

LADY JANE.

CHAPTER I.—Continued.

"She has no one but me to love her," she continued, lowering her voice. "They took papa from us, and carried him away, and mama says he'll never come back. He's not gone to San Antonio, he's gone to heaven; and we can't go there now. We're going to New York; but I'd rather go to heaven where papa is, only mama says there are no trains or ships to take us there, now, but by-and-by we're going if we're very good."

The boy listened to her innocent prattle with a sad smile, glancing uneasily now and then at the mother, fearful lest the plaintive little voice might reach her ear; but she seemed to be sleeping, sleeping uneasy, and with that hot flush still burning on her cheeks.

"Have you ever been in New York?" he asked, looking tenderly at the little head nestled against his arm. She had taken off her hat, and was very comfortably curled up on the seat with Tony in her lap. The bird also seemed perfectly satisfied with his position.

"Oh, no; I've never been anywhere only on the ranch. That's where Carlo, and Kitty, and the lambs were, and my pony, Sunflower; he was named Sunflower, because he was yellow. I used to ride on him, and papa lifted me on, and took me off; and Sunflower was so gentle. Dear papa—I loved him best of all and now he's gone away, and I can't see him again."

Here the rosy little face was buried in Tony's feathers, and something like a sob made the listener's heart ache.

"Come, come," he said softly, "you mustn't cry, or I shall think you don't care for the blue heron."

In a moment, her little head was raised, and a smile shone through her tears. "Oh, I do, I do. And if I can have him I won't cry for the others."

"I'm quite sure your mama will consent. Now, let me tell you about my home. I live in New Orleans, and I have lots of pets," and the boy went on to describe so many delightful things that the child forgot her grief in listening; and soon, very soon, the weary little head drooped, and she was sleeping with her rosy cheek pressed against his shoulder, and Tony clasped close in her arms.

And so the long, hot afternoon passed away, and the train sped on toward its destination, while the mother and the child slept, happily unconscious of the strange fate that awaited them in that city, of which the spires and walls were even now visible, bathed in the red light of the evening sun.

CHAPTER II.

TONY GOES WITH LADY JANE.

And now that the end of the journey was so near, the drowsy passengers began to bestir themselves. In order to look a little more presentable, dusty faces and hands were hastily wiped, frowny heads were smoothed, tumbled hats and bonnets were arranged, and even the fretful babies, pulled and coaxed into shape, looked less miserable in their soiled garments, while their mothers wore an expression of mingled relief and expectation.

Lady Jane did not open her eyes until her companion gently tried to disengage Tony from her clasp in order to consign him to his basket; then she looked up with a smile of surprise at her mother, who was bending over her. "Why, mama," she said brightly, "I've been asleep, and I had such a lovely dream; I thought I was at the ranch, and the blue heron was there too. Oh, I'm sorry it was only a dream!"

"My dear, you must thank this kind young gentleman for his care of you. We are near New Orleans now, and the bird must go to his basket. Come, let me smooth your hair and put on your hat."

"But, mama, am I to have Tony?" The boy was trying the cover over the basket, and, at the child's question, he looked at the mother entreatingly. "It will amuse her," he said, "and it'll be no trouble. May she have it?"

"I suppose I must consent; she has set her heart on it."

The boy held out the little basket, and Lady Jane grasped it rapturously. "Oh, how good you are?" she cried. "I'll never, never forget you, and I'll love Tony always."

At that moment the young fellow, although he was smiling brightly, was smothering a pang of regret, not at parting with the blue heron, which he really prized, but because his heart had gone out to the charming child, and she was about to leave him, without any certainty of their ever meeting again. While this thought was vaguely passing through his mind, the lady turned and said to him:

"I am going to Jackson street, which I believe is uptown. Is there not a nearer station for that part of the city, than the lower one?"

"Certainly, you can stop at Gretna; the train will be there in a few minutes. You cross the river there, and the ferry-landing is at the foot of Jackson street, where you will find carriages and horse-cars to take you where you wish to go, and you will save an hour."

"I'm very glad of that; my friends are not expecting me, and I should like to reach them before dark. Is it far to the ferry?"

"Only a few blocks; you'll have no trouble finding it," and he was about to add, "Can't I go and show you the way?" when the conductor flung open the door and bawled, "Grate-na! Grate-na! passengers for Grate-na! Before he could give expression to the request, the conductor had seized the lady's satchel, and was hurrying them toward the door. When he reached

the platform, the train had stopped, and they had already stepped off. For a moment, he saw them standing on the dusty road, the river and the setting sun behind them—the black-robed, graceful figure of the woman, and the fair-haired child with her violet eyes raised to his, while she clasped the little basket and smiled.

He touched his hat and waved his hand in farewell; the mother lifted her veil and sent him a sad good-by smile, and the child pressed her rosy fingers to her lips, and gracefully and gravely threw him a kiss. Then the train moved on; and the last he saw of them, they were walking hand in hand toward the river.

As the boy went back to his seat, he was reproaching himself for his neglect and stupidity. "Why didn't I find out her name?—or the name of the people to whom she was going?—or why didn't I go with her? It was too bad to leave her to cross alone, and she a stranger and looking so ill. She seemed hardly able to walk and carry her bag. I don't see how I could have been so stupid. It would not have been much out of my way, and, if I'd crossed with them, I should have found out who they were. I didn't want to seem too presuming, and especially after I gave the child the heron; but I wish I'd gone with them. Oh, she's left something," and in an instant he was reaching under the seat lately occupied by the object of his solicitude.

"It's a book, 'Daily Devotions,' bound in russet, silver clasp, monogram 'J. C.,' he said, as he opened it; "and here's a name."

On the fly-leaf was written JANE CHETWYND.

From Papa, New York, Christmas, 18—.

"Jane Chetwynd, that must be the mother. It can't be the child, because the date is ten years ago. 'New York.' They're from the North then; I thought they were. Hello! here's a photograph."

It was a group, a family group—the father, the mother, and the child; the father's a bright, handsome, almost boyish face, the mother's not pale and tear-stained, but fresh and winsome, with smiling lips and merry eyes, and the child, the little "Lady Jane," clinging to her father's neck, two years younger, perhaps, but the same lovely, golden-haired child.

The boy's heart bounded with pleasure as he looked at the sweet little face that had such a fascination for him. "I wish I could keep it," he thought, "but it's not mine, and I must try to return it to its owner. Poor woman! she will be miserable when she misses it. I'll advertise it to-morrow, and through it, I'm likely to find out all about them."

Next morning some of the readers of the principal New Orleans journals noticed an odd little advertisement among the personals:

Found, "Daily Devotions," bound in red russet-leather, silver clasp, with monogram, "J. C." Address, Blue Heron, P. O. Box 111.

For more than a week this advertisement remained in the columns of the paper, but it was never answered, nor was the book ever claimed.

CHAPTER III.

MADAME JOZAIN.

Madame Jozain was a creole of mixed French and Spanish ancestry. She was a tall, thin woman with great, soft black eyes, a nose of the hawk type, and lips that made a narrow line when closed. In spite of her forbidding features, the upper part of her face was rather pleasing, her mild eyes had a gently appealing expression when she lifted them upward, as she often did, and no one would have believed that the owner of those innocent, candid eyes could have a sordid, avaricious nature, unless he glanced at the lower part of her face, which was decidedly mean and disagreeable. Her nose and mouth had a wily and ensnaring expression, which was at the same time cruel and rapacious. Her friends, and she had but few, endowed her with many good qualities, while her enemies, and they were numerous, declared that she was but little better than a fiend incarnate; but Father Ducros, her confessor, knew that she was a combination of good and evil, the evil largely predominating.

With this strange and complex character, she had but two passions in life. One was for her worthless son, Adraste, and the other was a keen desire for the good opinion of those who knew her. She always wished to be considered something that she was not—young, handsome, amiable, pious, and the best *blanchisseuse de fin* in whatever neighborhood she hung out her sign.

And perhaps it is not to be wondered at, that she felt a desire to compensate herself by duplicity for what fate had honestly deprived her of, for no one living had greater cause to complain of a cruel destiny than had Madame Jozain. Early in life she had great expectations. An only child of a well-to-do baker, she inherited quite a little fortune, and when she married the *debonnair* and handsome Andre Jozain, she intended, by virtue of his renown as a politician, and a power in his ward, which might eventually have led him to some prominence; but instead, this same agency had conducted him, by dark and devious ways, to life-long detention in the penitentiary of his State—not, however, until he had squandered her fortune, and lamed her for life by pushing her down stairs in a quarrel. This accident, had it disabled her arms, might have incapacitated her from becoming a *blanchisseuse de fin*, which occupation she was obliged to adopt when she found

herself deprived of her husband's support by the too exacting laws of his country.

In her times of despondency it was not her husband's disgrace, her poverty, her lameness, her undutiful son, her lost illusions, over which she mourned, as much as it was the utter futility of trying to make things seem better than they were. In spite of all her painting, and varnishing, and idealizing, the truth remained horribly apparent: She was the wife of a convict, she was plain, and old, and lame; she was poor, miserably poor, and she was but an indifferent *blanchisseuse de fin*, while Adraste, or Raste, as he was always called, was the worst boy in the State. If she had ever studied the interesting subject of heredity, she would have found in Raste the strongest confirmation in his favor, for he had inherited all his father's bad qualities in a greater degree.

On account of Raste's unsavory reputation and her own incompetency, she was constantly moving from one neighborhood to another, and, by a natural descent in the scale of misfortune, at last found herself in a narrow little street, in the little village of Gretna, one of the most unlovely suburbs of New Orleans.

The small one-story house she occupied contained but two rooms, and a shed, which served as a kitchen. It stood close to the narrow side-walk, and its green door was reached by two small steps. Madame Jozain, dressed in a black skirt and a white sack, sat upon these steps in the evening and gossiped with her neighbor. The house was on the corner of the street that led to the ferry, and her greatest amusement (for, on account of her lameness, she could not run with the others to see the train arrive) was to sit on her doorstep and watch the passengers walking by on their way to the river.

On this particular hot July evening, she felt very tired, and very cross. Her affairs had gone badly all day. She had not succeeded with some lace she had been doing for Madame Joubert, the wife of the grocer, on the levee, and Madame Joubert had treated her crossly—in fact had condemned her work, and refused to take it until made up again; and Madame Jozain needed the money sorely. She had expected to be paid for the work, but instead of paying her that "little cut of a Madame Joubert" had fairly insulted her—she, Madame Jozain, *noe Bergeron*. The Bergerons were better than the Jouberts. Her father had been one of the City Council, and had died rich, and her husband—well, her husband had been unfortunate, but he was a gentleman, while the Jouberts were common and always had been. She would get even with that proud little fool; she would punish her in some way. Yes, she would do her lace over, but she would soak it in soda, so that it would drop to pieces the first time it was worn.

Meanwhile she was tired and hungry, and she had nothing in the house but some coffee and cold rice. She had given Raste her last dime, and he had quarreled with her and gone off to play "craps" with his chums on the levee. Besides, she was very lonesome, for there was but one house on her left, and beyond it was a wide stretch of pasture, and opposite there was nothing but the blank walls of a row of warehouses belonging to the railroad, and her only neighbor, the occupant of the next cottage, had gone away to spend a month with a daughter who lived "down town," on the other side of the river.

So, as she sat there alone, she looked around her with an expression of great dissatisfaction, yawning wearily, and wishing that she was not so lame, so that she could run out to the station, and see what was going on; and that boy, Raste, she wondered if he was throwing away her last dime. He often brought a little money home. If he did not bring some now, they would have no breakfast in the morning.

Then the arriving train whistled, and she straightened up and her face took on a look of expectancy.

"Not many passengers to-night," she said to herself, as a few men hurried by with bags and bundles. "They nearly all go to the lower ferry, now."

In a moment they had all passed, and the event of the evening was over. But no! she leaned forward and peered up the street with fresh curiosity.

"Why, here come a lady and a little girl, and they're not hurrying at all. She'll lose the ferry if she doesn't mind. I wonder what ails her?—she walks as if she could 'nt see."

Presently the two reached her corner, a lady in mourning, and a little yellow-haired girl carefully holding a small basket in one hand, while she clung to her mother's gown with the other.

Madame Jozain noticed, before the lady reached her, that she tottered several times as if about to fall, and put out her hand, as if seeking for some support. She seemed dizzy and confused, and was passing on by the corner, when the child said entreatingly, "Stop here a minute, mama, and rest."

Then the woman lifted her veil and saw Madame Jozain looking up at her, her soft eyes full of compassion.

"Will you allow me to rest here a moment? I'm ill and a little faint—perhaps you will give me a glass of water?"

"Why, certainly, my dear," said Madame Jozain, getting up alertly, in spite of her lameness. "Come in and sit down in my rocking-chair. You're too late for the ferry. It'll be gone before you get there, and you may as well be comfortable while you wait—come right in."

The exhausted woman entered willingly. The room was neat and cool, and a large white bed, which was beautifully clean, for Madame prided

herself upon it, looked very inviting. The mother sank into a chair, and dropped her head on the bed; the child set down the basket and clung to her mother caressingly, while she looked around with timid, anxious eyes.

Madame Jozain hobbled off to a glass of water and a bottle of ammonia, which she kept for her laces; then, with gentle, deft hands, she removed the bonnet and heavy veil, and bathed the poor woman's hot forehead and burning hands, while the child clung to her mother murmuring, "Mama, dear mama, does your head ache now?"

"I'm better now, darling," the mother replied after a few moments; then turning to Madame, she said in her sweet, soft tones, "Thank you so much. I feel quite refreshed. The heat and fatigue exhausted my strength. I should have fallen in the street had it not been for you."

"Have you travelled far?" asked Madame, gently sympathetic.

"From San Antonio, and I was ill when I started," and again she closed her eyes and leaned her head against the back of the chair.

At the first glance, Madame understood the situation. She saw, from the appearance of mother and child, that they were not poor. In this accidental encounter was a possible opportunity, but how far she could use it she could not yet determine, so she said only, "That's a long way to come alone;" then she added, in a casual tone, "Especially when one's ill."

The lady did not reply, and Madame went on tentatively, "Perhaps some one's waiting for you on the other side, and I'll come back on the ferry to see what's become of you."

"No. No one expects me; I'm on my way to New York. I have a friend living on Jackson street. I thought I would go there and rest a day or so; but I did wrong to get off the train here. I was not able to walk to the lower station, and saved myself the exertion of walking."

"Well, don't mind now, dear," returned Madame, soothingly. "Just rest a little, and when it's time for me to be back, I'll go on down to the ferry with you. It's only a few steps, and I can hobble that far. I'll see you safe on board, and when you get across, you'll find a carriage."

"Thank you, you're very good. I should like to get there as soon as possible, for I feel dreadfully ill," and again the weary eyes closed, and the heavy head fell back against its resting-place.

Madame Jozain looked at her for a moment, seriously and silently; then she turned, smiling sweetly on the child. "Come here, my dear, and let me take off your hat and cool your head while you are waiting."

"No, thank you, I'm going with mama."

"Oh, yes, certainly; but won't you tell me your name?"

"My name is Lady Jane," she replied gravely.

"Lady Jane? Well, I declare, that just suits you, for you are a little lady, and no mistake. Aren't you tired, and warm?"

"I'm very hungry; I want my supper," said the child frankly.

Madame winced, remembering her empty cupboard, but went on chatting cheerfully to pass away the time.

Presently the whistle of the approaching ferry-bell sounded; the mother put on her bonnet, and the child took the bag in one hand, and the basket in the other. "Come, mama, let us go," she cried eagerly.

"Dear, dear," said Madame solicitously, "but you look so white and sick. I'm afraid you can't get to the ferry even with me to help you. I wish my Raste was here; he's so strong, he could carry you if you gave out."

"I think I can walk; I'll try," and the poor woman staggered to her feet, only to fall back into Madame Jozain's arms in a dead faint.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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