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The Riverside Literature Series

JACKANAPES

AND

THE BROWNIES

BY

JULIANA HORATIA EWING

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

By HENRY W. BOYNTON, M. A.

HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
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CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Alfred Gatty was an English clergyman, vicar of Ecclesfield in Yorkshire, where in 1841 his daughter Juliana Horatia, afterward Mrs. Ewing, was born. The Gattys seem to have been an exceptionally clever family. While the children were still very young they learned to amuse each other by story-telling, and a little later they edited and wrote a story-magazine, which was not printed, but circulated in manuscript among their friends. Juliana was particularly good as an oral story-teller and mimic, and even as a child evidently had something of the magnetism which is so important an element in her nature work. Indeed, one can hardly think of her written stories as mere compositions; the author seems to be talking to us frankly and unaffectedly, and paper and ink serve only as conductors for that sweet and friendly voice. Her first book of stories was published when she was twenty-one years old, and from that time to the end of her not very long life she was producing tales in prose and verse, most of them about children.

In 1866 began the publication of "Aunt Judy's Magazine," edited by the Gattys, and really the public continuation of the nursery magazine with which they had grown up. At twenty-five Miss Juliana Gatty was married to Major Ewing of the British Army. Soon afterward he was stationed in New Brunswick, where Mrs. Ewing and he lived for several

years. Here she naturally learned a good deal about army life. It is odd that although she was continually writing stories, many of which were published in "Aunt Judy's Magazine," it did not occur to her for some time to make literary use of her army experience. At last in 1872, she wrote her first soldier story, "The Peace Egg." This tale is not very well known now, but the two which followed, "Jackanapes," and "The Story of a Short Life," not only became quickly popular, but are as widely read and as generously cried over to-day as they ever were.

In the mean time the Ewings had returned to England, where Mrs. Ewing lived for the rest of her life. In 1873 a part-editorship of "Aunt Judy's Magazine" fell into her hands, and was retained for about two years. But she had always been delicate. The routine of regular work was very difficult for her; and when, a few years after the return from New Brunswick, Major Ewing was transferred to Malta, she was not strong enough to go with him. Consequently they were separated for several years, and when he was finally ordered back to England she had not long to live; she died at Bath in 1885.

The secret of Mrs. Ewing's charm is hardly a secret at all. As a woman she was simple, sympathetic, and universally beloved; and she was the rare sort of person who is just as lovable in print as in real life. She is a writer of sentiment, but of sentiment wholly free from mawkishness or strained pathos. Her work is marked by a tender humor which reminds one of Dr. John Brown more than of anybody else. We are not so tolerant of the pathetic as our fathers were in the days of Colonel Newcome and Little Nell. A good many people find fault nowadays with Mrs.

Ewing's stories because they are so sad. But if the reader is not too ready to be cast down, he will notice that Mrs. Ewing herself is never so sad that she is not a little merry too. She does not admit that the sacrifice of Jackanapes's life was a waste, or a slip on the part of Providence; and the lifelong grief of the poor Doctor in "The Brownies," instead of embittering him, makes him more tender and considerate of the happiness of those who have not yet known the hard discipline of bereavement. Mrs. Ewing might not have been willing, considering them from a larger point of view than what is comfortable to one 's feelings, to admit that her stories do not "turn out right." She evidently perceived that pain and death are as valuable incidents in human experience as life and happiness; or, rather — for she was a great lover of life and happiness — she seems to have felt that pain and death are preferable to selfishness and dishonor.

Mrs. Ewing's style was the direct expression of her nature, simple and spontaneous, yet with the unmistakable hall-mark of social and literary good-breeding. It would not be an exaggeration to say, adapting the phrase so often used of Thackeray, that one of her chief distinctions is to have written like a gentlewoman. But this quality alone would not account for her continued popularity, any more than to have written like a gentleman accounts for Thackeray's. We must refer it rather to the sweet and sound philosophy, the gracious womanhood, which are at the basis of all her work.

JACKANAPES.

CHAPTER I.

Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
Last eve in Beauty's circle proudly gay,
The midnight brought the signal-sound of strife,
The morn the marshalling in arms — the day
Battle's magnificently stern array!
The thunder-clouds rose o'er it, which when rent
The earth is cover'd thick with other clay,
Which her own clay shall cover, heap'd and pent,
Rider and horse, — friend, foe, — in one red burial blent.

Their praise is hymn'd by loftier harps than mine;
Yet one would I select from that proud throng.

. . . . . .

To thee, to thousands, of whom each
And one as all a ghastly gap did make
In his own kind and kindred, whom to teach
Forgetfulness were mercy for their sake;
The Archangel's trump, not Glory's, must awake
Those whom they thirst for.

BYRON.[1]

Two Donkeys and the Geese lived on the Green, and all other residents of any social standing lived in houses round it. The houses had no names. Everybody's address was "The Green," but the Postman and the people of the place knew where each family lived. As to the rest of the world, what has one to do with the rest of the world when one is safe at home on one's own Goose Green? Moreover, if a stranger

[1] *Childe Harold*, canto iii. 28–31.

did come on any lawful business, he might ask his way at the shop.

Most of the inhabitants were long-lived, early deaths (like that of the little Miss Jessamine) being exceptional; and most of the old people were proud of their age, especially the sexton, who would be ninety-nine come Martinmas,[1] and whose father remembered a man who had carried arrows, as a boy, for the battle of Flodden Field.[2] The Gray Goose and the big Miss Jessamine were the only elderly persons who kept their ages secret. Indeed, Miss Jessamine never mentioned any one's age, or recalled the exact year in which anything had happened. She said that she had been taught that it was bad manners to do so "in a mixed assembly."

The Gray Goose also avoided dates; but this was partly because her brain, though intelligent, was not mathematical, and computation was beyond her. She never got farther than "last Michaelmas," "the Michaelmas before that," and "the Michaelmas before the Michaelmas before that." After this her head, which was small, became confused, and she said, "Ga, ga!" and changed the subject.

But she remembered the little Miss Jessamine, the Miss Jessamine with the "conspicuous" hair. Her aunt, the big Miss Jessamine, said it was her only fault. The hair was clean, was abundant, was glossy; but do what you would with it, it never looked quite like other people's. And at church, after Saturday

[1] The feast-day of Martinmas falls on the 11th of November, Michaelmas on the 29th of September.

[2] The battle of Flodden Field was fought September 9, 1513, and the Scotch, under King James, totally defeated. The battle is described in the sixth canto of Scott's *Marmion*.

night's wash, it shone like the best brass fender after a spring cleaning. In short, it was conspicuous, which does not become a young woman,[1] especially in church.

Those were worrying times altogether, and the Green was used for strange purposes. A political meeting was held on it with the village Cobbler in the chair, and a speaker who came by stage-coach from the town, where they had wrecked the bakers' shops, and discussed the price of bread.[2] He came a second time by stage; but the people had heard something about him in the mean while, and they did not keep him on the Green. They took him to the pond and tried to make him swim, which he could not do, and the whole affair was very disturbing to all quiet and peaceable fowls. After which another man came, and preached sermons on the Green, and a great many people went to hear him; for those were "trying times," and folk ran hither and thither for comfort. And then what did they do but drill the ploughboys on the Green, to get them ready to fight the French, and teach them the goose-step![3] However, that came to an end at last; for Bony was sent to St. Helena,[4] and the ploughboys were sent back to the plough.

Everybody lived in fear of Bony in those days, especially the naughty children, who were kept in

[1] "Which does not become a young woman," is one of the favorite refrains of Mrs. Malaprop, in Sheridan's *The Rivals*.

[2] This shows that the story begins in about 1811. Between 1811 and 1815 there were frequent riots throughout England, due to the low rate of wages and the high price of wheat.

[3] **Goose-step**, lock-step, made necessary by the nearness of the rear to the front rank.

[4] This is anticipating by several years, as "Bony" (Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte) was not sent to St. Helena till after his defeat at Waterloo, in 1815.

order during the day by threats of "Bony shall have you," and who had nightmares about him in the dark. They thought he was an Ogre in a cocked hat. The Gray Goose thought he was a Fox, and that all the men of England were going out in red coats[1] to hunt him. It was no use to argue the point; for she had a very small head, and when one idea got into it there was no room for another.

Besides, the Gray Goose never saw Bony, nor did the children, which rather spoilt the terror of him, so that the Black Captain became more effective as a Bogy with hardened offenders. The Gray Goose remembered *his* coming to the place perfectly. What he came for she did not pretend to know. It was all part and parcel of the war and bad times. He was called the Black Captain, partly because of himself and partly because of his wonderful black mare. Strange stories were afloat of how far and how fast that mare could go when her master's hand was on her mane and he whispered in her ear. Indeed, some people thought we might reckon ourselves very lucky if we were not out of the frying-pan into the fire, and had not got a certain well-known Gentleman of the Road[2] to protect us against the French. But that, of course, made him none the less useful to the Johnsons' Nurse when the little Miss Johnsons were naughty.

"You leave off crying this minnit, Miss Jane, or I'll give you right away to that horrid wicked officer.

[1] The point is that the soldier and the fox-hunter both wear red coats.

[2] **Gentleman of the Road** is the romantic title given to the highwayman in the eighteenth century, when his calling, though likely to end on the gallows, was considered an honorable profession by the common people.

Jemima! just look out o' the windy, if you please, and see if the Black Cap'n 's coming with his horse to carry away Miss Jane."

And there, sure enough, the Black Captain strode by, with his sword clattering as if he did not know whose head to cut off first. But he did not call for Miss Jane that time. He went on to the Green, where he came so suddenly upon the eldest Master Johnson, sitting in a puddle on purpose, in his new nankeen skeleton suit,[1] that the young gentleman thought judgment had overtaken him at last, and abandoned himself to the howlings of despair. His howls were redoubled when he was clutched from behind and swung over the Black Captain's shoulder; but in five minutes his tears were stanched, and he was playing with the officer's accoutrements. All of which the Gray Goose saw with her own eyes, and heard afterwards that that bad boy had been whining to go back to the Black Captain ever since, which showed how hardened he was, and that nobody but Bonaparte himself could be expected to do him any good.

But those were "trying times." It was bad enough when the pickle[2] of a large and respectable family cried for the Black Captain: when it came to the little Miss Jessamine crying for him, one felt that the sooner the French landed and had done with it, the better.

The big Miss Jessamine's objection to him was that he was a soldier; and this prejudice was shared by all the Green. "A soldier," as the speaker from the town had observed, "is a bloodthirsty, unsettled sort of a rascal, that the peaceable, home-loving, bread-

[1] **Nankeen skeleton suit**, a suit made of a Chinese cotton, the trousers buttoning directly upon the jacket.

[2] **Pickle**, the "case," the most troublesome member.

winning citizen can never conscientiously look on as a brother till he has beaten his sword into a ploughshare and his spear into a pruning-hook."

On the other hand, there was some truth in what the Postman (an old soldier) said in reply, — that the sword has to cut a way for us out of many a scrape into which our bread-winners get us when they drive their ploughshares into fallows that don't belong to them. Indeed, whilst our most peaceful citizens were prosperous chiefly by means of cotton, of sugar, and of the rise and fall of the money-market (not to speak of such salable matters as opium, fire-arms, and "black ivory"[1]), disturbances were apt to arise in India, Africa, and other outlandish parts, where the fathers of our domestic race were making fortunes for their families. And for that matter, even on the Green, we did not wish the military to leave us in the lurch, so long as there was any fear that the French were coming.

To let the Black Captain have little Miss Jessamine, however, was another matter. Her aunt would not hear of it; and then, to crown all, it appeared that the Captain's father did not think the young lady good enough for his son.[2] Never was any affair more clearly brought to a conclusion.

But those were "trying times"; and one moonlight night, when the Gray Goose was sound asleep upon one leg, the Green was rudely shaken under her by the thud of a horse's feet. "Ga, ga!" said she, putting down the other leg and running away.

By the time she returned to her place not a thing was to be seen or heard. The horse had passed like a shot. But next day there was hurrying and skurrying

[1] **Black ivory**, African slaves.

[2] Of course "good enough" means of good enough family.

and cackling at a very early hour, all about the white house with the black beams, where Miss Jessamine lived. And when the sun was so low and the shadows so long on the grass that the Gray Goose felt ready to run away at the sight of her own neck, little Miss Jane Johnson and her "particular friend" Clarinda sat under the big oak-tree on the Green, and Jane pinched Clarinda's little finger till she found that she could keep a secret, and then she told her in confidence that she had heard from Nurse and Jemima that Miss Jessamine's niece had been a very naughty girl, and that that horrid wicked officer had come for her on his black horse and carried her right away.

"Will she never come back?" asked Clarinda.

"Oh, no!" said Jane decidedly. "Bony never brings people back."

"Not never no more?" sobbed Clarinda, for she was weak-minded, and could not bear to think that Bony never, never let naughty people go home again.

Next day Jane had heard more.

"He has taken her to a Green."

"A Goose Green?" asked Clarinda.

"No. A Gretna Green.[1] Don't ask so many questions, child," said Jane, who, having no more to tell, gave herself airs.

Jane was wrong on one point. Miss Jessamine's niece did come back, and she and her husband were forgiven. The Gray Goose remembered it well; it was Michaelmas-tide, the Michaelmas before the Michaelmas before the Michaelmas — but, ga, ga! What does the date matter? It was autumn, harvest time, and everybody was so busy prophesying and praying

[1] **Gretna Green** was the famous marrying-place, just across the border in Scotland, the goal of all English elopements.

about the crops, that the young couple wandered through the lanes, and got blackberries for Miss Jessamine's celebrated crab and blackberry jam, and made guys of themselves with bryony wreaths, and not a soul troubled his head about them, except the children and the Postman. The children dogged the Black Captain's footsteps (his bubble reputation as an Ogre having burst) clamoring for a ride on the black mare. And the Postman would go somewhat out of his postal way to catch the Captain's dark eye, and show that he had not forgotten how to salute an officer.

But they were "trying times." One afternoon the black mare was stepping gently up and down the grass, with her head at her master's shoulder, and as many children crowded on to her silky back as if she had been an elephant in a menagerie; and the next afternoon she carried him away, sword and *sabretache*[1] clattering war music at her side, and the old Postman waiting for them, rigid with salutation, at the four cross-roads.

War and bad times! It was a hard winter; and the big Miss Jessamine and the little Miss Jessamine (but she was Mrs. Black Captain now) lived very economically, that they might help their poorer neighbors. They neither entertained nor went into company; but the young lady always went up the village as far as the George and Dragon,[2] for air and exercise, when the London Mail came in.

One day (it was a day in the following June) it

[1] **Sabretache**, a sort of heavy leather scabbard (literally, "sword-pocket") worn by cavalry.

[2] **The George and Dragon** is the village inn, which undoubtedly stood behind a swinging sign painted with the figures of St. George and the Dragon.

came in earlier than usual, and the young lady was not there to meet it.

But a crowd soon gathered round the George and Dragon, gaping to see the Mail Coach dressed with flowers and oak-leaves, and the guard wearing a laurel wreath over and above his royal livery. The ribbons that decked the horses were stained and flecked with the warmth and foam of the pace at which they had come, for they had pressed on with the news of Victory.[1]

Miss Jessamine was sitting with her niece under the oak-tree on the Green, when the Postman put a newspaper silently into her hand. Her niece turned quickly, —

"Is there news?"

"Don't agitate yourself, my dear," said her aunt. "I will read it aloud, and then we can enjoy it together; a far more comfortable method, my love, than when you go up the village, and come home out of breath, having snatched half the news as you run."

"I am all attention, dear aunt," said the little lady, clasping her hands tightly on her lap.

Then Miss Jessamine read aloud, — she was proud of her reading, — and the old soldier stood at attention behind her, with such a blending of pride and pity on his face as it was strange to see: —

[1] The English mail coach of the period of Waterloo was considered a marvel of speed. It travelled fifteen miles an hour, while a modern express train can make sixty miles an hour with ease, and seventy or eighty if necessary. But the hard thing to realize is that less than a century ago news had to travel at the same slow rate, so that the mail coach played a very important part at such moments as the Waterloo victory.

"DOWNING STREET,
"*June* 22, 1815, 1 A. M."

"That's one in the morning," gasped the Postman; "beg your pardon, mum."

But though he apologized, he could not refrain from echoing here and there a weighty word: "Glorious victory," — "Two hundred pieces of artillery," — "Immense quantity of ammunition," — and so forth.

"The loss of the British Army upon this occasion has unfortunately been most severe. It had not been possible to make out a return of the killed and wounded when Major Percy left headquarters. The names of the officers killed and wounded, as far as they can be collected, are annexed.

"I have the honor — "

"The list, aunt! Read the list!"

"My love — my darling — let us go in and — "

"No. Now! now!"

To one thing the supremely afflicted are entitled in their sorrow, — to be obeyed; and yet it is the last kindness that people commonly will do them. But Miss Jessamine did. Steadying her voice, as best she might, she read on; and the old soldier stood bareheaded to hear that first Roll of the Dead at Waterloo, which began with the Duke of Brunswick and ended with Ensign Brown. Five-and-thirty British Captains fell asleep that day on the Bed of Honor, and the Black Captain slept among them.

There are killed and wounded by war, of whom no returns reach Downing Street.

Three days later, the Captain's wife had joined him, and Miss Jessamine was kneeling by the cradle of their orphan son, a purple-red morsel of humanity, with conspicuously golden hair.

"Will he live, Doctor?"

"Live? Bless my soul, ma'am! Look at him! The young Jackanapes!"

CHAPTER II.

And he wandered away and away
With Nature, the dear old Nurse.

LONGFELLOW.

THE Gray Goose remembered quite well the year that Jackanapes began to walk, for it was the year that the speckled hen for the first time in all her motherly life got out of patience when she was sitting. She had been rather proud of the eggs, — they were unusually large, — but she never felt quite comfortable on them; and whether it was because she used to get cramp and go off the nest, or because the season was bad, or what, she never could tell; but every egg was addled but one, and the one that did hatch gave her more trouble than any chick she had ever reared.

It was a fine, downy, bright yellow little thing, but it had a monstrous big nose and feet, and such an ungainly walk as she knew no other instance of in her well-bred and high-stepping family. And as to behavior, it was not that it was either quarrelsome or moping, but simply unlike the rest. When the other chicks hopped and cheeped on the Green about their mother's feet, this solitary yellow brat went waddling off on its own responsibility, and do or cluck

what the speckled hen would, it went to play in the Pond.

It was off one day as usual, and the hen was fussing and fuming after it, when the Postman, going to deliver a letter at Miss Jessamine's door, was nearly knocked over by the good lady herself, who, bursting out of the house with her cap just off and her bonnet just not on, fell into his arms, crying, —

"Baby! Baby! Jackanapes! Jackanapes!"

If the Postman loved anything on earth, he loved the Captain's yellow-haired child; so, propping Miss Jessamine against her own door-post, he followed the direction of her trembling fingers and made for the Green.

Jackanapes had had the start of the Postman by nearly ten minutes. The world — the round, green world with an oak-tree on it — was just becoming very interesting to him. He had tried, vigorously but ineffectually, to mount a passing pig the last time he was taken out walking; but then he was encumbered with a nurse. Now he was his own master, and might, by courage and energy, become the master of that delightful downy, dumpy, yellow thing that was bobbing along over the green grass in front of him. Forward! Charge! He aimed well, and grabbed it, but only to feel the delicious downiness and dumpiness slipping through his fingers as he fell upon his face. "Quack!" said the yellow thing, and wabbled off sideways. It was this oblique movement that enabled Jackanapes to come up with it, for it was bound for the Pond, and therefore obliged to come back into line. He failed again from top-heaviness, and his prey escaped sideways as before, and, as before, lost ground in getting back to the direct road to the Pond.

And at the Pond the Postman found them both, — one yellow thing rocking safely on the ripples that lie beyond duck-weed, and the other washing his draggled frock with tears because he too had tried to sit upon the Pond and it would n't hold him.

CHAPTER III.

If studious, copy fair what time hath blurred,
Redeem truth from his jaws: if soldier,
Chase brave employments with a naked sword
Throughout the world. Fool not; for all may have,
If they dare try, a glorious life, or grave.
. . . . . .

In brief, acquit thee bravely: play the man.
Look not on pleasures as they come, but go.
Defer not the least virtue: life's poor span
Make not an ell, by trifling in thy woe.
If thou do ill, the joy fades, not the pains.
If well: the pain doth fade, the joy remains.

GEORGE HERBERT.[1]

YOUNG Mrs. Johnson, who was a mother of many, hardly knew which to pity more, — Miss Jessamine for having her little ways and her antimacassars[2] rumpled by young Jackanapes, or the boy himself for being brought up by an old maid.

Oddly enough she would probably have pitied neither, had Jackanapes been a girl. (One is so apt to think that what works smoothest, works to the highest ends, having no patience for the results of friction.) That Father in God who bade the young

[1] From *The Church Porch.*

[2] **Antimacassars** were crocheted coverings hung upon the backs of sofas and chairs to protect them from the macassar oil then commonly put on the hair.