

LHS 6/51

"Went fishin'. Caught me six cats long as our haid, Sambo."

Jane buried her face in the sweet-smelling covers. Oh, my brat, my wonderful resilient brat. They'll never get your tail, will they?

It was seven weeks till the end of term, when C. T. brought Jane a model wooden boat.

Jane stared at it. "Did you make this? So beautiful, C. T."

"Oh, I make them all the time... an' airplanes an' houses too. I do 'em in my spare time," he finished airily.

"Where do you get the models, C. T.?" she asked.

"I copies them from pictures in the magazines."

Right under my nose... right there all the time, she thought wonderingly. "C. T., could you like to build things when you grow up? Real houses and ships and planes?"

"Reckon I could, Miz Richards," he said confidently.

The excitement was growing in her. Look, C. T. You aren't going to do any lessons at all for the rest of the year. You're going to build ships and houses and airplanes and anything else you want to."

"I am, huh?" He grinned. "Well, I guess wasn't goin' to get promoted nohow."

"Of course if you want to build them the way they really are, you might have to do a little measuring, and maybe learn to spell the names of the parts you want to order. All the best contractors have to know things like that, you know."

"Say, I'm gonna have real fun, huh? I always said lessons wussent no good nohow. You say too much study eats out yer brains, y'know?"

Time went by. Jane ran a race with the model instructions from the model companies arrived. Jane burned the midnight oil learning each day's work:

Learn to spell the following words: ship, sail, anchor—boat, anchor, airplane, wing, fly.

Write a letter to the lumber company, ordering some lumber.

The floor of our model house is ten inches wide and fourteen inches long. Multiply the length by the width and you'll find the area of the floor in square inches.

Read the story of Columbus and his voyages. Our plane arrives in Paris in twenty-eight hours. Paris is the capital city of a country named France across the Atlantic Ocean.

Long ago sailors told time by the sun and the stars. Now, the earth goes around the sun.

Work and pray, Jane, work and pray!

C. T. learned. Some things vicariously, some things directly. When he found that he needed multiplication to plan his models to build, he learned to multiply. In three weeks he had mastered simple division.

Jane bought beautifully illustrated stories about ships and planes. He learned to read. He wrote for and received his own materials.

Jane exulted.

The last day! Forty-two faces waiting anxiously for report cards. Jane spoke to them briefly, praising them collectively, and admonishing them to obey the safety rules during the holidays. Then she passed out the report cards.

As she smiled at each childish face, she thought, *I've been wrong. The long arm of circumstance, environment and heredity is the farmer's wife that seeks to mow you down, and all of us who touch your lives are in some way responsible for how successful she is. But you aren't mice, my darlings. Mice are hated, hunted pests. You are normal, lovable children. The knife of the farmer's wife is double-edged for you, because you are Negro children, born mostly in poverty. But you are wonderful children, nevertheless, for you wear the bright protective cloak of laughter, the strong shield of courage, and the intelligence of children everywhere. Some few of you may indeed become as the mice—but most of you shall find your way to stand fine and tall in the annals of man. There's a bright new tomorrow ahead. For every one of us whose job it is to help you grow, that is insensitive and unworthy, there are hundreds who daily work that you may grow straight and whole. If it were not so, our world could not long endure.*

She handed C. T. his card. "Thank you, ma'am."

"Aren't you going to open it?" He opened it dutifully. When he looked up his eyes were wide with disbelief. "You didn't make no mistake?"

"No mistake, C. T. You're promoted. You've caught up enough to go to the fourth grade next year."

She dismissed the children. They were a swarm of bees released from a hive. "Bye, Miss Richards." "Happy holidays, Miss Richards."

C. T. was the last to go. "Well, C. T.?"

"Miz Richards, you remember what you said about a name being important?"

"Yes, C. T."

"Well, I talked to mamma, and she said if I wanted a name it would be all right, and she'd go to the courthouse about it."

"What name have you chosen, C. T.?" she asked.

"Christopher Turner Young."

"That's a nice name, Christopher," she said gravely.

"Sho' nuff, Miz Richards?"

"Sure enough, C. T."

"Miz Richards, you know what?"

"What, dear?"

"I love you."

She kissed him swiftly before he ran to catch his classmates.

She stood at the window and watched the running, skipping figures, followed by the bold mimic shadows. *I'm coming home, Paul. I'm leaving my forty-two children, and Tanya there on the hill. My work with them is finished now. The laughter bubbled up in her throat. But Paul, oh Paul. See how straight they run!*

### A DAY IN JUNE

(Continued from Page 66)

summer long and can serve again and in out on the patio or porch, down by the door or even in the dining room!

"I tell you, it's like this. All fall and winter we had good times. Now dinner with the guests is more and more..."

Send something special...

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