**Babys legs.**

**Age suitability age 8 Plus.**

**From Anyhow Stories .**

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**BETSY'S mother went out charing. All the day long she scrubbed and cleaned and rubbed at other people's goods and chattels, and at night, when she was tired out and could do no more, she went back to the two kitchens in which she and her children lived, and sat by the fire and rested. It was just the same, day in and day out all the year round ; but the good woman never grumbled, only thought what a blessed thing it was that long since she had spent some happy years with her good man gone .to rest, and that since then she had been able to work for the five little ones he had left her. Betsy was the eldest of them all, and eleven years old was Betsy, a thrifty little lass, able to scrub and clean, and mend and make, and to buy a dinner and cook it. " I never can think where she learnt it all," her mother sighed many a time when she sat down by the bright fire and clean hearth that awaited her in the evening, "except she's learnt it off her own heart. She's never been spoilt yet, and it's wonderful how much good people are born with. The way they come by the bad is rubbing about the world." "True enough, neighbour, depend upon it," the stonecutter's wife, who dropped in for a gossip one morning, answered ; " it's a wicked world, and the sooner we get out of it the better." " It's a very good world," the charwoman said, " if folks would only leave it alone. It's the people that spoil it, and mostly the grown-ups. The children are born good enough ; it's the grown-up folk that prevent their keeping so." "Maybe you are right," said the stonecutter's wife. " I always whipped my children well myself, and never stood any nonsense, and I'm very thankful to think it." "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Mrs. Jones, at your time of life to talk in such a wajV the charwoman cried, and with that they fell to quarrelling and discussed the world no more.**

**Meanwhile Betsy had gone upstairs for the other lodger's baby. She minded it all the day long, as well as her own little brothers and sisters, for the other lodger was as poor as the charwoman, and also went out to work. Betsy took the poor little baby in her arms, and went on her way to market all in the morning early, so that she might be indoors before her mother went out to work Now Betsy had very few clothes, and those were ragged, and she had little time to mend them, for she had the children and the baby to take care of, and the place to keep clean, and errands to go on for odd people, who gave her pence in return, with which she helped towards the house- keeping expenses. Moreover, poor little Betsy's clothes were, many of them, past mending, and it was strange indeed with some of them that one part held by another. But Sarah Jones, the stonecutter's daughter, a tidy lass and thrifty too in her way, and belonging to well-to-do parents, never considered all the trials of Betsy's lot, and was not slow to call her " Odds and Ends," and " Eags and Tags," and " Miss Coming -to -Pieces," and other descriptive names, which Betsy neither coveted nor loved. The con- sequence was that these two, Betsy and Sarah Jones, generally met in better humour than they parted. It was very cold when Betsy started for market, and she thought of the poor little baby, and fancied she felt it shiver, and remembered how it had had bronchitis in the autumn, and so she took off mother's shawl, which was round her own shoulders, and wrapped the baby well in it, and stopped at the corner of the street and asked the woman who kept the apple-stall to tie it round her and the baby together.**

**When this was done, Betsy went on her way with satisfaction, and the baby, having only its round bald head exposed, snoodled down in the warm woollen wrap, evidently feeling as cosy as a cat when it sits and purrs on the rug before the fire and hears the kettle singing. The market was only just opened for the day, and but few customers arrived early, so Betsy was soon served with the little scraps of meat and the few vegetables that were all she had come to buy, and then, still cuddling up the baby close and tight, she turned to go home, and there, just beyond the market, was Sarah Jones. " Good morning, Sarah," said Betsy, going up to her. " Is there any news ? " Sarah Jones looked neat and tidy, and in her arms she carried her youngest brother, a pale little fellow, who sucked his thumb while his legs hung naked in the cold morn- ing air. " I have no time to trouble about news, Betsy," answered Sarah. " Mrs. Blake, next door to us, is ill, and there's plenty to do in thinking about her, and then there's the wild beast show coming next week. I've no time to think about news." " Is there now, really ? Well, if it's going to be on a Saturday afternoon, I'll get mother to mind the little ones and I'll go and see it." " If I were you, Betsy," said Sarah Jones, " I'd be careful how I carried that baby. You have got it huddled up so, it won't know its legs from its arms soon." " It's not particular," said Betsy, " as long as it knows they are there all safe." Then Sarah Jones looked at Betsy well from top to toe. " Well, I must say," she exclaimed, " I wonder you like to let people see you come out like that, Betsy. Look at your arms and shoulders, nothing on them, and a bitter day like this."**

**"Well, look at your baby's legs," said Betsy; " there's nothing on them." " Legs are not arms and shoulders, Betsy. I shouldn't think of coming out without my jacket, and I wonder you like to do- it." " I haven't got a jacket," said poor little Betsy, " and I took off mother's shawl to put round the baby." " Well, at any rate, you might mend up your clothes a bit, Betsy," said Sarah Jones scornfully, as she turned to go on her way. " Maybe I might," said Betsy, " and maybe you might do many things you don't do. I have my hands full, Sarah, and plenty to think of besides myself." " I can always keep my things mended," said Sarah. " You have time enough to do it in," cried Betsy, " and yet there's a slit in your apron, and maybe your nice warm jacket covers holes where I've no jacket to hide them. And yet though you can cover up yourself you can't cover up your baby. I'll tell you what it is, Sarah Jones," Betsy called after her, " if you thought less of yourself and more of your baby's legs it would be better for you." Then Sarah Jones went home and put the baby on the floor, and took up her book and read for an hour or two, and was all the happier for knowing a little more to-day than she did yesterday, and the baby sneezed and coughed, and the next day it sneezed and coughed a little more, and in a week it had inflammation of the lungs, and every one said, " Dear me ! poor little fellow ! " And Betsy went home, and her mother went out, and Betsy scrubbed the floor, and cleaned all the things, and took care of the children, and thought of the wild beast show. The baby was well and warm enough, and sang a little song to itself that no- body else understood, and at the end of the day untidy little Betsy, forgetting to mend her rags, sat down and thought of Sarah Jones, and said to herself, " She's a nasty cat, and I can't bear her, and I never shall like good people who give themselves airs**

**Now the moral of this story is what you please, but I think it is, " It's well to be neat and tidy, but it's still better to take care of the baby's legs."**