

# Miss Sunbonnet

By Susanne Glenn

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A neat, white picket fence stretched between the two gardens.

The gardens were as equal in excellence as two gardens very well can be; perhaps the garden of the little white cottage may have contained a few more flowers than the garden of the big white house. But even that was a question.

Jeannette Perry sat in her tiny grape arbor thinking hard. She was thinking about James Harper. How could anyone, knowing the circumstances, sit in the Perry garden and not think of James Harper?

"Good morning, Miss Sunbonnet," he had said on the very first morning she ventured into the garden, as he endeavored to get a glimpse at the face under the faded pink folds.

When the girl lifted her head, the man gave a start of astonishment at the steady, questioning brown eyes and serious, sweet lips.

"I—I beg your pardon," he stammered. "I thought you were a child." "I am glad you are neighborly," she answered simply, "since our gardens adjoin. Perhaps you will not mind showing me how to do things? I never made a garden before."

"If only you will let me," he cried eagerly. So it came about that James Harper worked in the Perry garden as much as he did in his own, and every plant, every flower spoke loudly of his presence.

Jeannette was very happy in her Eden. While she dug in the soft earth on her side of the trim picket fence, her heart seemed to grow unaccountably mellow and receptive. As she planted the seeds and tended the young plants at James' direction, other invisible seeds were sown that



"I'm Glad You Are Neighborly."

produced roses in her cheeks and music in her voice.

"You are a great gardener, Miss Sunbonnet," James often observed, "and you seem to grow with it. I am getting jealous; you are beating me!"

"It is because I love everything so—they cannot help growing for me!" "You are a little girl, after all," he said, smiling indulgently.

And still Jeannette did not understand, did not comprehend what it all meant, until Lucille Emerson came to the big white house.

Lucille was tall and studiously graceful. She wore wonderful, clinging gowns, and arranged her hair in a manner not conducive to the wearing of sunbonnets. She monopolized James, she rode his horse, she demanded his attention, and she called him "Jimmie" with the utmost freedom.

Jeannette sat in her little arbor and thought her poor, unhappy thoughts, and fought for strength to go on with her ordinary, colorless living.

Two persons occupied the larger arbor in the garden of the big white house. After a comfortable fashion they sometimes had when together, each was interested in a bit of reading.

After a time the girl closed the book in her lap and looked at her unconscious companion.

"Jimmie," she said presently, "I've made a discovery about you, and I hope you are not going to deny it!" Harper's smile was an amused one. He always found this girl's unexpectedness entertaining.

"So?" "You are interested in this young person next door, and I want you to tell me about her."

The "young person next door" clasped her hands over her thumping heart, dreading to hear his answer, and yet not daring to disclose herself.

"She is a very nice young person, Lucille," said James calmly. "Nice? I should hardly think that the word, Jimmie. I—I do not know just the word to describe her, but it certainly is not 'nice'!" "It is a little difficult, Lucille, and I do not know that there is any occasion for you to worry your pretty head about it."

"Sugar-coated. Like all your sarcasm! Well, there just is occasion, my boy, where you are concerned. Tell me, how came you to be such friends—and do you really care?" "We are friends because our gardens adjoin, and because country people have a way of getting acquainted over the garden fence. And of course I like her, because, as I told you, she is a nice little girl."

"But that is not the point. Do you care enough to forget that she is in no possible way suited to you?" "One cannot forget what one never knew, dear child."

"But, Jimmie, you are such a scholar, so learned that you discomfort even me. I can discover nothing in which she is really posted."

"You know very little about her, Lucille. I have never known of her reading anything I was not interested in, at least."

"And she is quiet and dependent, and afraid of things, where you have always admired a fearless woman. I dare say she never rode a horse in all her life."

"I believe she is a bit nervous about horses," he admitted with his indulgent smile. "Oh, I see there is not use in talking. Facts, however glaring, have no effect upon a man in love."

"So that is what all this means? You think I am in love with Miss Perry? I thought you more discriminating, dear second-cousin Lucille! I merely like her very much, because, I repeat, she is a very nice girl!"

"I think you expressed it better this morning when you called her Miss Sunbonnet."

"Still, remember there is something under the bonnet," advised James, walking away with provoking good humor.

Jeannette in her arbor, sat in motionless misery.

"It is all true," she whispered; "he admires a woman who is capable and bright and fearless, and I am a plain, stupid little thing afraid of my own shadow. Lucille loves him—and he loves her only he doesn't understand it yet, any more than I did until she came and set fire to my very heart."

Until long after darkness had settled, she sat motionless with her thoughts.

"Now when it is too late I have overcome one of my deficiencies," she thought bitterly as she sat fearlessly in the breathless night.

Across the sky streaked jagged gleams of lightning. Thunder crashed nearer and nearer. Then rain dashed into the frail shelter. But she smiled contemptuously, defiantly.

"Whatever makes my little Miss Sunbonnet so pale?" inquired Harper next morning as he crossed into the neighboring garden.

"I am not pale," denied Jeannette, flushing uncomfortably. "And I wish you would call me by my name; that other sounds too foolish, really!"

James wondered vaguely. But before he could investigate this new turn of affairs, Lucille called from the porch that she was ready for her ride.

"You'd better look out for Jet this morning," he cautioned as she mounted the uneasy black horse. "She is nervous as a witch."

"You must know I am utterly unafraid of a horse," answered the girl loud enough for Jeannette to hear. "A few miles of this fine, open road will quiet her, never fear."

Jeannette shivered as Jet pranced out of the gate.

"I could never ride like that," she said aloud. Then she saw James' admiring glance toward the graceful girl on the flying horse, and hastened to the back of her garden.

An hour later Jeannette was working with the roses at the front gate. A clatter of hoofs told her of the rider's return. But why was Lucille clinging so desperately to Jet's neck, her white face half concealed by her loosened hair and the horse's flying mane?

Jet was plunging wildly, uncontrollably. The moment she comprehended, Jeannette flashed through the gate.

"Nothing must happen to Lucille," she sobbed frantically. "He loves her; he loves her!"

Wildly she waved her bonnet before the oncoming horse. As Jet slackened and half turned, Jeannette clutched the loosened bridle, the horse swung round and stopped, evidently weary from her run. Lucille slipped limply to the grass, unharmed.

"Jeannette, Jeannette," cried Harper, rushing to her and loosening the bridle from her fingers.

At sight of her white cheeks he took her suddenly in his arms.

"You are sure you are not hurt?" he cried sharply. "Oh, Jeannette, what made you do it? You might have been killed!"

"I wanted to save Lucille," she whispered.

James Harper looked at her with eyes through which his heart spoke. Color returned to her pale cheeks, and at sight of it he stooped and kissed her tenderly, reverently.

"Precious little Miss Sunbonnet," he whispered.

Her Address, Please. Maud—I've just heard of a case where a man married a girl on his deathbed so she could have his millions when so he was gone. Could you love a girl like that?

Jack—That's just the kind of a girl I could love. What's her address?

Tired of it. Ancient Whale—I hate to be seeming to put on airs, but when one has swallowed a live man, held interior communication with him for three days and then—

Ancient Shark—Now stop always throwing up Jonah to us, will you?

## RURAL SCHOOLS

### Some Suggestions by the State Superintendent.

State Superintendent Brister and State Elementary School Inspector Frazier are preparing a bulletin on the rural school situation, particularly with reference to the matter of consolidation of schools and transportation of pupils. As an introduction to the bulletin Superintendent Brister has prepared a paper setting forth the reasons why the rural elementary schools are deserving of interest at this time and with the endeavor to focus attention thereon. In this connection he has set forth a program for the betterment of the rural schools. He makes no claim to originality in any of the features, but merely presents in somewhat definite form a suggestion for their improvement.

The most interesting phase of public school education in the state today, or rather that which is most deserving of interest, is the rural school. This statement is made advisedly and for the following reasons:

1. The rural school is an important factor in the larger problem of rural life. Without attempting to justify the use of the word "problem" in this connection, it may be said that the situation is sufficiently complex and involves a sufficient number of factors to warrant it.

It is generally agreed that many of the institutions peculiar to country life are on the decline, that the country church is weakening, the glamour is being lifted from the old-time country home, rural population is declining, and there is manifest a general decay of country life. The one fact of decreasing rural population and increasing city population gives rise to alarm and calls for serious inquiry into the cause. Thirty-seven counties in Tennessee show a smaller population in 1910 than in 1900. The total increase for the whole state during the decade was only 164,173, and 70 per cent of this small increase is credited to the four counties of the state having large cities. The cry of "back to the farm" is not without significance; it grows out of the realization on the part of thoughtful men of a serious condition. Whatever other hypotheses may be advanced as to the cause of the influx of population to the cities, it is certainly true that a large number of desirable inhabitants of the country are leaving their homes in order to secure proper educational advantages for their children.

The need of improvement in the school is universally felt. It must play a prominent part in all the activities inaugurated for the resuscitation of country life. To it, more than to any other single institution which functions for country life, we must look for the setting in motion of forces which will make for attractiveness and productiveness, which will produce a satisfying richness and fullness of life, and which will thus aid materially in the solution of the problem confronting us.

2. The rural school has been apparently neglected. The thought of educators has been primarily about another phase of educational work. It is not meant that they have intentionally neglected the rural school; indeed they have not really neglected it. But in Tennessee and throughout the country, according to recent utterances from prominent educators, the rural school has not been held definitely in consciousness; other educational agencies have occupied first place, and the interest in the rural school has been largely incidental. It is not too much to say that the chief concern of the leading educators of Tennessee for the last decade has been teaching training. It is true that the argument for teacher training agencies rested always on the needs of the rural schools—elementary schools—but the object was so great as to become almost an end in itself, and the ultimate purpose has been well

nigh obscured.

The attention and interest centered on this one point have produced results; and there is now in successful operation a creditable system of Normal schools. But the mere fact of their establishment does not improve the rural school; another, and a far step needs to be taken. Teachers must not only be prepared, but a place must be prepared for the teacher. The rural elementary school then must be brought into prominence, interest and attention must be focused thereon, for in the rural school lies our vital educational problem.

3. The rural elementary school has made comparatively little progress. It is universally agreed that it is the most backward of all our educational agencies. While city schools, Normal schools, colleges and universities have been going forward steadily, it has been marking time. It is true that some progress has been made, that the term has been slowly lengthened, teachers' salaries have shown some advance, the revenues have increased; but it needs no argument to demonstrate that it has not kept pace with other educational forces and is today lamentably lacking in efficiency and vitality. This is true, not only in Tennessee, but all over the country the same complaint is heard. The rural elementary school is not responding effectively to the demands made upon it, it is not functioning satisfactorily for rural life. The shortness of term, the poor salaries of teachers, the consequent inexperience and untrained teaching force, the inadequate supervision, the unsanitary school conditions, the small school unit, the isolation, the antiquated course of study, the general inefficiency—all are counts in the indictment which can be truthfully drawn against the rural elementary school.

It needs no argument to show that this rural school is of tremendous importance. The biggest part of our population is still in the country. If our state is to be educated it must be through this agency; if illiteracy is to be abolished, the larger share of the burden is to fall upon the rural school; if there is to be an intelligent electorate qualified to deal with the intricate problems of government and to meet the responsible duties of citizenship, there must be an efficient rural school. The greatest foe to progress, the biggest obstacle in the development of our state, is ignorance; the only destruction of the foe, the only way to remove the obstacle, is in the school. It must be resuscitated, and vitalized; the future of the state, its manhood and womanhood, depend upon it.

Here then, it must be insisted, in our vital educational problem, here is the educational agency

most deserving of the people's interest; here, if possible, we who happen to be in official lead today are determined to focus attention and cease not to call upon the men and women of all classes to come to our aid.

It should be borne in mind that this is not a matter that concerns merely the people who live in the country; but the urban population of the state is just as much involved. The cities cannot live to themselves; they draw much of their best citizenship from the country; their life is conditioned on the rural environment. So that we have no array of country against city when we aim to focus attention on the country school. We are holding up the city school to them, not as a model to be copied, but as indicating the educational advantages which their children ought to have; and we are urging that country boys and girls everywhere shall have educational opportunities equal to those enjoyed by their city cousins.

### Escapes an Awful Fate.

A thousand tongues could not express the gratitude of Mrs. J. E. Cox, of Joliet, Ill., for her wonderful deliverance from an awful fate. "Typhoid pneumonia had left me with a dreadful cough," she writes. "Sometimes I had such awful coughing spells I thought I would die. I could get no help from doctors' treatment or other medicines till I used Dr. King's New Discovery. But I owe my life to the wonderful remedy for I scarcely cough at all now." Quick and safe, it's the most reliable of all throat and lung medicines. Every bottle guaranteed, 50c and \$1.00. Trial bottle free at Patrick Drug Co.

### Boy Breaks Arm.

A Sunday's special from Milan says: Bryant Cunningham, aged 12, son of Wiley Cunningham of this place, while on a visit to relatives at Whitthorne, six miles east of here, accidentally fell out of a tree yesterday and broke his arm below the elbow. He was otherwise injured, but not seriously.

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are mosquitoes. As they sting they put deadly malarial germs in the blood. Then follow the icy chills and the fires of fever. The appetite flies and the strength fails; also malaria often paves the way for deadly typhoid. But Electric Bitters kill and cast out malarial germs from the blood; give you a fine appetite and renew your strength. "After long suffering," wrote Wm. Fretwell, of Lucama, N. C., "three bottles drove all the malaria from my system, and I've had good health ever since." Best for all stomach, liver and kidney ills. 50c at Patrick Drug Co.

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## THE Democrat

Huntingdon, Tennessee

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