

Mary Jane *Her Visit*

CHAPTER I

MARY JANE'S ARRIVAL

IT seemed to Mary Jane that some magic must have been at work to change the world during the night she slept on the train. All the country she knew had hills and valleys and many creeks and woods of pine trees. But when she woke up in the morning and peeped out of the window of her berth, she saw great wide fields and woods that seemed always far away. And the occasional creek that the train rumbled over was small and could be seen a long way off, coming across the fields toward the railroad. And

the roads! How funny they were! They came straight and white toward the train, each just exactly as smooth and as regular as the one before.

To be sure the country was pretty; yellow buttercups and bright blue flowers bloomed along the track and the fields looked fresh and green in the morning sun.

“I think I’m going to like it anyway, even if the hills are all smoothed out,” said Mary Jane as she looked at it thoughtfully, “and maybe I’d better put on my shoes and stockings.” She rummaged in the funny little hammock that hung over her window, found the shoes and stockings and put them on, and was just wondering if it was time to dress when she heard Dr. Smith’s voice outside.

“Yes, Porter, I’m awake,” he was saying, “and you may call the young lady.”

Before Mary Jane had had time to wonder who the “young lady” might be, there was a

great shaking of her curtain and the voice of the porter said, "Thirty minutes to Glen-ville!"

Quick as a flash Mary Jane stuck her head out between the curtains and replied, "That's where my great-grandmother lives and I'm going to see her!"

The porter was vastly surprised ("I guess he thought I was going to sleep all day!" thought Mary Jane scornfully), but before he had a chance to reply anything, Dr. Smith called across, "Good morning, Mary Jane! How did you sleep?"

"All the night, just like I do at home," answered Mary Jane, "except one time when they bumped something into my bed—what was it, do you 'spose?"

"Most likely they put on a new engine," said Dr. Smith. "Now, how long will it take you to dress, my dear?"

"Just a tiny while," said Mary Jane, "because I've got my shoes and stockings on

now. And when may I wash my face and you put on my hair ribbon?”

Dr. Smith stepped out from his berth and looked at Mary Jane in dismay.

“You may wash your face any time you like, my dear,” he said, “but *I* can’t tie your hair ribbon. I don’t know how!”

Mary Jane laughed at the funny face he made and then she smiled in her most motherly fashion. “Then it’s a good thing I forgot and left it on last night,” she said, “and don’t you worry, I can perk it up and make it look real tidy.”

“You’re a good little traveler,” complimented Dr. Smith. “I’ll take you along again. Now let’s see who’s ready first.” Mary Jane put on the rest of her clothes; then she took her little bag, just as her mother had told her to, and went into the dressing room and washed her face and made herself neat and tidy. She got back in time to see the porter make up her bed and she was glad of that

because bed-unmaking on a train by daylight seemed even more wonderful and interesting than bed-making the night before.

She sat down on the seat across the aisle while he worked, so she could see everything he did.

“My mother and I don't make beds that way at home,” she announced suddenly.

“Sure not,” agreed the porter, and then by way of keeping up the conversation, he added, “Like to ride on a train?”

“Deed I do,” said Mary Jane happily, “and I like to go see my great-grandmother—it's my Great-grandmother Hodges I'm going to see, you know. And my mother isn't going and my daddah isn't going because he works and my sister Alice isn't going because she's in school and anybody isn't going but just my Dr. Smith and me 'cause I'm five and that's a big girl.”

“Well!” exclaimed the porter, and he actually stopped making beds to look at such a

big little girl. Mary Jane liked him and started to tell him about Doris and the birthday party and the pretty things in her trunk, but Dr. Smith came back just then and there was no more time for talk.

“Got your coat?” he asked, “and your hat and your—everything?”

“He put ’em there,” said Mary Jane, pointing to the next seat where she had seen the porter put her things, “and my gloves are in my pocket and my bag’s all shut.”

“That’s good,” said Dr. Smith. “You’d better put your things on now. Here, I’ll hold your coat.”

It was a good thing Mary Jane started putting on her gloves just when she did! For before she had the last button safely tucked in its button hole, the porter had slipped into a white coat and had picked up her bag and Dr. Smith’s big grip and started for the door of the car; the great long train was slowing up at a little station.

They got off in such a hurry that Mary Jane hardly had time to say good-bye to the kind porter before the train hurried away and someone picked her up and kissed her and exclaimed, "Well, well, well! Such a *big* girl!" and she found herself kissing dear Grandfather Hodges—she knew him well because he had visited her home and she had a nice, comfortable, "belonging" feeling the minute she saw him.

"Now you two stay right here by the car," said Grandfather, "while I get the trunk."

And Mary Jane had her first chance to look around.

The station wasn't a bit like the station at her home—not a bit. It was a funny little frame house with a platform out in front. And there wasn't any roof out over where the trains went or anything like that; just the little house and the platform. And instead of the piles of trunks on great trucks that she supposed were in every station,

there was only her own little trunk dumped forlornly on the platform. And instead of the many men busy about various duties, there was not a single man, at least not one that Mary Jane could see. Grandfather took the check that Dr. Smith gave him and went into the little station with it. In a second he was back and what do you suppose he did? He picked up her trunk and set it in the back of his waiting automobile just as easy as could be! Mary Jane was that surprised he could see it and he laughed and said, "That's the way we do our baggaging here, Mary Jane. We'll not wait for any sleepy baggage men—not when Grandmother and hot griddle cakes and honey are waiting for us, will we?"

And Mary Jane, who was getting hungry enough to find breakfast a most interesting subject, settled down in the back seat beside the trunk and said, "No, we won't!"

Dr. Smith climbed into the front seat and Grandfather started the car and went

spinning down the road.

"Your roads all know where they're going, don't they?" Mary Jane asked as they got under way.

"Yes," replied Grandfather in surprise; "don't yours?"

"Not like yours do," said Mary Jane positively; "ours go this way." And with her finger she made some big curves in the air.

"Oh!" laughed Grandfather, "you mean that yours are curving because of the hills and that ours are straight. Yes, our roads are pretty straight but you'll like that when you get used to it, because then you can't get lost. There's a road every mile and each road goes just the way it by rights ought to go because there aren't any hills to get in the way." And all the while Grandfather was talking, he was driving the car along the straight road just as fast as could be.

"And aren't there any hills before we get to your house?" asked Mary Jane after awhile.

"Well," said Grandfather smilingly, as he

slowed the car down, “what do you think about that yourself?”

Mary Jane looked before her, the way she could see Grandfather wanted her to look, and, right there close, she saw a big, old-fashioned white house. It had a flower bed, a great big round flower bed, in the yard in front of it and a curving driveway along the side. And it had a wide porch all across the front, a porch that had seats and a swing and everything a little girl would like to see on a porch. A lot of windows with green shutters were scattered over the house, and through the windows Mary Jane could see ruffled white curtains at every window. And on the porch of this house stood a pretty, white-haired grandmother, just the sort of a grandmother that belongs to every white house in the country.

“I think there aren’t any hills because here we are!” exclaimed Mary Jane happily as Grandfather stopped the car by the side steps.

Quick as a minute Dr. Smith jumped her out of the car and Grandmother Hodges, for it really was she, just as Mary Jane had guessed, gave her a hug and a dozen kisses and Mary Jane felt at home from that minute.

“Now don't bother about that trunk,” said Grandmother briskly. “It can wait! I don't know what Dr. Smith promised we'd have for breakfast this morning, but griddle cakes and honey are what I have ready. Come right on in, Dr. Smith.”

She took off Mary Jane's coat and hat and laid them on the couch in the living-room, and then they all went in to what Mary Jane thought was the best breakfast she had ever eaten in all her five years. There were bananas and cream, oh, such good cream; and eggs and bacon and griddle cakes and honey. Mary Jane had never eaten honey on griddle cakes before, and she liked it so well that they quite lost count of the number she ate!

“If you go on as you’re beginning,” laughed Dr. Smith, “you’ll be so big and fat by the time you go home that I’ll have to go along with you and tell them you’re Mary Jane Merrill, that’s what I will!”

“I’ll risk their knowing,” said Grandmother; “that child was almost starved! If you’re in a hurry, don’t wait for her. And Father” (she turned to Grandfather Hodges), “you be sure to take Mary Jane’s trunk up to her room before you go to the barn. She’ll want to open it right away to get out her play dress.”

By the time Mary Jane was through her breakfast the trunk had been carried upstairs and Grandfather Hodges was off to the barn. “You come out to see me whenever you’re ready,” he said as he left.

“And I’ll be running along too,” said Dr. Smith, “though I must admit I’d rather stay and help show Mary Jane the farm than to call on sick folks this morning. I’ll be by to see you this evening, little girl, to hear

what you think of all the new sights." And he started down the road toward his home—it was such a little way that he preferred to walk.

"Now, Mary Jane," said Grandmother briskly, "what would you like to play while I do the dishes?"

"I'd like to do them too," said Mary Jane promptly.

"A little girl five years old do dishes?" exclaimed Grandmother.

"Deed, yes, Grandmother," said Mary Jane, much pleased to think Grandmother was so impressed. "I'm a little past five, you know, and I can work a lot!"

"Just think of that," exclaimed Grandmother approvingly. "Then we'll be through in no time. I'll wash and you wipe, and I'll put away. Let me tie this apron over your pretty traveling dress."

While they did the work, Mary Jane answered all the questions about Mother and Alice and Father that Grandmother could

ask and then, as soon as the last dish was put away the two went upstairs and unpacked the trunk. Such fun as it was to put all her own ribbons and handkerchiefs into the funny little bureau that stood in Mary Jane's room! And to hang up her dresses, or watch Grandmother hang them, in the queer little closet that had a latch like a front gate! Mary Jane was to have a whole room and a whole closet and a bureau all to herself, and she wouldn't feel a bit lonesome because Grandmother's room was right next and the door stood open all the night long, Grandmother said.

When everything was in neat order, Mary Jane put on her dark blue rompers and big blue sun hat, and they went downstairs.

"There now," said Grandmother; "we're all fixed. And before I do another thing, I'm going to take you all around and show you everything you want to see."

They started down the back walk toward

the barn that looked so interesting. But they hadn't gone half the way to it before the telephone, back in the house, gave a long, loud ring.