

# JOHN EDWARD'S FRIEND

BY RUTH KIMBALL GARDINER

WITH PICTURES BY FANNY V. CORY



MARY JOHN had not been asked to sing in the Memorial Day chorus. To add sting to her disappointment, Lucilla Starr was to occupy a seat in the front row. But then Lucilla was an only child, while Mary John was merely the youngest of five. Lucilla was Mary John's "twin cousin," and concentrated in her small person all the advantages which in Mary John's case were of necessity distributed among a whole family. Lucilla was always a sovereign State in the decorated car which was a never-omitted feature of the Gordonville Fourth-of-July celebration. Mary John had seen her on two consecutive Fourths, with her crimped hair, her bright blue sash, and her gilt paper crown with "Illinois" lettered on it, and the car of States was a Juggernaut chariot before the wheels of which Mary John cast her fondest hopes.

Mary John was commonly considered too young to take part in such ceremonies. Sister Ellen was three years older, and Mary John would succeed to her honors in time. There might have been some comfort in this if it had not been for Lucilla's triumphant presence. Mary John felt that she would always be left out of things. She had come to accept it as almost a matter of course.

She knew that Aunt Fanny had asked to have Lucilla chosen as a Memorial Day singer. It was Aunt Fanny's way. Lucilla announced her ambitions, and Aunt Fanny saw to it that they were gratified. The simple expedient of following Lucilla's example never once occurred to Mary John. An unconquerable shyness kept her from open appeal. She wished on the new moon and on loads of hay, and picked up

pins for luck. She even searched the "branch" diligently to find a perfectly round "lucky rock." All these things seemed to her much easier than confessing to her mother her desire to sit by Lucilla's side. In the language of her State, Mary John was "shut-mouthed."

At seven experience contends but feebly against hope. Mary John was playing with her paper dolls in the sitting-room when Mrs. Berry came to engage sister Ellen for the Memorial Day chorus.

"What a lot of babies for one little mother!" said the lady.

"Yes, ma'am," murmured Mary John, politely. It was not for Mrs. Berry to know that Mary John's relation to her dolls was not maternal. Mrs. Berry could not guess that the child was dramatizing the court of a prince at which a Cinderella, who had always been left out of things, was presently to receive universal homage. Mary John never took anybody into her confidence. Reticence had been bred in her by association with brothers and sisters who flayed with careless laughter.

"Ellen sings so nicely," Mrs. Berry was saying.

Mary John went on playing with her dolls. She seemed quite absorbed in her game, but with every fiber of her small body tense she was praying over and over:

"O God, please let her ask me to be in it! O God, please let her ask me to be in it! O God, please don't let me be left out this time!"

"Ellen will be very glad to take part," said Mary John's mother.

Mrs. Berry looked at the paper dolls again.

"How fond she is of dolls!" she said. "I wonder if she 'd like to take part, too."



Half-tone plate engraved by H. C. Merrill

"MARY JOHN DID NOT STIR"

Mary John did not stir.

"Oh, no," she heard her mother say; "she's 'most too little. She's so shy she never cares for things like that, anyway."

Mary John went on playing with her dolls.

"O God," she was saying, "why can't you let me die right now?"

Lucilla Starr and Ellen stayed after school every afternoon to practise the

Memorial Day songs. Mary John committed to memory every word of "America," "The Star-Spangled Banner," and "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean." There was always the possibility of a miracle. She dramatized the scene that might occur. The principal would come into the First Reader room and say:

"The ladies want one more little girl for the Memorial Day exercises. Is there any little girl here who knows the songs?"

Mary John's hand would flutter up and the dream of her heart would be realized.

Memorial Day came, however, and there had been no miracle. Mary John had no

beyond the pasture lot back of her home, and the girls in white would march behind the old soldiers. Then the graves would be decorated. She did not remember what



Half-tone plate engraved by R. C. Collins

“ . . . AND TROTTED OFF, BAREFOOTED, ACROSS THE PASTURE LOT  
TO JOHN EDWARD ”

very clear idea of the meaning of the day, but she knew there would be music by the band, and speeches from the stand in the square, with girls in white to sing patriotic songs. Afterward there would be a slow procession to the cemetery, which lay just

“decorated” meant. The observance of the day was new in Gordonville at that time, and she did not like to ask questions.

Mary John was fond of the cemetery. She liked to walk there on Sunday afternoons, and she made a confidant of the

smallest headstone in the family lot. There was a small bird of indeterminate species on it, and she had long ago spelled out the inscription:

JOHN EDWARD GORDON,  
BORN FEBRUARY 18, 1850;  
DIED DECEMBER 23, 1861.

"Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Mary John felt that John Edward had been left out of many things. His grave lay on the very edge of the lot, quite by itself, and by small attentions she had tried to make up to him for the slight of this isolation. Beneath the headstone she had sunk the stem of a broken goblet in which slips of "wandering Jew" flourished, and beside the tiny footstone she had planted "live-for-ever." She had felt sorry for John Edward when the monument to Uncle Silas, who fell at Pittsburg Landing, was set up. It was a broken column of brown granite, beautifully polished, with gilded letters on it, and John Edward had only a small white stone. John Edward had even missed Christmas by dying when he did, and Mary John felt that he could sympathize with her in her successive disappointments.

She played with her paper dolls while sister Ellen's tightly braided hair was unbound into a crimped torrent suitable for so solemn an occasion as Decoration Day, and sister Ellen's blue sash was adjusted. She had not evinced the slightest desire to go down to the square, and it was considered that the exercises would not interest her. For once her family was in the right. She did not want to go to the square. She wanted to be free to go and talk to John Edward.

The child mingled with the crowd about the cemetery gate as the procession entered, and presently found herself with Ellen and Lucilla. She discovered that they carried baskets of flowers and handfuls of small flags, and as they walked toward the family lot they stopped here and there to bestow a few roses or a flag on a grave. This, then, was what decorating meant.

Uncle Silas's broken column had a large flag draped about it, and a tall bunch of roses in a vase at the foot of it. John Edward's grave had nothing on it but the goblet of wandering Jew. Mary John's hands were empty.

"Ain't you going to decorate this grave?" she asked.

Ellen and Lucilla exchanged glances of pitying superiority.

"Of course not, silly," said Lucilla. "He was n't a soldier. They don't decorate anything but soldiers' graves."

Mary John's eyes turned toward home. There, just beyond the pasture lot, were endless flowers. John Edward should not be left out.

"Where are you going, Mary John?" her mother called as the child started toward the gate.

"I want to get some flowers," said Mary John.

"There won't be time for that," said her mother. "We're going to drive out to Uncle Henry's to dinner, and he's ready to start now."

Mary John knew just how John Edward felt.

"It would n't take me a minute," she said.

"There is n't time," her mother repeated. "Come on, children. You don't need any flowers. All the soldiers' graves have been decorated already, and how pretty they do look!"

Ordinarily Mary John liked driving out to Uncle Henry's. The way lay through the woods, and passed the fearsome hollow where Aaron Scott killed Larkin Todd, or Larkin Todd killed Aaron Scott, she could never remember which, but she knew the murderer had been hanged. Then, too, there was a small green island cut out between the main road and a branch which returned to the beaten track a little farther on. Aunt Kate had told her that it was a giant's grave. There was also the mysterious covered bridge over the creek, and the blue house where Aunt Kate said the hermit lived. Mary John was filled with curiosity concerning him. No one but Aunt Kate ever called him a hermit, but Mary John did not know that. Aunt Kate was going out to Uncle Henry's, too, and Mary John talked almost freely with Aunt Kate when she was sure there was nobody to overhear and laugh, but to-day even Aunt Kate's presence did not lighten her heart. John Edward had been left out again, and every turn of the wheels took her farther from the possibility of making up to him for it.

It was quite dark when the spring-wagon

drove up to Mary John's home again. Aunt Kate was going to stay all night, and Mary John's wish on the first star that she might be allowed to share the "spare room" with her had been granted.

Mary John went to bed alone. A plot had formed itself in her mind on the way home, and she was glad to be in the spare room, where Ellen and sister Malinda could not interfere. She lay wide-eyed in the dark till their talking in the next room ceased. She could hear the voices of the grown people down-stairs; but they were in the parlor, and the back stairs opened into the kitchen. She crept out of bed and stole down the stairs. The moon made black bars on the kitchen floor through the slats of the shutters, and she carefully avoided stepping on them. The kitchen door was fastened, and a chair-back set under the knob, but she knew how to open it without making a noise.

Out in the garden she gathered roses, sweet peas, portulaca, and bleeding-hearts till her hands could carry no more. Then she opened the gate and trotted off, bare-footed, across the pasture lot to John Edward. The headstones in the family lot were white and ghost-like in the moon-

light, and the trees strewed the grass with mysterious shadows, but the intensity of her purpose made her forget her usual fears.

She knelt beside John Edward's grave, and with one forefinger burrowed little holes in the sod to hold the nosegays of short-stemmed flowers. They made a brave show in the moonlight above the sleeping lad who had been left out of so many things. When she had disposed the flowers to her liking she scrambled to her feet. The decorations still lacked something. She took a small flag from Uncle Silas's footstone.

"I know you would n't want John Edward not to have any at all," she whispered. "You won't miss this one. You've got the big flag, and I've left you two little ones. There, now, John Edward; you're all fixed."

A moment later the moon looked down on John Edward, alone with his tardy honors, and on Mary John, scudding homeward across the pasture lot. Courage had deserted her when her task was finished, and terror lent wings to her feet; but she was content. John Edward had not been left out.



## THE RUSSIAN COURT

BY HERBERT J. HAGERMAN

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VERY few foreigners, except those in official positions, are presented at the court of Russia. Americans, ambitious for invitations to court festivities in England, Germany, or Italy, have at least a chance of gratification if they are socially prominent, very rich, or very clever. At St. Petersburg, on the contrary, it is very seldom that any foreigners, except diplomats, are seen among the guests at the few brilliant entertainments given annually at the Winter Palace.

Of course no one is invited to a court ball without being first presented to the

Emperor or Empress, and such presentations, in the case of foreigners, are made only on rare occasions, upon the Emperor's own initiative, or, very occasionally, at the request of an ambassador or minister. The presentations are sometimes made at the balls themselves, before the dancing begins. There have been instances in recent years where all foreigners were excluded on the ground that the presentations to their Majesties would consume too much time, and it is safe to say that annually not more than six or eight *étrangers de distinction* have the honor of attending any of the functions at the Winter Palace. If the lines are closely drawn in regard to foreigners,