

short, I'll call the mistress to put you up something more."

I hesitated, fearing Jack might come in. I dreaded his prying eyes. Then I thought, "I will risk it. Mother will help me, trust her for that."

So she came out, spoke kindly to me, listened to father's explanation, went into the pantry, and filled a paper bag with cakes, which she put into my hands.

I was getting bolder now, and with reckless audacity I seized mother by the arm and pronounced this blessing upon her:

"May the Saints preserve you, madam! May St. Peter take you under his especial protection! May you live to be very old! May your children, grandchildren and their children rise up and call you blessed! And if ever I forget your goodness to a poor runaway, may my bones rot in Davy Jones's locker for ever—Amen!"

Then I dropped her arm and turned to go.

I can shut my eyes and see the picture now.

Father, sitting among his leather parings, grasping the huge "cobble-stone" in one hand while the other clenched the trusty hammer. What if he should attack me, under the impression that the poor, forlorn sailor was a madman! Mother was "game," though; she never even blinked an eyelash. Then Jack entered! I held my head down and slipped past him into the porch, trusting to the gathering darkness. Then, standing in the gloom, my hand on the door knob ready to turn it and fly, if need be, I turned and faced him. Father told him about me, and Jack stood and chatted with me from the inner doorway. Talked!—to his sister!—as if I were in reality a poor homeless wanderer. Jack, my smart, wide-awake brother! Cool, observant, "I-am-never-to-be-deceived" Jack! Truly, some things are not what they seem!

He wanted me to sleep in the wood shed. It was going to be very cold sleeping out of doors tonight.

I thanked him. I said "I must be on my road early tomorrow morning, and I wished to run no risk of being taken. I would curl down among the bushes and be comfortable enough."

Then I opened the door went along the path to the back gate, went through and walked along until out of sight. Then I sat down unobserved from the house. I heard Jack go out whistling to the barn, for it was now chore time. Father would be putting away his mending kit, mother and Nora would prepare tea, so I re-entered the gate, ran around to the front door, in and upstairs, where I rearranged myself leisurely. Presently, Nora called, "Tea is ready!" and I went down, to find them gathering at the table and discussing father's caller.

"Poor fellow," said father, "how grateful he was for the cakes, and what a funny benediction he said over Mother!"

Nora was nearly consumed to learn the details, but she couldn't talk without choking.

"What did he look like?" I asked, taking my usual place at the tea-table. I was cool enough now, the excitement had all worn out. I had succeeded beyond expectation. That fact rather sobered me.

"I scarcely know," replied father, "he kept his head down so. I didn't care to see him with such a hangdog look."

"He did not want you to make notes of his face," answered Jack. "Poor devil! he might have slept in the kitchen tonight, well enough. I don't suppose he would steal anything."

"But some of you must know what he looked like," I said again. "Was he young or old, handsome or ugly, tall or short?"

"A young-looking chap," said Jack. "Not strong looking and small sized. I couldn't tell much about him; the coat he wore was so big, and that old hat hid his face."

I thought to myself, "So you don't know your own clothes when you see them!" and I thought how very uncomfortable I had been sitting so close to a hot fire with that heavy old reefer on. I very nearly laughed, but I caught myself in time.

"What did he say to Mother?" asked Jack.

Father repeated it as well as he could

remember and they both roared, and Nora spluttered almost convulsively.

"I felt very sorry for him," mother said slowly. "He had a haunted sort of look, as though rainy weather did not suit him."

This was too bad of Mother, for like a pent up flood, Nora's laughter passed all the bounds of reason, and Jack eyed her so curiously that I broke down myself, and the "murder was out."

Jack felt the worst about it. Father enjoys a joke so much that one on himself was better than none at all. And was not Jack fooled, too? That was the sweet drop in the ointment for father. He laughed until he was useless.

"Bless me!" he said when he could speak. "I wish I had found her out before she got clear away; making fun of her old dad like that!"

And I thought in this wise, unto myself. "It is well you did not, oh, my father! Very well indeed—for me."

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