairs,” Billy said, as if he was stating a very simple fact.

There were flowers in his room, always fresh and fragrant. “Sent by some of the folks you saved,” the nurse told him; “they all want to see you when you get well, and are anxious to give you something more tangible than flowers, they say.”

“What’s tangible?” Billy asked.

The manager of the hotel was another visitor. And he made it very clear that when the new Springs Hotel was ready—one wing had been destroyed and the rest badly scorched—there would be a position waiting for Billy. “Elevator boy, caddie, anything you want,” he promised.

“Yessir!” Billy said, clinching with the offer. “I’ll be the elevator boy; I’ll be on duty when Dick Dawson isn’t.”

“Done!” the manager agreed, then smiled as he met Billy’s one black and lively eye. “You’re pretty little for the elevator, old chap, but folks’ll trust you, I fancy; they’ll feel honoured to have you take them up and down.”

“Yessir!” Billy agreed.

And then his old friend Tobias Tipkins came forward with another offer. Just as soon as Billy was able to leave the hospital he was to recuperate in his cottage.

“To *what*?” Billy asked.

“Recuperate, to get well.”

“But I’m getting weller here.” He looked up the least bit suspiciously. “You wouldn’t be wanting me to paint pictures all the time, would you?”

Tobias Tipkins was very reassuring. “Oh, no, we won’t bother about painting. We’ll get Toby to live with us too, and we’ll all go fishing together.”

“Hurray, that’s fine!” Billy said, immensely relieved.

Tucked away under his pillow he kept a letter from Joy. Lois Langford had read it to him the first time, and afterwards he had spelled it out for himself until part, at least, was familiar:

“Oh, Billy, if you’re not the bravest boy! We are all so proud of you. Your mother is going to have the newspaper headlines framed and hung up in the dining-room.”

“Jiminy crickets!” Billy never failed to exclaim at this point.

“I don’t believe Saint George himself, fighting his old Dragon, showed himself any braver and finer than you did, Billy Magiffin!”

And so he kept that letter just under the edge of his pillow where he could reach up and touch it and know it was there. “Not even Saint George himself showed himself any braver and finer.” “Oh, Jiminy!” Billy repeated, very happily.

On the whole it was rather pleasant now that the pain didn't bother him, and everybody was so kind.

"Tell them," he said to Lois Langford, who was writing a letter home for him, "tell them I have chicken ever so often, and ice-cream every day."

"Some fellows," Benjamin said, on hearing this, "some fellows get everything!"

Finally, the bandage came off Billy's other eye, and then he was very much better indeed. Then came the never-to-be-forgotten day when the reporter came to take his picture.

"It'll be fun, won't it," he asked, "seeing your picture in the paper?"

"Swell!" Billy agreed fervently, "though it's just my luck that they went and took my bandage off yesterday. Nurse," he called suddenly, "put my bandage back on, please; I'm going to have my picture took."

And so it was in the weekly paper, bandage and all, with the other eye, round and black and button-like, twinkling out into the eyes of the world.

There was only one thing Billy wanted during those days of convalescence—wanted ever and ever so much. That, of course, was Toby. Which was a request that they could not, under any condition, grant him. A dog—carrier of germs and microbes, against which the hospital gave daily and bitter battle—oh, impossible!

But, as Billy told them afterwards in high glee, they didn't know Toby.

During the days following the fire, when Billy had not turned up as usual, Toby had been decidedly puzzled. Always alert he seemed to be, watching, anxious, and unhappy. Then he started out to hunt for his master, wandering this way and that, sniffing here and there, returning home disconsolate with his tail turned down, to refuse the tempting meals which Mrs. Tibble offered him.

It was following Mrs. Tibble one afternoon that he found the hospital. Not that he knew it as such, of course. A large white house it appeared to him, with a funny smell coming out of it. Not a nice rabbit or chipmunk sort of smell, but queer and unfriendly. He took to following Mrs. Tibble each afternoon, and discovered that she frequently went in there. Always she turned at the door and said, "Stay there, Toby!" or, worse still, "Go home!" He felt rather offended when she said that, and was openly indignant when a person, white-clad like the house itself, came out and said, "Scat, go 'way!" just as if he was a silly kitten instead of a sensible, self-respecting, well-behaved dog.

But Toby didn't "scat." He had no intention of "scatting." He withdrew a

little, it is true, then sat with his ears cocked inquiringly and became suspicious. Why did they want to keep him out? Was it just possible that they were hiding Billy in there? Quite suddenly Toby decided that he was going in.

And, impossible though it sounds, in he went.

He slipped through one afternoon right on the heels of Mrs. Tibble, so that when she turned round as usual to say, "Stay there, Toby," he wasn't to be seen at all. Being so stout and unwieldy and of the generally unbendable type, Mrs. Tibble never dreamed of looking for him right down in the shadows about her feet.

It was just those shadows that helped him, for it was an overcast, thundery sort of afternoon, and the passages of the hospital were dim. At any rate he trotted along undetected right in the shadow of the unsuspecting Mrs. Tibble. It was at the second floor that he made his first mistake. He was not quite nimble enough. He didn't, in fact, expect her to turn and disappear through that door at all, so that she was through before the agile Toby could insert even a nose.

But he was convinced now. Something told him that Billy was in there. Wild horses, or hospital authorities, could not have dragged Toby from the doorway after that. He sat there very quiet, but tense and quivering.

It was when Mrs. Tibble came out that Toby slipped in. There was no sluggishness about his movements this time. So quiet he was, so slippery and eel-like, that she was in ignorance that he was there at all.

But Billy knew—knew the minute he heard the eager click-clack of his claws on the hardwood floor.

"Oh-h, Toby!" Billy said.

And "Oh, Billy!" Toby must surely have replied as he jumped up on the bed—on the clean white hospital bed with his germs and microbes and all—and, wiggling all over with mute inexpressible glee, burrowed his cold nose right down into Billy's neck.

And so the nurse found them later on, the dog lying quiet, with only an occasional little thump of the tail, while Billy, with his arms wound around the dog's neck, and a wide happy smile on his face, was fast asleep.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO DEALING WITH FUTURES

**M**rs. Lois Langford, in her own words, was dealing with futures that sunny August afternoon as she sat in the welcome shade of her side verandah and checked over lists on a table before her, a frown of perplexity the while between her pretty eyes.

“Dinty?” she said, half aloud, and made a triumphant little tick against the name. “Oh, Dinty’s all right, his grandmother is interested in the boy, and they’re good pals, I know. And Kipps,” she smiled, calling up before her mind’s eye the remembrance of Kipps’ joy when Tobias Tipkins had made known his desire to adopt him as his own small son. “I have a feeling that Kipps is going to mean something to the world, and he’s off to a good start now. I wish I felt as sure about the others.”

“The others” passed before her mental vision in rapid succession—Mildred Todd and Maudie Leonard, their mothers both jail-birds.

“Why,” Lois Langford wondered helplessly, “why do mothers, of all people, work their way into jail?”

“Sandy McCoy.” The pencil fell from her fingers as the boyish face rose before her—Sandy with his red hair and freckles, who, lacking parental restraint, was showing inclination to “run with the gang,” an already notorious gang. The anxiety faded a little from her eyes as they fell on the next names: “Jemima-Jane and Smudge Leander.” She put a tick against the name of Smudge. “We must not neglect that voice of yours, old chap. I have an idea

that the future holds many a conquest for you, our shy little Smudge,” and remembered the mellow softness of his voice as he had sung, just a few nights before, “Swing low, sweet chariot, low.”

Her smile twinkled into a laugh as the name of Billy Magiffin met her eyes. “Well,” she addressed the absent Billy, “if you’re determined to live up to your motto, ‘on duty,’ then nothing can go wrong with your future. But there remains Joy—oh, Joy, my dear, I wonder!”

A sudden tense little frown drew her brows together as she turned over in her mind a thought which had been forming for the past few weeks, and stared with unseeing eyes across the shadows of the verandah into the brightness of the afternoon sunlight on the lawn.

“And why not?” she demanded suddenly of herself. “Why not? It would mean a lot to the girl, and it would mean a lot to me, there’s no denying that. After all,” she voiced those thoughts slowly, “there’s no reason I shouldn’t carry out the plan, unless perhaps her relations or Mrs. Tibble object.”

A moment later she stood up and brought her hand down with a characteristic vigorous little thump on the table. “I’ll tackle Mrs. Tibble right now—Mrs. Tibble, the first lion in the path!”

There was nothing particularly lion-like about Mrs. Tibble as she rocked in her garden-chair that August afternoon. Mrs. Tibble loved that old rocking-chair of hers, had, in fact, brought it all the way from John Street, for rockers were almost impossible to buy.

Undoubtedly she was glad to welcome her visitor, for of late much of the veiled antagonism toward Mrs. Langford had died down. The Monday Afternoon Club, ignoring the fact that she didn’t make her own pickles, had adopted an almost friendly attitude, had even come to the conclusion that, after all, those queer-looking visitors were nobody’s business but her own. Mrs. Tibble had openly declared that she thought Mr. and Mrs. Oliver were right, that Mrs. Langford was a mighty fine young woman.

But if Mrs. Langford herself was welcome in Mrs. Tibble’s garden that afternoon, her errand met with no friendly reception. Mrs. Tibble rocked to and fro, perturbed and indignant.

“Of course I’ll not consent,” she snapped, “that is, if I get the chance of having Joy back here at all—it’d be just like that Jennie Magiffin to hang on to the girl when she knew I wanted her. But why *should* I consent to a scheme like yours, I’d like to know?”

“It’s Joy we should think of, Mrs. Tibble, Joy with so much of life before

her.”

“Well, I *am* thinking of her.” Mrs. Tibble suspended the rocking motion and glared over her spectacles. “I’m willing to provide for her future, I’m willing to give her a good home——” the impressive rise of her voice was almost dramatic; “I’m willing—I’m intending to adopt her as my own daughter!”

“But there’s more to the future than just having a good home, Mrs. Tibble.” Lois Langford was eloquently persuasive at the moment. “There’s so much a girl of to-day can demand of life; there’s so much she can give in return. There’s so much a good woman can do, so many places she is needed. I want to fit Joy for a life-work; I want her to become, not dependent on others, but on her own efforts. Oh, I want to give her every opportunity now to make good later on.”

“I don’t see what you’re getting at.” Mrs. Tibble was rocking to and fro very fast indeed.

“Don’t you think it would mean a lot to Joy to have the opportunity of further education, High School, the University perhaps, and travel? I can give her all these, Mrs. Tibble.”

Only the eloquent crick-crack of the rocker answered.

“I don’t want to do anything unfair to you. That’s why I came to you first. But we mustn’t be unfair to the girl. I know I’m asking a lot of you when you’re expecting her back. I know you love her. One couldn’t, I think, help that. But I know too that you want to do what you think is best for her regardless of your own feelings.”

It was an appeal to all that was best in Mrs. Tibble. Her plump face puckered as the handkerchief went up to her eyes. “Of course I do,” she agreed tearfully from behind the handkerchief. “N-nobody w-w-wants it more. All right—you can have her!”

And so it came about that on that warm August afternoon Lois Langford won Mrs. Tibble round to her way of thinking.

A couple of days later Lois Langford drove her little car into the city and, after a busy hour or so on the down-town section, turned into Victory Avenue. It was Joy who opened the door of No. 5, Joy with a flash of delight in her eyes at sight of the visitor. “Oh, it’s *you!*” she said.

Twenty minutes later they came out and got into the car. “I want to talk,” Lois Langford explained, “and we can’t talk here, can we?”

Joy shook her head. "We wouldn't have much chance with Aunt Jennie and Alice-Marie around."



It was a cosy little tea-room to which Lois Langford took Joy, a little place with amber lights and flower-decked tables, very quiet and simple and refined, but in Joy's eyes very wonderful and luxurious. "Just to sit back," she said, smiling across the table at her companion, "and know that someone is not going to remind me that I've forgotten the salt again. Ben says I've the best forgettery he ever knew."

It was not until the meal was over that Lois Langford pushed aside her coffee-cup and broached the subject uppermost in her mind. "Joy," she asked suddenly, "do you remember I told you once that I loved dealing with futures?"

Joy nodded. "I've remembered it ever so often."

"Lately I've been dealing with yours."

"With mine?"

“I want you to come and live with me.”

“To—live—with—you?”

“As my adopted daughter, yes.”

Joy stared at her companion. Years afterwards she was to remember curious inconsequent details of that moment—the amber lights, the silver top of the salt-cellar, the blue willow-pattern of the cups.

Lois Langford broke the silence. “I mean it, little girl; don’t look so incredulous.”

“But Uncle Peter and Aunt Jennie and Mrs. Tibble?”

“All settled!” Lois Langford swept her hand out in a little gesture of dismissal. “I spent the noon-hour talking to your uncle, and finally persuaded him to consent.”

Joy grabbed a leg of the table and held on to it with both hands. “Then it really and truly can happen?”

Lois Langford’s laugh was very reassuring to Joy at that moment. “It really and truly can happen,” she said.

The tenseness of the girl’s attitude relaxed. “And Uncle Peter gave his consent?”

“After persuasion. He said he was afraid his wife might——”

“Kick.”

“His word exactly. But I told him that even if kings kicked we must think of your future. I want the future to mean so much to you, Joy, not only to yourself, but to others through your efforts. I want it to hold Service—oh, I think that’s one of the most splendid words of to-day, so”—her voice softened—“Christ-like somehow.” Then she smiled at the girl confronting her. “So it’s all settled. As soon as your Aunt Jennie can spare you, you are to come back to Graybrook, and after a week or so with Mrs. Tibble you are to come to us.”

“I feel,” Joy told her, “as if the world had turned upside down.”

Lois Langford smiled with ready sympathy. “I hope you’ll find it very much right side up,” she said.

Aunt Jennie Magiffin, as Joy expected, was shrill in denunciation. She had heard the news from her husband before Joy came in to be met with a volley of protests. “You’re an ungrateful girl, plotting behind our backs.”

“Oh, but I haven’t plotted.” Joy justified herself. “Really I haven’t.”

But words were useless. Aunt Jennie Magiffin heard only her own voice. “Plotting how to get away and leave us in the lurch after all we’ve done for you, scrimpin’ and savin’ to feed you who hadn’t any call on us, and just when you *could* return a little of what you owe us, just when you *could* help——”

“Jennie,” her husband’s voice broke in unexpectedly, “you mustn’t forget what Joy has done for us since you broke your leg. We ought, I think, to feel very grateful to her.”

“Oh, that’s it, that’s it—upholdin’ your relation against your wife! If she was my relation it’d be a different story. But she isn’t. You wouldn’t catch a relation of mine sponging on us like she’s done, and then beating it off——”

But Joy had disappeared up the stairs, and Peter Magiffin was apparently immersed in the evening paper, so Mrs. Magiffin through lack of audience was forced to forbear.

But Joy had only escaped her Aunt Jennie to find Alice-Marie waiting in her room to have her say in the matter.

“Pa says you’re goin’ to be adopted by a rich lady.” Her expressive little nose wrinkled scornfully. “I’m glad I have folks of my own and don’t have to be adopted. I don’t care if the lady is rich, I wouldn’t be you for *anything!*”

“Look here,” Joy suggested, trying to keep a leash on her temper, “suppose you go on downstairs.”

“I’m goin’. I wouldn’t stay if you asked me to!” She took her smug and indignant little self through the door and down the stairs. “I’ll be ever so glad when you go away!” she called back.

“Well,” Joy sang out, “so will I!”

But when Alice-Marie had bounced indignantly into the lower regions, Joy faced herself accusingly in the mirror. “That was horrid of me,” she confessed frankly to that reflection, “but somehow or other Aunt Jennie and Alice-Marie always make me feel like that, just horrid. And I shouldn’t forget that they took me in when they didn’t want me, and though they didn’t make me very welcome, they didn’t refuse me a home. But now”——it was a very happy-faced young girl who was reflected in the mirror then——“*now* someone *does* want me. Someone is making me welcome!”

She picked up a letter from Billy. It had arrived earlier in the day, but she had laid it aside. The written words carried her at once into Billy’s small-boy and delightful world:

“The folks I brot down in the elivator want to give me sumthing becus I saved their lifes. At first they didnt know wat. Then they sed they wud give me a thing called a Guvernmint Bond. I didn’t like the sound of it, and thot I wud rather have a new collar for Toby, but Mr. Tipkins sed take it, a Guvernmint Bond is a swell thing. He says it’s wurth a lot of collars. He says that insted of giving me muneey wich I might spend on collars and all-day suckers they are giving it to the Guvernmint to help them run Canada, and the Guvernmint is so tickeld at getting my muneey that they will pay me for it twice every year and wen I am older they will give it all bak to me. Mr. Tipkins says he put his forchun in Guvernment Bonds, so I guess Guvernmint Bonds is all right. But I’d like to have had my muneey to gingel arond my pockut. It’s hard to make fellas bleve unles you gingel.”

Joy was smiling as she laid down the letter. “Oh, hurray!” she said, “hurray for our little Billy and his Government Bond!”

She went across to the window and looked out. An afterglow of sunset still lingered in the sky, though the roof-tops were deep in sombre shadow. The tall slender spires of the church seemed to have caught the sunset colours, as on Joy’s memorable first morning in that room the spire had caught and held the rays of the rising sun.

“She said,” Joy told herself, remembering the words of Lois Langford, “she said we ought to be thankful for the possibilities of the future, for the possibility of work, of service, for the chance to do some good. Well, I *am*. Oh, she’s made me thankful for mine!”



## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

### “OUR LITTLE BLACK JOY!”

**I**t was September when Joy left the city, a city which was overhung by a pall of smoke through which the sun shone but dimly. In Graybrook the sky was clear and blue, and the sun found unexpected response in the bronze of the oak leaves and touched to vivid, flaming beauty the scarlet and gold of the maples.

“I feel,” Joy said, “as if I had been away for years and years. Oh, I *am* glad to see everyone again!”

There was Mrs. Tibble, first of all, Mrs. Tibble, who, having had long practice in hiding her innermost feelings, only wound her plump old arms around the girl and exclaimed, “Oh, Joy!”

And then there was Billy, Billy about to start work again restored to old-time vigour and rosiness, the proud possessor of a wrist-watch for himself and a collar for Toby. Toby’s collar bore an inscription: “My name is Toby. I belong to Billy Magiffin, boy-hero of the fire.”

“One of the guys I brought down in my elevator,” Billy explained, “wanted to give me something ’sides a Government Bond, something I could see and feel. So he gave me the collar and this——” His arm swept up in a comprehensive gesture as his eye fastened on the watch: “it’s twenty minutes after four now.”

On the first of October Joy was to leave Mrs. Tibble and make her permanent home with Lois Langford. That much was settled.

“Then,” Lois Langford told Joy as they walked along Main Street one afternoon, “we’ll think about your future.”

Joy smiled. “You’re always thinking about somebody’s future.”

“I’ve thought a lot about yours, Joy, for I want—oh, I do want it to hold something worth while.”

“I’ve been thinking about it too,” Joy confided a little shyly. “I think I’d like to be a teacher.”

“A teacher?”

Joy nodded. “At first I thought about nursing, then I found out that I’m a reflecting kind of person. If folks are nice and sweet to me, then I’m sort of nice and sweet back. If they’re cross, like Aunt Jennie Magiffin with her broken leg, I get cross too, and that would never do for a nurse.”

“Oh, never!” Lois Langford agreed, her eyes a-twinkle. Then, suddenly serious, she slipped her hand through the girl’s arm and gave it an impulsive little squeeze. “If you’re going to teach, I don’t need to worry, for there’s no limit to the good a teacher can do. Do you think,” she added after a moment’s silence, “that Mrs. Tibble is feeling it very deeply because you’re leaving her?”

Joy wrinkled her forehead thoughtfully, “I don’t know, really. We don’t seem to speak of it very often.”

“Poor Mrs. Tibble, it is hard on her when she’s so fond of you. She hasn’t had many people to love, has she?”

But there was evidently something vaguely disconcerting about the conversation, for at the words the little frown between Joy’s eyes deepened and she was quick to change the subject.

“Doesn’t Kipps look happy with his new father?” she asked.

“He certainly does,” her companion agreed, and pulled a letter from her bag. “See, this reflects his happiness, I think; he left it in the post-office for me this morning.”

It was a boyish scrawl:

“If you get a chance please tell Farmer Burns that I eat all I want here, and that’s going some. Please tell him that Mr. Tipkins says, ‘Oh, don’t stop, just keep on going.’ Tell him I do too.”

Joy handed the letter back. “I think it’s splendid,” she said, “that you take so much trouble with all these kiddies. Most of them, most of us, I mean, have

no claim on you at all, and yet you do so much for us.”

“Life would be empty without you all, Joy. There’s a rather obscure little verse in the Bible that I love: ‘They helped every one his neighbour——’ ”

“Oh, I know, Dad loved that too; ‘and everyone said to his brother, Be of good courage.’ ”

“I wish,” Lois Langford added, “that I felt of good courage about Sandy McCoy. I succeeded in getting him into a real home instead of having him ‘hang out,’ as he called it, at the garage, and in getting him away from the gang too, where he was sliding downhill, poor laddie, just as fast as he could slide. He’s with the Allens of the General Store now, but though they’re kind, they’re old folks, and Sandy isn’t happy—oh, I know he isn’t.”

Lois Langford was quite right. Sandy McCoy was unhappy. He was lonely and he was rebellious, furiously resenting the turn of events which had curtailed his freedom, torn him from the gang, and set him down under the restrictions of home life.

“Some day,” Lois Langford was telling Joy, “I’m going to break up that gang.”

“Break up that gang? You?”

She nodded, and added with the wisdom of experience, “In the meantime we must fill the space it has left in Sandy’s thoughts with some new interest.”

Curiously enough it was Joy who was to find that interest for Sandy, and old Mr. Allen himself gave her the first cue. It was later that same afternoon when she was in the store, with Sandy uppermost in her thoughts, that the old gentleman showed her a box, a beautifully fashioned little thing of natural wood.

“See what our laddie’s been doing,” he said, and there was pride as well as affection in his voice; “the boy can do anything with his hands.”

Chancing to meet Sandy just outside, Joy spoke to him about it. “Mr. Allen was showing me the box you made,” she said: “he’s quite proud of it. It is beautiful, Sandy.”

The boy gave his shoulders a don’t-care little shrug, but there was a flash of interest in his eyes. “ ’Twasn’t nothin’!” he said.

A remark of Billy’s further forwarded that change in the future and fortunes of Sandy McCoy. Billy was waiting for Joy at Mrs. Tibble’s, brimming over with news. “The Government sent me some money ’cause of

my Government Bond,” he told her. “Mr. Tipkins says it’s interest. And he said, put it in the Bank, that’s how to get rich.” The round black eyes looked hopefully up at Joy. “I did too, though I’d rather have heard it jingle in my pocket. And Mr. Tipkins, he says he’s goin’ to get me a dog-kennel for Toby.”

“A dog-kennel for Toby!” Joy repeated thoughtfully. “A dog-kennel!”

The idea which sprang up at that suggestion had taken forcible possession of her thoughts when she went down to the General Store the next day. “Sandy,” she asked the boy abruptly, “do you think you could make a dog-kennel for Billy’s Toby?”

He stared at her, then ran his fingers through his hair until it flamed erect, a little fuzz of excitement.

“A dog-kennel?” he repeated, and laughed scornfully. “Make a dog-kennel? I couldn’t!”

“You could!” Joy contradicted vigorously. “Why, Mr. Allen told me yesterday you could do anything with your hands.”

“He said that about me?”

“He said, too, that you have the makings of a fine workman, Sandy.”

And then did the old-time light flash back into Sandy’s eyes. His head went up and his shoulders squared. “Sure,” he said, “sure I’ll make a dog-kennel for Billy’s Toby. Sure I will. It’s as easy as pie!”

And Sandy McCoy, the boy who had run with the gang, who had struggled to free himself from the shackles of home-life, became in that moment the boy who could do anything with his hands, became the father of the man who was to prove a workman that needed not to be ashamed.

And with that very obvious change in Sandy McCoy something had its birth in the heart of Joy Meredith. A sense of power, of achievement. She turned and ran all the way home, and bursting into the house threw her arms around the rather ample girth of Mrs. Tibble.

“I’ve done it,” she gasped; “I’ve done it!” and gave that surprised lady an impulsive little twirl. “I’ve done it!”

Mrs. Tibble disengaged herself. “Done what?” she demanded, the least bit impatiently, ruffled with the indignity of being twirled.

“It’s Sandy McCoy; I’ve done it,” Joy explained, incoherent and happy; “I’ve given him an interest.”

On her way to confide the good news to Lois Langford that afternoon, Joy

met the twins—a very hot, breathless, and excited pair of twins. Between them they were carrying, or trying to carry, a water-melon, and, despite the coolness of the afternoon, perspiration stood out in beads on their foreheads.

It was their birthday, they explained, and this water-melon had been one of the presents which had come all the way from the city.

“And then didn’t mother go and tell us,” Donald related rather resentfully, “that the little Leanders’d love it, that water-melon and them just go together. So we’re taking it down to them now.”



“That’s jolly nice of you,” Joy said; “here, let me help.”

But when that water-melon had been duly delivered, when grins of delight had enlivened the dusky little face of Smudge, whom they left sitting atop that water-melon as if to ensure its anchorage, Joy tore home, her feet winged with excitement over the news confided to her by Jemima-Jane.

“Aunt Maggie! Aunt Maggie!” she called, before she was fairly inside the house. “Oh, Aunt Maggie, where are you? What *do* you think’s happened?”

Mrs. Tibble looked up from a book of knitting instructions. “Now don’t get

me all mixed up, Joy. I'm just getting it into my head. But go on, you're fairly bursting with news, the second time to-day you've come flying in all excited. Go on, I'll remember—purl-plain, purl-plain, drop one. What is it?"

"Oh, Aunt Maggie! It's so wonderful, I was never so excited in my life."

"Out with it, girl!"

Joy subsided on to a chair and let it out all in one breath. "The Leanders have got a new baby, a little black, black baby, and—they've named it Joy after me!"

"Well, I never!"

"A dear little black, black baby!" Joy repeated, incredulously it seemed, "and they've named it Joy after me, because they say they want it to be just like me when it grows up, even if she is black."

The book of knitting instructions slipped unnoticed to the floor.

"I don't see anything to be so excited about. Plenty of folks wouldn't be pleased at all. Don't know's I would."

"Oh, but you would, Aunt Maggie." Joy pranced across the room and threw her arms around Mrs. Tibble's neck. "You'd be tickled to pieces if there was a brand-new black baby named Maggie."

Billy's black eyes reflected Joy's excitement when he heard. "That's swell," he agreed, and added a little wistfully, "If it'd been a boy d'you s'pose they might——"

"They might," Joy agreed. "Billy would be ever so nice for a black boy, wouldn't it?"

"Just my luck it *wasn't* a boy!" Billy said.

But Donald and Dimples were frankly envious. "I think," Donald said very decidedly, "that when Dimp and I gave 'em our Golliwog and then our watermelon, they might have named their baby after us."

And all the while the little black baby who had received the name of Joy, lived and cried and had her being unconscious of disturbances in the vast, unknown, outside world, "Jes' goin' on," Jemima-Jane said, holding the new little sister very tenderly in her arms, "jes' goin' on bein' the best little baby in de whole world—our little black Joy!"



## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR NEW BEGINNINGS

“From the end spring new beginnings.”—

PLINY THE ELDER.

One afternoon towards the end of September, when there was a keenness in the wind that swayed the tree-tops and a hint of frost in the air, Joy, sewing a cream collar into a new green dress, looked across the sitting-room toward Mrs. Tibble. “Just a week from to-morrow I’m going to Mrs. Langford’s,” she remarked out of a long silence.

“Um-hum,” Mrs. Tibble replied, as her knitting needles flew, purl-plain, purl-plain.

There was silence again. A moment later Joy glanced up, and as she did so something caused the green dress to fall into her lap. Something caused her eyes to pop wide with astonishment. Something caused her heart to give a queer, unexpected little jump.

That something was just a tear—a bright and shining tear that fell from Mrs. Tibble’s eye on to the grey knitting.

Joy stood up—the green dress slipping unheeded to the floor—and, turning, went quietly from the room and up the stairs.

It was the memory of Lois Langford’s words that she carried with her, words which rang clearly insistent: “Poor Mrs. Tibble, she hasn’t had many people to love, has she?”

“But she loves me,” Joy realized, as she stared out of her window at the red and gold of the maples that lined Prince Albert Avenue, “and she’s feeling sorry now because I’m leaving her.”

As if in answer to the thought, a curious, detached little memory-picture flashed into her mind—Mrs. Tibble as she had first seen her, stout, unwieldy, and short of breath, but with a kindly light in her tired blue eyes—kindliness which enfolded all the later memories.

“Kind?” Joy voiced the word half aloud; “she *has* been kind and I’ve taken it all for granted. And now when she’s willing—when she *wants* me to stay as her daughter—I’m going!”

White-faced and tense the girl stood there, motionless in the sudden, self-accusing glare.

“Be honest,” her father had once said, vividly she remembered the words; “be honest with yourself and then you’ll be honest with all men.”

At the time it had seemed to her a queer remark. Wasn’t one always honest with oneself? “No,” Joy answered her own thought now, “if I’m honest I’ll admit that I’m selfish—selfish and unkind.”

It seemed a long, long time that she stood there. Marked by actual count it was but a little while before she ran downstairs again, and closing the front door softly behind her went out into the street.

She ran down Prince Albert Avenue and a little way along Main Street, but within a block of Lois Langford’s house her steps slackened, even flagged a little. “It’s going to be hard,” she realized, “hard to tell her. Oh, what will she think of me?”

She was stopped at the corner by Billy in a state of glowing excitement, as was so often the case these days.

“We’re goin’ back to work soon,” he told her, “and we’ve got our new uniforms. They’re the *spiffiest* things! And the manager says I’m to be head bell-boy—head bell-boy—me! And I’m to have a star on my shoulder to show I’m him. I’m to run the elevator too. The manager says that when a boy knows what on duty means, he knows a lot. It’s swell, isn’t it,” he finished, rather breathlessly, “about the star, I mean?”

“It’s great!” Joy said; “oh, Billy, I’m so proud of you!”

She stood for a moment or two and watched him until his chubby legs carried his happy little self out of sight.

Lois Langford's sitting-room was cosily attractive that afternoon. There was a fire in the grate, a fire that found reflection in the bright and shining fender-rail. There were purple asters on the table, and slender spikes of salvia in the window. Lois Langford looked up from a book as Joy entered, but her smile of welcome changed quickly to alarm.

"What's the matter?" she asked, without preliminaries of greeting.

The girl walked over to the hearth-rug and stood there quite motionless, then suddenly drew a deep breath. "I've come to tell you," she said clearly, "that I'm not going to be your daughter. I'm—I'm——" with an obvious effort she shot out the words, "I'm going to be Mrs. Tibble's daughter instead."

Lois Langford closed her book and laid it on the table. "Mrs. Tibble's daughter?" she echoed. "Mrs. Tibble's daughter? You're not coming to me?"

The girl shook her head.

"Joy," Lois Langford asked, "why are you doing this?"

"Because," the words came quickly, as if she was finding relief in expression, "because I suddenly knew it would be mean to leave her—mean and selfish. She's been kind, oh, ever so kind to me. She's getting old, and you said, don't you remember, that she hasn't many people to love."

"She hasn't, has she? And she does love you."

"And George. But George isn't a girl who can do things for her like I can. When I started to think about it I knew that Dad's daughter couldn't be a quitter."

There was silence for a moment. "Perhaps," Lois Langford said very thoughtfully, "perhaps, after all, my dear, you are choosing the better part." She tilted her head meditatively to one side. "Joy," she added, "I thought you would do this."

"You thought I would? Why?"

"Because," she answered, and smiled—that sudden, merry, irresistible little smile, "just because you're you!"

A little later they sat in front of the fire, which they stirred to lively leaping flame, and discussed the subject that was never far removed from the thoughts of Lois Langford.

"We still have the future," she said, "no change can take that from us, to live for, to hope for, and to plan. And if you are going to be a teacher, Joy, you must let me help you. I want to feel, even if you are not my daughter, that I am

always here, ready if you want me.”

“That’s ever so good of you. I was just thinking that if I become a teacher of little children, why, I’ll be doing what you have done, dealing with futures, won’t I?” The dancing light of the flames found day-dreams in the depths of Joy’s eyes at the moment. “Oh, I love the hope—and the possibilities—of my future!” she said.

Lois Langford held out her hands to the blaze. “The hope of your future,” she repeated, then laughed suddenly outright; “I like the sound of it, Joy dear.”

It was dusk when Joy returned to Prince Albert Avenue, but Mrs. Tibble’s fingers still plied the familiar needles. “Aunt Maggie,” the girl said as she came in, and the high, buoyant note in her voice was very noticeable. “Aunt Maggie, I’m not going away from you after all.”

Mrs. Tibble slipped her spectacles to the tip of her nose and stared up at Joy.

The girl laughed—a laugh that was the natural expression of relief.

“I’m not going to Mrs. Langford after all, Aunt Maggie. I—I just can’t leave you!”

Mrs. Tibble emitted a curious little gasp as if she was suddenly short of breath.

“What nonsense, Joy! Of course you’re going—all the arrangements made and all.”

“They’re going to be unmade.”

“Of course you’re going——”

But the girl’s strong young arms were about her, and the girl’s young voice in her ear. “I’m not going, Aunt Maggie; I can’t—I can’t leave you!”

Something in the voice, something in the feel of the encircling arms, something in the words themselves carried conviction to the heart of Maggie Tibble. And just because she wanted—oh—desperately—to believe those words, to grasp that happiness, she struggled against it.

“I won’t hear of it! Sacrificing yourself like that, giving up that beautiful home of Mrs. Langford’s, and travel and education——”

“There’s no sacrifice in giving up the home, Aunt Maggie, for I love this one. As for travel—well, I’ve crossed the ocean once already. And I don’t need to give up the education; I can still go to High School, can’t I? For I’ve made plans; oh, I’m just bubbling over with them.”

Mrs. Tibble nodded. She wanted to say that of course she could go to High School, she could go anywhere, do anything, but the words refused to answer up to the stupendous demands of the moment.

“I want to be a teacher,” the girl was confessing, shyly it seemed, “a teacher of little children. That’s why I’m so anxious to go to High School. I’ll have to work hard——” She jumped up and brought her hands together with a decisive little clap. “Oh, I’ll be willing to work ever so hard to make up for lost time. But Mrs. Langford says that with coaching I may be able to get through High School fairly quickly, she says that in some things I’m very far advanced. That’s because of the studying I did with Dad. But I’m so anxious to be a teacher.”

“Once,” Mrs. Tibble said unexpectedly, “I wanted to be a teacher.” She nodded, answering the expression of surprise on the girl’s face. “But it was that old John Street house that put a crimp in those plans, being saddled with that.” Suddenly Mrs. Tibble’s thoughts reverted to the original subject. “Joy,” she added sharply, “I won’t think of it, not for a moment, having you sacrificed.”

“Sacrificed?” the girl repeated, and laughed. “Sacrificed? Oh, Aunt Maggie! Well, I don’t care what you call it, I’m staying with you. I told Mrs. Langford, and she said that somehow she knew I’d stay. So now it’s all settled and we’ll all live happily ever after.”

And Mrs. Tibble, watching the expressive face of the girl, wondered if it had really come to pass, if she was to have the happiness of watching those day-dreams of her youth find re-birth in the heart of this radiant young girl named Joy.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

### ACHIEVEMENT

It was a day or two later that Tobias Tipkins and Kipps appeared in Prince Albert Avenue. The manner of their coming was triumphant. Tobias Tipkins at the wheel of a new and shiny motor-car was obviously very proud. “Hello,” he greeted Joy, and she was quick to notice a peculiarly happy note in his voice; “my son and I”—he glanced down at the boy by his side—“are enjoying our new car.”

Joy nodded. “I heard about it.”

“And we’ve come to invite you and Mrs. Tibble to motor into town with us to-morrow.”

“To motor into town?” Joy repeated, a little blankly.

He nodded, smiling broadly. “We’ve something to show you.”

“Something swell!” Kipps added and giggled—a boyish, excited little giggle. And then they both looked at each other and laughed mysteriously.

It was difficult to persuade Mrs. Tibble. “What would there be in town that I’d be wanting to see?” she demanded. “If you’re so set on my seeing it, whatever it is, why can’t you bring it here?”

At that they both laughed again, and Kipps, his eager face alight, looked across at his new father and winked—obviously a wink from one chum to another.

“We can’t very well bring it to you,” Tobias Tipkins was telling Mrs. Tibble, “and I know you would be sorry to miss it.”

Mrs. Tibble’s curiosity was aroused, so that when George added his persuasions she gave in, a little ungraciously it is true.

“It beats me what the man’s got up his sleeve,” she confided to Joy afterwards; “he said I’d be sorry to miss it. Now what in the world——”

“I don’t know, I don’t know!” Joy said, prancing up and down as a very little girl might have pranced, for truly the undercurrent of excitement in Tobias Tipkins’ voice had been contagious. “But anyway it’s *something*, Aunt Maggie!”

“Hm-mm.” Mrs. Tibble adjusted her glasses and picked up her knitting. “That isn’t telling me much, is it?”

The respect which Mrs. Tibble felt for Mr. Tipkins did not restrain her from driving from the back seat during that ride to town the following morning. Accustomed to issue warnings to George when he was driving, Mrs. Tibble, on this occasion, gave voluble instructions. “There’s a man waiting to pass us, Mr. Tipkins. I’d let him go, he’d get ahead anyway. That’s a bad corner we’re coming to—watch out for that boy. Look at that silly man turning out like that without any warning—honk at him, Mr. Tipkins, honk!”

“I wonder,” Mr. Tipkins was thinking, though aloud he said nothing, “who’s driving this car?”

But Mrs. Tibble was genuinely puzzled when they finally reached the city and, turning in a north-westerly direction, stopped in front of the Art Academy. “What’re we coming here for?” she demanded, sharply.

A sudden flash of insight inspired Joy. “Are any of your pictures here?” she asked the artist.

There was no time to answer, for a moment or two later they stood before it—the prize award of the Exhibition, set up in a wide panel by itself. A picture of Joy Meredith it was, Joy Meredith standing in a doorway, her head tilted back against the frame, her hands clasped over the handle of a floor-mop, and in her eyes the expression which the artist had caught—all that wistful longing, all those day-dreams which transcended the dingy surroundings, which lent a poignant appeal and beauty to the title—MEMORIES.

“Well,” Mrs. Tibble exclaimed, the first to recover from surprise. “Well, I never!”

Joy, obviously startled and a little frightened, stepped back. “It isn’t——”

she gasped. “Oh, it isn’t——”

“But it *is!*” the boy Kipps assured her. “Anyone’d know it, Joy. Don’t you like it?”

“Like it?” she echoed. “Like it? I don’t know. I feel funny inside.”

Tobias Tipkins nodded understandingly. “Not so funny as I did when I heard that not only had the picture been accepted by the Academy but had been awarded the prize as well.”

“Funnier than you felt about your fortune?” Kipps asked.

He nodded. “Much funnier. I’d rather have that picture hanging there with the effort and achievement behind it than all the fortunes in the world,” he said.

“I don’t know’s I’d go as far as all that,” Mrs. Tibble remarked; “a fortune come in handy if you’re a bit short of cash. But that picture certainly is nice—lifelike and all. If you’d only let her hold a bunch of flowers like I wanted, instead of that floor-mop—it was the old mop too.”

Tobias Tipkins shook his head. “The floor-mop is necessary,” he said.

“Necessary—fiddlesticks!” Mrs. Tibble warmed to the rôle of critic. “And if she’d had the flowers you could have given it a name that tells a story, like ‘The Waiting Bridesmaid,’ or ‘The Expectant Bride,’ instead of just plain ‘Memories.’ That doesn’t mean so very much.”

“I think it means a good deal.”

“And I wish you’d just stuck a card in the corner saying that it was painted in Mrs. Tibble’s boarding-house on John Street.”

“Modern art isn’t supposed to need explanations. Some day,” Tobias Tipkins added unexpectedly, with a lively twinkle in his eyes, “I’ll paint a picture of you, Mrs. Tibble, sitting in your garden, and we’ll call it ‘Contentment.’ ”

“There’ll be nothing contented about it if you get a floor-mop in with me. No, you’d better be satisfied with what you’ve done, Mr. Tipkins.” Mrs. Tibble nodded towards “Memories.” “It certainly is lovely of Joy, but if she’d *only* had those flowers!”

Joy and Kipps were sitting on the far side of the room facing the picture.

“You just look,” Kipps whispered, his eyes on the picture, “as if you were goin’ to step out and come over. It’s another you. What made you look like that, Joy, sort of glad and sorry all at the same time?”

“I was remembering Dad,” Joy said simply.

Reluctantly they left it at last, in the quiet, shining beauty of the great gallery for the world to see—the world which was soon to take to its great, beauty-loving heart, Tobias Tipkins’ picture of Joy Meredith.

**THE END**

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *Joy Meredith* by Dora Olive Thompson]