LUCY FOSTER MADISON

A DAUGHTER OF THE UNION

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CHAPTER I
WHAT GIRLS CAN DO

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“That finishes everything,” exclaimed Jeanne Vance, placing a neatly folded handkerchief in a basket. “And oh, girls, what a little bit of a pile it makes!”

The five girls drew their chairs closer to the basket and gazed ruefully at its contents.

“How many handkerchiefs are there, Jeanne?” asked one.

“There are fifty handkerchiefs and five pairs of socks. It seemed like a great many when we took them to make, but what do they amount to after all?”

“There isn’t much that girls can do anyway,” spoke another. “If we were boys we could go to the war, or, if we were women we could be nurses. I don’t like being just a girl!”

“Well, I wouldn’t mind it so much if there was anything I could do,” remarked Jeanne who seemed to be the leader. “But when Dick is in the army, father in government service, and mother at work all day in the Relief Association, it is pretty hard not to be able to do anything but hem handkerchiefs and make socks.”

“A great many persons don’t even do that,” said Nellie Drew, the youngest girl of the party. “And they are grown-up people, too.”

“Then the more shame to them,” cried Jeanne indignantly. “In such a war as ours every man, woman and child in the United States ought to be interested. I don’t see how any one can help being so. For my part, I am going to

do all that I can for the soldiers if it is only to hem handkerchiefs."

"What else could we do? We can't help being girls, and Miss Thornton was pleased when we asked for more work. She said that our last socks were done as well as women could do them. I am sure that that is something."

"That is true," admitted Jeanne soberly. "I have heard mother say that some of the things were so poorly made that the ladies were ashamed to send them to the front, but that often the need was so urgent that they were compelled to do it. I am willing to knit socks and to hem handkerchiefs, but I would like to do something else too. There is so much to be done that I don't feel as if I were doing all that I might do."

"We don't either, Jeanne, and if you know of anything we will gladly help to do it," cried the girls together.

"I don't know of anything else, girls, but maybe I can think of something," said Jeanne, looking at the earnest faces before her.

It was a bright May afternoon in the year of 1862, and the great conflict between the North and the South was waging fiercely. The terrible battle of Shiloh of the month before had dispelled some of the illusions of the North and the people were awakening to the fact that a few victories were not sufficient to overthrow the Confederacy.

Aid societies under the United States Sanitary Commission for the relief of the soldiers were springing up all over the Union, and patriotism glowed brightly inflaming the hearts of rich and poor alike. This zeal was not confined to the old but animated the minds of the young as well.

Numerous instances are recorded of little girls who had not yet attained their tenth year denying themselves the luxuries and toys they had long desired and toiling with a patience and perseverance wholly foreign to childish nature, to procure or to make something of value for their country's defenders.

Our group of girls was only one among many banded together for the purpose of doing whatever they could for the relief of the boys in blue, and their young hearts were overwhelmed with a sense of their impotence. Jeanne Vance, a tall, slender, fair-haired girl of sixteen, serious and thoughtful beyond her years, was the leader in every patriotic enterprise of her associates.

Her father since the beginning of the war had devoted himself exclusively to furthering the interests of the government; her mother was a prominent worker in The Woman's Central Relief Association, giving her whole time to collecting supplies and money to be forwarded to the front and providing work for the wives, mothers and daughters of the soldiers. Her brother, Richard Vance, had responded to the first call of President Lincoln to arms: thus the girl was surrounded by influences that filled her being to the utmost with intense loyalty to the Union.

As she looked at the eagerly waiting girls around her a sudden inspiration came to her.

"Let's give a fair, girls. We could make pretty things to sell and I am willing that all my toys and games shall be sold too. Perhaps we could get a great deal of money that way, and I am sure that even a little would be welcome."

“But how about the socks and handkerchiefs? Shall we give up making them?”

“No, indeed! We must keep right on with those, but this fair will be all our own effort. I believe that we will feel as if we were really doing something worth while if we can manage it. What do you say?”

“It is the very thing,” cried they. “When shall we begin?”

“This afternoon,” said Jeanne energetically. “There is no time like the present. This is May. We ought to be ready by the last of June. We can do a great deal in that time if we work hard.”

“And we can get our mothers to help us too,” suggested Nellie Drew.

“We ought not to do that, Nellie,” replied Jeanne seriously. “They are so busy themselves, and it would not be truly ours if we have the older ones to help. Don’t you think we ought to do just the very best we can without them?”

“Oh, yes, yes!” chorused the girls.

“I can make pretty pin cushions,” said a girl about Jeanne’s age. “I will make as many of them as I can.”

“I can do pen wipers very nicely, mamma says,” spoke Nellie modestly.

“Mother always lets me help dress the dolls for Christmas,” cried another.

“Where will we have it, Jeanne?”

Jeanne looked puzzled for a moment. “I’ll tell you, girls. Let’s have it on our steps. We’ll have a big card telling all about it printed and put up. Then people will stop and buy things when they know it is for the soldiers.”

“On your steps,” cried Nellie. “Oh, Jeanne, will your mother let you? It is right on Fifth Avenue.”

“Why, mother won’t care!” answered Jeanne, surprised at the question. “Fifth Avenue is the best place in New York for anything of the sort, because so many well-to-do people pass, and they will be sure to be generous for the soldiers’ sake.”

“Mercy, Jeanne, where did you learn so much about things?” gasped Nellie in admiration. “I wouldn’t have thought of that.”

“Well,” said Jeanne, flushing at the praise, “I hear mother and the ladies talking, you know. They say that such things must always be taken into consideration. If you have anything to sell, or you want money, you must go where there is money to be had. I know the ladies do that in their fairs.”

“Then of course that is the way to do,” remarked a tall girl decidedly. “Let’s take our handkerchiefs and socks to the Relief rooms and begin right away.”

The girls set to work joyfully, and labored zealously for their fair. Their parents were amused at their earnestness, but seeing them happy and contented encouraged them in their efforts. The days were busy ones, but the knowledge that every boat and train was bringing hundreds of wounded soldiers into the hospitals from the disastrous Yorktown campaign spurred them to greater exertion, until at last they declared themselves ready to open the sale.

Handkerchiefs, aprons, homemade candies, dolls, with all the paraphernalia belonging to them, pin cushions, pen wipers, and books, presented a goodly appearance as they

were spread enticingly upon the steps of the mansion in lower Fifth Avenue. A large card, which Mr. Vance had had printed for them with the inscription, “For the relief of our wounded and sick soldiers. Please buy,” reared its head imposingly over the articles, and five little maids, neatly dressed, stood in expectant attitude eagerly watching each passer-by in the hope of a customer.

The placard caught the eyes of an elderly man, and the little girls could scarcely conceal their delight as he paused before them.

“Well, my little ladies, what have we here?” he asked kindly. “For the soldiers, eh? Who put you up to this?”

“No one, sir,” answered Jeanne as the other girls shrank back abashed. “We are doing it ourselves to help buy things for the boys.”

“But who made the articles?” queried the old gentleman. “I am a poor judge of such things, but these handkerchiefs seem to be very neatly done. They are not of your making, I presume.”

“Indeed they are,” answered the girl earnestly. “We have done all the sewing, and made the candies. The toys were our own, given to us by our parents, but we would rather have the money to give to the soldiers, so they are for sale too. We girls have made everything but the toys and the books.”

“But why,” persisted he good-naturedly. “The government provides for its soldiers, and there are women and men to do what the government doesn’t do. Why should you interest yourselves in such things? The war doesn’t concern you!”

“Whatever concerns our country concerns us,” answered Jeanne with dignity. “We are only girls, sir, and cannot do much, but what we can do to help those who are fighting for us we will do.”

“Nobly said, my little maid. I was anxious to see if this was a mere whim of the moment, or if you really were actuated by patriotic motives. You have taught me that girls can feel for their country as well as grown people. How much are those handkerchiefs?”

“A dollar a dozen, sir.”

“H’m’m!” mused the old gentleman drawing forth a well filled pocketbook. “Too cheap by far. Give me a couple of dozen.”

Jeanne obeyed with alacrity and carefully wrapped the handkerchiefs in tissue paper. “I can’t change this bill, sir,” she said as the old gentleman gave her a twenty dollar note.

“I don’t want you to, my little girl,” returned he kindly. “Take it for the cause.”

“Oh,” cried Jeanne her eyes filling with glad tears. “How good you are! How good you are!”

“Nonsense! It’s a pity if I cannot give a little money when you girls have given so much time and work. Good-day, my little patriots. Success to you in your undertaking. You may see me again.”

“Good-day, sir,” cried the girls together. “And thank you ever so much.”

“Oh, girls,” gasped Jeanne delightedly. “Isn’t it fine? Twenty dollars! I didn’t think we’d make more than that altogether.”

“Here come more customers, Jeanne,” cried Nellie excitedly. “Oh, but I believe that we are going to have luck!”

It was but the beginning. There was little leisure for the girls after that. Their evident zeal and earnestness impressed the passers-by whose hearts were already aglow with sympathy for the soldiers, and bills and shinplasters poured in upon the little merchants until at dusk not an article remained upon the steps. Then, tired but happy, they assembled in Mrs. Vance’s parlor to count the proceeds.

“Two hundred dollars!” exclaimed Mr. Vance as the girls announced the result in excited tones. “Why, girls, this is wonderful! The government would better turn over its finances into your hands.”

“You blessed dears,” cried Mrs. Vance, “it will do so much good! You don’t know how much that will buy, but you shall go with the committee and see for yourselves.”

“We have done well,” said Jeanne in congratulatory tones.

“I don’t believe that grown people could do any better,” and Nellie Drew gave her head a proud toss.

“There’s a little lame boy asking to see Miss Jeanne, ma’am,” announced a servant entering at this moment. “Shall I show him up?”

“Yes, Susan. Who is it, Jeanne?”

“It must be Eddie Farrell. He lives down on Fourth Avenue. His mother washes for Nellie’s mother, and they are awfully poor. He came by while we were fixing our things and we told him all about what we were doing and why we were doing it. How do you do, Eddie?” as the door opened to admit the visitor.

A little fellow not over ten years old, with great blue eyes that were just now alight with eagerness, paused abruptly as he caught sight of Mr. and Mrs. Vance. He made a pathetic looking figure as he stood in the doorway. He was deplorably lame and leaned on a pair of rude crutches for support, balancing in some way known only to himself, a long bundle under his arm.

“Have a chair, my boy,” said Mr. Vance, kindly noticing his embarrassment. “Did you wish to see Jeanne?”

“Yes, sir.” The boy sat down and then opened his bundle disclosing a pair of well made crutches. “The girls told me what they wuz doing fer the sogers and I’ve been thinking ever since what I could do. I didn’t have no money ner nuffin’ ter give ’cepting these crutches. I thought mebbe they’d do some pore feller some good what ’ud have his leg cut off.”

“But where did you get them?” queried Mr. Vance.

“They wuz mine, sir. Bill, a sailor man I knows, he spliced on some pieces to make ’em longer, and there they are, sir.”

“My lad,” and Mr. Vance laid his hand softly on the boy’s head, “it is a great deal for you to give. You need them yourself.”

“I’ll get along all right,” said the boy eagerly. “’Deed I will, Mr. Vance. See, Bill he rigged me up a pair that’ll do me all right, an’ I’d like ter help some pore feller.”

Mr. Vance gazed pityingly at the rude substitutes which the boy held up, and then looked at the crutches so deftly lengthened. His voice was husky as he spoke:

“It is a great gift. More than you should give.”

“It ain’t nuthin’,” answered the lad. “I feel fer the feller that is born with two good legs an’ then loses one of them.”

Mr. Vance nodded understandingly. Mrs. Vance’s eyes were full to overflowing as she stroked the boy’s hair gently.

“We’ll write a little note and tie on the crutches,” she said. “Then whoever gets them will know who gave them.”

“That will be fine,” cried the lad gleefully. “I’m so glad you’ll take them. I wuz afraid mebbe it wouldn’t be enough ter give.”

“It is more than we have done,” said Jeanne as soon as she was able to speak.

“Then good-bye,” and Eddie arose. “I’ll run back and tell mother.” He nodded to them and left the room, his face aglow with satisfaction.

“We haven’t done anything,” said Jeanne emphatically. “We didn’t give a thing we could not do without. Oh, I feel so mean!”

She looked at the girls tearfully, then drew a slender chain from her throat, and detached the gold piece which was suspended from it. “There!” she said, putting it with the bills on the table. “Uncle Joe gave me that before he went to the army. After he was killed at Shiloh I thought I would never part with it, but I am going to let it go for the soldiers too.”

“It is good for us,” said Nellie wiping her eyes. “We were awfully puffed up over this fair. I was beginning to think that we had done something great.”

Mr. Vance laughed.

“You need not feel so bad, girls,” he said. “If it had not been for you that poor little fellow wouldn’t have thought of

giving his crutches."

"I wish he had some though," remarked Jeanne wistfully.

"Make your mind easy on that score, my dear, I'm going to look after that boy."

"And meantime you girls can go with me to the Association to carry the money and the crutches, and we'll tell the ladies all about it," said Mrs. Vance.

CHAPTER II
A GREAT UNDERTAKING

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For a time affairs went on in their usual way, and the girls contented themselves with hemming towels and handkerchiefs and making socks. That is, all the girls save Jeanne Vance. With her the desire was stronger than ever to do something more than she had done.

“What makes you so thoughtful, Jeanne?” asked her father one evening looking up from his paper. “You are as still as a mouse. Come, and tell me all about it.”

“It’s the country,” said Jeanne settling herself comfortably on his lap and laying her head on his shoulder. “I was thinking about our army and how much there was to be done for it.”

“I am afraid that you think too much about the war,” observed her father soberly. “It is not good for you.”

“I can’t help it, father. Dick’s letters make me, and the work that you and mother do keeps it always before me. I am the only one who doesn’t do much.”

“I am sure that you carried that fair through admirably, and have made a number of articles for the soldiers. Best of all you are looking after yourself so well that your mother and I can devote our whole time to the cause. And that is a great deal, my little girl.”

“But I should like to do something else,” persisted Jeanne. “It doesn’t seem as if I were helping one bit.”

“Very few of us can see the result of our labors. If you were in the army it would be the same way. A soldier often

has to obey orders for which he can see no reason, but his disobedience might cause the loss of a battle. We are all of us part of a great whole striving for the same end. If each one does his part all will be well. If every little girl in the country would do as much as you are doing, the amount of work accomplished would be startling."

"If I were a boy I could do more," sighed Jeanne. "It is very hard to be 'only a girl,' father."

Mr. Vance laughed.

"But since you are one, Jeanne, try to be contented. I am very thankful for my daughter if she is 'only a girl.'"

"You are troubled too," observed Jeanne presently, noting a look of anxiety on her father's face.

"Yes, child; I am."

"Could you tell me about it, father? Perhaps it would help you. I feel ever so much better since I have talked with you."

"I am afraid that you cannot help me, child. If only Dick were here," and he sighed.

"Could I if I were a boy?" asked the girl, wistfully.

"Yes," replied Mr. Vance unthinkingly. "If you were a boy, Jeanne, with the same amount of brightness and common sense that you now have, I would be strongly tempted to send you forth on some private business."

"Oh, father!" Jeanne sat bolt upright. "Send me anyway. I am sure that I could do it just as well as a boy."

"But this would necessitate a journey into the enemy's country. A bright boy could go through all right if he would exercise his wits, but a tender, delicate girl like you! Why, I couldn't think of it!"

“I could do just as well as a boy,” declared Jeanne with conviction. “I am sure that I could. Please let me try, father.”

“I am sorry that I spoke of it, child. I will tell you just what the service is, and you will see the impossibility of any girl undertaking it. In the cities both North and South there are men whose duty it is to look after certain private matters for the government. In our communications with each other we must be very guarded. We do not dare to risk even the mails, because in almost every department of the service there are traitors. In some mysterious manner the enemy becomes aware of all our plans. Therefore we have tried and trusted men who are our go betweens. On some occasions we have employed boys because they could pass through the lines of the armies without being suspected of carrying important information. But as it is a hazardous business we use the boys only when there is no one else to send. Just at present our men are all out, and even the few boys who are ordinarily available are not on hand. That is why I spoke as I did.”

“Where would the boy have to go?” queried Jeanne, who had listened attentively.

“To New Orleans, dear. It is a long distance, and would be a perilous journey. You see, Jeanne, how I am trusting you. You will be careful not to repeat anything I say.”

“I understand perfectly, father. You need not fear when you tell me anything. You could not be useful if others knew of your affairs.”

“That is it precisely, my daughter.”

“Is the errand important, father?”

“Very.” Mr. Vance thought she saw the impossibility of going and therefore spoke more freely than he otherwise would have done. “I ought to send a messenger not later than day after to-morrow with the documents, but I fear that I shall have to let the matter rest until some of the men come in, and then it may be too late.”

“Father, doesn’t Uncle Ben live in New Orleans?”

“Yes, Jeanne; why?”

“Why couldn’t I go down to see him, and carry these papers hidden about me? The trains are still running, aren’t they?”

“Yes,” said her father thoughtfully; “but those in the Southern States are under Confederate control, you know.”

“Well, suppose I were to take the train from here to St. Louis,” mapping the route on her lap, “then from there I could go down the Mississippi on a steamboat. St. Louis is for the Union, and New Orleans belongs to us now too. I don’t see much danger in that, father.”

“It sounds all right, little girl. The only flaw lies in the fact that Vicksburg is not ours. If it were then the matter could be easily arranged.”

“Don’t you think that it will be ours soon, father?”

“Yes, indeed,” replied Mr. Vance with conviction. “With Farragut and Porter on the river and this new man Grant who is making such a record in charge of the land forces it will not be long before Vicksburg will share the fate of Forts Henry and Donelson and Island No. 10. Indeed,” added he, for Mr. Vance in common with many others held the view that the war could not be of long duration, “I feel sure that McClellan will soon enter Richmond and that will virtually

close the war. It is only a question of days now before we shall see the end of this rebellion. The administration is of the same opinion, because it has ceased to enlist men for the army."

"Then, father, it seems to me that there would be no risk in performing this service for you. I feel sure that I could carry your papers safely to New Orleans. It is not as if the country all belonged to the rebels. There would be only one place to pass that is theirs: Vicksburg. I know that our men can easily go by one place," she added confidently.

"Your manner of taking hold of the matter almost persuades me to let you try it, Jeanne," and Mr. Vance regarded his daughter with a new light in his eyes.

"Do," said Jeanne as calmly as she could, realizing that if she would carry her point she must be very matter-of-fact. "You see, father, no one would suspect a girl of carrying papers."

"I don't know but that you are right, Jeanne. Still, I would not consider the thing for an instant if my need were not so great. Should the papers fall into the rebels' hands, not only would they secure important information but they would also get the names of men whose death would pay the penalty of discovery."

"I understand," said the girl gravely. "But the rebels shall never get them, father. I will destroy them first. They must be concealed about my clothing in such a manner that even if I were searched they could not be discovered. Not that I think that I shall be," she added hastily as a look of alarm flitted over her father's face, "but it is just as well to be prepared for emergencies."

“What are you two plotting?” asked Mrs. Vance entering the room. “You have been talking so earnestly that I thought that you were settling the affairs of the nation.”

“We have been,” answered Jeanne gaily. “I am going to New Orleans on business for father.”

“Oh, Richard,” came from Mrs. Vance in a wailing cry. “Not my girl too! I have given my boy! Leave me my daughter.”

“Mother!” Jeanne sprang to her outstretched arms where she was folded close to the mother’s heart. “You don’t understand. There is no danger. Who would harm a girl like me?”

“She shall not go, Dora, if you do not consent,” spoke Mr. Vance comfortingly. “My need for a messenger was so urgent that I spoke of it before Jeanne, and the little witch has beguiled me into thinking that she is the very one for the business.”

“Why of course I am,” cried Jeanne in decided tones. “Let’s sit down and talk it over.”

“I don’t like it,” said Mrs. Vance after the matter had been explained. “I am afraid that something will happen to you.”

“But, mother, what could happen? Even if I were to fall into the hands of the Confederates what could they do to me? Men don’t make war on girls.”

“I know that the Southern people are counted chivalrous,” answered Mrs. Vance, “but soldiers are usually rough fellows, and I would not like you to be brought into contact with them even though they were our own boys.”

“Dick is a soldier, and he isn’t a bit rough. They are all somebody’s sons, mother. I thought that you liked soldiers.”

“I do,” assented Mrs. Vance wearily, “but I don’t like the thought of sending you where there is a chance of fighting. No one knows what might happen.”

“Dick has to take a great many chances, and why should not I risk a little for my country? Wouldn’t you be willing to give your life for it, mother?”

“Yes; but––” began the mother.

“And I am your child,” cried Jeanne, kissing her. “I can’t help it, mother. It’s in the blood, and blood will tell, you know. Haven’t I heard you and father many a time relate what great things our ancestors did in the Revolution? Well, you really can’t expect anything else from their descendants.”

“I suppose not,” and Mrs. Vance stifled a sigh. “If it really would help you, Richard.”

“It really would, Dora. If Jeanne can carry these papers to New Orleans she is not only worth her weight in gold but she will do the government a great service. She is energetic, resourceful and self-reliant. I believe that she can get through without injury to herself or I should not consider the thing a moment. As she says, why should harm come to a girl? She would not be suspected where older people would be subjected to the most searching scrutiny. The more that I think of it, the more favorably does the idea strike me.”

“Then I must consent,” Mrs. Vance smiled faintly though her face was very white. “My country demands much of me, Richard.”

“It does, Dora. But please God when this rebellion is put down we shall have such peace as the country has never enjoyed. Let us hope for the best, dear.”

“When do I start, father?” broke in Jeanne.

“I think to-morrow night. The sooner the better. I will see about your transportation in the morning, and try to arrange to send you straight through. Now, little girl, you must say good-night because we must be up bright and early. There is a great deal to be done to-morrow.”

“Good-night,” said Jeanne obediently, and kissing each tenderly she retired to her room.

CHAPTER III
STARTING FOR DIXIE

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The next day passed all too quickly for the parents, but not for Jeanne. She went about her preparations with an uplifted mien and a solemnity of manner that at another time would have been amusing, but which under the circumstances went to her mother's heart.

"In this petticoat, dear, I have quilted the documents," said Mrs. Vance as she dressed her for her departure. "It may be a little heavy, but you need not wear so many skirts as you otherwise would, and perhaps it will not be too warm. See how nicely it holds out your dress. It almost answers the purpose of a pair of hoops."

"Am I not to wear my hoops, mother?"

"No, child. They are sometimes in the way, and as you have not yet learned to manage them well, it would be best not. Your frock hangs out in quite the approved style as it is."

Jeanne glanced down at her attire complacently.

"It does look stylish," she admitted. "I wonder if the rebel girls wear hoops."

"I dare say they do," answered the mother rather absently. Then overcome by a rush of emotion she caught the girl to her. "Oh, Jeanne, I wonder if I am doing right to let you go! What if some harm should come to you?"

"Don't worry, mother," and Jeanne soothed her gently. "I feel sure that I will get through safely."