

of till later had contributed to the Doctor's popularity. As the Doctor was in the back yard talking to Mrs. Dow about his patient, he saw a little half-crippled girl in a chair under an apple-tree playing with some scraps of stuff out of which she was making clothes for an old doll. Mrs. Dow caught the expression on his face and answered his inarticulate question.

"That's Jane."

"Is she yours?"

"Yes—my Milly's. She stays here mostly. Like's to stay with me, because I spoil her, I guess. Least, that's what Milly says. But she's so hapless, I don't see as no harm'll come of a little spoiling. She can't play like other children, an' all she wants is to set still and sew. You ought to see how she can sew. Speak to the gentleman, Jane." For the Doctor was now at Jane's side on his knees examining her handiwork and incidentally, the little bent figure among the old cushions.

"She can copy anything," pursued the grandmother with subdued pride, "and since she seen the fine things that little thing in the front room has, nothin' will appease her but she must copy 'em for her doll."

When Mrs. Dow told me about it, having allowed me a measure of reflected friendship, she described how, all of a sudden, she had seen that the Doctor had lost all interest in her; and from the time he caught sight of Jane had not

heard a word she said to him. "But I was really ashamed to let him see her so untidy. However, as I say, you can't raise children and chickens without dirt, and you know he said 'that's so.' And now, would you believe it, in five minutes there was Jane up in his lap, talkin' to him the same as if she had known him all her life, and she never one to say a word to nobody—not to my knowin'. I was that ashamed of his seein' that old broken doll, b'cause she's got a better one, but Milly won't let her play with it, and 't appears she likes that broken one best anyway. She calls her 'Miss Hazel.' An' when I explained it to him, he said he liked it best, too, that he and Jane together'd mend it. Oh! I say! that man beats me! And he says he wants me to give him Jane for a little while, and he says he can make her like other children, most. But I mustn't say a word about it to a soul. So I won't—not even to Milly. But won't that be grand? Do you think he can do it? Jane? Why, she ain't got anythin' to build on. But I'll say this, if anybody can, he can. I wish Lissy Dow had seen him—just handlin' her like a mother does her first baby, as if he was afraid she'd break in two! If anybody can, I believe he can."

I agreed to this.

After this there was quite a change in the establishment. The Doctor appeared to be so much taken up with the two children that he left me to my devices

while he went off with them to play at keeping-house with "Miss Hazel," in a sunny nook between the rocks, where he had with his own hands helped them to fashion and fit up a little house out of old boards and other odds and ends. Her first piece of surgery was the repair of the broken doll which he first put in stays and afterwards, to the great delight of the two children, in a little plaster jacket. I soon learned of this; Jane showed her to me, while little Carolyn looked on, and no trained nurses ever got more pleasure out of exhibiting an improving patient. But I did not know until afterwards that the Doctor was treating Jane in the same way, and that whenever he paid a professional visit to the doll he also paid one to the little mistress, having secured her consent through his services to the doll.

The treatment of the little visitor he had found more difficult in, as the governess stood in terror of Madame; and Madame had left strict injunctions that she was to play with no child whom she herself did not know. "Madame was very particular."

"Well, I have a playmate for her," said the Doctor, and he mentioned Jane.

"Oh! Sir, I couldn't let her play with her," protested the nurse. "It would be as much as my position is worth if I should let her play with vulgar children. Madame gave me positive orders

"Vulgar children, indeed!" snapped

the Doctor. "There are no vulgar children. Vulgar is a mark of a more advanced age. Madame is a fool, I know, but she is not such a fool as to object to what I prescribe. Between you, you are killing that child, and you will not keep your place a week after you have killed her."

Whatever the means were, the woman's scruples appeared to have been overcome; for in a few days the two little girls were, as I have related, inseparable companions, and even I could see the improvement in the little visitor's appearance.

After this I was privileged as a friend of the Doctor's to attend one or two of the "parties" given down in "Miss Hazel's house," as the little place which the Doctor had fitted up for them between the rocks was called; and I got an idea of the Doctor's skill in the handling of children. There was a great deal of formality where "Miss Hazel" was concerned, and that ancient and battered lady had to answer a good many questions about her health and that of her friends—as to whether the plaster jacket hurt her, and how long she could remain strapped on her board without too much pain, etc.

"Miss Hazel" had in some way been promoted through the medium of a husband lost at sea and known among the trio as "The Late Lamented," and was, under the Doctor's skilful necromancy, a devoted invalid aunt, whose only joy in life were her two nieces, two young ladies who had unhappily inherited the Hazel back. This was the Doctor's invention, as it was his care to attend the entire Hazel family. And it was amusing to see this long-limbed, broad-shouldered man, sitting day after day, carrying on conversations with the span-long doll about her two nieces and their future, while the wan-faced little creatures listened with their eager eyes glancing at the pictures he conjured up of their future gaieties and triumphs.

And when they came home in the afternoon, grimy and happy, with faint traces of color in their wan cheeks, Mrs. Dow unbent and gave us her best preserves in sheer happiness. Even the nurse admitted that her charge ate more, slept more soundly and was better than she had ever seen her. They not only played in the present, but planned for great entertainments when Mrs. Durer should come down—a date to which her little girl was always looking forward and leading Jane to look forward also. And sometimes they played that "the beautiful lady," as they called her, had come, and Carolyn would pretend that she was her Mamma and act her part as a lady bountiful. I never saw the Doctor in such spirits. He entered into the game with as much zest as the children and grew ruddy in the sea air.

"Pies are the real things!" he used to say. "These Yankees know their business. And of all pies—mud-pies are the best. Mrs. Dow is right; chickens and children must have dirt—clean dirt—to play in to be healthy. If that woman will keep away long enough I'll give that child a chance for her life."

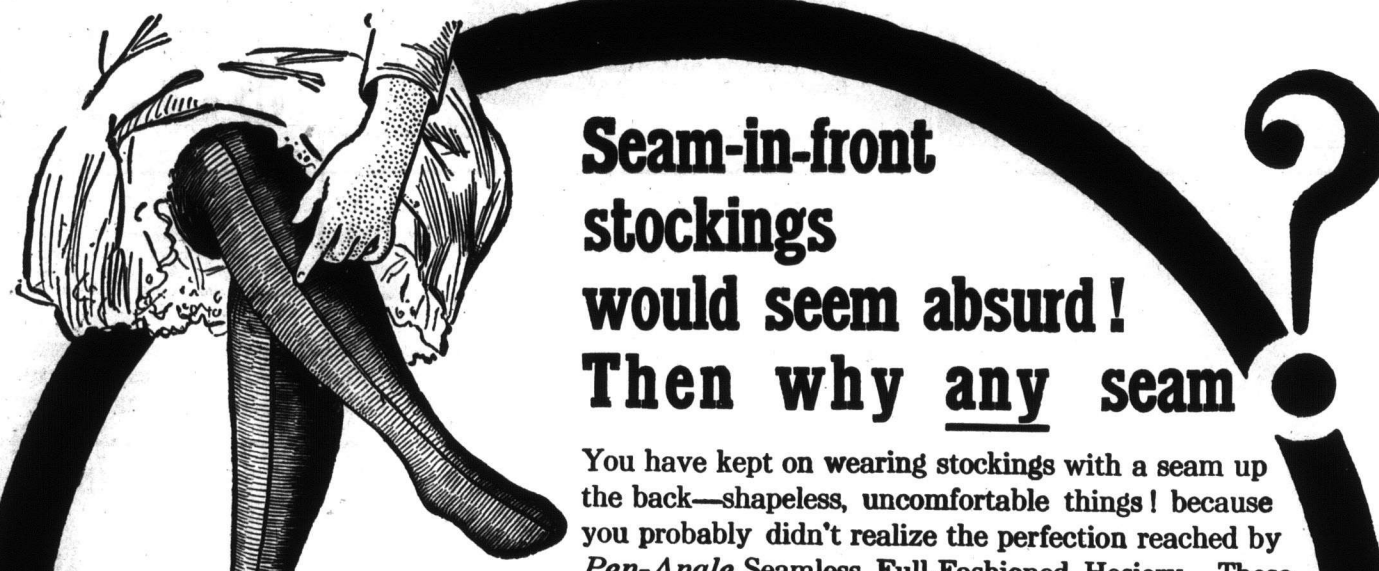
"You do not appear to hold the lady in quite the esteem the world gives you credit for?" I hazarded.

He gave a grunt and a grim expression settled about his mouth. After a moment of reflection, he added: "Oh! she's well enough in a way—as good as most of those about her, I fancy. But it's the system—the life. It's all wrong—all wrong. Why, the womanliness—the motherhood is all squeezed out of them. I don't suppose she ever put that child to sleep in her arms in her life. I have seen women weep and wail and almost die of heart-hunger because they have no children, and there are she and her like, trifling away their life in what they call their d-d society, while their babies perish or grow up to be like them. Why, I would not give that angular, hard-featured old Mrs. Dow, with her sharp tongue, for the whole crowd of them."

"She is rather crusty," I hazarded.

"Yes, but deep down under the crust she has a heart, and a woman without a heart is a monster."

"She must have a heart. She could not look as she does," I protested. I was still thinking of Mrs. Durer



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