

CHAPTER II - GRAN'PA JIM

Beverly is an old town and not especially progressive. It lies nearly two miles from a railway station and has little attractiveness for strangers. Beverly contains several beautiful old residences, however, built generations ago and still surrounded by extensive grounds where the trees and shrubbery are now generally overgrown and neglected.

One of these fine old places Miss Stearne rented for her boarding school; another, quite the most imposing residence in the town, had been leased some two years previous to the time of this story by Colonel James Weatherby, whose family consisted of his widowed daughter, Mrs. Burrows, and his grandchild, Mary Louise Burrows. Their only servants were an old negro, Uncle Eben, and his wife, Aunt Polly, who were Beverly bred and had been hired when the Colonel first came to town and took possession of the stately Vandeventer mansion.

Colonel Weatherby was a man of exceptionally distinguished appearance, tall and dignified, with courtly manners and an air of prosperity that impressed the simple villagers with awe. His snow-white hair and piercing dark eyes, his immaculate dress upon all occasions, the whispered comments on his ample deposits in the local bank, all contributed to render him remarkable among the three or four hundred ordinary inhabitants of Beverly, who, after his two years' residence among them, scarcely knew more of him than is above related. For Colonel Weatherby was an extremely reserved man and seldom deigned to exchange conversation with his neighbors. In truth, he had nothing in common with them and even when he walked out with Mary Louise he merely acknowledged the greeting of those he met by a dignified nod of his stately head.

With Mary Louise, however, he would converse fluently and with earnestness, whether at home during the long evenings or on their frequent walks through the country, which were indulged in on Saturdays and holidays during the months that school was in session and much more often during vacations. The Colonel owned a modest automobile which he kept in the stable and only drove on rare occasions, although one of Uncle Eben's duties was to keep the car in apple-pie order. Colonel Weatherby loved best to walk and Mary Louise enjoyed their tramps together because Gran'pa Jim always told her so many interesting things and was such a charming companion. He often developed a strain of humor in the girl's society and would relate anecdotes that aroused in her spontaneous laughter, for she possessed a keen sense of the ludicrous. Yes, Gran'pa Jim was really funny, when in the mood, and as jolly a comrade as one would wish.

He was fond of poetry, too, and the most severe trial Mary Louise was forced to endure was when he carried a book of poems in his pocket and insisted on reading from it while they rested in a shady nook by the roadside or on the bank of the little river that flowed near by the town. Mary Louise had no soul for

poetry, but she would have endured far greater hardships rather than forfeit the genial companionship of Gran'pa Jim.

It was only during these past two years that she had come to know her grandfather so intimately and to become as fond of him as she was proud. Her earlier life had been one of so many changes that the constant shifting had rather bewildered her. First she remembered living in a big city house where she was cared for by a nurse who was never out of sight or hearing. There it was that "Mamma Bee"--Mrs. Beatrice Burrows-- appeared to the child at times as a beautiful vision and often as she bent over her little daughter for a good-night kiss the popular society woman, arrayed in evening or ball costume, would seem to Mary Louise like a radiant angel descended straight from heaven.

She knew little of her mother in those days, which were quite hazy in memory because she was so young. The first change she remembered was an abrupt flitting from the splendid city house to a humble cottage in a retired village. There was no maid now, nor other servant whatever. Mamma Bee did the cooking and sweeping, her face worn and anxious, while Gran'pa Jim walked the floor of the little sitting room day by day, only pausing at times to read to Mary Louise stories from her nursery books.

This life did not last very long--perhaps a year or so--and then they were in a big hotel in another city, reached after a long and tiresome railway journey. Here the girl saw little of her grandfather, for a governess came daily to teach Mary Louise to read and write and to do sums on a pretty slate framed in silver. Then, suddenly, in dead of night, away they whisked again, traveling by train until long after the sun was up, when they came to a pretty town where they kept house again.

There were servants, this time, and horses and carriages and pretty clothes for Mary Louise and Mamma Bee. The little girl was sent to a school just a block away from her home. She remembered Miss Jenkins well, for this teacher made much of her and was so kind and gentle that Mary Louise progressed rapidly in her studies.

But the abrupt changes did not end here. Mary Louise came home from school one afternoon and found her dear mother sobbing bitterly as she clung around the neck of Gran'pa Jim, who stood in the middle of the room as still as if he had been a marble statue. Mary Louise promptly mingled her tears with those of her mother, without knowing why, and then there was a quick "packing-up" and a rush to the railway again.

Next they were in the house of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Conant, very pleasant people who seemed to be old friends of Mamma Bee and Gran'pa Jim. It was a cosy house, not big and pretentious, and Mary Louise liked it. Peter Conant and Gran'pa Jim had many long talks together, and it was here that the child first heard her grandfather called "Colonel." Others might have called him that before,

but she had not heard them. Mrs. Conant was very deaf and wore big spectacles, but she always had a smile on her face and her voice was soft and pleasing.

After a few days Mamma Bee told her daughter she was going to leave her in the care of the Conants for a time, while she traveled to a foreign country with Gran'pa Jim. The girl was surprised at being abandoned but accepted her fate quietly when it was explained that she was to go to school while living with the Conants, which she could not do if she was traveling with her mother and grandfather, who were making this arrangement for the girl's best good.

Three years Mary Louise lived with the Conants and had little to complain of. Mr. Conant was a lawyer and was at his office all day, while Mrs. Conant was very kind to the girl and looked after her welfare with motherly care.

At last, quite unexpectedly, Mary Louise's trunk was packed and she was taken to the station to meet a train on which were her mother and grandfather. They did not leave the cars except to shake hands with the Conants and thank them for their care of Mary Louise. A moment later the train bore away the reunited family to their new home in Beverly.

Mary Louise now found she must "get acquainted" with Mamma Bee and Gran'pa Jim all over again, for during these last three years she had developed so fast in mind and body that her previous knowledge of her relatives seemed like a hazy dream. The Colonel also discovered a new granddaughter, to whom he became passionately attached. For two years now they had grown together until they were great friends and cronies.

As for Mrs. Burrows, she seemed to have devoted her whole life to her father, the Colonel. She had lost much of her former beauty and had become a thin, pale woman with anxious eyes and an expectant and deprecating air, as if always prepared to ward off a sudden blow. Her solicitude for the old Colonel was almost pathetic and while he was in her presence she constantly hovered around him, doing little things for his comfort which he invariably acknowledged with his courtly bow and a gracious word of thanks.

It was through her association with this cultured old gentleman that Mary Louise had imbibed a certain degree of logic and philosophy unknown to many girls of fifteen. He taught her consideration for others as the keynote of happiness, yet he himself declined to mingle with his fellow men. He abhorred sulking and was always cheerful and pleasant in his home circle, yet when others approached him familiarly he resented it with a frown. He taught his granddaughter to be generous to the poor and supplied her freely with money for charity, yet he personally refused all demands upon him by churches or charitable societies.

In their long talks together he displayed an intimate acquaintance with men and affairs, but never referred in any way to his former life.

"Are you really a colonel?" Mary Louise once asked him.

"Men call me so," he replied, but there was a tone in his voice that warned the girl not to pursue the subject further. She knew his moods almost as well as her mother did.

The Colonel was very particular as to dress. He obtained his own clothing from a New York tailor and took a keen interest in the gowns of his daughter and of Mary Louise, his taste in female apparel being so remarkable that they were justly considered the best dressed women in Beverly. The house they were living in contained an excellent library and was furnished in a quaint, old-fashioned manner that was very appealing to them all. Mary Louise sincerely hoped there would be no more changes in their lives and that they might continue to live in Beverly for many years to come.