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tempts to make him back up.

Miss Jane and Little Dorothy

(By EDITH A. SAWYER, IN THE 'SUNDAY
REPUBLICAN'.)

A child? A fragment of the morn,
A piece of spring.

—William Watson.

Tears welled into Miss Jane's eyes. Sub-
tly aggrieved always, she felt more than ordi-
nary depression on this spring morning when
everything in Nature expressed living hope.
'I wish I could help somebody. I might as
well be dead.'

Mrs Barnes—Miss Jane's companion for
10 years past—did not offer any protest
against a complaint to which she had grown
accustomed. But something which had hap-
pened made the wretchedly repressed woman
say, after a moment's deliberation: 'That
poor soul I told you about, the mother they
brought to the almshouse in March has died.'
'I wish I had died,' declared Miss Jane
passionately.

Mrs Barnes bent lower over her mending:
'Maybe if we didn't trust the Lord to do
what's best, we might wonder why he takes
mothers, sometimes instead of people who
haven't any children.'

Meek-spirited Mrs Barnes was not prone
to answer back; Miss Jane straightened her-
self aggressively.

Instead of waiting for Miss Jane to resume
the conversation, however, Mrs Barnes went
on, hurriedly for her: 'The woman made an
awful time because she had to die and have
her little girl all alone in the world. You
remember, don't you? She lost her husband
six months ago, and she was worn out, tak-
ing care of him, and there wasn't any money,
so the selectmen had to put the mother and
child into the almshouse.'

Miss Jane turned her hands on head lan-
guidly: 'I remember you told me all this,'
she said, as if dismissing the subject.

'That just broke the poor soul's spirit,
persisted Mrs Barnes. 'She had known bet-
ter days, they say. The night before she died
she just begged and begged the matron Mrs
Gates, not to keep the little girl there but to
find a good home for her. And Miss Gates—
who's kindness for all she has to do with
miserable pauper creatures most of the time
—she says she just had to promise, so that
the woman might die peaceful-like. She was
telling me about it, down town, this morning
and she says she's dreadful put to, to know
where to find a home for that friendless lit-
tle girl, who hasn't got any folks or any mon-
ey.'

This had been an unusually long speech
for Mrs Barnes; her hands were trembling
and moisture dimmed her spectacles, so that
she took mishapen stitches.

Miss Jane had not listened closely; she had
heard enough, however, to answer directly:
'You only make me feel worse, telling me
such matters. The world is a terribly hard
place.' Hands clasped listlessly, a melan-
choly droop to her mouth, Miss Jane was a
picture of the luxury of grief as she sat there
surrounded by the comforts of life.

'The world will be a terribly hard place
for that little slip of a girl if somebody does-
n't give her a home.' Mrs Barnes began, nar-
rowly folding her work.

'I suppose it's a poor, puny child,— girl,
you said? Probably deformed, or has rickets
or some such dreadful disease,' Miss Jane re-
marked with a shudder.

'No,' returned Mrs Barnes almost curtly.
'It's a well-favored, sort of an old-fashioned
looking little girl. I told Miss Gates to
bring her over this afternoon to see if any of
my Mary's clothes would do for her. The
child misses her mother,' Mrs Barnes con-
tinued agitatedly: 'It must have been ter-
rible for the mother. I can feel just how
she felt. Only I missed my little girl,—that's
the difference—Mary didn't have to miss her
mother.'

Mrs Barnes went precipitately out of the
room. Miss Jane sat apathetic, thinking.
Deep down in her heart, self-pity was stirring
at the thought that she herself had no child
to grieve over.

She was a woman of about sixty years,
with dark, restless eyes, hair just whitening,
and a fresh complexion; she was fairly vigor-
ous in health—despite her extreme care of
herself—and full of nerves, and full of imagi-
nary troubles. Always generous of money,
she seldom gave of herself. Her fellow-towns
folk spoke of her as the rich Mrs Peters,
who's going to be queer if she doesn't look
out.'

Miss Jane was alone in the world, save for
an older bachelor brother who visited her,
punctiliously and briefly, twice a year, and
who under no consideration would have taken
up his abode in the old New England
homestead with his aimless low-spirited sis-
ter.

'What time is that child coming?' queried
Miss Jane, when Mrs Barnes, as usual, an-
nounced dinner precisely at one o'clock.
'About 3, I don't want to have your nap
disturbed,' answered Mrs Barnes waiting
duly at the door of the dining-room.
'It isn't likely that I care to see the child,
replied Miss Jane haughtily. Then staring
herself, she bowed her head to say the accu-
stomed grace.

Miss Jane's nap ended at 3. She dressed
herself carefully but without interest, and
descended to the library to take up her usual
afternoon pastimes of a little reading and
much thinking, so to speak. It was the first
balmy days of April. A glow of color suff-
fused the tints that danced on the bare
benches of the trees; the grass had more
than a tinge of green. The suggestive on-
coming of the springtime vaguely emphasized
Miss Jane's loneliness that afternoon. She
was, in fact, alone in the world. Wealth
was all she had.

Meanwhile upstairs, Mrs Barnes was try-
ing to choke back her tears as she tenderly
handled the little dresses and underclothes
that she took from a trunk in the depth of
the roomy closet. She was roused from her
task by the ringing of the front door bell.
Hurriedly she went downstairs to intercept
Hannah in opening the door.

From her seat near the library window,
Miss Jane had seen a plainly dressed woman
turn into the flagstone path, leading a bud-
dled, red-shawled figure of diminutive size,
who dragged behind evidently not so much
from reluctance as from shortness of legs.
Miss Jane heard Mrs Barnes' swift descent,
the visitors' entrance, and Mrs Barnes'
words: 'Come right up to my room.'

'Bring the people in here,' Miss Jane
rose with a sudden impulse; she would have
a look at the child.

But Mrs Barnes was already leading the
way upstairs. Miss Gates, following, alone
headed, and turned to say, over her shoulder:
'Sorry, ma'am, but I haven't got any time to
pare.'

Miss Jane, her soft silk skirts held back in
one hand, waited doubtfully a moment by
the massive newel-post, watching them,—
Mrs Barnes, a wiry, straight-lined figure,
the tall, gaunt matron, and the little child
still hurrying yet obliged to go up by putting
not one foot on one stair after the other, but
both feet squarely on each stair.

'Plucky little thing! I wonder why she
doesn't cry,' thought Miss Jane. Then,
slowly, as if against her will, she followed
upstairs.

When, a moment later, she saw the child's
face, she saw why the child had not cried.

A winsome face it was; delicate, yet deter-
mined, in oval outline; a touch of color in
the cheeks from the hurrying; a few stray
tendrils of brown hair escaping from under
the faded blue tam-o-shanter shaded the
fair, high forehead, the soft line of mouth
was firmly shut, and there was such a patho-
sic, steady braveness in the violet-blue eyes,
that a sudden, real pain gripped Miss Jane's
heart.

Miss Jane stood there, in the doorway
without a word, while Mrs Barnes, her face
tense with feeling, held out two or three
little dresses, measuring them to the child.
The unpinning of the cumbersome shawl had
revealed a slight figure, sturdy-looking with-
all, despite the thin knees which showed be-
neath the too-short skirts.

'Those will do; and so will the blue jacket
and the white hat with pink roses,' said Miss
Gates, her practical eyes taking in the layout
on the bed. 'Can she have the underclothes
too? The better-dressed she is the more
chance there is of somebody's adopting her.'

The child's eyes were fixed roundly, rather
dreamily on the pink roses; one soft little
hand reached slowly out to touch them.

Mrs Barnes hesitated imperceptibly, be-
fore answering Miss Gates; 'Yes, she can
have them all, if they will do her any good.'
'Some of the things are too big, but she'll
grow to them,' replied Miss Gates. 'She's
worn out most everything she had when she
came to the poorhouse.'

Miss Jane started forward. It was sud-
denly terrible to have 'poorhouse' associated
with this wistful-faced steady-eyed child.

Just then the little girl looked up at Miss
Jane, and, unheeding of what had been pass-
ing, said in a voice with an irresistible cad-
ence: 'Those is like the roses in my mudder's
garden at my home.'

For a moment Miss Jane and the child
looked at one another, the child's fearless
gaze studying the woman's face, Miss Jane's
heart expanding with a great overwhelming
purpose.

Kneeling suddenly, she put her arms about
the slight figure and said: 'You haven't any
home now?'

'No. O, yes, the poorhouse.' The child
corrected herself with a trembling lip, yet
with a quick, grateful glance at Miss Gates
who had stopped talking to look and listen.

'How old are you, dear?' Miss Jane asked.
'Four years old last January,' the voice
was like delicate music.

'And what is your name?'

'Dorothy.'

'Will you come to live with me, Dorothy?'

asked Miss Jane, struggling to control her
voice.

'Haven't you any little girl?' questioned
the child shyly.

'No, Dorothy.'

'I haven't any mudder here now,' said the
child slowly, 'and you haven't any little girl?'

'No,' said Miss Jane; then, with a strange
new tenderness in her voice she repeated:
'Will you come to live with me?'

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