WHEN LILLIAN SAILED IN.

(Stanley Waterloo, in the Saturday Evening Post.)

Miss Luella Beeson rocked vigorously back and forth in her straight-backed, wooden rocking-chair Her morning work was done. The large kitchen in which she sat, in her one story and a half brown cottage, was in exquisite order. The canary had been fed, the plants in the window had been watered, everything was spick, span and in place. Upon the long pine table was a red tablecloth, and set exactly in the centre was a big brass lamp, newly filled, cleansed and polished

Miss Beeson always set her lamp upon the table 'between meals.' It was her most treasured possession, whether lighted or not. It represented both elegance and usefulness. The hour was half-past ten, and at eleven the table must be set for Miss Beeson's 'Mealers;' railway men who were furnished dinners and suppers by the spinster—her sole but sufficient means of support being her own hands.

The middle-aged single woman of severe but not discouraging aspect was thinking of her nephew and charge John.

He was a boy, freckled and seven years old and the son of the widow of a railway engineer. Each of his parents had belonged to the group undefined between the classes and the masses. His father had been the cleverest engineer on the Long Plains Railway, a straight forward, strong man. The engineer had been in good luck, he thought, when he met the cleverest girl, in his opinion, in all the towns on his railway line. The two fell in love and were married, and they had two children, a girl and a boy, and the boy is the central figure of this true tale.

John Markham, the father, had carefully taught John Markham, his son, to tell the truth always, to grow up strongly, and to fight for the weaklings. This was the father's working creed. The mother, later, had tried to follow up the teachings of the father to his boy.

When the engineer's daughter was eight years old and his son was six, the father was killed in a railway accident, and the widow, Mary Markham, had to support the children. She had been obliged within a year to give up her home and leave John with her sister, Miss Beeson, while she herself took her little daughter with her to another city, where she had been offered work. As for the boy, John—well, he inherited some of his mother's sweetness, and all of his father's militant strength of character. He had learned rapidly at a little private school, and had also licked every boy in that school of his own age, and sometimes some of those who antedated by a year or two that particular Ahno Domini. Even the teacher had become half-way afraid of him. He was honest and straightforward, but there was too much of the rude, rough, far-distant Anglo-Saxon in him. When there was a difference, he wanted to fight. All this Miss Beeson had heard of John in the days before upon her had been thrown responsibility for his character and conduct. The tales of school squabbles and neighborhood ructions in which John figured had been listened to by the maiden lady with that tranquil serenity with which the world at large hears of other people's troubles. Now all was changed. Miss Beeson's voice rang out at church on a Sunday with new and piercing earnestness, when the congregation joined in singing:

'We are living, we are dwelling
In a grand, an awful time.'

The spinster, stern, nervously conscientious, and loving withal, was confused in mind over the course she should follow regarding her sister's son. She was of a simple nature. She had passed most of her life on a farm in southern Illinois, and the ways of the great city, in whose struggling outskirt she now lived, were new and unmeaning to her.

'I wish I'd taken the girl,' she thought as he glanced at the clothes-rack near the door, where the sunlight fell upon the recently washed and ironed garments of John's sister, Lillian. These were outworn summer clothes, which Mrs. Markham had left to be given away, and Miss Beeson had carefully mended, washed and starched each article of little girl's raiment prior to any further dealings with them.

Just then a wild clamor was borne upon the morning air, and over the back fence came tumbling a vision of kicking, clutching legs and arms, while from a red, boyish face came yells so frantic as to be fairly seen as well as heard. Miss Beeson hastened across the yard.

Over the fence boards appeared the head, shoulders and arms of a stout, broad-faced woman, and in her hands she firmly held, half way between the top of the fence and the ground, the wriggling John, with his short dark head ineffectually beating against the boards. Another youngster was yelling in the alley.

"Oh, Aunt Luella!" shrieked John. 'Make 'er lemme go!'

As soon as Miss Beeson spoke the Amazon gave the boy a parting shake and dropped him upon the ground. John shot past his aunt into the house and made for his room.

'Your boy he too much all time want to f[illegible]' said the neighbor.

'I know it,' admitted the spinster, ruefully. 'But what shall I do, Mrs. Allemmeister?'

'I think it's better when you send him to school, already, counselled the good-humored matron.

'But he is always in trouble at school,' said Miss Beeson.

'But,' said the neighbor, 'in the public school he finds out somebody that can lick him, and then it is also all right,

This idea, though somewhat captivating to Miss Beeson, was not altogether satisfactory. She said nothing but shook her head and walked meditatively toward the house.

'Talk about some hens hatching out some ducks,' Mrs. Allemmeister, the mother of seven children, commented to herself, as she returned to her own dominions across the alley from Miss Beeson's kitchen garden.

Miss Beeson began to clear the decks for the cooking of the midday meal. As she set to one side the clothes-frame on which the girl's pink and blue gowns were spread out, a new thought struck her. She sat down for a minute in her rocking-chair and fairly gasped, with such force did the idea burst upon her brain. It was not new, exactly; long and long ago in the far away district school she had noted the effect of trying a sunbonnet upon the boy's head and condemning him to sit with the girls, as punishment for some boyish prank.

'I'll dress him in girl's clothes and then he can't' fight, she thought. 'I'll send him to the public school, and I'll make him promise not to tell he's a boy. A week of that kind of punishment will straighten him out.' And she smiled grimly and began to rattle the pots and pans and clatter with the dishes.

John, at these cheerful sounds descended the low stairs, and began to hang about the kitchen after the manner of hungry boys.

He was amazed by the unexpected tactics of the spinster. She cut from the well browned loaf a thick, wide, long slice of bread, spread at generously with butter, then sprinkled it plentifully with sugar, and gave it to him, spreading a newspaper under and around the chair she bade him sit in.

John ate the unexpected offering without much ado, and then, looking up for more, he encountered his aunt's eyes looking at him over the stove where she was at work, with an expression so piercing, so determined and grave, that he needed all of his resolution to keep from bursting into a howl and running away.

'John,' said Miss Beeson pointing at him with the iron basting-spoon still hot from the oven. 'I am going to dress you in Lillian's clothes, and you shall act like a girl. You won't fight then; you'll study hard and not disgrace us. Not a word, John! Not a word yet! I want you to promise me on your word of honor—remembering what your father taught you—that you will not let anypody know you are not a girl for a whole week.'

'Oh, Aunt Luella!' gasped the stricken boy. The sky had been somewhat clouded, but this thunderbolt was nevertheless unexpected.

'Not one word of complaint, John; I've made up my mind, and you might as well settle yours!'

After dinner her project was again brought up by Miss Beeson, and announced with renewed emphasis and firmness. The boy hesitated long. At last, with flushed cheeks, fingers clinched, his little chest heaving, he, the best fighter among the little boys, gave up, and promised to become a girl and lie low. Borne down by his aunt's vigorous talk, and by thoughts of his father and mother, he gave his word to be silent under the ordeal prepared for him.

'All right, Aunt Luella," he broke out tearfully and bravely; 'I'll do it—but I hate to, awfully!'

Then, as ever heretofore, John spoke the truth.

Monday morning came. It was a fresh yet warm September morning. Snail-footed youngsters crept schoolward, loth to be immured within walls on such a day. In Miss Bennett's schoolroom a few children of the more ambitious minds were gathered, quietly awaiting the nine o'clock bell. The teacher, already at her desk, looked across the schoolroom as she became, somehow, aware that the eyes of her pupils were turned that way.

Framed in the doorway stood two figures, a woman holding by the hand a little girl. The woman meeting Miss Bennett's eyes came into the room and walked with long steps toward the desk of authority, dragging her unwilling charge at an arm's length as she advanced.

A tall, angular frame of the build known as "slab-sided,' clothed in blue cotton and crowned by a slatted gingham sunbonnet, at once proclaimed the new comer to be a country product of strictly American genesis. To leave nothing to be guessed at, the woman spoke in a rather sweet drawling voice.

"I am Miss Luella Beeson," she announced, 'and I take care of this here child. Her mother has to be away at her work and I'm bound to send the child to school.'

'What is her name,' asked the teacher, trying in vain to get a glimpse of the face hidden in the dropping sunbonnet number two, worn by the small bit of humanity about to join her flock.

'Her name is Lillian,' came the prompt answer. Lillian Markham, aged seven years, and she lives at 422 Kaskaskia street.'

Then the big sunbonnet came close to Miss Bennett's ear, and a whispered conference took place between the teacher and her visitor.

The child held fast by the bony hand of its guardian, shrunk within itself, with hanging head and awkward, spreading feet.

Lillian's pink gown, surely of last year's make, and very short, was as stiff as starch could make it, and over it was worn a white apron, still more unyielding and board-like than the gown. Snow-white stockings inclosed her thin legs, and these disappeared into rusty shoes of a size nothing short of gigantic in proportion to the dimensions of their owner. As the two women talked Lillian's sunbonnet dropped more and more. It seemed as if Lillian's bones of the neck had suffered dislocation, so limply hung her head upon her starched little pinafore.

Miss Bennett's face was a study to the curious children who swarmed around her desk. She looked as if she wanted to laugh, but didn't quite dare to laugh, either, and it may as well be said that her appearance indicated her feelings with exactness. While Miss Luella Beeson stood near her Miss Bennett felt that a laugh would be out of place. As long as the forlorn sunbonnet bowed before her in such meek submission she could not laugh.

The school bell rang. The conference in Room No. 11 came to an end. Miss Beeson loosed her hold of Lillian's hand, sat the child down firmly upon a front seat near the teacher's little platform, and strode manfully from the room.

When school began, girls and boys alike looked askance at Lillian's short hair. The girls tossed their beribboned braids and sniffed the air. When the noon recess came the girls formed in a ring to play London Bridge is falling Down, but Lillian stood sulkily alone, neither joining nor invited to join in the game, and looking longingly over to the boys' side. What thoughts passed through the child's mind, what desperate emotions, who can tell? Talk about isolation, humiliaiion, degradation, here were all combined. But he mustn't cry—that the little fellow resolved upon.

The playground for the youngsters, who spent but little time in it each day, was separated into two parts by a stone copping or ledge, about a foot high, which ran from the street to the schoolhouse. On one side were the little girls, upon the other the little boys.

Lillian was necessarily upon the girl's side of the ledge, but took no interest in their vivacious, but to him unaccustomed, games. The strain upon the child was growing harder. He had been taught from the time he could talk never to tell a lie, and the blood of a truthteller was in him. He had promised to keep his word and not tell he was a boy, and he tried in his childish, boyish way to do it. He had come out with the girls, with them but not of them. He drifted over toward the ledge and then came back, uncomfortable in his skirts, to where the girls were grouped. The little boys were playing ball in a bungling, unformed way, but with much vigor, and there was a lively contest. There came a moment when the ball came into impact with that slightness which produces what is called a 'foul' in the vernacular of the baseball grounds, and flicked far backward over the little stone ledge which separated the playground of the boys from the playground of the girls. It was a hardhit ball. Something going, as they say, directly towards the girl group, from which shot upward a girlish figure. There were hands upstretched and the ball was caught, greedily, ere it touched them, and hurled back to the boy players on the other side.

The girls stood looking at Lillian silently. This was something they could not understand—a girl who could catch a ball batted so fiercely, and throw it back so strongly into the midst of rough boys. Some said 'Tom-boy' and sidled away, and Lillian stood there alone. The boy's heart swelled, his whole being was as if immersed in misery. He remained dumb by great exercise of self-mastery, but he had a brooding look.

There was danger in the air that afternoon, when the children came out into their playground for the usual fifteen minutes recess. Lillian walked sulkily along with the girls, and took his stand near the boundary of the girl's side. The boys, led by Larry O'Brien, looked at him mockingly and began to chant:

"Ticky, Ticky Tom boy!
Half girl, half boy!'

Poor Lillian could not endure it, and slunk miserably away to a corner by himself, and sat down on the farthest end of the dividing ledge. The enemy followed him.

Larry O'Brien, the archangel of the fighting group among the smaller pupils, came up and jeered at Lillian, who was now standing helplessly on the white-grey ledge. Larry called him names, exhibiting quite a degree of skill in his oratory, and made such new allusions to the quality of a boy-girl that the blood pumped by Johnny's heart seemed going mostly into his face. It became flaming. Every situation has its climacteric. It came swiftly in this case. With that unconscious little ruffian making fun of him he forget everything else. The last straw had been laid on the little camel's back. He could endure it no longer, His face took on the look of the rage of boyhood. He leaped like a young catamount from the stone ledge fairly into the midst of the group of bullying boyhood, and upon their leader, Larry. Here was a big freckled boy attacked by a thing of red flannel petticoats, pink sun bonnet, white pinafore, large, bony hands and heavy feet. It was an awful thing, to the girls on one side of the ledge and to the boys on the other side. Here was a girl attacking physically the bully of their schoolroom. It was dreadful! The boys slunk away wonderingly from this strange single combat and looked upon it in a half-formed ring. Larry fought well, this must be confessed. But he was weakened himself by his own imaginings. How could this girl be such a fighter? She hit where she wanted to, and she hit hard. His deadly enemy, Johnny Smith, who was a good boxer, could find while they were fighting that particular spot of the stomach which is called the 'mark,' and which when suddenly thrust into benumbs the wearer of that particular stomach, but this leaping, dancing, iron-fisted fighter in petticoats was far and away ahead of Johnny Smith in jolting strength and vigor.

All in sight had gasped for breath when Lilian began the fray, and all stood bewildered while the fight was on. They sell what they call 'pin-wheels,' very pretty, on the eve of the Fourth of July; but as a spectacular affair they are not up to what happened when Lillian 'sailed in.' In Lillian's performance there was irridescence to burn. I have conversed with one of the most careful and conscientious of the youthful spectators, and he can't tell whether what he saw was the competing fringes of a scarlet petticoat or the whisk of hair cut short as becomes a black-haired boy. He only knows the other fellow was licked.

Larry O'Brien and all the rest of the small human beings of Room 11 had learned something. They knew that Lillian was a boy for sure, and Lillian was wondering how he should explain matters to his aunt. 'One thing is sure,' he thought; 'I never told. Not one word!'

When school ended that day the teacher handed a note to a defiant little figure clothed in a pink frock and the remnants of a white pinafore. The letter ran thus: To Miss Luella Beeson, No. 422 Kashaskia street, City:

Dear Madam,—I think John has been punished enough, and I suggest that you send him to school dressed in his own clothes hereafter. I will give him special attention while he is in the schoolroom. Outside, he is amply able to take care of himself.

Very sincerely yours,
ANNA BENNETT,
Teacher Seventh Street School.

And so 'Lillian' fought at once for glory and for dissolution, but not for oblivion, for the day when Lillian 'sailed in' has not yet perished from the memory of any one who had part in the dire proceedings.

CONCERNING CHOICE.

"What choice in life is there, anyway, for one in my position?" complained the day laborer bitterly.

"Why should you knock, my friend," replied the optimist, "when you, more than other men, always have your pick?"

Hereupon the laborer laughed good naturedly, for the optimist could by no means be called a plutocrat, though he considered all his own witticisms capital. —New York Sun.