

JEAN'S NEW DESKMATE

By Beth Slater Whitson

Jean came hurrying in from school and, tossing her books aside, threw herself on the lounge in Mamma Anderson's sitting room and burst into tears.

Mamma Anderson dropped her sewing in amazement and hurried across the room to where her little daughter lay sobbing piteously.

"What is the matter, dear?" the mother questioned anxiously. "Are you ill? What has happened? Tell mamma.

Jean sobbed on for a moment or two, then sat up and pushed the tumbled hair away from her tear-stained face. "O mamma," she cried, her lips quivering, "Miss Hester moved Louise and gave me another deskmate today."

Mrs. Anderson gave a relieved little laugh, "Mamma is very glad to know that it is nothing more serious than that."

"How can you talk like that, mamma," asked Jean, her eyes filling again, "when Louise and I have been deskmates for so long? Neither of us ever went with anyone else."

"Well, perhaps that was the reason teacher thought best to separate you," answered Mrs. Anderson. "You will both make new friends now and still love each other."

"No, no," cried Jean, "we promised each other not to notice our new deskmates."

"How ridiculous!" smiled Mrs. Anderson. "What is yours like?"

"I don't know; I haven't looked at her yet," said Jean.

"Well, I believe I would take a good look at her tomorrow, at least," suggested Jean's mother, putting a loving arm about her little girl. "You can do this and still be loyal to Louise, and then you owe it to yourself to be polite and kind to her. Besides, you will get very lonely sitting by someone to whom you never speak."

"Y-e-s, it was lonesome today," acknowledged Jean hesitantly. "You think it wouldn't be treating Louise wrong, mamma?"

"Not in the least," replied Mrs. Anderson. "It would be treating the other little girl wrong, though, if you should persist in being unfriendly."

The next morning Jean looked her little deskmate over with a faint show of interest. She was so bright and sweet-looking, she seemed to fairly radiate sunshine, and Jean felt herself smiling without knowing why.

“You were lonesome for your old deskmate yesterday, I know,” whispered the new one with a little twinkle in her blue eyes. “I’ll try to be as nice as possible if you just won’t frown at me as you did yesterday. I was really frightened.”

Jean almost laughed outright. “I’ll promise not to frown so hard, at least,” she returned promptly.

At recess Louise came hurrying over, leading another happy-faced little girl. “This is my new deskmate, Jean” she said.

“And this is mine,” smiled Jean. “Suppose we four go somewhere and eat all those nuts which mother insisted I should bring this morning. She must have guessed there would be four of us.”

“I wonder how she guessed so well,” said Louise as they ran down the steps into the sunshine.

“Mothers just seem to know things” smiled Jean’s new deskmate.

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