FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT

T. TEMBAROM

T. Tembarom

FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT

T. Tembarom, F. Hodgson Burnett
Jazzybee Verlag Jürgen Beck
86450 Altenmünster, Loschberg 9
Deutschland

ISBN: 9783849649098

www.jazzybee-verlag.de
admin@jazzybee-verlag.de

CONTENTS:

Chapter I

The boys at the Brooklyn public school which he attended did not know what the "T." stood for. He would never tell them. All he said in reply to questions was: "It don't stand for nothin'. You've gotter have a' 'nitial, ain't you?" His name was, in fact, an almost inevitable school-boy modification of one felt to be absurd and pretentious. His Christian name was Temple, which became "Temp." His surname was Barom, so he was at once "Temp Barom." In the natural tendency to avoid waste of time it was pronounced as one word, and the letter p being superfluous and cumbersome, it easily settled itself into "Tembarom," and there remained. By much less inevitable processes have surnames evolved themselves as centuries rolled by. Tembarom liked it, and soon almost forgot he had ever been called anything else.

His education really began when he was ten years old. At that time his mother died of pneumonia, contracted by going out to sew, at seventy-five cents a day, in shoes almost entirely without soles, when the remains of a blizzard were melting in the streets. As, after her funeral, there remained only twenty-five cents in the shabby bureau which was one of the few articles furnishing the room in the tenement in which they lived together, Tembarom sleeping on a cot, the world spread itself before him as a place to explore in search of at least one meal a day. There was nothing to do but to explore it to the best of his ten-year-old ability.

His father had died two years before his mother, and Tembarom had vaguely felt it a relief. He had been a resentful, domestically tyrannical immigrant Englishman, who held in contempt every American trait and institution. He had come over to better himself, detesting England and

the English because there was "no chance for a man there," and, transferring his dislikes and resentments from one country to another, had met with no better luck than he had left behind him. This he felt to be the fault of America, and his family, which was represented solely by Tembarom and his mother, heard a good deal about it, and also, rather contradictorily, a good deal about the advantages and superiority of England, to which in the course of six months he became gloomily loyal. It was necessary, in fact, for him to have something with which to compare the United States unfavorably. The effect he produced on Tembarom was that of causing him, when he entered the public school round the corner, to conceal with determination verging on duplicity the humiliating fact that if he had not been born in Brooklyn he might have been born in England. England was not popular among the boys in the school. History had represented the country to them in all its tyrannical rapacity and bloodthirsty oppression of the humble free-born. The manly and admirable attitude was to say, "Give me liberty or give me death"—and there was the Fourth of July.

Though Tembarom and his mother had been poor enough while his father lived, when he died the returns from his irregular odd jobs no longer came in to supplement his wife's sewing, and add an occasional day or two of fuller meals, in consequence of which they were oftener than ever hungry and cold, and in desperate trouble about the rent of their room. Tembarom, who was a wiry, enterprising little fellow, sometimes found an odd job himself. He carried notes and parcels when any one would trust him with them, he split old boxes into kindling-wood, more than once he "minded" a baby when its mother left its perambulator outside a store. But at eight or nine years of age one's pay is in proportion to one's size. Tembarom, however, had neither his father's bitter eye nor his mother's discouraged one. Something different from either had been

reincarnated in him from some more cheerful past. He had an alluring grin instead—a grin which curled up his mouth and showed his sound, healthy, young teeth,—a lot of them,—and people liked to see them.

At the beginning of the world it is only recently reasonable to suppose human beings were made with healthy bodies and healthy minds. That of course was the original scheme of the race. It would not have been worth while to create a lot of things aimlessly ill made. A journeyman carpenter would not waste his time in doing it, if he knew any better. Given the power to make a man, even an amateur would make him as straight as he could, inside and out. Decent vanity would compel him to do it. He would be ashamed to show the thing and admit he had done it, much less people a world with millions of like proofs of incompetence. Logically considered, the race was built straight and clean and healthy and happy. How, since then, it has developed in multitudinous less sane directions, and lost its normal straightness and proportions, I am, singularly enough, not entirely competent to explain with any degree of satisfactory detail. But it cannot be truthfully denied that this has rather generally happened. There are human beings who are not beautiful, there are those who are not healthy, there are those who hate people and things with much waste of physical and mental energy, there are people who are not unwilling to do others an ill turn by word or deed, and there are those who do not believe that the original scheme of the race was ever a decent one.

This is all abnormal and unintelligent, even the not being beautiful, and sometimes one finds oneself called upon passionately to resist a temptation to listen to an internal hint that the whole thing is aimless. Upon this tendency one may as well put one's foot firmly, as it leads nowhere. At such times it is supporting to call to mind a certain undeniable fact which ought to loom up much larger in our philosophical calculations. No one has ever made a

collection of statistics regarding the enormous number of perfectly sane, kind, friendly, decent creatures who form a large proportion of any mass of human beings anywhere and everywhere—people who are not vicious or cruel or depraved, not as a result of continual self-control, but simply because they do not want to be, because it is more natural and agreeable to be exactly the opposite things; people who do not tell lies because they could not do it with any pleasure, and would, on the contrary, find the exertion an annoyance and a bore; people whose manners and morals are good because their natural preference lies in that direction. There are millions of them who in most essays on life and living are virtually ignored because they do none of the things which call forth eloquent condemnation or brilliant cynicism. It has not yet become the fashion to record them. When one reads a daily newspaper filled with dramatic elaborations of crimes and unpleasantness, one sometimes wishes attention might be called to them—to their numbers, to their decencies, to their normal lack of any desire to do violence and their equally normal disposition to lend a hand. One is inclined to feel that the majority of persons do not believe in their existence. But if an accident occurs in the street, there are always several of them who appear to spring out of the earth to give human sympathy and assistance; if a national calamity, physical or social, takes place, the world suddenly seems full of them. They are the thousands of Browns, Joneses, and Robinsons who, massed together, send food to famine-stricken countries, sustenance to earthquake-devastated regions, aid to wounded soldiers or miners or flood-swept homelessness. They are the ones who have happened naturally to continue to grow straight and carry out the First Intention. They really form the majority; if they did not, the people of the earth would have eaten one another alive centuries ago. But though this is surely true, a happy cynicism totally disbelieves in their existence.

When a combination of circumstances sufficiently dramatic brings one of them into prominence, he is either called an angel or a fool. He is neither. He is only a human creature who is normal.

After this manner Tembarom was wholly normal. He liked work and rejoiced in good cheer, when he found it, however attenuated its form. He was a good companion, and even at ten years old a practical person. He took his loose coppers from the old bureau drawer, and remembering that he had several times helped Jake Hutchins to sell his newspapers, he went forth into the world to find and consult him as to the investment of his capital.

"Where are you goin', Tem?" a woman who lived in the next room said when she met him on the stairs. "What you goin' to do?"

"I'm goin' to sell newspapers if I can get some with this," he replied, opening his hand to show her the extent of his resources.

She was almost as poor as he was, but not quite. She looked him over curiously for a moment, and then fumbled in her pocket. She drew out two ten-cent pieces and considered them, hesitating. Then she looked again at him. That normal expression in his nice ten-year-old eyes had its suggestive effect.

"You take this," she said, handing him the two pieces. "It'll help you to start."

"I'll bring it back, ma'am," said Tem. "Thank you, Mis' Hullingworth."

In about two weeks' time he did bring it back. That was the beginning. He lived through all the experiences a small boy waif and stray would be likely to come in contact with. The abnormal class treated him ill, and the normal class treated him well. He managed to get enough food to eat to keep him from starvation. Sometimes he slept under a roof and much oftener out-of-doors. He preferred to sleep out-of-doors more than half of the year, and the rest of the time

he did what he could. He saw and learned many strange things, but was not undermined by vice because he unconsciously preferred decency. He sold newspapers and annexed any old job which appeared on the horizon. The education the New York streets gave him was a liberal one. He became accustomed to heat and cold and wet weather, but having sound lungs and a tough little body combined with the normal tendencies already mentioned, he suffered no more physical deterioration than a young Indian would suffer. After selling newspapers for two years he got a place as "boy" in a small store. The advance signified by steady employment was inspiring to his energies. He forged ahead, and got a better job and better pay as he grew older. By the time he was fifteen he shared a small bedroom with another boy. In whatsoever quarter he lived, friends seemed sporadic. Other boy's congregated about him. He did not know he had any effect at all, but his effect, in fact, was rather like that of a fire in winter or a cool breeze in summer. It was natural to gather where it prevailed.

There came a time when he went to a night class to learn stenography. Great excitement had been aroused among the boys he knew best by a rumor that there were "fellows" who could earn a hundred dollars a week "writing short." Boyhood could not resist the florid splendor of the idea. Four of them entered the class confidently looking forward to becoming the recipients of four hundred a month in the course of six weeks. One by one they dropped off, until only Tembarom remained, slowly forging ahead. He had never meant anything else but to get on in the world—to get as far as he could. He kept at his "short," and by the time he was nineteen it helped him to a place in a newspaper office. He took dictation from a nervous and harried editor, who, when he was driven to frenzy by overwork and incompetencies, found that the long-legged, clean youth with the grin never added fuel to the flame of his wrath. He was a common young man, who was not marked by special

brilliancy of intelligence, but he had a clear head and a good temper, and a queer aptitude for being able to see himself in the other man's shoes—his difficulties and moods. This ended in his being tried with bits of new work now and then. In an emergency he was once sent out to report the details of a fire. What he brought back was usable, and his elation when he found he had actually "made good" was ingenuous enough to spur Galton, the editor, into trying him again.

To Tembarom this was a magnificent experience. The literary suggestion implied by being "on a newspaper" was more than he had hoped for. If you have sold newspapers, and slept in a barrel or behind a pile of lumber in a wood-yard, to report a fire in a street-car shed seems a flight of literature. He applied himself to the careful study of newspapers—their points of view, their style of phrasing. He believed them to be perfect. To attain ease in expressing himself in their elevated language he felt to be the summit of lofty ambition. He had no doubts of the exaltation of his ideal. His respect and confidence almost made Galton cry at times, because they recalled to him days when he had been nineteen and had regarded New York journalists with reverence. He liked Tembarom more and more. It actually soothed him to have him about, and he fell into giving him one absurd little chance after another. When he brought in "stuff" which bore too evident marks of utter ignorance, he actually touched it up and used it, giving him an enlightening, ironical hint or so. Tembarom always took the hints with gratitude. He had no mistaken ideas of his own powers. Galton loomed up before him a sort of god, and though the editor was a man with a keen, though wearied, brain and a sense of humor, the situation was one naturally productive of harmonious relations. He was of the many who unknowingly came in out of the cold and stood in the glow of Tembarom's warm fire, or took refuge from the heat in his cool breeze. He did

not know of the private, arduous study of journalistic style, and it was not unpleasing to see that the nice young cub was gradually improving. Through pure modest fear or ridicule, Tembarom kept to himself his vaulting ambition. He practised reports of fires, weddings, and accidents in his hall bedroom.

A hall bedroom in a third-rate boarding-house is not a cheerful place, but when Tembarom vaguely felt this, he recalled the nights spent in empty trucks and behind lumber-piles, and thought he was getting spoiled by luxury. He told himself that he was a fellow who always had luck. He did not know, neither did any one else, that his luck would have followed him if he had lived in a coal-hole. It was the concomitant of his normal build and outlook on life. Mrs. Bowse, his hard-worked landlady, began by being calmed down by his mere bearing when he came to apply for his room and board. She had a touch of grippe, and had just emerged from a heated affray with a dirty cook, and was inclined to battle when he presented himself. In a few minutes she was inclined to battle no longer. She let him have the room. Cantankerous restrictions did not ruffle him.

"Of course what you say GOES," he said, giving her his friendly grin. "Any one that takes boarders has GOT to be careful. You're in for a bad cold, ain't you?"

"I've got grippe again, that's what I've got," she almost snapped.

"Did you ever try Payson's 'G. Destroyer'? G stands for grippe, you know. Catchy name, ain't it? They say the man that invented it got ten thousand dollars for it. 'G. Destroyer.' You feel like you have to find out what it means when you see it up on a boarding. I'm just over grippe myself, and I've got half a bottle in my pocket. You carry it about with you, and swallow one every half-hour. You just try it. It set me right in no time."

He took the bottle out of his waistcoat pocket and handed it to her. She took it and turned it over.

"You're awful good-natured,"—She hesitated,—"but I ain't going to take your medicine. I ought to go and get some for myself. How much does it cost?"

"It's on the bottle; but it's having to get it for yourself that's the matter. You won't have time, and you'll forget it."

"That's true enough," said Mrs. Bowse, looking at him sharply. "I guess you know something about boarding-houses."

"I guess I know something about trying to earn three meals a day—or two of them. It's no merry jest, whichever way you do it."

Chapter II

When he took possession of his hall bedroom the next day and came down to his first meal, all the boarders looked at him interestedly. They had heard of the G. Destroyer from Mrs. Bowse, whose grippe had disappeared. Jim Bowles and Julius Steinberger looked at him because they were about his own age, and shared a hall bedroom on his floor; the young woman from the notion counter in a down-town department store looked at him because she was a young woman; the rest of the company looked at him because a young man in a hall bedroom might or might not be noisy or objectionable, and the incident of the G. Destroyer sounded good-natured. Mr. Joseph Hutchinson, the stout and discontented Englishman from Manchester, looked him over because the mere fact that he was a new-comer had placed him by his own rash act in the position of a target for criticism. Mr. Hutchinson had come to New York because he had been told that he could find backers among profuse and innumerable multi-millionaires for the invention which had been the haunting vision of his uninspiring life. He had not been met with the careless rapture which had been described to him, and he was becoming violently antagonistic to American capital and pessimistic in his views of American institutions. Like Tembarom's father, he was the resentful Englishman.

"I don't think much o' that chap," he said in what he considered an undertone to his daughter, who sat beside him and tried to manage that he should not be infuriated by waiting for butter and bread and second helpings. A fine, healthy old feudal feeling that servants should be roared at if they did not "look sharp" when he wanted anything was one of his salient characteristics.

"Wait a bit, Father; we don't know anything about him yet," Ann Hutchinson murmured quietly, hoping that his words had been lost in the clatter of knives and forks and dishes.

As Tembarom had taken his seat, he had found that, when he looked across the table, he looked directly at Miss Hutchinson; and before the meal ended he felt that he was in great good luck to be placed opposite an object of such singular interest. He knew nothing about "types," but if he had been of those who do, he would probably have said to himself that she was of a type apart. As it was, he merely felt that she was of a kind one kept looking at whether one ought to or not. She was a little thing of that exceedingly light slimness of build which makes a girl a childish feather-weight. Few girls retain it after fourteen or fifteen. A wind might supposably have blown her away, but one knew it would not, because she was firm and steady on her small feet. Ordinary strength could have lifted her with one hand, and would have been tempted to do it. She had a slim, round throat, and the English daisy face it upheld caused it to suggest to the mind the stem of a flower. The roundness of her cheek, in and out of which totally unexpected dimples flickered, and the forget-me-not blueness of her eyes, which were large and rather round also, made her look like a nice baby of singularly serious and observing mind. She looked at one as certain awe-inspiring things in perambulators look at one—with a far and clear silence of gaze which passes beyond earthly obstacles and reserves a benign patience with follies. Tembarom felt interestedly that one really might quail before it, if one had anything of an inferior quality to hide. And yet it was not a critical gaze at all. She wore a black dress with a bit of white collar, and she had so much soft, red hair that he could not help recalling one or two women who owned the same quantity and seemed able to carry it only as a sort of untidy bundle. Hers looked entirely under

control, and yet was such a wonder of burnished fullness that it tempted the hand to reach out and touch it. It became Tembarom's task during the meal to keep his eyes from turning too often toward it and its owner.

If she had been a girl who took things hard, she might have taken her father very hard indeed. But opinions and feelings being solely a matter of points of view, she was very fond of him, and, regarding him as a sacred charge and duty, took care of him as though she had been a reverentially inclined mother taking care of a boisterous son. When his roar was heard, her calm little voice always fell quietly on indignant ears the moment it ceased. It was her part in life to act as a palliative: her mother, whose well-trained attitude toward the ruling domestic male was of the early Victorian order, had lived and died one. A nicer, warmer little woman had never existed. Joseph Hutchinson had adored and depended on her as much as he had harried her. When he had charged about like a mad bull because he could not button his collar, or find the pipe he had mislaid in his own pocket, she had never said more than "Now, Mr. Hutchinson," or done more than leave her sewing to button the collar with soothing fingers, and suggest quietly that sometimes he DID chance to carry his pipe about with him. She was of the class which used to call its husband by a respectful surname. When she died she left him as a sort of legacy to her daughter, spending the last weeks of her life in explaining affectionately all that "Father" needed to keep him quiet and make him comfortable.

Little Ann had never forgotten a detail, and had even improved upon some of them, as she happened to be cleverer than her mother, and had, indeed, a far-seeing and clear young mind of her own. She had been called "Little Ann" all her life. This had held in the first place because her mother's name had been Ann also, and after her mother's death the diminutive had not fallen away from her.

People felt it belonged to her not because she was especially little, though she was a small, light person, but because there was an affectionate humor in the sound of it.

Despite her hard needs, Mrs. Bowse would have faced the chance of losing two boarders rather than have kept Mr. Joseph Hutchinson but for Little Ann. As it was, she kept them both, and in the course of three months the girl was Little Ann to almost every one in the house. Her normalness took the form of an instinct which amounted to genius for seeing what people ought to have, and in some occult way filling in bare or trying places.

"She's just a wonder, that girl," Mrs. Bowse said to one boarder after another.

"She's just a wonder," Jim Bowles and Julius Steinberger murmured to each other in rueful confidence, as they tilted their chairs against the wall of their hall bedroom and smoked. Each of the shabby and poverty-stricken young men had of course fallen hopelessly in love with her at once. This was merely human and inevitable, but realizing in the course of a few weeks that she was too busy taking care of her irritable, boisterous old Manchester father, and everybody else, to have time to be made love to even by young men who could buy new boots when the old ones had ceased to be water-tight, they were obliged to resign themselves to the, after all, comforting fact that she became a mother to them, not a sister. She mended their socks and sewed buttons on for them with a firm frankness which could not be persuaded into meaning anything more sentimental than a fixed habit of repairing anything which needed it, and which, while at first bewildering in its serenity, ended by reducing the two youths to a dust of devotion.

"She's a wonder, she is," they sighed when at every weekend they found their forlorn and scanty washing resting tidily on their bed.

In the course of a week, more or less, Tembarom's feeling for her would have been exactly that of his two hall-bedroom neighbors, but that his nature, though a practical one, was not inclined to any supine degree of resignation. He was a sensible youth, however, and gave no trouble. Even Joseph Hutchinson, who of course resented furiously any "nonsense" of which his daughter and possession was the object, became sufficiently mollified by his good spirits and ready good nature to refrain from open conversational assault.

"I don't mind that chap as much as I did at first," he admitted reluctantly to Little Ann one evening after a good dinner and a comfortable pipe. "He's not such a fool as he looks."

Tembarom was given, as Little Ann was, to seeing what people wanted. He knew when to pass the mustard and other straying condiments. He picked up things which dropped inconveniently, he did not interrupt the remarks of his elders and betters, and several times when he chanced to be in the hall, and saw Mr. Hutchinson, in irritable, stout Englishman fashion, struggling into his overcoat, he sprang forward with a light, friendly air and helped him. 'He did not do it with ostentatious politeness or with the manner of active youth giving generous aid to elderly avoirdupois. He did it as though it occurred to him as a natural result of being on the spot.

It took Mrs. Bowse and her boarding-house less than a week definitely to like him. Every night when he sat down to dinner he brought news with him-news and jokes and new slang. Newspaper-office anecdote and talk gave a journalistic air to the gathering when he was present, and there was novelty in it. Soon every one was intimate with him, and interested in what he was doing. Galton's good-natured patronage of him was a thing to which no one was indifferent. It was felt to be the right thing in the right place. When he came home at night it became the custom

to ask him questions as to the bits of luck which befell him. He became "T. T." instead of Mr. Tembarom, except to Joseph Hutchinson and his 'daughter. Hutchinson called him Tembarom, but Little Ann said "Mr. Tembarom" with quaint frequency when she spoke to him.

"Landed anything to-day, T. T.?" some one would ask almost every evening, and the interest in his relation of the day's adventures increased from week to week. Little Ann never asked questions and seldom made comments, but she always listened attentively. She had gathered, and guessed from what she had gathered, a rather definite idea of what his hard young life had been. He did not tell pathetic stories about himself, but he and Jim Bowles and Julius Steinberger had become fast friends, and the genial smoking of cheap tobacco in hall bedrooms tends to frankness of relation, and the various ways in which each had found himself "up against it" in the course of their brief years supplied material for anecdotal talk.

"But it's bound to be easier from now on," he would say. "I've got the 'short' down pretty fine—not fine enough to make big money, but enough to hold down a job with Galton. He's mighty good to me. If I knew more, I believe he'd give me a column to take care of—Up-town Society column perhaps. A fellow named Biker's got it. Twenty per. Goes on a bust twice a month, the fool. Gee! I wish I had his job!"

Mrs. Bowse's house was provided with a parlor in which her boarders could sit in the evening when so inclined. It was a fearsome room, which, when the dark, high-ceilinged hall was entered, revealed depths of dingy gloom which appeared splashed in spots with incongruous brilliancy of color. This effect was produced by richly framed department-store chromo lithographs on the walls, aided by lurid cushion-covers, or "tidies" representing Indian maidens or chieftains in full war paint, or clusters of poppies of great boldness of hue. They had either been

Christmas gifts bestowed upon Mrs. Bowse or department-store bargains of her own selection, purchased with thrifty intent. The red-and-green plush upholstered walnut chairs arid sofa had been acquired by her when the bankruptcy of a neighboring boarding-house brought them within her means. They were no longer very red or very green, and the cheerfully hopeful design of the tidies and cushions had been to conceal worn places and stains. The mantelpiece was adorned by a black-walnut-and-gold-framed mirror, and innumerable vases of the ornate ninety-eight-cents order. The centerpiece held a large and extremely soiled spray of artificial wistaria. The end of the room was rendered attractive by a tent-like cozy-corner built of savage weapons and Oriental cotton stuffs long ago become stringy and almost leprous in hue. The proprietor of the bankrupt boarding-house had been "artistic." But Mrs. Bowse was a good-enough soul whose boarders liked her and her house, and when the gas was lighted and some one played "rag-time" on the second-hand pianola, they liked the parlor.

Little Ann did not often appear in it, but now and then she came down with her bit of sewing,—she always had a "bit of sewing,"—and she sat in the cozy-corner listening to the talk or letting some one confide troubles to her. Sometimes it was the New England widow, Mrs. Peck, who looked like a spinster school-ma'am, but who had a married son with a nice wife who lived in Harlem and drank heavily. She used to consult with Little Ann as to the possible wisdom of putting a drink deterrent privately in his tea. Sometimes it was Mr. Jakes, a depressed little man whose wife had left him, for no special reason he could discover. Oftenest perhaps it was Julius Steinberger or Jim Bowles who did their ingenuous best to present themselves to her as energetic, if not successful, young business men, not wholly unworthy of attention and always breathing daily increasing devotion. Sometimes it was Tembarom, of whom

her opinion had never been expressed, but who seemed to have made friends with her. She liked to hear about the newspaper office and Mr. Galton, and never was uninterested in his hopes of "making good." She seemed to him the wisest and most direct and composed person he had ever known. She spoke with the broad, flat, friendly Manchester accent, and when she let drop a suggestion, it carried a delightfully sober conviction with it, because what she said was generally a revelation of logical mental argument concerning details she had gathered through her little way of listening and saying nothing whatever.

"If Mr. Biker drinks, he won't keep his place," she said to Tembarom one night. "Perhaps you might get it yourself, if you persevere."

Tembarom reddened a little. He really reddened through joyous excitement.

"Say, I didn't know you knew a thing about that," he answered. "You're a regular wonder. You scarcely ever say anything, but the way you get on to things gets me."

"Perhaps if I talked more I shouldn't notice as much," she said, turning her bit of sewing round and examining it. "I never was much of a talker. Father's a good talker, and Mother and me got into the way of listening. You do if you live with a good talker."

Tembarom looked at the girl with a male gentleness, endeavoring to subdue open expression of the fact that he was convinced that she was as thoroughly aware of her father's salient characteristics as she was of other things.

"You do," said Tembarom. Then picking up her scissors, which had dropped from her lap, and politely returning them, he added anxiously: "To think of you remembering Biker! I wonder, if I ever did get his job, if I could hold it down?"

"Yes," decided Little Ann; "you could. I've noticed you're that kind of person, Mr. Tembarom."

"Have you?" he said elatedly. "Say, honest Injun?"

"Yes."

"I shall be getting stuck on myself if you encourage me like that," he said, and then, his face falling, he added, "Biker graduated at Princeton."

"I don't know much about society," Little Ann remarked, —"I never saw any either up-town or down-town or in the country,—but I shouldn't think you'd have to have a college education to write the things you see about it in the newspaper paragraphs."

Tembarom grinned.

"They're not real high-brow stuff, are they," he said. "'There was a brilliant gathering on Tuesday evening at the house of Mr. Jacob Sturtburger at 79 Two Hundredth Street on the occasion of the marriage of his daughter Miss Rachel Sturtburger to Mr. Eichenstein. The bride was attired in white peau de cygne trimmed with duchess lace.'"

Little Ann took him up. "I don't know what peau de cygne is, and I daresay the bride doesn't. I've never been to anything but a village school, but I could make up paragraphs like that myself."

"That's the up-town kind," said Tembarom. "The down-town ones wear their mothers' point-lace wedding-veils some-times, but they're not much different. Say, I believe I could do it if I had luck."

"So do I," returned Little Ann.

Tembarom looked down at the carpet, thinking the thing over. Ann went on sewing.

"That's the way with you," he said presently: "you put things into a fellow's head. You've given me a regular boost, Little Ann."

It is not unlikely that but for the sensible conviction in her voice he would have felt less bold when, two weeks later, Biker, having gone upon a "bust" too prolonged, was dismissed with-out benefit of clergy, and Galton desperately turned to Tembarom with anxious question in his eye.

"Do you think you could take this job?" he said.

Tembarom's heart, as he believed at the time, jumped into his throat.

"What do you think, Mr. Galton?" he asked.

"It isn't a thing to think about," was Galton's answer. "It's a thing I must be sure of."

"Well," said Tembarom, "if you give it to me, I'll put up a mighty hard fight before I fall down."

Galton considered him, scrutinizing keenly his tough, long-built body, his sharp, eager, boyish face, and especially his companionable grin.

"We'll let it go at that," he decided. "You'll make friends up in Harlem, and you won't find it hard to pick up news. We can at least try it."

Tembarom's heart jumped into his throat again, and he swallowed it once more. He was glad he was not holding his hat in his hand because he knew he would have forgotten himself and thrown it up into the air.

"Thank you, Mr. Galton," he said, flushing tremendously. "I'd like to tell you how I appreciate your trusting me, but I don't know how. Thank you, sir."

When he appeared in Mrs. Bowse's dining-room that evening there was a glow of elation about him and a swing in his entry which attracted all eyes at once. For some unknown reason everybody looked at him, and, meeting his eyes, detected the presence of some new exultation.

"Landed anything, T. T.?" Jim Bowles cried out. "You look it."

"Sure I look it," Tembarom answered, taking his napkin out of its ring with an unconscious flourish. "I've landed the up-town society page—landed it, by gee!"

A good-humored chorus of ejaculatory congratulation broke forth all round the table.

"Good business!" "Three cheers for T. T.!" "Glad of it!" "Here's luck!" said one after another.

They were all pleased, and it was generally felt that Galton had shown sense and done the right thing again. Even Mr. Hutchinson rolled about in his chair and grunted his approval.

After dinner Tembarom, Jim Bowles, and Julius Steinberger went upstairs stairs together and filled the hall bedroom with clouds of tobacco-smoke, tilting their chairs against the wall, smoking their pipes furiously, flushed and talkative, working themselves up with the exhilarated plannings of youth. Jim Bowles and Julius had been down on their luck for several weeks, and that "good old T. T." should come in with this fairy-story was an actual stimulus. If you have never in your life been able to earn more than will pay for your food and lodging, twenty dollars looms up large. It might be the beginning of anything.

"First thing is to get on to the way to do it," argued Tembarom. "I don't know the first thing. I've got to think it out. I couldn't ask Biker. He wouldn't tell me, anyhow."

"He's pretty mad, I guess," said Steinberger.

"Mad as hops," Tembarom answered. "As I was coming down-stairs from Galton's room he was standing in the hall talking to Miss Dooley, and he said: `That Tembarom fellow's going to do it! He doesn't know how to spell. I should like to see his stuff come in.' He said it loud, because he wanted me to hear it, and he sort of laughed through his nose."

"Say, T. T., can you spell?" Jim inquired thoughtfully.

"Spell? Me? No," Tembarom owned with unshaken good cheer. "What I've got to do is to get a tame dictionary and keep it chained to the leg of my table. Those words with two m's or two l's in them get me right down on the mat. But the thing that looks biggest to me is how to find out where the news is, and the name of the fellow that'll put me on to it. You can't go up a man's front steps and ring the bell and ask him if he's going to be married or buried or have a pink tea."

"Wasn't that a knock at the door?" said Steinberger.

It was a knock, and Tembarom jumped up and threw the door open, thinking Mrs. Bowse might have come on some household errand. But it was Little Ann Hutchinson instead of Mrs. Bowse, and there was a threaded needle stuck into the front of her dress, and she had on a thimble.

"I want Mr. Bowles's new socks," she said maternally. "I promised I'd mark them for him."

Bowles and Steinberger sprang from their chairs, and came forward in the usual comfortable glow of pleasure at sight of her.

"What do you think of that for all the comforts of a home?" said Tembarom. "As if it wasn't enough for a man to have new socks without having marks put on them! What are your old socks made of anyhow—solid gold? Burglars ain't going to break in and steal them."

"They won't when I've marked them, Mr. Tembarom," answered Little Ann, looking up at him with sober, round, for-get-me-not blue eyes, but with a deep dimple breaking out near her lip; "but all three pairs would not come home from the wash if I didn't."

"Three pairs!" ejaculated Tembarom. "He's got three pairs of socks! New? That's what's been the matter with him for the last week. Don't you mark them for him, Little Ann. 'Tain't good for a man to have everything."

"Here they are," said Jim, bringing them forward. "Twenty-five marked down to ten at Tracy's. Are they pretty good?"

Little Ann looked them over with the practised eye of a connoisseur of bargains.

"They'd be about a shilling in Manchester shops," she decided, "and they might be put down to sixpence. They're good enough to take care of."

She was not the young woman who is ready for prolonged lively conversation in halls and at bedroom doors, and she

had turned away with the new socks in her hand when Tembarom, suddenly inspired, darted after her.

"Say, I've just thought of something," he exclaimed eagerly. "It's something I want to ask you."

"What is it?"

"It's about the society-page lay-out." He hesitated. "I wonder if it'd be rushing you too much if—say," he suddenly broke off, and standing with his hands in his pockets, looked down at her with anxious admiration, "I believe you just know about everything."

"No, I don't, Mr. Tembarom; but I'm very glad about the page. Everybody's glad."

One of the chief difficulties Tembarom found facing him when he talked to Little Ann was the difficulty of resisting an awful temptation to take hold of her—to clutch her to his healthy, tumultuous young breast and hold her there firmly. He was half ashamed of himself when he realized it, but he knew that his venial weakness was shared by Jim Bowles and Steinberger and probably others. She was so slim and light and soft, and the serious frankness of her eyes and the quaint air of being a sort of grown-up child of astonishing intelligence produced an effect it was necessary to combat with.

"What I wanted to say," he put it to her, "was that I believe if you'd just let me talk this thing out to you it'd do me good. I believe you'd help me to get somewhere. I've got to fix up a scheme for getting next the people who have things happening to them that I can make society stuff out of, you know. Biker didn't make a hit of it, but, gee! I've just got to. I've got to."

"Yes," answered Little Ann, her eyes fixed on him thoughtfully; "you've got to, Mr. Tembarom."

"There's not a soul in the parlor. Would you mind coming down and sitting there while I talk at you and try to work things out? You could go on with your marking."

She thought it over a minute.

"I'll do it if Father can spare me," she made up her mind. "I'll go and ask him."

She went to ask him, and returned in two or three minutes with her small sewing-basket in her hand.

"He can spare me," she said. "He's reading his paper, and doesn't want to talk."

They went down-stairs together and found the room empty. Tembarom turned up the lowered gas, and Little Ann sat down in the cozy-corner with her work-basket on her knee. Tembarom drew up a chair and sat down opposite to her. She threaded a needle and took up one of Jim's new socks.

"Now," she said.

"It's like this," he explained. "The page is a new deal, anyhow. There didn't used to be an up-town society column at all. It was all Fifth Avenue and the four hundred; but ours isn't a fashionable paper, and their four hundred ain't going to buy it to read their names in it. They'd rather pay to keep out of it. Uptown's growing like smoke, and there's lots of people up that way that'd like their friends to read about their weddings and receptions, and would buy a dozen copies to send away when their names were in. There's no end of women and girls that'd like to see their clothes described and let their friends read the descriptions. They'd buy the paper, too, you bet. It'll be a big circulation-increaser. It's Galton's idea, and he gave the job to Biker because he thought an educated fellow could get hold of people. But somehow he couldn't. Seems as if they didn't like him. He kept getting turned down. The page has been mighty poor—no pictures of brides or anything. Galton's been sick over it. He'd been sure it'd make a hit. Then Biker's always drinking more or less, and he's got the swell head, anyhow. I believe that's the reason he couldn't make good with the up-towners."

"Perhaps he was too well educated, Mr. Tembarom," said Little Ann. She was marking a letter J in red cotton, and

her outward attention was apparently wholly fixed on her work.

"Say, now," Tembarom broke out, "there's where you come in. You go on working as if there was nothing but that sock in New York, but I guess you've just hit the dot. Perhaps that was it. He wanted to do Fifth Avenue work anyway, and he didn't go at Harlem right. He put on Princeton airs when he asked questions. Gee! a fellow can't put on any kind of airs when he's the one that's got to ask."

"You'll get on better," remarked Little Ann. "You've got a friendly way and you've a lot of sense. I've noticed it."

Her head was bent over the red J and she still looked at it and not at Tembarom. This was not coyness, but simple, calm absorption. If she had not been making the J, she would have sat with her hands folded in her lap, and gazed at the young man with undisturbed attention.

"Have you?" said Tembarom, gratefully. "That gives me another boost, Little Ann. What a man seems to need most is just plain twenty-cents-a-yard sense. Not that I ever thought I had the dollar kind. I'm not putting on airs."

"Mr. Galton knows the kind you have. I suppose that's why he gave you the page." The words, spoken in the shrewd-sounding Manchester accent, were neither flattering nor unflattering; they were merely impartial.

"Well, now I've got it, I can't fall down," said Tembarom. "I've got to find out for myself how to get next to the people I want to talk to. I've got to find out who to get next to."

Little Ann put in the final red stitch of the letter J and laid the sock neatly folded on the basket.

"I've just been thinking something, Mr. Tembarom," she said. "Who makes the wedding-cakes?"

He gave a delighted start.

"Gee!" he broke out, "the wedding-cakes!"

"Yes," Little Ann proceeded, "they'd have to have wedding-cakes, and perhaps if you went to the shops where they're sold and could make friends with the people, they'd

tell you whom they were selling them to, and you could get the addresses and go and find out things."

Tembarom, glowing with admiring enthusiasm, thrust out his hand.

"Little Ann, shake!" he said. "You've given me the whole show, just like I thought you would. You're just the limit."

"Well, a wedding-cake's the next thing after the bride," she answered.

Her practical little head had given him the practical lead. The mere wedding-cake opened up vistas. Confectioners supplied not only weddings, but refreshments for receptions and dances. Dances suggested the "halls" in which they were held. You could get information at such places. Then there were the churches, and the florists who decorated festal scenes. Tembarom's excitement grew as he talked. One plan led to another; vistas opened on all sides. It all began to look so easy that he could not understand how Biker could possibly have gone into such a land of promise, and returned embittered and empty-handed.

"He thought too much of himself and too little of other people," Little Ann summed him up in her unsevere, reasonable voice. "That's so silly."

Tembarom tried not to look at her affectionately, but his voice was affectionate as well as admiring, despite him.

"The way you get on to a thing just in three words!" he said. "Daniel Webster ain't in it."

"I dare say if you let the people in the shops know that you come from a newspaper, it'll be a help," she went on with ingenuous worldly wisdom. "They'll think it'll be a kind of advertisement. And so it will. You get some neat cards printed with your name and Sunday Earth on them."

"Gee!" Tembarom ejaculated, slapping his knee, "there's another! You think of every darned thing, don't you?"

She stopped a moment to look at him.