

An Ivy Spray and Ladies' Slippers

"It can't be done! So I may as well give it I up and get a new pair. I long for them, but I'm afraid my nice little plan for Laura will be spoiled," said Jessie Delano to herself, as she shook her head over a pair of small, dilapidated slippers almost past mending. While she vainly pricked her fingers over them for the last time, her mind was full of girlish hopes and fears, as well as of anxieties far too serious for a light-hearted creature of sixteen.

A year ago the sisters had been the petted daughters of a rich man; but death and misfortune came suddenly, and now they were left to face poverty alone. They had few relations, and had offended the rich uncle who offered Jessie a home, because she refused to be separated from her sister. Poor Laura was an invalid, and no one wanted her; but Jessie would not leave her, so they clung together and lived on in the humble rooms where their father died, trying to earn their bread by the only accomplishments they possessed. Laura painted well, and after many disappointments was beginning to find a sale for her dainty designs and delicate flowers. Jessie had a natural gift for dancing; and her former teacher, a kind-hearted Frenchwoman, offered her favorite pupil the post of assistant teacher in her classes for children.

It cost the girl a struggle to accept a place of this sort and be a humble teacher, patiently twirling stupid little boys and girls round and round over the smooth floor where she used to dance so happily when she was the pride of the class and the queen of the closing balls. But for Laura's sake she gratefully accepted the offer, glad to add her mite to their small store, and to feel that she could help keep the wolf from the door. They had seemed to hear the howl of this dreaded phantom more than once during that year, and looked forward to the long hard winter with an anxiety which neither would confess to the other. Laura feared to fall ill if she worked too hard, and then what would become of this pretty young sister who loved her so tenderly and would not be tempted to leave her? And Jessie could do very little

except rebel against their hard fate and make impracticable plans. But each worked bravely, talked cheerfully, and waited hopefully for some good fortune to befall them, while doubt and pain and poverty and care made the young hearts so heavy that the poor girls often fell asleep on pillows wet with secret tears.

The smaller trials of life beset Jessie at this particular moment, and her bright wits were trying to solve the problem how to spend her treasured five dollars on slippers for herself and paints for Laura. Both were much needed, and she had gone in shabby shoes to save up money for the little surprise on which she had set her heart; but now dismay fell upon her when the holes refused to be cobbled, and the largest of bows would not hide the worn-out toes in spite of ink and blacking lavishly applied.

"These are the last of my dear French slippers, and I can't afford any more. I hate cheap things! But I shall have to get them; for my boots are shabby, and every one has to look at my feet when I lead. Oh dear, what a horrid thing it is to be poor!" and Jessie surveyed the shabby little shoes affectionately, as her eyes filled with tears; for the road looked very rough and steep now. when she remembered how she used to dance through life as happy as a butterfly in a garden full of sunshine and flowers.

"Now, Jess, no nonsense, no red eyes to tell tales! Go and do your errands, and come in as gay as a lark, or Laura will be worried." And springing up, the girl began to sing instead of sob, as she stirred about her dismal little room, cleaning her old gloves, mending her one white dress, and wishing with a sigh of intense longing that she could afford some flowers to wear, every ornament having been sold long ago. Then, with a kiss and a smile to her patient sister, she hurried away to get the necessary slippers and the much-desired paints, which Laura would not ask for, though her work waited for want of them.

Having been reared in luxury, poor little Jessie's tastes were all of the daintiest sort; and her hardest trial, after Laura's feeble health, was the daily sacrifice of the many

comforts and elegances to which she had been accustomed. Faded gowns, cleaned gloves, and mended boots cost her many a pang, and the constant temptation of seeing pretty, useful, and unattainable things was a very hard one. Laura rarely went out, and so was spared this cross; then she was three years older, had always been delicate, and lived much in a happy world of her own. So Jessie bore her trials silently, but sometimes felt very covetous and resentful to see so much pleasure, money, and beauty in the world, and yet have so little of it fall to her lot.

"I feel as if I could pick a pocket to-day and not mind a bit, if it were a rich person's. It's a shame, when papa was always so generous, that no one remembers us. If ever I'm rich again, I'll just hunt up all the poor girls I can find, and give them nice shoes, if nothing else," she thought, as she went along the crowded streets, pausing involuntarily at the shop windows to look with longing eyes at the treasures within.

Resisting the allurements of French slippers with bows and buckles, she wisely bought a plain, serviceable pair, and trudged away, finding balm for her wounds in the fact that they were very cheap. More balm came when she met a young friend, who joined her as she stood wistfully eying the piles of grapes in a window and longing to buy some for Laura.

This warm-hearted schoolmate read the wish before Jessie saw her, and gratified it so adroitly that the girl could accept the pretty basketful sent to her sister without feeling like a spendthrift or a beggar. It comforted her very much, and the world began to look brighter after that little touch of kindness, as it always does when genuine sympathy makes sunshine in shady places.

At the art store she was told that more of Laura's autumn-flowers were in demand; and her face was so full of innocent delight and gratitude it quite touched the old man who sold her the paints, and gave her more than her money's worth, remembering his own hard times and pitying the pretty young girl whose father he had known.

So Jessie did not have to pretend very hard at being "as gay as a lark" when she got home and showed her treasures. Laura was so happy over the unexpected gifts that the dinner of bread and milk and grapes was quite a picnic; and Jessie found a smile on her face when she went to dress for her party.

It was only a child's party at the house of one of Mademoiselle's pupils, and Jessie was merely invited to help the little people through their dancing. She did not like to go in this way, as she was sure to meet familiar faces there,

full of the pity, curiosity, or indifference so hard for a girl to bear. But Mademoiselle asked it as a favor, and Jessie was grateful; so she went, expecting no pleasure and certain of much weariness, if not annoyance.

When she was ready,--and it did not take long to slip on the white woollen dress, brush out the curly dark hair, and fold up slippers and gloves,--she stood before her glass looking at herself, quite conscious that she was very pretty, with her large eyes, blooming cheeks, and the lofty little air which nothing could change. She was also painfully conscious that her dress was neither fresh nor becoming without a bit of ribbon or a knot of flowers to give it the touch of color it needed. She had an artistic eye, and used to delight in ordering charming costumes for herself in the happy days when all her wishes were granted as if fairies still lived. She tossed over her very small store of ribbons in vain; everything had been worn till neither beauty nor freshness remained.

"Oh dear! where can I find something to make me look less like a nun,--and a very shabby one, too?" she said, longing for the pink corals she sold to pay Laura's doctor's bill.

The sound of a soft tap, tap, tap, startled her, and she ran to open the door. No one was there but Laura, fast asleep on the sofa. Tap, tap, tap! went the invisible hand;

and as the sound seemed to come from the window, Jessie glanced that way, thinking her tame dove had come to be fed. Neither hungry dove nor bold sparrow appeared,--only a spray of Japanese ivy waving in the wind. A very pretty spray it was, covered with tiny crimson leaves; and it tapped impatiently, as if it answered her question by saying, "Here is a garland for you; come and take it."

Jessie's quick eye was caught at once by the fine color, and running to the window she looked out as eagerly as if a new idea had come into her head. It was a dull November day, and the prospect of sheds, ash-barrels, and old brooms was a gloomy one; but the whole back of the house glowed with the red tendrils of the hardy vine that clung to and covered the dingy bricks with a royal mantle, as if eager to cheer the eyes and hearts of all who looked. It preached a little sermon of courage, aspiration, and content to those who had the skill to read it, and bade them see how, springing from the scanty soil of that back yard full of the commonest objects, the humblest

work, it set its little creepers in the crannies of the stone, and struggled up to find the sun and air, till it grew strong and beautiful,--making the blank wall green in summer, glorious in autumn, and a refuge in winter, when it welcomed the sparrows to the shelter of its branches where the sun lay warmest.

Jessie loved this beautiful neighbor, and had enjoyed it all that summer,-- the first she ever spent in the hot city. She felt the grace its greenness gave to all it touched, and half unconsciously imitated it in trying to be brave and bright, as she also climbed up from the dismal place where she seemed shut away from everything lovely, till she was beginning to discover that the blue sky was over all, the sun still shone for her, and heaven's fresh air kissed her cheeks as kindly as ever. Many a night she had leaned from the high window when Laura was asleep, dreaming innocent dreams, living over her short past, or trying to look into the future bravely and trustfully. The little vine had felt warmer drops than rain or dew fall on it when things went badly, had heard whispered prayers when the lonely child asked the Father of the fatherless for help and comfort, had peeped in to see her sleeping peacefully when the hard hour was over, and been the first to greet her with a tap on the window-pane as she woke full of new hope in the morning. It seemed to know all her

moods and troubles, to be her friend and confidante, and now came with help like a fairy godmother when our Cinderella wanted to be fine for the little ball.

"Just the thing! Why didn't I think of it? So bright and delicate and becoming? It will last better than flowers; and no one can think I'm extravagant, since it costs nothing."

As she spoke, Jessie was gathering long sprays of the rosy vine, with its glossy leaves so beattifully shaded that it was evident Jack Frost had done his best for it. Going to her glass, she fastened a wreath of the smallest leaves about her head, set a cluster of larger ones in her bosom, and then surveyed herself with girlish pleasure, as well she might; for the effect of the simple decoration was charming. Quite satisfied now, she tied on her cloud and slipped away without waking Laura, little dreaming what good fortune the ivy spray was to bring them both.

She found the children prancing with impatience to begin their ballet, much excited by the music, gaslight, and gay dresses, which made it seem like "a truly ball." All welcomed Jessie, and she soon forgot the cheap slippers, mended gloves, and old dress, as she gayly led her troop through the pretty dance with so much grace and skill that the admiring mammas who lined the walls declared it was the sweetest thing they ever saw.

"Who is that little person?" asked one of the few gentlemen who hovered about the doorways.

His hostess told Jessie's story in a few words, and was surprised to hear him say in a satisfied tone,--

"I'm glad she is poor. I want her head, and now there is some chance of getting it."

"My dear Mr. Vane, what do you mean?" asked the lady, laughing.

"I came to study young faces; I want one for a picture, and that little girl with the red leaves is charming. Please present me."

"No use; you may ask for her hand by-and-by, if you like, but not for her head. She is very proud, and never would consent to sit as a model, I'm sure."

"I think I can manage it, if you will kindly give me a start."

"Very well. The children are just going down to supper, and Miss Delano will rest. You can make your bold proposal now, if you dare."

A moment later, as she stood watching the little ones troop away, Jessie found herself bowing to the tall gentleman, who begged to know what he could bring her with as much interest as if she had been the finest lady in the room. Of course she chose ice-cream, and slipped into a corner to rest her tired feet, preferring the deserted parlor to the noisy dining-room,--not being quite sure where she belonged now.

Mr. Vane brought her a salver full of the dainties girls best love, and drawing up a table began to eat and talk in such a simple, comfortable way that Jessie could not feel shy, but was soon quite at her ease. She knew that he was a famous artist, and longed to tell him about poor Laura, who admired his pictures so much and would have enjoyed every moment of this chance interview. He was not a very young man, nor a handsome one, but he had a genial face, and the friendly manners which are so charming; and in ten minutes Jessie was chatting freely, quite unconscious that the artist was studying her in a mirror all the while. They naturally talked of the children, and after praising the pretty dance Mr. Vane quietly added,--

"I've been trying--to find a face among them for a picture I'm doing; but the little dears are all too young, and I must look elsewhere for a model for my wood-nymph."

"Are models hard to find?" asked Jessie, eating her ice with the relish of a girl who does not often taste it.

"What I want is very hard to find. I can get plenty of beggar-girls, but this must be a refined face, young and blooming, but with poetry in it; and that does not come without a different training from any my usual models get. It will be difficult to suit me, for I'm in a hurry and don't know where to look," -
-which last sentence was not quite true, for the long glass showed him exactly what he wanted.

"I help Mademoiselle with her classes, and she has pupils of all ages; perhaps you could find some one there."

Jessie looked so interested that the artist felt that he had begun well, and ventured a step further as he passed the cake-basket for the third time.

"You are very kind; but the trouble there is, that I fear none of the young ladies would consent to sit to me if I dared to ask them. I will confide to you that I have seen a head which quite suits me; but I fear I cannot get it. Give me your advice, please. Should you think this pretty creature would be offended, if I made the request most respectfully?"

"No, indeed; I should think she would be proud to help with one of your pictures, sir. My sister thinks they are very lovely; and we kept one of them when we had to sell all the rest," said Jessie, in her eager, frank way.

"That was a beautiful compliment, and I am proud of it. Please tell her so, with my thanks. Which was it?"

"The woman's head,--the sad, sweet one people call a Madonna. We call it Mother, and love it very much, for Laura says it is like our mother. I never saw her, but my sister remembers the dear face very well."

Jessie's eyes dropped, as if tears were near; and Mr. Vane said, in a voice which showed he understood and shared her feeling,--

"I am very glad that anything of mine has been a comfort to you. I thought of my own mother when I painted that picture years ago; so you see you read it truly, and gave it the right name. Now, about the other head; you think I may venture to propose the idea to its owner, do you?"

"Why not, sir? She would be very silly to refuse, I think."

"Then you wouldn't be offended if asked to sit in this way?"

"Oh, no. I've sat for Laura many a time, and she says I make a very good model. But then, she only paints simple little things that I am fit for."

"That is just what I want to do. Would you mind asking the young lady for me? She is just behind you."

Jessie turned with a start, wondering who had come in; but all she saw was her own curious face in the mirror, and Mr. Vane's smiling one above it.

"Do you mean me?" she cried, so surprised and pleased and half ashamed that she could only blush and laugh and look prettier than ever.

"Indeed I do. Mrs. Murray thought the request would annoy you; but I fancied you would grant it, you wore such a graceful little garland, and seemed so interested in the pictures here."

"It is only a bit of ivy, but so pretty I wanted to wear it, as I had nothing else," said the girl, glad that her simple ornament found favor in such eyes.

"It is most artistic, and caught my eye at once. I said to myself, 'That is the head I want, and I must secure it if possible.' Can I?" asked Mr. Vane, smiling persuasively as he saw what a frank and artless young person he had to deal with.

"With pleasure, if Laura doesn't mind. I'll ask her, and if she is willing I shall be very proud to have even my wreath in a famous picture," answered Jessie, so full of innocent delight at being thus honored that it was a pretty sight to see.

"A thousand thanks! Now I can exult over Mrs. Murray, and get my palette ready. When can we begin? As your sister is an invalid and cannot come to my studio with you, perhaps you will allow me to make my sketch at your

own house," said Mr. Vane, as pleased with his success as only a perplexed artist could be.

"Did Mrs. Murray tell you about us?" asked Jessie quickly, as her smiles faded away and the proud look came into her face; for she was sure their misfortunes were known, since he spoke of poor Laura's health.

"A little," began the new friend, with a sympathetic glance.

"I know models are paid for sitting; did you wish to do it with me because I'm poor?" asked Jessie, with an irrepressible frown and a glance at the thrice-cleaned dress and the neatly mended gloves.

Mr. Vane knew what thorn pricked the sensitive little girl, and answered in his friendliest tone,--

"I never thought of such a thing. I wanted you to help me, because I am poor in what artists so much need,--real grace and beauty. I hoped you would allow me to give your sister a copy of the sketch as a token of my gratitude for your great kindness."

The frown vanished and the smile returned as the soft answer turned away Jessie's wrath and made her hasten to say penitently,--

"I was very rude; but I haven't learned to be humble yet, and often forget that I am poor. Please come to us any time. Laura will enjoy seeing you work, and be delighted with anything you give her. So shall I, though I don't deserve it."

"I won't punish you by painting the frown that quite frightened me just now, but do my best to keep the happy face, and so heap coals of fire on your head. They won't burn any more than the pretty red leaves that brought me this good fortune," answered the artist, seeing that his peace was made.

"I'm so glad I wore them!" and as if trying to make amends for her little flash of

temper, Jessie told him about the ivy, and how she loved it,-- unconsciously betraying more of her pathetic little story than she knew, and increasing her hearer's interest in his new model.

The children came back in riotous spirits, and Jessie was called to lead the revels again. But now her heart was as light as her heels; for she had something pleasant to think of,--a hope of help for Laura, and the memory of kind words to make hard duties easier. Mr. Vane soon slipped away, promising to come the next day; and at eight o'clock Jessie ran home to tell her sister the good news, and to press the little wreath which had served her so well.

With the sanguine spirit of girlhood, she felt sure that something delightful would happen, and built fine castles in the air for her sister, with a small corner for herself, where she could watch Laura bloom into a healthy woman and a great artist. The desire of Jessie's heart was to earn enough money to enable them to spend a month or two at the seashore when summer came, as that was the surest cure for Laura's weak nerves and muscles. She had cherished the wild idea of being a ballet-girl, as dancing was her delight; but every one frowned upon that plan, and her own refined nature told her that it was not the life for a young girl. Mr. Vane's request for her head suggested a splendid hope; and after getting angry with him for hinting at her being a model, she suddenly decided to try it,--with the charming inconsistency of her sex. The more she thought of it, the better she liked the idea, and resolved to ask her new friend all about it, fondly hoping that much money could be made in this way.

She said nothing to her sister, but while she sat patiently to Mr. Vane when he came next day, she asked many questions; and though somewhat discouraged by his replies, confided to him her hopes and begged his advice. Being a wise man as well as a good and kindly one, he saw at once that this life would not be safe for the pretty, impulsive, and tenderly reared girl, left so unprotected in a world full of trials and temptations. So he told her it would not do, except so far as she would allow him to make several studies of her head in various characters and pay for them.

She consented, and though much disappointed found some consolation in hoarding a part of the handsome sum so earned for the desire of her heart.

The artist seemed in no haste to finish his work, and for some weeks came often to the sittings in that quiet room; for it grew more and more attractive to him, and while he painted the younger sister's changeful face he studied the beautiful nature of the elder and learned to love it. But no one guessed that secret for a long time; and Jessie was so busy racking her brain for a way to earn more money that she was as blind and deaf to much that went on before her as if she had been a wooden dummy.

Suddenly, when she least expected it, help came, and in such a delightful way that she long remembered the little episode with girlish satisfaction. One day as she sat wearily waiting till the dressing-room was cleared of maids and children after the dancing-class was over, a former friend came sauntering up to her, saying in the tone which always nettled Jessie,--

"You poor thing! aren't you tired to death trying to teach these stupid babies?"

"No; I love to dance, and we had new figures to-day. See! isn't this pretty?" and Jessie, who knew her own skill and loved to display it, twirled away as lightly as if her feet were not aching with two hours of hard work.

"Lovely! I do wish I ever could learn to keep time and not jerk and bounce. Being plump is a dreadful trial," sighed Fanny Fletcher, as Jessie came back beaming and breathless.

"Perhaps I can teach you. I think of making this my profession since I must do something. Mademoiselle earns heaps of money by it," she said, sitting down to rest, resolved not to be ashamed of her work or to let Fanny pity her,

"I wish you could teach me, for I know I shall disgrace myself at the Kirmess. You've heard about it, of course? So sorry you can't take a part, for it's going to be great fun and very splendid. I am in the Hungarian dance, and it's one of the hardest; but the dress is lovely, and I would be in it.

Mamma is the matron of it; so I had my way, though I know the girls don't want me, and the boys make fun of me. Just see if this isn't the queerest step you ever beheld!"

Fanny started bravely across the wide smooth floor, with a stamp, a slide, and a twirl which was certainly odd, but might have been lively and graceful if she had not unfortunately been a very plump, awkward girl, with no more elasticity than a feather-bed. Jessie found it impossible not to laugh when Fanny ended her display with a sprawl upon the floor, and sat rubbing her elbows in an attitude of despair.

"I know that dance! It is the tzardas, and I can show you how it should be done. Jump up and try it with me!" she said good-naturedly, running to help her friend up, glad to have a partner of her own size for once.

Away they went, but soon stopped; for Fanny could not keep step, and Jessie pulled and stamped and hummed in vain.

"Do it alone; then I can see how it goes, and manage better next time," panted the poor girl, dropping down upon the velvet seat which ran round the hall.

Mademoiselle had come in and watched them for a moment. She saw at once what was needed, and as Mrs. Fletcher was one of her best patrons, she was glad to oblige the oldest daughter; so she went to the piano and struck up the proper air just as Jessie, with one arm on her hip, the other on the shoulder of an invisible partner, went down the hall with a martial stamp, a quick slide, and a graceful turn, in perfect time to the stirring music that made her nerves tingle and her feet fly. To and fro, round and round, with all manner of graceful gestures, intricate steps, and active bounds went the happy girl, quite carried away by the music and motion of the

pastime she loved so much.

Fanny clapped her hands with admiration, and Mademoiselle cried, "Bien, tres bien, charmante, ma cherie!" as she paused at last, rosy and smiling, with one hand on her heart and the other at her temple with the salute that closed the dance.

"I must learn it! Do come and give me lessons at our house. I called for Maud and must go now. Will you come, Jessie? I'll be glad to pay you if you don't mind. I hate to be laughed at; and I know if some one would just help me alone I should do as well as the rest, for Professor Ludwig raves at us all."

Fanny seemed in such a sad strait, and Jessie sympathized so heartily with her, that she could not refuse a request which flattered her vanity and tempted her with a prospect of some addition to the "Sister-fund," as she called her little savings. So she graciously consented, and after a few laborious lessons prospered so well that her grateful pupil proposed to several other unsuccessful dancers in the set to invite Jessie to the private rehearsals held in various parlors as the festival drew near.

Some of these young people knew Jessie Delano, had missed the bright girl, and gladly welcomed her back when, after much persuasion, she agreed to go and help them with the difficult figures of the tzardas. Once among them she felt in her element, and trained the awkward squad so well that Professor Ludwig complimented them on their improvement at the public rehearsals, and raved no more, to the great delight of the timid damsels, who lost their wits when the fiery little man shouted and wrung his hands over their mistakes.

The young gentlemen needed help also, as several of them looked very much like galvanized grasshoppers in their efforts to manage long legs or awkward elbows. Jessie willingly danced with them, and showed them how to move with grace and spirit, and handle their partners less like dolls and more like peasant maidens with

whom the martial Hungarians were supposed to be disporting themselves at the fair. Merry meetings were these; and all enjoyed them, as young people do whatever is lively, dramatic, and social. Every one was full of the brilliant Kirmess, which was the talk of the city, and to which

every one intended to go as actor or spectator. Jessie was sadly tempted to spend three of her cherished dollars for a ticket, and perhaps would have done so if there had been any one to take care of her. Laura could not go, and Mr. Vane was away; no other friend appeared, and no one remembered to invite her, so she bravely hid her girlish longing, and got all the pleasure out of the rehearsals that she could.

At the last of these, which was a full-dress affair at Fanny's house, something happened which not only tried Jessie's temper sorely, but brought her a reward for many small sacrifices. So much dancing was very hard upon her slippers, the new pair were worn out long ago, and a second pair were in a dangerous condition; but Jessie hoped that they would last that evening, and then she would indulge in better ones with what Fanny would pay her. She hated to take it, but her salary at Mademoiselle's was needed at home; all she could spare from other sources was sacredly kept for Laura's jaunt, and only now and then did the good little girl buy some very necessary article for herself. She was learning to be humble, to love work, and be grateful for her small wages for her sister's sake; and while she hid her trials, withstood her temptations, and bravely tugged away at her hard tasks, the kind Providence, who teaches us the sweetness of adversity, was preparing a more beautiful and helpful surprise than any she could plan or execute.

That night all were much excited, and great was the energy displayed as the scarlet, blue, and silver couples went through the rapid figures with unusual spirit and success. The brass-heeled boots stamped in perfect time, the furred caps waved, and the braided jackets glittered as the gay troop swung to and fro or marched to the barbaric music of an impromptu band. Jessie looked on with such longing in her eyes that Fanny, who was ill with a bad cold, kindly begged her to take her place, as motion made her cough, and putting on the red and silver cap sent her joyfully away to lead them all.

The fun grew rather fast and furious toward the end, and when the dance broke up there lay in the middle of the floor a shabby little slipper, burst at the side, trodden down at the heel, and utterly demoralized as to the bow with a broken buckle in it. Such a disreputable little shoe was it that no one claimed it when one of the young men held it up on the point of his sword, exclaiming gayly,--

"Where is Cinderella? Here's her shoe, and it's quite time she had a new pair. Glass evidently doesn't wear well now-a-days."

They all laughed and looked about to find the shoeless foot. The girls with small feet displayed them readily; those less blessed hid them at once, and no Cinderella appeared to claim the old slipper. Jessie turned as red as her cap, and glanced imploringly at Fanny as she slipped through a convenient door and flew up-stairs, knowing that in a moment all would see that it must be hers, since the other girls wore red boots as a part of their costume.

Fanny understood; and though awkward and slow with her feet, she was kind-hearted and quick to spare her friend the mortification which a poor and proud girl could not help feeling at such a moment. The unfortunate slipper was flying from hand to hand as the youths indulged in a boyish game of ball to tease the laughing girls, who hastened to disclaim all knowledge of "the horrid thing."

"Please give it to me!" cried Fanny, trying to catch it, and glad Jessie was safe.

"No; Cinderella must come and put it on. Here's the Prince all ready to help her," said the finder of the shoe, holding it up.

"And here are lots of proud sisters ready to cut off their toes and heels if they could

only get on such a small slipper," added another young Mygar, enjoying the fun immensely.

"Listen, and let me tell you something. It's Jessie Delano's, and she has run away because she lost it. Don't laugh and make fun of it, because it was worn out in helping us. You all know what a hard time she has had, but you don't know how good and brave and patient she is, trying to help poor Laura and to earn her living. I asked her to teach me, and I shall pay her well for it, because I couldn't have gone on if she hadn't. If any of you feel a

as I do, and as sorry for her, you can show it in any kind way you please, for it must be dreadful to be so poor."

Fanny had spoken quickly, and at the last Words hid the tremble in her voice with a cough, being rather scared at what she had done on the impulse of the moment. But it was a true impulse, and the generous young hearts were quick to answer it. The old slipper was respectfully handed to her with many apologies and various penitent suggestions. None were adopted just then, however, for Fanny ran off to find Jessie with her things on waiting--for a chance to slip away unseen. No persuasions would keep her to supper; and at last, with many thanks, she was allowed to go, while Fanny returned to lay plans with her guests as they disturbed their digestions with lobster salad, ice-cream, and strong coffee.

Feeling more than ever like Cinderella as she hurried out into the winter night, leaving all the good times behind her, Jessie stood waiting for a car on the windy street-corner, with the ragged slippers under her arm, tears of weariness and vexation in her eyes, and a resentful feeling against an unjust fate lying heavy at her heart. The glimpses of her old gay, easy life, which these rehearsals had given her, made the real hardship and loneliness of her present life all the more irksome, and that night she felt as if she could not bear it much longer. She longed with all a girl's love of gayety to go to the Kirmess, and no one thought to invite her. She could not go alone even if she yielded to temptation and spent her own money. Laura would have to hire a carriage if she ventured to try it; so it was impossible, for six or seven dollars was a fortune to the poor girls now. To have been one of the happy creatures who were to take part in it, to dance on the green in a dainty costume to the music

of a full band,--to see and do and enjoy all the delights of those two enchanting evenings, would have filled Jessie's cup to overflowing. But since she might as well cry for the moon she tried to get some comfort out of imagining it all as she rumbled home in a snowstorm, and cried herself to sleep after giving Laura a cheerful account of the rehearsal, omitting the catastrophe.

The sun shone next morning, hope woke again, and as she dressed Jessie sung to keep her heart up, still trusting that some one would remember her before the day was over. As she opened her windows the sparrows welcomed her with shrill chirpings, and the sun turned the snow-covered vine to a glittering network very beautiful to see as it hung like a veil of lace over the

dingy wall. Jessie smiled as she saw it, while taking a long breath of the keen air, feeling cheered and refreshed by these familiar comforters; then with a brave, bright glance up at the clear blue sky she went away to the day's duties, little guessing what pleasant surprises were on their way to reward her for the little sacrifices which were teaching her strength, patience, and courage for greater ones by-and-by.

All the morning she listened eagerly for the bell, but nothing came; and at two o'clock she went away to the dancing-class, saying to herself with a sigh,--

"Every one is so busy, it is no wonder I'm forgotten. I shall hear about the fun in the papers, and try to be contented with that."

Though she never felt less like dancing, she was very patient with her little pupils, and when the lesson was over sat resting a moment, with her head still full of the glories of the Kirmess. Suddenly Mademoiselle came to her, and in a few kind words gave her the first of the pleasant surprises by offering her a larger salary, an older class, and many commendations for her skill and faithfulness. Of course she gratefully accepted the welcome offer, and hurried home to tell Laura, forgetting her heavy heart, tired feet, and disappointed hopes.

At her own door the second surprise stood waiting for her, in the person of Mrs. Fletcher's servant with a large box and a note from Miss Fanny. How she ever got herself and her parcel up the long stairs Jessie never knew, she was in such a frantic hurry to see what that vast box could contain. She startled her sister by bursting into the room breathless, flushed, and beaming, with the mysterious cry of,--

"Scissors! quick, the scissors!"

Off went cords and papers, up flew the cover, and with a shriek of rapture Jessie saw the well-known Hungarian costume lying there before her. What

it all meant she could not guess, till she tore open the note and read these delightful words:--

DEAR JESS,--My cold is worse, and the doctor won't let me go to-night. Isn't it dreadful? Our dance will be ruined unless you will take my place. I know you will to oblige us, and have a lovely time. Every one will be glad, you do it so much better than I can. My dress will fit you, with tucks and reefs here and there; and the hoots won't be much too large, for though I'm fat I have small feet, thank goodness! Mamma will call for you at seven, and bring you safely home; and you must come early to-morrow and tell me all about it.

In the small box you will find a little token of our gratitude to you for your kindness in helping us all so much. Yours ever,

FAN.

As soon as Jessie could get her breath and recover from this first delightful shock, she opened the dainty parcel carefully tied up with pink ribbons. It proved to be a crystal slipper, apparently full of rosebuds; but under the flowers lay five-and-twenty shining gold dollars. A little card with these words was tucked in one corner, as if, with all their devices to make the offering as delicate and pretty as possible, the givers feared to offend:--

"We return to our dear Princess the glass slipper which she lost at the ball, full of thanks and good wishes."

If the kind young persons who sent the fanciful gift could have seen how it was received, their doubts would soon have been set at rest; for Jessie laughed and cried as she told the story, counted the precious coins, and filled the pretty shoe with water that the buds might keep fresh for Laura. Then, while the needles flew and the gay garments were fitted, the happy voices talked and the sisters rejoiced together over this unexpected pleasure as only loving girls could do.

"The sweetest part of all the splendid surprise is that they remembered me just at the busiest time, and thanked me in such a lovely way. I shall keep that glass slipper all my life, if I can, to remind me not to despair; for just when everything seemed darkest, all this good luck came," said Jessie, with ecstatic skips as she clanked the brass heels of her boots and thought of the proud moment when she would join in the tzardas before all Boston.

Gentle Laura rejoiced and sympathized heartily, sewed like a busy bee, and sent her happy sister away at seven o'clock with her sweetest smile, never letting her suspect what tender hopes and fears were hidden in her own heart, what longing and disappointment made her days doubly sad and lonely, or how very poor a consolation all the glories of the Kirmess would be for the loss of a friend who had grown very near and dear to her.

No need to tell the raptures of that evening to little Jessie, who enjoyed every moment, played her part well, and was brought home at midnight ready to begin all over again, so inexhaustible is youth's appetite for pleasure.

To her great surprise, Laura was up and waiting to welcome her, with a face so full of a new and lovely happiness that Jessie guessed at once some good fortune had come to her also. Yes, Laura's well-earned reward and beautiful surprise had arrived at last; and she told it all in a few words as she held out her arms exclaiming,--

"He has come back! He loves me, and I am so happy! Dear little sister, all your hard times are over now, and you shall have a home again."

So the dreams came true, as they sometimes do even in this work-a-day world of ours, when the dreamers strive as well as hope, and earn their rewards.

Laura had a restful summer at the seaside, with a stronger arm than Jessie's to lean upon, and more magical medicine to help her back to health than any mortal doctor could prescribe. Jessie danced again with a light heart,--for pleasure, not for pay,-- and found the new life all the sweeter for

the trials of the old one. In the autumn there was a quiet wedding, before three very happy people sailed away to Italy, the artist's heaven on earth.

"No roses for me," said Jessie, smiling at herself in the mirror as she fastened a spray of rosy ivy-leaves in the bosom of her fresh white gown that October morning. "I'll be true to my old friend; for it helped me in my dark days, and now it shall rejoice with me in my bright ones, and go on teaching me to climb bravely and patiently toward the lig