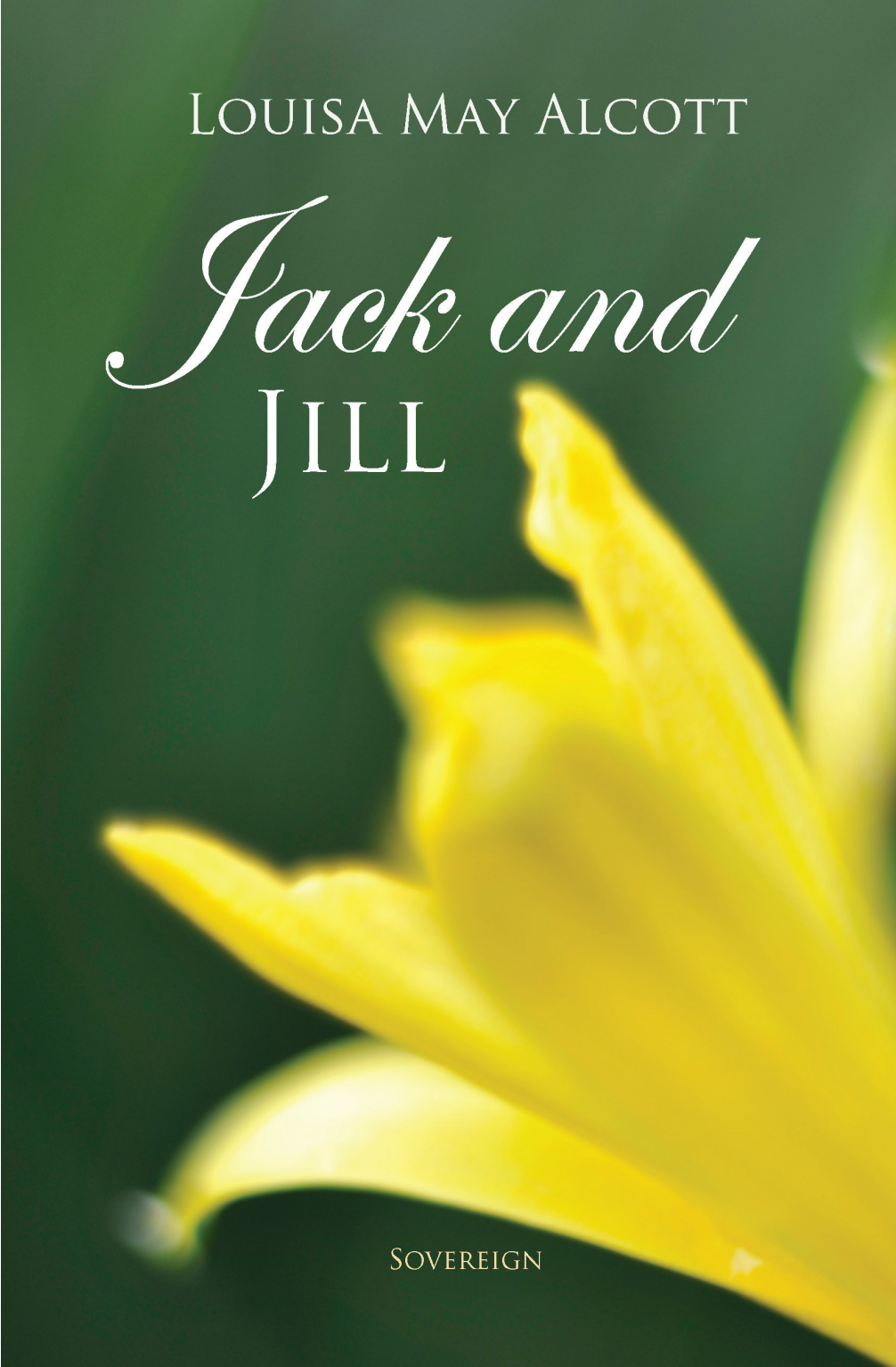
Louisa May Alcott
Jack and Jill
Sovereign

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Jack and Jill went up the hill
To coast with fun and laughter;
Jack fell down and broke his crown,
And Jill came tumbling after.

CHAPTER I. THE CATASTROPHE

"Clear the lulla!" was the general cry on a bright December afternoon, when all the boys and girls of Harmony Village were out enjoying the first good snow of the season. Up and down three long coasts they went as fast as legs and sleds could carry them. One smooth path led into the meadow, and here the little folk congregated; one swept across the pond, where skaters were darting about like water-bugs; and the third, from the very top of the steep hill, ended abruptly at a rail fence on the high bank above the road. There was a group of lads and lasses sitting or leaning on this fence to rest after an exciting race, and, as they reposed, they amused themselves with criticising their mates, still absorbed in this most delightful of out-door sports.

"Here comes Frank Minot, looking as solemn as a judge," cried one, as a tall fellow of sixteen spun by, with a set look about the mouth and a keen sparkle of the eyes, fixed on the distant goal with a do-or-die expression.

"Here's Molly Loo
And little Boo!"

sang out another; and down came a girl with flying hair, carrying a small boy behind her, so fat that his short legs stuck out from the sides, and his round face looked over her shoulder like a full moon.

"There's Gus Burton; doesn't he go it?" and such a very long boy whizzed by, that it looked almost as if his heels were at the top of the hill when his head was at the bottom!

"Hurrah for Ed Devlin!" and a general shout greeted a sweet-faced lad, with a laugh on his lips, a fine color on his brown cheek, and a gay word for every girl he passed.

"Laura and Lotty keep to the safe coast into the meadow, and Molly Loo is the only girl that dares to try this long one to the pond. I wouldn't for the world; the ice can't be strong yet, though it is cold enough to freeze one's nose off," said a timid damsel, who sat hugging a post and screaming whenever a mischievous lad shook the fence.

"No, she isn't; here's Jack and Jill going like fury."

"Clear the track
For jolly Jack!"

sang the boys, who had rhymes and nicknames for nearly every one.

Down came a gay red sled, bearing a boy who seemed all smile and sunshine, so white were his teeth, so golden was his hair, so bright and happy his whole air. Behind him clung a little gypsy of a girl, with black eyes and hair, cheeks as red as her hood, and a face full of fun and sparkle, as she waved Jack's blue tippet like a banner with one hand, and held on with the other.

"Jill goes wherever Jack does, and he lets her. He's such a good-natured chap, he can't say 'No.'"

"To a girl," slyly added one of the boys, who had wished to borrow the red sled, and had been politely refused because Jill wanted it.

"He's the nicest boy in the world, for he never gets mad," said the timid young lady, recalling the many times Jack had shielded her from the terrors which beset her path to school, in the shape of cows, dogs, and boys who made faces and called her "'Fraid-cat."

"He doesn't dare to get mad with Jill, for she'd take his head off in two minutes if he did," growled Joe Flint, still smarting from the rebuke Jill had given him for robbing the little ones of their safe coast because he fancied it.

"She wouldn't! she's a dear! You needn't sniff at her because she is poor. She's ever so much brighter than you are, or she wouldn't always be at the head of your class, old Joe," cried the girls, standing by their friend with a unanimity which proved what a favorite

she was.

Joe subsided with as scornful a curl to his nose as its chilly state permitted, and Merry Grant introduced a subject of general interest by asking abruptly,—

"Who is going to the candy-scrape to-night?"

"All of us. Frank invited the whole set, and we shall have a tip-top time. We always do at the Minots'," cried Sue, the timid trembler.

"Jack said there was a barrel of molasses in the house, so there would be enough for all to eat and some to carry away. They know how to do things handsomely;" and the speaker licked his lips, as if already tasting the feast in store for him.

"Mrs. Minot is a mother worth having," said Molly Loo, coming up with Boo on the sled; and she knew what it was to need a mother, for she had none, and tried to care for the little brother with maternal love and patience.

"She is just as sweet as she can be!" declared Merry, enthusiastically.

"Especially when she has a candy-scrape," said Joe, trying to be amiable, lest he should be left out of the party.

Whereat they all laughed, and went gayly away for a farewell frolic, as the sun was setting and the keen wind nipped fingers and toes as well as noses.

Down they went, one after another, on the various coasts,—solemn Frank, long Gus, gallant Ed, fly-away Molly Loo, pretty Laura and Lotty, grumpy Joe, sweet-faced Merry with Sue shrieking wildly behind her, gay Jack and gypsy Jill, always together,—one and all bubbling over with the innocent jollity born of healthful exercise. People passing in the road below looked up and smiled involuntarily at the red-cheeked lads and lasses, filling the frosty air with peals of laughter and cries of triumph as they flew by in every conceivable attitude; for the fun was at its height now, and the oldest and gravest observers felt a glow of pleasure as they looked, remembering their own young days.

"Jack, take me down that coast. Joe said I wouldn't dare to do it, so I must," commanded Jill, as they paused for breath after the long trudge up hill. Jill, of course, was not her real name, but had been given because of her friendship with Jack, who so admired Janey Pecq's spirit and fun.

"I guess I wouldn't. It is very bumpy and ends in a big drift; not half so nice as this one. Hop on and we'll have a good spin across

the pond;" and Jack brought "Thunderbolt" round with a skilful swing and an engaging air that would have won obedience from anybody but wilful Jill.

"It is very nice, but I won't be told I don't 'dare' by any boy in the world. If you are afraid, I'll go alone." And, before he could speak, she had snatched the rope from his hand, thrown herself upon the sled, and was off, helter-skelter, down the most dangerous coast on the hill-side.

She did not get far, however; for, starting in a hurry, she did not guide her steed with care, and the red charger landed her in the snow half-way down, where she lay laughing till Jack came to pick her up.

"If you will go, I'll take you down all right. I'm not afraid, for I've done it a dozen times with the other fellows; but we gave it up because it is short and bad," he said, still good-natured, though a little hurt at the charge of cowardice; for Jack was as brave as a little lion, and with the best sort of bravery,—the courage to do right.

"So it is; but I must do it a few times, or Joe will plague me and spoil my fun to-night," answered Jill, shaking her skirts and rubbing her blue hands, wet and cold with the snow.

"Here, put these on; I never use them. Keep them if they fit; I only carry them to please mother." And Jack pulled out a pair of red mittens with the air of a boy used to giving away.

"They are lovely warm, and they do fit. Must be too small for your paws, so I'll knit you a new pair for Christmas, and make you wear them, too," said Jill, putting on the mittens with a nod of thanks, and ending her speech with a stamp of her rubber boots to enforce her threat.

Jack laughed, and up they trudged to the spot whence the three coasts diverged.

"Now, which will you have?" he asked, with a warning look in the honest blue eyes which often unconsciously controlled naughty Jill against her will.

"That one!" and the red mitten pointed firmly to the perilous path just tried.

"You will do it?"

"I will!"

"Come on, then, and hold tight."

Jack's smile was gone now, and he waited without a word while Jill tucked herself up, then took his place in front, and off they

went on the brief, breathless trip straight into the drift by the fence below.

"I don't see anything very awful in that. Come up and have another. Joe is watching us, and I'd like to show him that we aren't afraid of anything," said Jill, with a defiant glance at a distant boy, who had paused to watch the descent.

"It is a regular 'go-bang,' if that is what you like," answered Jack, as they plowed their way up again.

"It is. You boys think girls like little mean coasts without any fun or danger in them, as if we couldn't be brave and strong as well as you. Give me three go-bangs and then we'll stop. My tumble doesn't count, so give me two more and then I'll be good."

Jill took her seat as she spoke, and looked up with such a rosy, pleading face that Jack gave in at once, and down they went again, raising a cloud of glittering snow-dust as they reined up in fine style with their feet on the fence.

"It's just splendid! Now, one more!" cried Jill, excited by the cheers of a sleighing party passing below.

Proud of his skill, Jack marched back, resolved to make the third "go" the crowning achievement of the afternoon, while Jill pranced after him as lightly as if the big boots were the famous seven-leagued ones, and chattering about the candy-scrape and whether there would be nuts or not.

So full were they of this important question, that they piled on hap-hazard, and started off still talking so busily that Jill forgot to hold tight and Jack to steer carefully. Alas, for the candy-scrape that never was to be! Alas, for poor "Thunderbolt" blindly setting forth on the last trip he ever made! And oh, alas, for Jack and Jill, who wilfully chose the wrong road and ended their fun for the winter! No one knew how it happened, but instead of landing in the drift, or at the fence, there was a great crash against the bars, a dreadful plunge off the steep bank, a sudden scattering of girl, boy, sled, fence, earth, and snow, all about the road, two cries, and then silence.

"I knew they'd do it!" and, standing on the post where he had perched, Joe waved his arms and shouted: "Smash-up! Smash-up! Run! Run!" like a raven croaking over a battlefield when the fight was done.

Down rushed boys and girls ready to laugh or cry, as the case might be, for accidents will happen on the best-regulated

coasting-grounds. They found Jack sitting up looking about him with a queer, dazed expression, while an ugly cut on the forehead was bleeding in a way which sobered the boys and frightened the girls half out of their wits.

"He's killed! He's killed!" wailed Sue, hiding her face and beginning to cry.

"No, I'm not. I'll be all right when I get my breath. Where's Jill?" asked Jack, stoutly, though still too giddy to see straight.

The group about him opened, and his comrade in misfortune was discovered lying quietly in the snow with all the pretty color shocked out of her face by the fall, and winking rapidly, as if half stunned. But no wounds appeared, and when asked if she was dead, she answered in a vague sort of way,—

"I guess not. Is Jack hurt?"

"Broken his head," croaked Joe, stepping aside, that she might behold the fallen hero vainly trying to look calm and cheerful with red drops running down his cheek and a lump on his forehead.

Jill shut her eyes and waved the girls away, saying, faintly,—

"Never mind me. Go and see to him."

"Don't! I'm all right," and Jack tried to get up in order to prove that headers off a bank were mere trifles to him; but at the first movement of the left leg he uttered a sharp cry of pain, and would have fallen if Gus had not caught and gently laid him down.

"What is it, old chap?" asked Frank, kneeling beside him, really alarmed now, the hurts seeming worse than mere bumps, which were common affairs among baseball players, and not worth much notice.

"I lit on my head, but I guess I've broken my leg. Don't frighten mother," and Jack held fast to Frank's arm as he looked into the anxious face bent over him; for, though the elder tyrannized over the younger, the brothers loved one another dearly.

"Lift his head, Frank, while I tie my handkerchief round to stop the bleeding," said a quiet voice, as Ed Devlin laid a handful of soft snow on the wound; and Jack's face brightened as he turned to thank the one big boy who never was rough with the small ones.

"Better get him right home," advised Gus, who stood by looking on, with his little sisters Laura and Lotty clinging to him.

"Take Jill, too, for it's my opinion she has broken her back. She can't stir one bit," announced Molly Loo, with a droll air of triumph, as if rather pleased than otherwise to have her patient hurt the

worse; for Jack's wound was very effective, and Molly had a taste for the tragic.

This cheerful statement was greeted with a wail from Susan and howls from Boo, who had earned that name from the ease with which, on all occasions, he could burst into a dismal roar without shedding a tear, and stop as suddenly as he began.

"Oh, I am so sorry! It was my fault; I shouldn't have let her do it," said Jack, distressfully.

"It was all my fault; I made him. If I'd broken every bone I've got, it would serve me right. Don't help me, anybody; I'm a wicked thing, and I deserve to lie here and freeze and starve and die!" cried Jill, piling up punishments in her remorseful anguish of mind and body.

"But we want to help you, and we can settle about blame by and by," whispered Merry with a kiss; for she adored dashing Jill, and never would own that she did wrong.

"Here come the wood-sleds just in time. I'll cut away and tell one of them to hurry up." And, freeing himself from his sisters, Gus went off at a great pace, proving that the long legs carried a sensible head as well as a kind heart.

As the first sled approached, an air of relief pervaded the agitated party, for it was driven by Mr. Grant, a big, benevolent-looking farmer, who surveyed the scene with the sympathetic interest of a man and a father.

"Had a little accident, have you? Well, that's a pretty likely place for a spill. Tried it once myself and broke the bridge of my nose," he said, tapping that massive feature with a laugh which showed that fifty years of farming had not taken all the boy out of him. "Now then, let's see about this little chore, and lively, too, for it's late, and these parties ought to be housed," he added, throwing down his whip, pushing back his cap, and nodding at the wounded with a reassuring smile.

"Jill first, please, sir," said Ed, the gentle squire of dames, spreading his overcoat on the sled as eagerly as ever Raleigh laid down his velvet cloak for a queen to walk upon.

"All right. Just lay easy, my dear, and I won't hurt you a mite if I can help it."

Careful as Mr. Grant was, Jill could have screamed with pain as he lifted her; but she set her lips and bore it with the courage of a little Indian; for all the lads were looking on, and Jill was proud to

show that a girl could bear as much as a boy. She hid her face in the coat as soon as she was settled, to hide the tears that would come, and by the time Jack was placed beside her, she had quite a little cistern of salt water stored up in Ed's coat-pocket.

Then the mournful procession set forth, Mr. Grant driving the oxen, the girls clustering about the interesting invalids on the sled, while the boys came behind like a guard of honor, leaving the hill deserted by all but Joe, who had returned to hover about the fatal fence, and poor "Thunderbolt," split asunder, lying on the bank to mark the spot where the great catastrophe occurred.

CHAPTER II. TWO PENITENTS

Jack and Jill never cared to say much about the night which followed the first coasting party of the season, for it was the saddest and the hardest their short lives had ever known. Jack suffered most in body; for the setting of the broken leg was such a painful job, that it wrung several sharp cries from him, and made Frank, who helped, quite weak and white with sympathy, when it was over. The wounded head ached dreadfully, and the poor boy felt as if bruised all over, for he had the worst of the fall. Dr. Whiting spoke cheerfully of the case, and made so light of broken legs, that Jack innocently asked if he should not be up in a week or so.

"Well, no; it usually takes twenty-one days for bones to knit, and young ones make quick work of it," answered the doctor, with a last scientific tuck to the various bandages, which made Jack feel like a hapless chicken trussed for the spit.

"Twenty-one days! Three whole weeks in bed! I shouldn't call that quick work," groaned the dismayed patient, whose experience of illness had been limited.

"It is a forty days' job, young man, and you must make up your mind to bear it like a hero. We will do our best; but next time, look before you leap, and save your bones. Good-night; you'll feel better in the morning. No jigs, remember;" and off went the busy doctor for another look at Jill, who had been ordered to bed and left to rest till the other case was attended to.

Any one would have thought Jack's plight much the worse, but the doctor looked more sober over Jill's hurt back than the boy's compound fractures; and the poor little girl had a very bad quarter of an hour while he was trying to discover the extent of the injury.

"Keep her quiet, and time will show how much damage is done," was all he said in her hearing; but if she had known that he told Mrs. Pecq he feared serious consequences, she would not have wondered

why her mother cried as she rubbed the numb limbs and placed the pillows so tenderly.

Jill suffered most in her mind; for only a sharp stab of pain now and then reminded her of her body; but her remorseful little soul gave her no peace for thinking of Jack, whose bruises and breakages her lively fancy painted in the darkest colors.

"Oh, don't be good to me, Mammy; I made him go, and now he's hurt dreadfully, and may die; and it is all my fault, and everybody ought to hate me," sobbed poor Jill, as a neighbor left the room after reporting in a minute manner how Jack screamed when his leg was set, and how Frank was found white as a sheet, with his head under the pump, while Gus restored the tone of his friend's nerves, by pumping as if the house was on fire.

"Whist, my lass, and go to sleep. Take a sup of the good wine Mrs. Minot sent, for you are as cold as a clod, and it breaks my heart to see my Janey so."

"I can't go to sleep; I don't see how Jack's mother could send me anything when I've half killed him. I want to be cold and ache and have horrid things done to me. Oh, if I ever get out of this bed I'll be the best girl in the world, to pay for this. See if I ain't!" and Jill gave such a decided nod that her tears flew all about the pillow like a shower.

"You'd better begin at once, for you won't get out of that bed for a long while, I'm afraid, my lamb," sighed her mother, unable to conceal the anxiety that lay so heavy on her heart.

"Am I hurt badly, Mammy?"

"I fear it, lass."

"I'm glad of it; I ought to be worse than Jack, and I hope I am. I'll bear it well, and be good right away. Sing, Mammy, and I'll try to go to sleep to please you."

Jill shut her eyes with sudden and unusual meekness, and before her mother had crooned half a dozen verses of an old ballad, the little black head lay still upon the pillow, and repentant Jill was fast asleep with a red mitten in her hand.

Mrs. Pecq was an Englishwoman who had left Montreal at the death of her husband, a French Canadian, and had come to live in the tiny cottage which stood near Mrs. Minot's big house, separated only by an arbor-vitae hedge. A sad, silent person, who had seen better days, but said nothing about them, and earned her bread by sewing, nursing, work in the factory, or anything that came in her

way, being anxious to educate her little girl. Now, as she sat beside the bed in the small, poor room, that hope almost died within her, for here was the child laid up for months, probably, and the one ambition and pleasure of the solitary woman's life was to see Janey Pecq's name over all the high marks in the school-reports she proudly brought home.

"She'll win through, please Heaven, and I'll see my lass a gentlewoman yet, thanks to the good friend in yonder, who will never let her want for care," thought the poor soul, looking out into the gloom where a long ray of light streamed from the great house warm and comfortable upon the cottage, like the spirit of kindness which made the inmates friends and neighbors.

Meantime, that other mother sat by her boy's bed as anxious but with better hope, for Mrs. Minot made trouble sweet and helpful by the way in which she bore it; and her boys were learning of her how to find silver linings to the clouds that must come into the bluest skies.

Jack lay wide awake, with hot cheeks, and throbbing head, and all sorts of queer sensations in the broken leg. The soothing potion he had taken did not affect him yet, and he tried to beguile the weary time by wondering who came and went below. Gentle rings at the front door, and mysterious tappings at the back, had been going on all the evening; for the report of the accident had grown astonishingly in its travels, and at eight o'clock the general belief was that Jack had broken both legs, fractured his skull, and lay at the point of death, while Jill had dislocated one shoulder, and was bruised black and blue from top to toe. Such being the case, it is no wonder that anxious playmates and neighbors haunted the doorsteps of the two houses, and that offers of help poured in.

Frank, having tied up the bell and put a notice in the lighted side-window, saying, "Go to the back door," sat in the parlor, supported by his chum, Gus, while Ed played softly on the piano, hoping to lull Jack to sleep. It did soothe him, for a very sweet friendship existed between the tall youth and the lad of thirteen. Ed went with the big fellows, but always had a kind word for the smaller boys; and affectionate Jack, never ashamed to show his love, was often seen with his arm round Ed's shoulder, as they sat together in the pleasant red parlors, where all the young people were welcome and Frank was king.

"Is the pain any easier, my darling?" asked Mrs. Minot, leaning

over the pillow, where the golden head lay quiet for a moment.

"Not much. I forget it listening to the music. Dear old Ed is playing all my favorite tunes, and it is very nice. I guess he feels pretty sorry about me."

"They all do. Frank could not talk of it. Gus wouldn't go home to tea, he was so anxious to do something for us. Joe brought back the bits of your poor sled, because he didn't like to leave them lying round for any one to carry off, he said, and you might like them to remember your fall by."

Jack tried to laugh, but it was rather a failure, though he managed to say, cheerfully,—

"That was good of old Joe. I wouldn't lend him 'Thunderbolt' for fear he'd hurt it. Couldn't have smashed it up better than I did, could he? Don't think I want any pieces to remind me of that fall. I just wish you'd seen us, mother! It must have been a splendid spill to look at, any way."

"No, thank you; I'd rather not even try to imagine my precious boy going heels over head down that dreadful hill. No more pranks of that sort for some time, Jacky;" and Mrs. Minot looked rather pleased on the whole to have her venturesome bird safe under her maternal wing.

"No coasting till some time in January. What a fool I was to do it! Go-bangs always are dangerous, and that's the fun of the thing. Oh dear!"

Jack threw his arms about and frowned darkly, but never said a word of the wilful little baggage who had led him into mischief; he was too much of a gentleman to tell on a girl, though it cost him an effort to hold his tongue, because Mamma's good opinion was very precious to him, and he longed to explain. She knew all about it, however, for Jill had been carried into the house reviling herself for the mishap, and even in the midst of her own anxiety for her boy, Mrs. Minot understood the state of the case without more words. So she now set his mind at rest by saying, quietly.

"Foolish fun, as you see, dear. Another time, stand firm and help Jill to control her headstrong will. When you learn to yield less and she more, there will be no scrapes like this to try us all."

"I'll remember, mother. I hate not to be obliging, but I guess it would have saved us lots of trouble if I'd said No in the beginning. I tried to, but she would go. Poor Jill! I'll take better care of her next time. Is she very ill, Mamma?"

"I can tell you better to-morrow. She does not suffer much, and we hope there is no great harm done."

"I wish she had a nice place like this to be sick in. It must be very poky in those little rooms," said Jack, as his eye roved round the large chamber where he lay so cosey, warm, and pleasant, with the gay chintz curtains draping doors and windows, the rosy carpet, comfortable chairs, and a fire glowing in the grate.

"I shall see that she suffers for nothing, so don't trouble your kind heart about her to-night, but try to sleep; that's what you need," answered his mother, wetting the bandage on his forehead, and putting a cool hand on the flushed cheeks.

Jack obediently closed his eyes and listened while the boys sang "The Sweet By and By," softening their rough young voices for his sake till the music was as soft as a lullaby. He lay so still his mother thought he was off, but presently a tear slipped out and rolled down the red cheek, wetting her hand as it passed.

"My blessed boy, what is it?" she whispered, with a touch and a tone that only mothers have.

The blue eyes opened wide, and Jack's own sunshiny smile broke through the tears that filled them as he said with a sniff,—

"Everybody is so good to me I can't help making a noodle of myself.

"You are not a noodle!" cried Mamma, resenting the epithet. "One of the sweet things about pain and sorrow is that they show us how well we are loved, how much kindness there is in the world, and how easily we can make others happy in the same way when they need help and sympathy. Don't forget that, little son."

"Don't see how I can, with you to show me how nice it is. Kiss me good-night, and then 'I'll be good,' as Jill says."

Nestling his head upon his mother's arm, Jack lay quiet till, lulled by the music of his mates, he drowsed away into the dreamless sleep which is Nurse Nature's healthiest soothing sirup for weary souls and bodies.

CHAPTER III. WARD NO. 1

For some days, nothing was seen and little was heard of the "dear sufferers," as the old ladies called them. But they were not forgotten; the first words uttered when any of the young people met were: "How is Jack?" "Seen Jill yet?" and all waited with impatience for the moment when they could be admitted to their favorite mates, more than ever objects of interest now.

Meantime, the captives spent the first few days in sleep, pain, and trying to accept the hard fact that school and play were done with for months perhaps. But young spirits are wonderfully elastic and soon cheer up, and healthy young bodies heal fast, or easily adapt themselves to new conditions. So our invalids began to mend on the fourth day, and to drive their nurses distracted with efforts to amuse them, before the first week was over.

The most successful attempt originated in Ward No. 1, as Mrs. Minot called Jack's apartment, and we will give our sympathizing readers some idea of this place, which became the stage whereon were enacted many varied and remarkable scenes.

Each of the Minot boys had his own room, and there collected his own treasures and trophies, arranged to suit his convenience and taste. Frank's was full of books, maps, machinery, chemical messes, and geometrical drawings, which adorned the walls like intricate cobwebs. A big chair, where he read and studied with his heels higher than his head, a basket of apples for refreshment at all hours of the day or night, and an immense inkstand, in which several pens were always apparently bathing their feet, were the principal ornaments of his scholastic retreat.

Jack's hobby was athletic sports, for he was bent on having a strong and active body for his happy little soul to live and enjoy itself in. So a severe simplicity reigned in his apartment; in summer, especially, for then his floor was bare, his windows were uncurtained,

and the chairs uncushioned, the bed being as narrow and hard as Napoleon's. The only ornaments were dumbbells, whips, bats, rods, skates, boxing-gloves, a big bath-pan and a small library, consisting chiefly of books on games, horses, health, hunting, and travels. In winter his mother made things more comfortable by introducing rugs, curtains, and a fire. Jack, also, relented slightly in the severity of his training, occasionally indulging in the national buckwheat cake, instead of the prescribed oatmeal porridge, for breakfast, omitting his cold bath when the thermometer was below zero, and dancing at night, instead of running a given distance by day.

Now, however, he was a helpless captive, given over to all sorts of coddling, laziness, and luxury, and there was a droll mixture of mirth and melancholy in his face, as he lay trussed up in bed, watching the comforts which had suddenly robbed his room of its Spartan simplicity. A delicious couch was there, with Frank reposing in its depths, half hidden under several folios which he was consulting for a history of the steam-engine, the subject of his next composition.

A white-covered table stood near, with all manner of dainties set forth in a way to tempt the sternest principles. Vases of flowers bloomed on the chimney-piece,—gifts from anxious young ladies, left with their love. Frivolous story-books and picture-papers strewed the bed, now shrouded in effeminate chintz curtains, beneath which Jack lay like a wounded warrior in his tent. But the saddest sight for our crippled athlete was a glimpse, through a half-opened door, at the beloved dumb-bells, bats, balls, boxing-gloves, and snow-shoes, all piled ignominiously away in the bath-pan, mournfully recalling the fact that their day was over, now, at least for some time.

He was about to groan dismally, when his eye fell on a sight which made him swallow the groan, and cough instead, as if it choked him a little. The sight was his mother's face, as she sat in a low chair rolling bandages, with a basket beside her in which were piles of old linen, lint, plaster, and other matters, needed for the dressing of wounds. As he looked, Jack remembered how steadily and tenderly she had stood by him all through the hard times just past, and how carefully she had bathed and dressed his wound each day in spite of the effort it cost her to give him pain or even see him suffer.

"That's a better sort of strength than swinging twenty-pound

dumb-bells or running races; I guess I'll try for that kind, too, and not howl or let her see me squirm when the doctor hurts," thought the boy, as he saw that gentle face so pale and tired with much watching and anxiety, yet so patient, serene, and cheerful, that it was like sunshine.

"Lie down and take a good nap, mother dear, I feel first-rate, and Frank can see to me if I want anything. Do, now," he added, with a persuasive nod toward the couch, and a boyish relish in stirring up his lazy brother.

After some urging, Mamma consented to go to her room for forty winks, leaving Jack in the care of Frank, begging him to be as quiet as possible if the dear boy wished to sleep, and to amuse him if he did not.

Being worn out, Mrs. Minot lengthened her forty winks into a three hours' nap, and as the "dear boy" scorned repose, Mr. Frank had his hands full while on guard.

"I'll read to you. Here's Watt, Arkwright, Fulton, and a lot of capital fellows, with pictures that will do your heart good. Have a bit, will you?" asked the new nurse, flapping the leaves invitingly.—for Frank had a passion for such things, and drew steam-engines all over his slate, as Tommy Traddles drew hosts of skeletons when low in his spirits.

"I don't want any of your old boilers and stokers and whirligigs. I'm tired of reading, and want something regularly jolly," answered Jack, who had been chasing white buffaloes with "The Hunters of the West," till he was a trifle tired and fractious.

"Play cribbage, euchre, anything you like;" and Frank obligingly disinterred himself from under the folios, feeling that it was hard for a fellow to lie flat a whole week.

"No fun; just two of us. Wish school was over, so the boys would come in; doctor said I might see them now."

"They'll be along by and by, and I'll hail them. Till then, what shall we do? I'm your man for anything, only put a name to it."

"Just wish I had a telegraph or a telephone, so I could talk to Jill. Wouldn't it be fun to pipe across and get an answer!"

"I'll make either you say;" and Frank looked as if trifles of that sort were to be had for the asking.

"Could you, really?"

"We'll start the telegraph first, then you can send things over if you like," said Frank, prudently proposing the surest experiment.

"Go ahead, then. I'd like that, and so would Jill, for I know she wants to hear from me."

"There's one trouble, though; I shall have to leave you alone for a few minutes while I rig up the ropes;" and Frank looked sober, for he was a faithful boy, and did not want to desert his post.

"Oh, never mind; I won't want anything. If I do, I can pound for Ann."

"And wake mother. I'll fix you a better way than that;" and, full of inventive genius, our young Edison spliced the poker to part of a fishing-rod in a jiffy, making a long-handled hook which reached across the room.

"There's an arm for you; now hook away, and let's see how it works," he said, handing over the instrument to Jack, who proceeded to show its unexpected capabilities by hooking the cloth off the table in attempting to get his handkerchief, catching Frank by the hair when fishing for a book, and breaking a pane of glass in trying to draw down the curtain.

"It's so everlasting long, I can't manage it," laughed Jack, as it finally caught in his bed-hangings, and nearly pulled them, ring and all, down upon his head.

"Let it alone, unless you need something very much, and don't bother about the glass. It's just what we want for the telegraph wire or rope to go through. Keep still, and I'll have the thing running in ten minutes;" and, delighted with the job, Frank hurried away, leaving Jack to compose a message to send as soon as it was possible.

"What in the world is that flying across the Minots' yard,—a brown hen or a boy's kite?" exclaimed old Miss Hopkins, peering out of her window at the singular performances going on in her opposite neighbor's garden.

First, Frank appeared with a hatchet and chopped a clear space in the hedge between his own house and the cottage; next, a clothes line was passed through this aperture and fastened somewhere on the other side; lastly, a small covered basket, slung on this rope, was seen hitching along, drawn either way by a set of strings; then, as if satisfied with his job, Frank retired, whistling "Hail Columbia."

"It's those children at their pranks again. I thought broken bones wouldn't keep them out of mischief long," said the old lady, watching with great interest the mysterious basket travelling up and down the rope from the big house to the cottage.

If she had seen what came and went over the wires of the "Great

International Telegraph," she would have laughed till her spectacles flew off her Roman nose. A letter from Jack, with a large orange, went first, explaining the new enterprise:—

"Dear Jill,—It's too bad you can't come over to see me. I am pretty well, but awful tired of keeping still. I want to see you ever so much. Frank has fixed us a telegraph, so we can write and send things. Won't it be jolly! I can't look out to see him do it; but, when you pull your string, my little bell rings, and I know a message is coming. I send you an orange. Do you like gorver jelly? People send in lots of goodies, and we will go halves. Good-by.

"Jack"

Away went the basket, and in fifteen minutes it came back from the cottage with nothing in it but the orange.

"Hullo! Is she mad?" asked Jack, as Frank brought the despatch for him to examine.

But, at the first touch, the hollow peel opened, and out fell a letter, two gum-drops, and an owl made of a peanut, with round eyes drawn at the end where the stem formed a funny beak. Two bits of straw were the legs, and the face looked so like Dr. Whiting that both boys laughed at the sight.

"That's so like Jill; she'd make fun if she was half dead. Let's see what she says;" and Jack read the little note, which showed a sad neglect of the spelling-book:—

"Dear Jacky,—I can't stir and it's horrid. The telly graf is very nice and we will have fun with it. I never ate any gorver jelly. The orange was first rate. Send me a book to read. All about bears and ships and crockydiles. The doctor was coming to see you, so I sent him the quickest way. Molly Loo says it is dreadful lonesome at school without us. Yours truly,

"Jill"

Jack immediately despatched the book and a sample of guava jelly, which unfortunately upset on the way, to the great detriment of "The Wild Beasts of Asia and Africa." Jill promptly responded with the loan of a tiny black kitten, who emerged spitting and scratching, to Jack's great delight; and he was cudgelling his brains as to how a fat white rabbit could be transported, when a shrill whistle from without saved Jill from that inconvenient offering.

"It's the fellows; do you want to see them?" asked Frank, gazing down with calm superiority upon the three eager faces which looked up at him.