

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## Polly's Business Bump.

(Sophie Swett, in the 'Congregationalist and Christian World.')

Aunt Jane smoothed her hair and her apron and made one of the twins get down from the back of her chair and gave the baby to Polly to hold before she opened the letter that Tommy Higgins, their next door neighbor, had brought from the post-office. She said she always felt almost as if the minister and his wife had come to tea when she got a letter from Cousin Mary Olive Tidd. Cousin Mary Olive had gone away from Dumpling Hill to keep a shop in Poppleton when she was a young girl. Every one thought she ought to teach school because she was a minister's daughter, but she said she had a business bump and the Lord meant you to do what you could. Polly's heart had thrilled at sight of the Poppleton's postmark. She thought that the letter might be an answer to the question that every one was asking, 'What shall be done with Polly?' She was an orphan and Dumpling Hill farms bore scanty crops and all her relatives, like the old woman in the shoe, had so many children they didn't know what to do.

Aunt Jane opened the letter and read it aloud, and this was every word that was in it:—

'Dear Cousin Jane: I know you have quite enough to take care of without Polly, so you may send her to me and I will do well by her if she has a business bump. If she has not, I don't want her and shan't keep her.

'Yours truly, MARY OLIVE TIDD.'

Aunt Jane said she didn't see how any one could expect a twelve-year-old girl to have a business bump. And the tears came into her eyes; for the letter did not sound to her as if Cousin Mary Olive would be kind to Polly.

Caddy, the twin with a freckle (not even the twins' own mother could have told them apart if it had not been for the freckle on Caddy's nose) began to cry because she really thought it meant that Polly was going to get a bump like the one that little Jeremiah had on his forehead from falling downstairs; and little Jeremiah stepped on the kitten's tail in his haste to hold Polly by her skirts so she couldn't go away and made the kitten growl and spit. Ponto, who was the kitten's particular friend, began to bark wildly and there was a great uproar, above which Polly was heard to say, calmly:

'Mr. Tilden, the storekeeper, said that I had a business bump when I sold my white turkey's eggs for seven dollars and twenty-nine cents. So I am not afraid to go to Cousin Mary Olive!'

And then Aunt Jane wiped away the tears from her motherly eyes and only said she was glad that Polly had a brand-new blue cashmere dress to wear.

Three days afterwards Polly set out for Poppleton with her purple pig bank in her trunk, with seven dollars and twenty-nine cents all in it. Aunt Jane would not let her pay her fare out of it; she seemed to feel, as did Polly herself, that it was a proof of the business bump without which Cousin Mary Olive Tidd would not keep her.

She was put in charge of Deacon Lufkin, who was going to Poppleton on business, but he had time only to show her the way to the street where Cousin Mary Olive lived and she had to find the shop alone. But that was easy—easier than it was to find courage to open the door, with one's heart going thumpity-thump!

A little bell jingled when at length she did

open it and Cousin Mary Olive came hurrying out from an inner room. She scowled, but Polly tried to remember that people did sometimes scowl only because they are near-sighted, and the creases of her double chin really looked pleasant.

'I am Polly Whitcomb, and I am pretty sure about the business bump,' said Polly.

'You had better be if you are going to live with me!' said Cousin Mary Olive promptly. 'But you are too small for twelve! How will you look behind a counter?'

'Perhaps I shall grow,' said Polly hopefully.

She felt like crying, but she kept back the tears and used her eyes to look about her, which is always the better way. And she saw that it was a pleasant, old-fashioned house behind the shop, and in the garden the grass was every bit as green and the sky was just as blue as it was on Dumpling Hill. And she said to herself that of course one could be happy where the grass was green and the sky was blue. And when you have found that out you are really quite wise.

'I find I must go to the city to be with my brother Nahum at the hospital sooner than I thought,' said Cousin Mary Olive when she had read a letter at the breakfast table, the next morning. 'I meant to have about a week to show you how to keep a shop before I left you alone in mine, but now you will have to do it without any teaching. If you have a business bump you can, and if you haven't, why I shall find it out and you can go back to Dumpling Hill. Hannah Shea, who washes and cleans for me, will do the housework and stay with you nights, but mind you don't let her go into the shop! Some people would think I was crazy to trust a twelve-year-old girl there, but it has kind of come about in the way of Providence that I should and I guess it is meant that I should find out about that business bump of yours! I found out, last night, that you could measure and make change and the prices are well marked on everything. You may go ahead and keep the shop as if it were your very own. My customers are all good, honest people, anyway, and I don't keep anything to entice children.'

'No, ma'am,' said Polly, with a little touch of sadness. For when she had walked up and down the street, the afternoon before, she had seen in the window of every other shop like Cousin Mary Olive's some bright and tempting displays for children. Not a doll, nor a toy, in Miss Tidd's! Polly thought it looked lonesome.

Now there is no better cure for home-sickness, nor indeed for heart sickness of any kind, than to have something to do that needs to be done with all one's might. And Polly felt sure that it would take all there was of a twelve-year-old girl from Dumpling Hill to keep a shop on the main street of Poppleton. Her heart fairly danced with joy when Cousin Mary Olive said that she might keep it just as if it were her own.

All went well but it was not very lively to sell spools of thread and yards of cambric all day and she longed to be in the little shop almost opposite, whose windows, gay with ribbons and toys, drew a crowd of children as soon as school was out.

One day the 'drummer' came from whom Cousin Mary Olive was accustomed to order goods. Cousin Mary Olive had told her to look carefully into the boxes and see just what was needed and order only that. Polly felt that this was the time to show whether she had a business bump or not. But when the drummer brought in, from his great

gayly-painted waggon at the door, a box with three beautiful dolls in it she heaved a long, long sigh. She could see just how those dolls would look in the window if she only had a chance to dress them! For Polly had a knack of dressing dolls. You should see the corn-cob sailor boy and the rag Dinah that she had made for the twins! Whenever they had a fair at Dumpling Hill Polly dressed all the dolls.

After the drummer had gone she found one of the dolls lying face downward on a pile of cambrics. He went in a hurry and must have let it fall out of the box and put the cover on again without observing it. Polly ran to the door with the doll, but the gayly-painted waggon was out of sight. 'I will put it away until the next time he comes,' she said to herself. 'But he said it was only twenty-five cents! I wish I could buy it to send to one of the Dumpling Hill Children.'

As many as a dozen times that day Polly opened the box in which she had put the doll and took a long, wistful look at it. When little Miss Dinsmore, the dressmaker next door, came in, she showed it to her feeling that it was too important a matter to keep to one's self.

'I would buy it if I were you; it is very cheap at sixty-five cents, and it would amuse you to dress it. Come into my house, after you close, to-night, and I will give you some beautiful pieces of silk. I have a whole heap up in my attic,' said the dressmaker.

That was one of the nights when Polly closed at seven and she spent a delightful evening picking over the pieces of silk in Miss Dinsmore's great, rainbow-hued heap. She dressed the doll as a shepherdess; there was a beautiful piece of pink silk with tiny rose buds. The minister's wife at Dumpling Hill had showed her how to dress a shepherdess.

The shepherdess was so pretty, with her looped-up, puffy skirts and a pink hat upon her yellow head, that Polly couldn't help putting her in the window for the children to see. Cousin Mary Olive had not said that she would not have a doll in her window but only that she would not have one sold over her counter. She had told Polly to keep the shop just as if it were her own! And Miss Dinsmore said that she didn't think it would do the least harm to put a doll in the window.

The wonderful news spread quickly that there was a doll and the very prettiest doll that ever was seen in a Poppleton shop in Miss Tidd's window, and a crowd gathered as soon as school was done—a crowd that cheered the heart of the lonely little shopkeeper. She said to herself that she should not mind smashing her purple pig bank when the drummer came again, the doll had been such a comfort.

It was hard to have to say to wistful little girls who brought their mammas that the doll was not for sale; she could so easily dress another one—or even one a piece—for the Dumpling Hill twins when the pig bank was broken! But there was a queer and a cheering thing about the crowd at the windows, the coming of the mammas. They all bought something if they could not buy the doll. Polly was kept so busy that she had scarcely time to breathe. Trade increased so that little Miss Dinsmore came in to help in the evening when her poor eyesight would not allow her to sew.

'I guess she won't doubt that you have a business bump when she sees the money in the drawer!' Miss Dinsmore said.

But one day—the very day before Cousin Mary Olive was to return—Polly did a very