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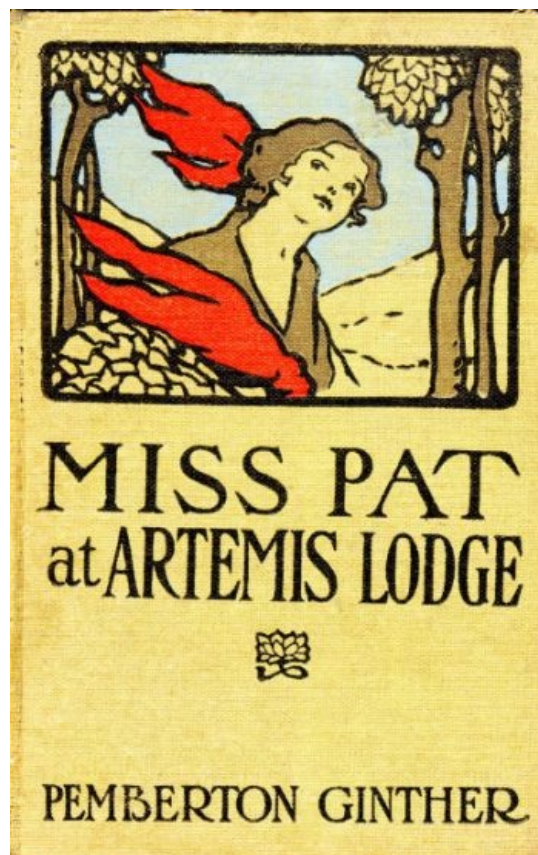
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MISS PAT AT ARTEMIS LODGE

THE "MISS PAT" SERIES

Nine Volumes

Miss Pat and Her Sisters

MISS PAT AT SCHOOL

MISS PAT IN THE OLD WORLD

MISS PAT AND COMPANY, LIMITED

MISS PAT'S HOLIDAYS AT GREYCROFT

MISS PAT AT ARTEMIS LODGE

MISS PAT'S PROBLEM

MISS PAT IN BUENOS AYRES

MISS PAT'S CAREER



"TANCREDI SAYS ROSAMOND IS GOING INTO
OPERA AS SOON AS SHE IS DONE WITH HER."

MISS PAT AT ARTEMIS LODGE

BY
PEMBERTON GINTHER

FRONTISPIECE BY
THE AUTHOR

PHILADELPHIA
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To
CAROLYN, A TRUE FRIEND

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CHAPTER I

MISS PAT ARRIVES

"The train's in, Elinor, and she'll be here in a jiffy. Bruce said he'd get a taxi, so as not to lose a minute. Do come and watch that corner while I keep my eyes on this one," said Judith, in a sudden flurry.

She was standing with her nose pressed against the cool glass of the studio window, staring eagerly out across the wintry square and scanning the opposite streets with intent gaze, and even when she gestured urgently to her older sister, her eyes never left the busy outdoor scene.

"I wish the studio wasn't so high up in the air that we can't possibly see the door," she regretted. "I'd so love to see her as she gets out—Miss Pat always makes me feel sort of thrillingly and excited when I see her hopping out of a carriage or coming up the walk. Something nice usually happens when she rushes in, all laughing and sparkly, doesn't it, Elinor?" she ended, cuddling up against the tall, slender figure which had joined her at the deep casement.

10

Elinor smiled and patted her pale hair. "I think, chick, that the best thing that happens when Miss Pat comes in is—just Miss Pat herself."

Judith nodded, with her searching eyes on the crowded streets below. "That must be it," she agreed thoughtfully. "I didn't think of it just that way, but I guess you're right. She's so—so—pleasant that she makes the stupid little things that happen seem like big *eventful-ish* doings. At Greycroft this winter things seemed terribly exciting, and now, when I look back at them, they really weren't so very wonderful."

"It's the spirit, my dearest Judy, that puts the sparkle into life," said Elinor absently, with her flexible artist hands straying idly over the pale mass of her little sister's straight heavy locks. "Many girls lead vastly more interesting and exciting lives than our dear Miss Pat, but they have dull spirits, and so we don't notice them; while we're all bursting with enthusiasm over every little thing she happens to be doing. It's her gay, glad spirit that wins our interest, bless her heart."

11

Judith nodded again. "I know," she said conclusively. "When Miriam and she went into the chicken business no one got awfully excited over Miriam's part of it, while they were all trying to help Miss Pat make a success of it. And when we were fixing up the Social House, even old Mr. Peberdy woke up when she scolded him. It's queer, isn't it, how she makes you feel? She ___"

A rap-a-tap-tap on the knocker sounded sharply and then, before either Judith or Elinor could move, the door was flung open and Patricia, followed by Bruce and Mrs. Spicer, rushed breathlessly in.

"Oh, you darlings!" she cried, hugging them both at once. "Oh, how heavenly it is to be here, and how adorable you look! Judy, that's a simply perfect green in that frock, and, Norn, you're lovelier than ever in that queer faded yellow. The studio looks stunning. Oh, I'm so excited that I don't know what I'm doing! To think of actually being here at last!" And she flung down her hat on the long divan and, crumpling her bright hair between both pink palms, she stepped back and faced the group in the middle of the studio with laughing lips and wet eyes.

12

Elinor, Judith and Bruce, with Mrs. Spicer in their midst, smiled back at her, but did not speak, each feeling, somehow, that this was Miss Pat's moment for utterance. On the brink of her new life—that life she had so ardently longed and planned and worked for—she had become for the moment the first figure in the scene. Tomorrow she would be gone into the ranks of that great army which is building up the beautiful world for others less gifted to live in, but today she was the center of her little world.

"To think, Judy and Elinor and Bruce and Mrs. Jinny-Nat, that I'm here, *here*, all ready to begin too with my music. One little day and then I'll be a real singing student. Why, it takes my breath away—" And she paused with a catch in her voice that threatened tears. 13

This was too much for the calm and practical Judith. "But you've been simply crazy to be here, Miss Pat," she cried reprovingly. "You've toiled and moiled on chickens and sculpture and candy and boards and everything just to be able at last to be a real singer. I don't see what there is to be a cry-baby about now."

Patricia's merry peal rang out wholesomely and she caught Judith by her slim shoulders and gave her a playful shake.

"It takes Ju to show up our little mistakes, doesn't it, Mrs. Nat?" she cried gayly. "Thank you, Judy, for them kind words. I won't be a cry-baby again; I promise you that. Come, Norn, tell us what you and Bruce have been up to while we've been wandering toward the sunny South this last two weeks. Is your stained glass window done, Norn, and has Marty been behaving as well as ever? Oh, there's such a lot to talk about, it's hard to know where to begin." 14

Mrs. Spicer laid aside her wraps and drew a deep chair to the fire. "I move we get thawed out while we gabble," she proposed, with her deep, husky chuckle. "I'm so frozen that it'll take a week of Sundays to shed my icicles. This zero weather isn't particularly inspiring after the balmy breezes of the Gulf Stream."

"Oh, do let's stay in for tea and go without any real dinner, Elinor," begged Patricia, impulsively. "Bruce said we were to take dinner at the Ritz as a special treat, but I'd ever so much rather stay home for this one night, if you don't mind."

Elinor looked inquiringly at her husband, who nodded and disappeared into the adjoining room, and then she smiled at Mrs. Spicer and nodded reassuringly at Judith, whose rather troubled expression did not escape the quick eyes of her impetuous sister.

"Will it disappoint you, Judy?" she asked with slightly dampened ardor. "I never thought of your being set on it——" 15

Judith waved her aside with a gesture of calm benignity. "I should hope," she said magnificently, "that I could do without *food* as well as any of you." And she seated herself on the stool beside Mrs. Spicer with an air of having settled the matter.

Patricia could not resist a ripple of merriment at her imposing manner. "Squelched again," she laughed, trying vainly to look humble and repentant. "Elinor, you really oughtn't to let Judy sacrifice herself like this. She——"

Elinor sank into another wide chair at the opposite side of the hearth. "We're only too glad to stay indoors this bitterly cold weather," she replied easily. "Judith was just wishing before you came that we could have a cosy supper here, but we all thought it would be more festive to celebrate in some more lively spot than the old studio. We didn't have any tea for you this afternoon because we wanted you to enjoy the dinner all the more."

Patricia still looked rather uncertainly at Judith, whose dignified manner was as impassive as ever. "Sure you don't mind, Ju?" she asked, solicitous as ever for her small sister's happiness. "Mrs. Nat will soon be thawed out, and——" 16

Judith drew herself up with beautiful composure. "Patricia Louise Kendall, you will never be a great artist if your mind is so set on your food," she said severely. "Do stop talking about dinners, and tell us what you've seen down there among the alligators and palm trees."

Patricia flung out two protesting palms. "Ask Sinbad, otherwise Mrs. Nathaniel Spicer," she retorted gayly, relieved by Judith's evident sincerity, "I'm no earthly good on descriptive pieces, as you very well know; and she can spin yarns that would make Robinson Crusoe sound like a Cook excursion. I'll roll up here alongside of Elinor and censor her reports when they get too highly colored."

Mrs. Spicer chuckled, rubbed her frosty fingers before the leaping blaze and then plunged into the story of their fortnight's journey southward with Miriam Halden, whom they had left with her mother in New Orleans, looking forward, in spite of crutches, to the festivities of her friends' coming-out parties. 17

Elinor and Judith asked a great many questions and Patricia threw in a word or two occasionally, but for the most part she was silent, reveling in the cosy warmth of the big room, with its easels and casts and canvases and all the other familiar delightful implements of the painter's craft.

As Mrs. Spicer finished and Patricia was beginning to bubble over with eager questions about friends and acquaintances, Bruce came back into the room, and, lighting a cigar, flung himself into the vacant lounging chair at the other side of the hearth. He was smiling and Patricia knew his expression meant something agreeable.

"What is it, Bruce?" she asked eagerly. "I know you've something up your sleeve. Is it a

surprise? Does Elinor know? Is anyone coming?"

Bruce pretended to be absorbed in his cigar and said not a word.

The others looked expectantly at him, and Judith, catching the infection, slipped over to him and taking him gently by the ears, turned his head directly toward them. 18

"You may as well tell us, Mr. Bruce," she urged firmly. "We haven't any time to waste this evening on conundrums, you know."

Elinor suddenly seemed enlightened. "Oh, I think I know—" she began, when Bruce interrupted her.

"No, you don't know it all," he announced loudly, as if fearful that the news might come from some other source. "You may know that I was going to order dinner served here in the studio, and you might guess that it was to be a very festive one, but you couldn't possibly foresee who was to share the humble board with us, no, not if you guessed a hundred years."

"Pooh, I'm sure I could do it in one little hour if I tried," laughed Patricia. "We don't know such a horde of people that it would take long to run over every name we know."

"Oh, don't try, please don't!" cried Judith in alarm, lest valuable time be lost. "Tell us, Bruce, do, Mrs. Nat hates to haggle over news." 19

There was a merry outcry at this transparent plea and then Bruce, with a pretense of reluctance, gave in.

"We're going to have dinner here in the studio with real waiters, Judy, and a bunch of flowers for each lady—don't interrupt, please, till I've done. A bunch of violets for you and Elinor and Mrs. Spicer and the happy song-bird there, and also for Miss Margaret Howes and Mrs. Hiram Todd."

There was such a chorus of questions that Bruce held up his hands in protest.

"Give me time, and I'll confess all," he entreated. "Don't be too hard on a poor solitary man-body. Remember, you're four to one, and be easy. I had asked the Todds for a surprise to you all, and today I met Miss Howes on the street—just back in town and honing for a sight of old friends, and I nailed her on the spot. Fortunately I could get them all on the phone and they one and all bubbled with joy at the prospect of a quiet little dinner in the shelter of our roof-tree. Margaret Howes is sick of hotel life and Mrs. Todd isn't quite acclimated to it yet." 20

Mrs. Spicer shook her head. "We didn't even know there was a Mrs. Hiram," she said with a chuckle. "When did it happen?"

"The very day after you left," replied Elinor. "They went to Washington—Hiram had some more business there—and Marian had the time of her life. She looks like a different girl, too. She's taken Hiram in hand already, and he is beginning to seem like other people. She told me the day we called on them here that she had given all of Hiram's wedding outfit to the Salvation Army, and she meant to fit him out right here in New York."

Patricia puckered her brow. "I thought Hiram was very well as he was," she said doubtfully. "He was the sort that couldn't be much changed, and it seems silly to deck him out—"

Bruce interrupted her. "That isn't the idea, my dear Pat," he explained, smiling. "Marian says Hiram has too much brains to look like a scarecrow for ignorant people to look down on, so she's making him fit, merely to enlighten them as to his merit." 21

Patricia was silenced, though not yet convinced. She turned to the subject of Margaret Howes with eager interest, asking all sorts of questions as to her progress in painting and her appearance and her life of the past year, to none of which Bruce would answer a word, even though urged by Elinor.

"Wait and find out for yourselves," he said teasingly. "It would take off the bloom if I recounted all."

Elinor rose to lead the way to the rooms where they would dress. "I don't believe he knows a single thing," she said emphatically. "Margaret isn't a chatterbox and it was too bitterly cold on the streets today for any lengthy confidences. Come along and get into your festive togs—we don't want to miss a single minute, and dinner is very early tonight."

As Patricia followed the others out she bent gratefully over Bruce's chair. Her large gray eyes were shining in the rosy firelight and her face was sweetly serious. 22

"You're awfully good to me, Bruce," she said in a low tone. "I don't deserve it one scrap—but I'll try all the harder to be worth while some day."

Bruce looked up with his nicest smile and laid his strong hand over hers on his chair-arm.

"You're very much worth while now—to me, Patsy dear," he said with genuine affection. "I'm not looking ahead to those future days. Who knows whether the success, when it comes, will make you nearer to us, or will take you far away—"

She broke in eagerly with her hand pressed on her quickly beating heart. "Oh, Bruce," she said with a little tinge of fear in her tone. "I'm sometimes so afraid of that—losing you all in the work and hurry that is coming to me. But you'll help me, won't you? You'll keep me remembering how much we've always despised conceited, stuck-up people? I may be a failure after all, but if I'm not, if I'm the tiniest bit of a success and you see me getting selfish and horrid, you'll try to remind me, won't you?"

Bruce smiled reassuringly up at her flushed face. "Rely on me to puncture your balloon if it's needed, Miss Pat," he said in a tone that was very comforting, and, as she dropped a light kiss on his dark, waving hair, he added more soberly, "It's a mighty hard thing for a singer to be unselfish and generous, I warn you, my dear. It's going to be a struggle sometimes, though I don't doubt for an instant that you'll win out with flying colors."

23

Patricia's gayety was surging back in a happy flood, and she straightened up with a little rippling laugh, casting all her shadowy fears behind her.

"Just you wait till I sing my first concert, Mr. Bruce Hayden," she challenged, "and then tell me I'm a conceited goose, if you dare. I wagger as Hannah Ann says, I'll be the same stupid, silly thing I am now." And nodding brightly at him, she danced after the others, humming a gay little tune as she went.

24

CHAPTER II

BRUCE'S SURPRISE PARTY

Although Patricia would have been very well entertained with a quiet tea all to themselves in the studio, since there was so much to be talked over, so many plans to be made and such hopes to be indulged in, nevertheless she was obliged to confess that she had never had a jollier time in her life than at the dinner that night.

While they were dressing, the table was laid and some tall palms placed in the corners of the room just where they made the best effect, and when they came into the studio again the whole scene was of the most restive sort. Flowers on the tables and candles twinkling everywhere, the tapestries and screens of the shadowy backgrounds, the gleam of copper and brass, all mingled in a delightful whole which would have been hard to equal by any hotel, however well appointed.

25

Judith gave an exclamation of pleasure as she stood on the threshold.

"Why, it's the very nicest place in the world to celebrate in!" she said warmly. "You ought to be an awfully great singer, Miss Pat, when you're starting off with such lovely doings."

Patricia screwed up her face into a mocking protest and had opened her lips, when the sound of the elevator made them start eagerly to the door.

Margaret Howes knocked before they could fling it open, but they had her inside and were hugging her and shaking hands recklessly ere Bruce could hurry out to see who had knocked.

Margaret, in a long cloak and with her dark hair crowned with a simple wreath of ivy leaves, was looking more charming than ever, and although she was fain to linger a moment to take in the beautified studio, they hurried her off to Elinor's room, where Mrs. Spicer was waiting to hook the last reluctant hook in Elinor's filmy gown.

There was another shower of excited embraces, questions and comments rained down and it was only the arrival of the Hiram Todd's that saved Margaret from pouring out all her store of information about herself in one reckless flood and thereby wasting half of the entertainment for the dinner table.

26

Mrs. Hiram Todd fully justified Elinor's approbation, for in the incredibly short time since she had left Rockham and gone with the lanky Hiram to the national capital, she had shed the slightly rustic manner of her former days and had become, in appearance at least, a well-dressed, attractive, sensible looking girl such as you may see in the comfortable homes of the large cities.

But although Patricia was surprised at the change which Marian had effected in her own manners and garments in the brief fortnight of married life, her astonishment grew as she gazed on Hiram.

No one, seeing the happy Hiram for the first time, could have believed that a few short months ago he had been the lank and ungrammatical individual whose gift of a patent rocker struck consternation to the members of the House Committee on that fateful donation night at the Social House when the ninety-nine wooden chairs had been presented by the guests of the evening. The memory of that trying moment, the picture of his later efforts in pursuit of grammar under her own tuition, faded from Patricia's mind as she looked at him. She recalled only the successful geologist, the man of science whose collection had gained him recognition in high places, and she held out her hand with cordial sincerity.

27

"How splendidly you're looking, Hiram," she said, almost with admiration in her tone. "City life

must agree with you tremendously——"

Bruce's chuckle halted her speech, but Hiram nodded heartily.

"That's about the size of it," he said with one of his grins. "But it took a smarter one than me—I to get at it. I was in town a lot since Mr. Hayden got me in touch with the big guns at the capital, and I didn't turn a hair, as far as clothes was concerned. My, my, what a dummy I was. But the minute Marian landed in the dining-room of the hotel, she knew what was what. She's just built me all over on stylish lines, you see," he ended with simple candor that was very pleasant to hear. "And the funny part of it is that I don't feel foolish in them, either. I like this striped white vest a heap better'n the plain ones, and I'm dinged if I ain't amazing comfortable in this stiff, starchy dress shirt."

28

Marian had the good sense to enjoy Hiram's frankness and she smiled on him affectionately. "We're both glad we came to town," she said with a glance at her own fluffy net dress, "but we'll be glad, too, to get back to the folks again. Town's plenty of fun, but it takes one's ambition. Hiram's simply lost without the woods and hills and I'm going to be pretty well satisfied with Rockham, once I get back."

Margaret Howes took a great fancy to both of them, and she plied Hiram with many questions as to his geological pursuits, bringing out all the best in him, while Marian, pleased with the respect this pretty, intelligent girl showed to her husband, glowed and beamed on her, growing entirely at ease and even loquacious under the stimulating warmth of Margaret's interest. By the time that dinner was served they were all in the most friendly humor possible and ready to enjoy the least excuse for laughter.

29

Another pleasant surprise came as they were settling themselves at the table. The elevator clanged its downward flight and a moment after the door flung open to admit Patricia's twin Ted, with his chum Tom Hughes, both very much delighted to find such a merry company and fully equipped with appetites to do justice to the feast.

Bruce received them with something like contrition in his cheerful face. "Great Scott, I forgot you two!" he gasped, wringing their hands with great cordiality. "Hope you haven't been wandering about in this frosty burg too long?"

Tom shook himself out of his overcoat with a silent grin, but Ted was not so considerate.

"See here, Elinor," he complained, turning to his sister at the head of the table. "That husband of yours needs a lecture. He made a date with us fellows over a week ago and we've been tracking him in vain for nearly an hour. He never peeped a note about having the dinner here. I thought it was to be at the Ritz and we've been hanging about there for a dog's age. What do you think of it?"

30

Patricia broke in before Bruce or Elinor could reply. "Don't waste time mourning over the dark past, Ted Kendall," she said severely. "Come sit down here between Margaret Howes and me, and let Margaret see how nicely you can behave since you've grown up enough to have evening clothes. She hasn't seen you since you were a little boy at Elinor's wedding, you know."

There was a laugh at this, as the ceremony mentioned had taken place in a June not so very long ago, and while Bruce tried hard to trump up excuses for having forgotten to telephone to his young brother-in-law, the two boys settled themselves at the table at the hastily arranged places provided for them, and the dinner began amidst great gayety.

When the fish had been disposed of Ted leaned forward to catch Elinor's eye. "Have you broken the news to the future prima donna?" he asked with interest. "I saw Merton today—you know his sister is living at Venusburg now—and he said it was a dandy place. Receptions every week. Tea-room on the premises. Art mongers and singers and a few chaperones that know their business——"

31

Patricia broke in with puzzled wonder: "What are you talking about, Ted?" she demanded. "What has Elinor to do with tea-rooms and the like?"

Ted looked surprised in his turn. "Haven't they told you yet?" he inquired doubtfully. "Perhaps I oughtn't to have——"

Elinor hastened to reassure him. "It's all right, Ted dear," she said. "We hadn't told Miss Pat because we thought she mightn't like it and we wanted her to have this one evening without a flaw. But she has to know tomorrow, so she may as well hear it now."

Patricia's heart sank as Elinor turned to her, and her first words were not encouraging.

"I know how you love to be with us all," she said, hesitating for the best words, "but Madame Milano has written that she wants you to agree absolutely to her suggestions as to your studies and——"

32

Patricia flushed suddenly. "Well, if it means that I have to go away all by myself and never have any real family times, like we've just begun to have after all these years," she declared hotly, "I simply won't do it, no matter what comes of it."

There was a little pause in the animated talk at the other end of the table where Bruce and Marian Todd were discussing architecture with Tom Hughes, and Bruce bent an anxious glance at his rebellious sister-in-law.

"Humph, listen to that, will you?" said Ted, appealing to Margaret. "She isn't a bit grateful—not she. She turns down a real thorough-going opera singer without a spasm. Time was when she groveled—fairly groveled—at Milano's lightest suggestion. At Leeuwarden, for instance——"

Patricia had caught the look in Bruce's eye and she flung her petulance from her with her usual energy.

"Never mind preaching any more, St. Francis-Edward-David Carson-Kendall, I'll be good," she said lightly. "Tell me the worst, Elinor, so that I may have it over. I always did think I'd like to expire among lights and flowers." 33

It was an effort to put her own feelings to one side, but she had her reward in Bruce's look and in Elinor's sigh of relief, and she instantly determined to put up with whatever Milano decreed with as joyful a spirit as she could summon.

"It really isn't so very dreadful. Many girls would love it," explained Elinor. "You are to study with Madame Milano's friend, Madame Tancredi, and to live at the new students' club, Artemis Lodge——"

"I thought Ted called it something else," began Patricia puzzled.

Ted laughed. "That's the name the fellows have for it," he explained in a hasty aside.

Elinor went gently on with the rules. "And you are to come home on Sunday evenings," she said brightly, "and to be very particular about your diet and physical exercises. I think that's all." 34

Patricia, in spite of her good resolves, could not repress a sigh at the program which was so very different from that she had planned for herself. Afternoons at the studio, morning chats with Elinor, music lessons for the aspiring Marty, who was to be put to school as soon as she came from Rockham, and a host of other idle, pleasant doings had been in her catalogue.

"I suppose it will be very nice," she said in a half-hearted manner that showed her feelings as clearly as any words could have. "Have you seen the place, Elinor?"

Elinor had not, but Margaret Howes had stopped there before settling in her new studio apartment, and she declared it as delightful as one could wish. Ted and Tom added their hopeful prophecy that she'd find a dandy bunch of girls there, and even Judith put in a word for Patricia's future abode by saying in her most conclusive fashion:

"I suppose they'll be fearfully nice to you there, since they will all know that Madame Milano made you come there. You're always so very lucky, Miss Pat. Everybody makes things so easy for you." 35

Patricia gave a gurgle of amusement at Judith's grown-up air. Her soaring spirits began to color the picture of Artemis Lodge with brighter hue and she saw that it really was fortunate to have the interest of a prominent and popular opera singer as an introduction to the world of musical endeavor.

"That's true enough, Judith-Minerva, my dear," she retorted gayly. "I'll try to live up to the great Milano's recommendation. But if I fail, I'll get my literary sister, the authoress of——"

Here Judith, for some reason unknown to Patricia, looked so very hurt and agitated that she dropped her teasing manner and said with genuine satisfaction, "I'm awfully glad that you pointed out what a card Madame Milano's introduction will be, Judy. They'll put up with me for her sake and I'll have a good time, even if it is in borrowed plumage."

Judith, however, was not going to allow that her admired Miss Pat needed any other recommendation than her own pleasant self, and she defended Patricia so stoutly against this statement that Ted declared he was green with jealousy and began a counter-charge of neglect of his talents, which moved Judith to swift retort and afforded great diversion to their end of the table. 36

The talk hung on the charms of Artemis Lodge, and then slipped to the changes which had come into each of their lives since their last meeting. Margaret Howes confessed to being at work on a large decorative scheme for a woman's club, although she would not divulge the whereabouts of the club nor the length of her stay in the metropolis. Elinor showed the photograph of her finished cartoon for the stained glass window she had been at work on before and during the holidays, while Bruce promised a view of his partly finished panel for the Historical Society. Hiram Todd sketched lightly the prospects which were opening to him in additional work in Washington. Ted and Tom had little to add to their openly avowed intentions to capture honors in the same course, each declaring that the other stood little show beside himself. Judith was very quiet and, as the youngest, was not pressed for any definite account of her aims and accomplishments, and though Patricia knew well that her silence covered great determinations, the memory of her agitated manner when she had spoken jestingly of her literary ambitions kept her from further open questioning. 37

The intimate hospitality of the studio made a good setting for their gay sociability and the dinner progressed without any more drags on the wheels of its merry-making. Mrs. Nat told funny stories, and the boys gave impromptu imitations of classmates and professors; Margaret Howes sparkled with quaint tales of the remote mountain village where she had been spending the summer. Elinor's gentle wit flashed; and Bruce's ready laughter followed every one of his own clever jokes, while Patricia and Marian made their mark as an appreciative audience, enjoying everything that was meant for humor and applauding even the feeblest joke. Altogether it was a great success as a celebration and a happy augury of the future into which it ushered the expectant Patricia. 38

The guests were slow to leave and if it had not been necessary for Ted and Tom to make a certain train in order to get back to college at the required time, while Hiram was also due at a

midnight conference of geologists at his hotel, they might have gone on with the merriment long after the last waiter had disappeared and the violets were fading.

"I simply hate to go," confessed Margaret Howes as she stood waiting for her taxi after the rest had departed. "I've had a gorgeous time and I am sorry to leave you. Remember you are to meet me in the tea-room at Artemis Lodge at four-fifteen tomorrow to look over the ground before Miss Pat plunges in. Wait for me in the corner near the door. I'll be on time—if I can."

After the elevator had clanged its way down with Bruce and Margaret, Patricia turned with a passionate gesture to the others.

"Oh, my dears, to think it has really begun!" she cried as though just realizing the great fact. "Oh, Mrs. Nat, and Judy, and Elinor, you dear, adorable angels, I'm so happy I don't know what to do." 39

Elinor and Judith were blowing out the guttering candles, and Mrs. Nat was hastily rearranging the disordered furniture, but they each stopped to smile sympathetically at her, and Judith reached out an eager hand.

"Just think of tomorrow, Miss Pat," she said, shaken out of her composure for once. "Oh, jiminy! Losh keep us all! What fun that's going to be!"

CHAPTER III

THE TEA-ROOM AT ARTEMIS LODGE

Patricia spent the next morning in a whirl of pleasantly conflicting emotions, and, while she was posing in the studio for a rapid sketch by Elinor, her head was humming with a perfect hive of delightful thoughts.

Bruce was off for the day on business, Judith was, of course, at school, and so the three, Mrs. Nat, Elinor and Patricia, had the place to themselves. And how they did chatter!

Patricia heard over and over again every particular of the interview Elinor and Bruce had with the prima donna on their last flying visit to New York; they discussed the possibilities of getting an attractive room at Artemis Lodge at the very moderate price Patricia could afford; they made plans for the welfare of Marty Sneath, who was to arrive and take up her duties as studio-girl the next day; and, in spite of the fact that it was only two short weeks since the travelers had left the north, Patricia insisted on minute inquiries about everyone she knew. 41

But always, at the end of every other subject, they returned to the great matter in hand—Patricia's enrolment as a singing student under Madame Tancredi and her establishment at Artemis Lodge.

"I'm scared stiff at the thought of paying such a fortune for the lessons," Patricia said ruefully. "Think of spending all that money for one little half hour! And three lessons a week, too. Don't you think I might do with less, Norn? I can make it up with practicing, you know."

Elinor shook her head and Mrs. Spicer counseled briskly, "Better stick tight to rules, my dear. This Madame knows her business, it seems, and if your operatic friend, says three, it must be as she commands. Thank goodness, she didn't tell you to spend every afternoon there."

"Well, then, the only thing for me to do is to get a very cheap room," said Patricia decisively. "For I am just determined not to be sponging on you and Bruce if I can help it." 42

Elinor was about to protest, but Mrs. Spicer with nods and head-shakes signaled her to desist.

"That's the way to talk," she said heartily. "You'll enjoy every scrap of progress that you make. We've got to pay for everything in this life one way or another and it saves a lot trouble to begin square."

"Oh, I'm so glad you see it," cried Patricia. "I simply couldn't take money for mere *indulgences*, even though I might for real hard study. I can be just as happy in a little room as a big one, and I'll have this lovely place to come to when I'm hankering after space, anyway."

It was settled, after a careful consultation of the little book which Patricia called her "Incomings and Outgoings" that, since the lessons took almost every cent of the modest income which Ted generously insisted on sharing with his two younger sisters for the winter months, Patricia was to accept the rent of her room at Artemis Lodge as a gift from Bruce and Elinor and to keep the remnant of her own money for current expenses. 43

"I'll be a perfect miser and that will help me to stay at home and practice all the more," laughed Patricia as she settled down to the posing again. "I do hope Artemis Lodge isn't a very top-lofty

place, with lots of maids to tip and a hundred ways of grabbing at my little pile."

"You'll find out all its pitfalls *after* you get there," said Mrs. Nat with a grimness born of experience. "Don't look for too much. It isn't human nature to be perfect. Besides, it ain't religious. If this good old earth of ours was just one little mite better none of us would be hankering so very specially after heaven."

Patricia tossed the suggestion of drawbacks to Artemis Lodge behind her with a gay gesture, and if the clock had not struck at that minute would have entered a strong protest. At the signal of release, however, she flung off the drapery in which Elinor had posed her, and flew to the window.

"The sun's out again, and it's come to stay!" she cried, peering down at the streets with eager interest. "Oh, isn't it too jolly for words to be really going to get my room and all! I'm so excited I simply can't wait for the time to come." 44

But of course she did wait and with the very best grace in the world. For she helped Elinor pack a box of warm half-worn clothing for the worthless Sneaths in Rockham, and made some necessary repairs in her own slightly travel-worn clothes.

"I want to be as fresh as possible, without being too wealthy looking," she said with a smile as she laid out her newest blouse and brushed her hat with great nicety when the hour for getting ready for the tea-party had arrived.

Judith had come in and was hurrying through her toilet at an unusual rate of speed, but she paused and critically surveyed her sister with her head first on one side and then on the other.

"You may as well give up trying to look like the deserving poor, Miss Pat," she said emphatically. "You'll always be sort of *rich-ish* looking, not real luxuriant, you know, but—but—" She hesitated for just the right phrase. "Well, anyone would know you used a bath-brush and took care of your hair," she ended lamely. 45

Patricia bubbled with mirth. "What a left-handed compliment, Judy. Is that the best you can do for me? I'm glad I appear clean, anyway."

Judith began to fasten her frock, undisturbed. "You know perfectly well, Miss Pat, that you're quite good-looking—not so lovely as Elinor, but heaps prettier than Miriam or—or—me," she ended rather forlornly.

Patricia had come to understand the longing after beauty which was in the depths of her small sister's secret heart and was quick to offer balm.

"Look at us," she said, pulling Judith to the mirror beside her. "Fess up now Miss, that you are quite as fascinating as your elderly relative. You forget that you've been growing and changing a lot since I've been away."

Judith gazed at the reflection in the glass which showed her as a slender childish figure with a lengthening mop of pale, ashy hair and a face of delicate intensity. She really had not changed at all in Patricia's short absence, but the different surroundings made both girls view her with other eyes, and she seemed to have taken on new height and color. 46

"I'm growing!" cried Judith rapturously, turning from the mirror to rush into Elinor's room with the glorious news. "Oh, Elinor, I'm nearly up to Miss Pat's ear-tip now."

Patricia heard Elinor's laughing comments with a smile of satisfaction curving her pink lips. She knew that Judith did not measure a fraction of an inch more than when she left Rockham, but she was glad that the images in the glass had cheered the critical Judith, whose lamentations about her size and coloring were always loudest when she faced a looking-glass.

It was only a very little thing, this incident of cheering Judith, but it warmed Patricia's already glowing heart and added the final drop to her cup of happiness, and she started off on their expedition to the Artemis tea-room with such a radiant face that Judith commented on it. 47

"Miss Pat," she whispered with a warning nudge as they fell behind the other two in the crowded pavement, "you ought to take a tuck in your smile. Everybody will be looking at us if you go along grinning like that."

But Patricia only smiled the more at this and Judith gave her up in despair of making any impression on her abounding good humor.

"She's perfectly dreadful, Mrs. Nat," she confided as she slipped to her old friend's side, leaving Patricia to Elinor for the rest of the walk. "She doesn't care a bit about how she looks. Lots of people turned to stare at us."

Mrs. Spicer nodded approval of Patricia's reckless course. "Don't you fret, my dear," she soothed Judith. "Miss Pat is worth looking at any time and folks like to see a real happy person once in a while. Land knows why we're all so afraid to show our joyful side to the world. Let her alone. Good times don't last too long for any of us."

Judith meditated on this bit of wisdom and she watched Patricia closely when they reached the street where the house was located. There was no clouding of the bright face, however, at the sight of the substantial graystone building, and Judith drew a sigh of relief that Patricia's happy hour was lengthened by so much. 48

"Isn't it a perfect duck of a place?" said Patricia as they stood at the wide entrance door. "It's just like some of the old houses I saw in Belgium last summer—only fresher and newer, of course."

"Margaret said it was modeled after an old French house," said Elinor, reaching for the shiny brass knob at the side of the green door. "The people who planned it wanted to get what they called 'artistic atmosphere' and a suitable setting for the budding geniuses within doors."

"And they hit the nail on the head, *smack*," agreed Mrs. Nat as the door swung open and a glimpse of a wide, paved inner courtyard made an interesting background for the respectable, stout elderly woman who, like the concierge abroad, guarded the entrance.

They were ushered across the courtyard—Patricia all the while gaping shamelessly about at the four house-walls that formed the square about the courtyard—and went up a red-carpeted, stone stair to the first floor of the house, where they followed their affable guide through a succession of passages, coming at last into a huge room at the door of which she left them.

There was a murmur of well-modulated voices, a hum of light chatter, and as they paused on the threshold for a moment, the sound of a couple of notes struck carelessly on a piano made Patricia's cheeks glow.

"Isn't it a stunning big room?" she said in an undertone to Elinor, who nodded appreciatively as she led the way into the nearest corner where a comfortable divan and a couple of chairs stood invitingly empty.

The room was filled with girls of varying ages, with a scattering of guests, and although it was as yet too early for tea, the place was alive with chatting groups, some of whom had secured little tables against future needs. The tea-table was at one end of the room, and the big brass samovar was already sending out encouraging clouds of steamy vapor. The girl behind the urn attracted Patricia's immediate attention.

"Look, Norn," she said in eager interest. "Isn't that Doris Leighton at the tea-table? It's enough like her to be her twin, if it isn't herself."

Elinor's surprise was quite as great as Patricia's on recognizing beyond a doubt the fair hair and attractive figure which had so won Patricia's admiration on her first visit to the art school many months ago. Doris it was beyond a doubt, and grown more charming than ever, as they quickly found on making themselves-known to her.

"I'm staying here for the winter," she explained to them while her hands were busy with the tea-things. "I get my room free for attending to the tea-table, and I am doing social secretary work in the mornings. I've been intending to hunt you up, ever since I came back to town but I've been so busy I could hardly see."

Patricia, in spite of her knowledge of Doris' brave struggle since the loss of their money, could not help contrasting the present capable Doris with the beauty of the class at the Academy whose severest task had been to clean her big palette or wash her soiled paint brushes.

"That month at Greycroft while you were abroad set me up completely," Doris went on with an earnestness that was good to see. "I'll never forget your kindness to me and mother, Elinor, and if there is ever anything I can do to show how I feel, you must let me do it."

It was on the tip of Patricia's tongue to suggest that she give them some hints of the inner workings of Artemis Lodge, but at that moment Margaret Howes came in, and there was all the exclaiming and wondering over the coincidence of Doris' presence to be gone over again, until the arrival of a maid with a basket of hot buns put an end to their talk with the tea-mistress.

Margaret led the way back to their corner. "It's great luck that Doris should be here," she said with an exultant note in her voice. "She can do a lot for you, Miss Pat, by way of avoiding the rocks among the shoals. She'll know more about the real inside workings of these fair damsels than you can find out all at once for yourself. And I advise you to get her opinion of anyone you fancy, before you tie too closely to them."

This was considered a good plan by all, and they intended to seek Doris after her duties were over and put some leading questions to her. While the tea was still circulating and they were deep in discussing the various sorts of girls surrounding their corner, Doris came over to them with a word of regret for her early flitting.

"It's my short hour today, and I have a lesson in domestic science to give over in Brooklyn. I'm late, too," she said, pulling into her gloves with nervous haste and glancing at the window near their corner. "Send me your address, Elinor, and we'll have a real meeting some day soon. Good-bye, Mrs. Nat. Good-bye, Judy, Don't forget to make Elinor hunt me up, Miss Pat. Mercy, there goes my car now," and she fled precipitately.

Margaret Howes looked after her with approval in spite of her own disappointed hopes. "Don't tell me that it isn't good for some people to be poor," she said impressively. "Doris Leighton proves that beyond a doubt. Did she tell you anything about Miss Ardsley, the new directress?" she asked in a changed tone.

Elinor shook her head. "We were too much surprised to keep our wits, I am afraid," she confessed. "We really ought to see her now—it's getting late and Mrs. Spicer wants to make that six-ten train."

Margaret rose and made her way to another part of the room, where she seemed to be making inquiries, for a girl in a faded green linen dress nodded and then went out, returning quickly.

Margaret came back smiling. "Miss Ardsley is in today," she said, "and will see us in a short while."

Patricia's color rose and she held her hands together under the cover of her muff. The anxious

moment seemed an age to her, and although the green-robed girl had assured Margaret that the lady was on the way to meet them, she was positive that it was at least half an hour until the slim, silk-clad form of the directress of Artemis Lodge stood smiling gently before them.

54

She was of that age between youth and middle age which shows at the same time gray hairs among the dark braids and pink cheeks where the wrinkles are beginning to hide. She wore a sober, well-cut gown and her few ornaments were of the choicest kind. Her hands were soft and long and somewhat faded, though carefully tended and of good shape.

Patricia on the first swift glance did not feel particularly drawn to her, but after the introductions had been made by Margaret Howes, and they were seated again, she began to revise her first hasty judgment.

Miss Ardsley was graciousness itself, and even the mention of Madame Milano's name did not seem to heighten her original cordiality, but she had disappointment for Patricia's high hopes in her accounts of the popularity of Artemis Lodge.

"I assure you, my dear Mrs. Hayden, we have not a single empty room," she said with graceful regret. "Every apartment in the Lodge is filled at present, and unless someone should leave, I do not see how we can hope to have the pleasure of Miss Kendall's being with us."

55

Mrs. Spicer, always practical and to the point, demanded if there were any prospect of a removal.

Miss Ardsley feared not, since the Lodge was so deservedly popular. "And with the very best families, I assure you," she said with an earnestness which Patricia wondered at. "We have two young millionairesses with us now, and the social tone of the establishment is higher than ever this year."

It was plain that the magic names of Hayden and Milano could do nothing in this case, and Patricia gave up hope, plunging into a dark region of despair from which it took a hard struggle on her part to emerge sufficiently to smile her farewells to Miss Ardsley and make her way out with the others with an appearance at least of cheerful indifference.

On the way back she was very silent and neither Elinor nor Judith attempted to comfort her, but when they had reached the station and Mrs. Spicer had bought her ticket and Bruce had appeared in the nick of time with luggage checks and other necessities of travel, her face cleared and she turned to her old friend with more of her usual happy air.

56

"I'm not going to give up just for one little disappointment, Mrs. Nat," she whispered as she clung to her in farewell. "I'll get into Artemis Lodge and I'll have a splendid time there, in spite of everything."

Mrs. Nat patted her cheek approvingly. "Certain sure you will, my dear," she responded heartily. "Something's bound to happen, once you make your mind up to it."

Patricia watched the train pull out of the big smoky shed, with a real hope growing in her heart.

"Something's bound to happen," she repeated determinedly, and she took Judith's arm and skipped a couple of steps along the dim platform, much to that young lady's horror.

"It's simply bound to happen, Judy," she said out loud, but to Judith's puzzled questions she would give no answer save a little confident laugh.

57

CHAPTER IV

TANCREDI'S TWO PUPILS

And something did actually happen. It was in the most unexpected way and it came from a quarter that caused Patricia to believe in modern miracles.

She had gone with some quaking to her appointment with Madame Tancredi, and she was waiting alone in the anteroom—Elinor having left her for some necessary shopping until the lesson should be over—when the maid ushered in a girl in sumptuous street clothes, carrying a music roll of extravagant design.

Patricia loved pretty clothes and pretty people, and the girl was undeniably pretty in a dark, tropical way. She moved with graceful, gliding steps and her face under the wide drooping velvet hat looked amiable as well as comely.

Patricia wanted to speak to her, but was uncertain as to the propriety of the act. The girl solved her difficulty, however, by choosing a chair near Patricia's, and, settling easily in it with an accustomed air of being agreeable, smiled pleasantly and spoke in a most melodious voice.

58

"Are you the new pupil?" she asked, apparently less from curiosity than a desire to break the silence. "I have heard that Madame was expecting someone recommended by Milano, but since she didn't tell me any more than just that much, I may be mistaken."

Patricia eagerly assured her that she was indeed the expected student, adding a rather anxious question as to the manner of instructor she was to have in Madame Tancredi.

The girl laughed a tinkling laugh which showed her faultless little white teeth and waved her hand in quite the foreign manner.

"Tancredi is very well as teachers go," she said with an indifference that seemed superhuman to the quivering Patricia, who immediately set her up in her mind as authority on matters musical.

"I've never studied before," she confessed, with a tinge of confusion. "I am afraid Madame will find me awfully stupid."

The girl looked at her with a lightening of her amiable, indifferent air. "Are you really so very young as all that?" she asked in some surprise. "You look very childish in this dim light, but I thought you must be old enough to have studied somewhere before this. Tancredi doesn't usually take rank amateurs."

Patricia felt very small indeed before this calm criticism, but she confessed bravely, though with flushing cheeks. "I am past seventeen," she said resolutely. "And I've been waiting six months to begin study."

And then at the encouraging look on the other's face she rushed into a rather jumbled account of her aspirations, her trials and lastly her disappointment of yesterday in being refused admittance at Artemis Lodge on the score of lack of room.

The girl listened closely, and Patricia thought she nodded approval at the names of Bruce Hayden and Greycroft, and showed a keener interest when Milano's visit to Rockham was hastily mentioned. She made few comments, however, and when the gong rang, rose to go into the studio with graceful alacrity.

At the threshold she paused to say, "If you are here when I come out, I should like to see you again," and then with a return of her amiable, indifferent air, she passed into the inner sanctum, leaving the impulsive Patricia worshipping at her shrine.

Some sounds of liquid melody found their way out through the heavy doors, and helped to make the tedious half hour pass like magic. Patricia was thankful she had made a mistake in the time and had arrived so much too soon, since it gave her the opportunity of having even this small glimpse into the world of music before she ventured into it herself.

The girl came out, and her expression was heightened into positive radiance. Evidently her lesson had been a good one and she had been praised.

Coming over to where Patricia still sat, she stood for a moment looking down on her. Then she smiled her slow smile and held out her hand.

"I am Rosamond Merton," she said, "and I know that you are Patricia Kendall. I am living at the Lodge while I study with Madame. I have three rooms there. Will you come and stay with me for a month?"

Patricia gasped. "Why—" she began in some confusion. "Oh, you're awful kind, but—but—you don't know me at all."

Rosamond Merton smiled again, but did not withdraw her hand. "Which means that you don't know me," she replied, not at all affronted. "Ask Tancredi who I am, and—if you are still in doubt, come to see me at the Lodge. I like you, Miss Patricia Kendall, and I mean that you shall like me."

Patricia was so overcome by these magnanimous words that she shook hands with great heartiness, promising to visit Miss Merton and vowing appreciation of her kindness.

"Though I can't come and stay with you, you know," she said as she rose in response to the gong which was now summoning her. "I'm simply crazy to stay at Artemis Lodge, but I couldn't sponge on a perfectly absolutely strange girl." Then fearing that this might sound ungracious, she added hastily, "Though there isn't anyone I'd like to visit better than you."

The frank admiration in her tone pleased the girl and she took up her muff and gloves with a gratified air. "I warn you that I am hard to discourage when I've set my mind on a thing," she said lightly as she turned to go. "You will come to see me this afternoon, I am sure."

She was gone before Patricia could reply and since the door into the studio was opening softly, there was no other course for Madame Milano's protégé than to walk as calmly as she might straight into the fiery furnace, leaving all thoughts of Rosamond Merton behind her.

Tancredi proved a rather good-natured portly woman with a taste for exaggerated garments which suggested the operatic stage. She met Patricia on the threshold, and patted her shoulder kindly as she led her into the large bare apartment.

"So, so. You are a very young one," she said with a strong foreign accent, yet with great kindness. "Milano did not prepare me for this. Sit there, little one, while I look thee over."

She pushed Patricia to the piano bench, and settled herself on the opposite settee by the music stand, and though her scrutiny was amazingly thorough, Patricia was surprised to find that it did not disconcert her in the least. Madame Tancredi was the exact opposite of her friend

Milano in all save the kindly spirit of the true artist. She was stout and heavy, where Milano was swift and graceful; she was frankness itself where Milano was cryptic; and, finally, she was the owner of a very lively curiosity.

Patricia feared lest her precious half hour go by in catechism, and was beginning to feel a bit downcast over the length and variety of the questions put to her by the smiling Tancredi, when suddenly, with a jingle of her chatelaines and bangles, she rose and beckoned to a screened corner where, unnoticed by Patricia, a dark-haired young woman had been copying music.

"The Heather Song, Marçon," she said briefly. "This young lady requests the Heather Song." 64

As a matter of fact, Patricia had done no more than to confess with reluctance that she had tried it by herself at Greycroft, strumming the accompaniment with careless fingers. She heard, with a sort of dismay, the dashing introduction rendered faultlessly by the competent Marçon, and she stood beside the shining grand piano in no very pleasant frame of mind.

Her throat grew dryer with every moment and when it was her time to burst into the rippling, tender song, she heard a trembling little voice, which she could hardly recognize for her own, stumble faintly into the melody.

It was too much for her tried nerves. She broke down utterly, turning away from the piano with a sob, and, flinging out her hands in a despairing gesture, cried out that she could not sing, that she never should be able to sing and that she might as well go.

Tancredi was too much used to the emotions of the geniuses and near-geniuses, whose temperamental outbreaks she had learned by heart, not to understand what was the matter.

Waving the composed Marçon out of her room, she pushed Patricia to the stool with no very gentle hand. "There now, my little one. Sing for me in your own way," she commanded. "Rome was not builded in one day. You are too much excited—and you so young," she ended with a softening of pity in her rich tones. 65

Somehow that accusation of youthfulness was the spur that drove Patricia to victory. Raising her head with a toss of determination, she ran her hands over the keys first lightly and then with growing certainty of herself, while, unseen by her, Tancredi nodded and smiled to herself in high good humor.

The song bubbled out in Patricia's best notes, rippling in silver waves through a golden atmosphere of pure melody. She sang it to the end and then sat mutely on the bench, with her anxieties returning slowly as the silence grew.

When she could bear it no longer she turned a pale face to where Tancredi sat staring into space.

"S—shall I try it again?" she faltered uncertainly. 66

Tancredi shook her head silently. "That will be enough of songs for the present, my treasure," she said, in a strange tone, of which Patricia could make nothing.

Presently she rose and walked the length of the apartment with something very like triumph on her heavy face, at which the puzzled Patricia wondered all the more, though she waited docilely enough on her stool in front of the great shining piano.

After a few turns, Tancredi came suddenly to her where she sat and took her chin in her warm, soft padded fingers, staring sharply into her face as though to read her whole being at a glance. Decidedly, she was a woman of unusual moods, for she stooped and kissed the anxious, girlish face, first on one cheek and then on the other.

"There, my little one, we are friends now," she said, releasing her, "and you shall sometimes sing for me some of those songs when it is needed to cheer your heart. But otherwise you shall not sing—no, not for the king himself should he ask it."

Patricia's hopes went down with a flop! Was she being told that she could not study? Had the end come so swiftly? She had a hard time not to cry out with the pain of this horrible fear, and the kind eyes of the experienced Tancredi caught her despairing look. 67

"Ah, no. It is not that you shall not sing at all," she said hurriedly. "It is only that you shall sing the exercises only as yet. We must walk ere we may run. Come, let us see about the breathing now," and she stood erect and vigorous, motioning Patricia to face her and follow her every movement.

Patricia came out from that interview so bewildered yet so happy that she forgot completely about questioning the teacher as to Rosamond Merton. Elinor, who was waiting for her in the anteroom, saw her shining face before she spoke, and knew that all had gone well with her.

"Dear Miss Pat," she said softly, slipping her arm into Patricia's as they went out of the wide front door. "So it has all come out well, and you are really going to be a singer some day! How glad I am that you have passed this first test."

Patricia was still slightly puzzled, though more confident than she had been before Tancredi had begun her instructions. 68

"I've had a mighty lucky day, Norn," she said with real thankfulness. "I've been put down on the books as a regular pupil at Tancredi's, and—oh, I forgot all about it—I've had a sort of a chance to go into Artemis Lodge, though of course I couldn't take it."

Elinor agreed with her after hearing the incident. "Though it is certainly very sweet of her to be

so generous," she said thoughtfully. "Rosamond Merton, you say her name is. We'll have to ask Doris Leighton about her."

But, as it happened, they did not have time to put any questions to Doris Leighton. Rosamond Merton was not the sort of girl who cares to postpone interesting events. Miss Pat had piqued her fancy and she took a very determined course to gain her point.

Bruce handed Elinor a note when they reached the studio.

"Messenger boy brought it ten minutes ago," he explained. "Said it was urgent, but as I didn't know where to find you, I had to leave it till you came in."

69

CHAPTER V

ROSAMOND INSISTS

"What is it, Norn?" asked Patricia rather anxiously.

She eyed the note with an unspoken fear that it might be a message from her new instructor canceling her enrolment, though Elinor's face did not show any consternation as she swiftly ran her eye over the brief sheet.

"Of all things!" she murmured with an amused smile, and then read more carefully, breaking into a ripple of laughter as she finished.

"You certainly have charmed this Rosamond Merton, Miss Pat," she said with a fond look at the amazed Patricia. "Listen to this."

Patricia's look of amazement grew as Elinor read. Rosamond Merton invited them to tea with her in her rooms that afternoon, very prettily insisting that the small sister whose name she thought was Julia, might make one of the party, since it was to be merely a cosy cup of tea to better acquaintance.

70

"I must say she writes very agreeably," commented Elinor, scanning the lines critically.

"That's just what she is—agreeable," declared Patricia, nodding at the word. "She seems as though she would never take the trouble to be cross with anyone. And she's very pretty."

"That settles it," laughed Elinor. "No matter what must be set aside for it, I see that we must take tea with Rosamond Merton. We must look her over, Judy, and see if we can let our Miss Pat fall in love with her, as I perceive she is on the brink of doing."

Judith's anxious look made Patricia laugh. "Don't be afraid I'll make a silly of myself like I did over Miss Warner and Doris Leighton," she said lightly. "I'm done with that sort of thing ages and ages ago."

Elinor was deeply interested in this new adventure, and after a late luncheon and a hasty half hour of breathing practice for Patricia, they got into their afternoon clothes and went to Artemis Lodge again.

71

"How familiar it looks today," said Patricia as they rang the shining brass bell. "Isn't it queer how soon you get used to places? I feel quite like an old inmate already."

"That's always the way with me, too," agreed Judith. "I felt as though I'd always lived on that corner near the Dam, just because we spent an half hour there on each of those two mornings we were in Amsterdam."

The opening of the door put an end to their chat and they followed the respectable woman through the courtyard again, feeling quite at home with its quaint quadrangle.

They did not wind their way through any intricate passages, however, for Rosamond Merton's rooms were near the main entrance at the head of a little flight of winding stairs, very easy of access from the courtyard and quite remote from the various offices and salons.

She opened the door immediately on their knock, and there was such a pretty warmth of welcome in her tranquil manner that Elinor was won at once, though Judith, who prided herself on her discrimination, did not completely thaw out until the visit was nearly over.

72

The rooms, three in number, were furnished with a simple elegance that appealed strongly to them all, and the undemonstrative manner with which Rosamond Merton pursued her purpose gave her persistence a charm that robbed it of all crudity.

"You see, Mrs. Hayden," she said, after tea had been served and they were chatting comfortably before a small fire in the pleasant sitting room, "I am really quite selfish in wishing your sister to come with me for a while—as long as she will, in fact. I am very much alone here, being the

only Tancredi pupil in the house, and I have more room than I need. I can't possibly use more than two of this suite, one for my bedroom and the other for a sitting-room. So the small room there is practically going to waste."

"Do you have to keep it?" asked Elinor, "I should think Miss Ardsley would be glad to have it —"

73

"But it belongs with this suite," urged Rosamond quietly. "It has no door except into these other rooms."

This was so evident a reason for her being burdened with an unnecessary room that Elinor fell silent for a little space while the others moved to the other side of the room to look over some fine photographs of the old French chateaux. Presently her face cleared and she went over to the table where they were busy with the views.

"Why wouldn't you consent to Patricia having the little room until there is a vacancy?" she inquired with a tinge of hesitation. "She could pay you the rent——"

Rosamond Merton broke in with such a decided negation that Patricia gave up hope, but Elinor persisted gently.

"Really, you know, Miss Pat couldn't possibly come under any other conditions," she said with sweet finality. "We are very anxious for her to be here, of course, since Madame Milano urged it; but if you feel that you can't have her under such circumstances, there's nothing for it but to wait till someone leaves and she can get a room from Miss Ardsley."

74

Rosamond Merton was silent for a long minute, and then she suddenly smiled her slow smile.

"Since you speak so very positively," she said with a graceful gesture of resignation, "there is nothing more for me to do than to give in. I will rent the room——"

"At the rate which they charge you," Elinor gently insisted.

"At the regular Artemis Lodge rates," agreed Rosamond Merton with a little helpless laugh. "She shall have it entirely to herself as long as she wants it, and I promise never to intrude unless I'm asked."

This considerate speech so moved Patricia that she burst out with a grateful offer to obliterate herself part of the time so that her generous hostess might not feel the loss of the room; but a nudge from Judith's rather angular elbow curtailed her gratitude, and she allowed Elinor to voice her thanks, while she tried to catch Judith's eye and understand the meaning of the prod. Judith turned to the photographs again and was not to be understood so quickly.

75

It was decided that the furniture should remain in the little room, Patricia merely adding her own desk, and that she should retain it until another room might be secured from Miss Ardsley. Patricia was to move in the next day and, most alluring of all, Rosamond Merton told her that she should have regular hours of use of the fine grand piano which stood in the sitting-room, thereby taking a great load off Patricia's excited mind.

"I've been wondering how I was to get a piano in that little scrap of a place," she confessed, "and I didn't see how it could be done, unless I slept on it at nights and practiced by day. A bed and a piano both simply couldn't be crammed in."

They parted in great good humor and Patricia felt that she was treading on air as she went down the winding stair to the courtyard.

"This certainly is my lucky day," she said exultantly, as the gate closed behind them. "Here I am, a pupil of Tancredi and a member of the illustrious band of inmates of Artemis Lodge—all at one fell swoop. Elinor, you've made me tremendously happy by sticking to the point like you did. I'd never have got the room if it hadn't been for your hanging on so."

76

"I tell you what it is, Miss Pat," said Judith with sudden decision in her tone. "You need somebody to take care of you. If Elinor hadn't insisted on paying, you'd have lost that room, and if I hadn't stopped you after you did get it, you'd have thrown away most of the good of it by making yourself a perfect door-mat."

Patricia gazed with astonishment at this amazing young sister of hers. "A door-mat?" she repeated blankly. "A door mat?"

"For Miss Merton to walk in upon as often as she liked," retorted Judith with calm finality. "She's a very encroaching sort of person, Miss Pat. I can see that. And you want to be sure you are going to be real friends with her before you let her get too chummy with you."

Patricia burst into a merry peal and even Elinor rippled with amusement at this way of looking at the matter.

77

"'Chummy' isn't exactly the word that fits Miss Merton, Ju," she said gayly. "It sounds suspiciously like unimposing me, rather than the elegant young lady of the three-room apartment. The only thing I'm afraid of is that she'll get tired of her bargain before the week is out. I may be an awful nuisance with my scales and strummings."

Then Judith was scandalized in earnest. The idea of anyone finding Miss Pat a nuisance was beyond her powers of thought, and she could not even find words to express her scorn of such an impossible state of things.

Patricia rippled again at the sniff of disgust which Judith made so prodigious. "Never mind, Judy-pudy, you shall come and look me over every once in a while and see that I am being well

treated. Miss Merton may be a perfect monster, after all."

Judith was not to be won to speech by any such bald nonsense, and stalked homeward in thoughtful silence, hardly seeming to hear the gay chat of the other two in regard to what Miss Pat should or should not take with her to Artemis Lodge.

78

At the door of their own apartment Patricia stood quite still with a rather blank expression.

"We forgot all about asking Doris Leighton," she said. "How perfectly stupid of us."

Elinor had her key in the door and she flung it open on an unlighted interior as she spoke.

"Very stupid indeed, my dear," she admitted cheerfully, "but it's too late to remedy it now. Besides, I don't see how you'd have got a room in Artemis Lodge in any other way."

"And that was the most important thing, after all," agreed Patricia, stumbling over a stool in the dimness. "Mercy! What's that?"

The small figure which rose at their approach gave a familiar chuckling laugh and before it could speak, Judith exclaimed, "Marty Sneath, all by herself, too!"

And Marty Sneath it proved to be, ahead of her schedule by nearly twenty-four hours and very much pleased with the chance to be installed in her new quarters that much sooner than had been planned.

79

After the lights were turned on and they had all commented encouragingly on the improvement in Marty's dress and appearance, she gave them an enlivening account of all that had happened in the village since their departure, particularly dwelling on the changes in the modest home of the Sneath family since Danny's removal to the far-away school where Mr. Long had sent him.

"I tell you it ain't like it used to be," she said with a shake of her elfish head and a twinkle in her brilliant eyes. "Clara's got real well and Pop's swore off, and there ain't no lively times like there used to be. Of course," she prophesied cheerfully, "Pop'll fall off in about a week—he ain't one to stick to water long, you know. Then I bet there'll be some scrimmages. He's dead set on Clara goin' for service and she wants to be a typewriter. And they're both awful set. But it won't be nothin' without Danny. It's awful flat at home now."

80

It was rather hard to sympathize with this peculiar point of view, so they kept to the safer side by asking about Danny, whether he liked the school, how he was getting on, and what Mr. Long said about him now.

Marty's reports were very satisfactory. Danny was doing finely and Mr. Long was delighted with his experiment. "He's as braggity about him as if he'd made our Danny up out of his head," she said with a tinge of ruffled family pride. "He better look out, though, 'fore he crows too loud. Our Danny is mighty cute and maybe he's only fooling them teachers. He ain't no lamb, you know," she ended with an earnestness that made Patricia uncomfortable for her former favorite.

"He's never had half a chance to want to be good," defended Patricia warmly. "I've always believed he was better than he behaved."

This seemed to be too deep for Marty, and she turned the subject by producing a letter from the pocket of her neat blue dress.

"Mrs. Spicer sent this," she said, handing it to Patricia. "She gave me a whole dollar, too, to spend just as I liked. My, but I felt grand comin' down on that train with a whole dollar in my purse. I kept holt on it all the way. I've read about pickpockets, and I ain't forgot Danny's ways this soon, neither."

81

Patricia could not deny that Danny must have been a liberal education in that sort of sleight of hand, but the letter saved her the painful confession. While Elinor took Marty to her room and Judith explained the uses of the various conveniences, push buttons and the like, Patricia devoured the scribbled note.

"Oh, Norn, listen to this," she cried, following the others into Elinor's room. "Mrs. Nat met a house-party who were going down to Mr. Long's on the train last night and she was telling them about taking tea at Artemis Lodge, and Miss Chapin, the senator's daughter Mr. Long is so devoted to, told her she had a cousin there, who was studying with Tancredi, and she hoped we'd meet and be friends. Her name—think of it—her name is Rosamond Merton!"

82

Elinor looked pleased. "It doesn't really enlighten us much as to her," she said. "But it's rather nice to locate her even in that remote way."

Judith tossed her pale mane in quite her old superior manner. "How childish you are, Elinor," she commented. "Cousins aren't much alike. Miss Warner wasn't a scrap like Mr. Bingham. Patricia will have to find out everything for herself—everything that Doris Leighton can't tell her."

"Pooh, I shan't bother Doris now," said Patricia easily. "I'm in for a while at least, and it would seem like spying to ask questions. I'm too thankful to be in Artemis Lodge to be so awfully finicky."

Judith tossed her head again.

"Oh, well, you never are very sensible, Miss Pat," she returned loftily. "You never see beyond a pretty face. It takes others to watch over you."

The ripples which greeted this somber speech did not seem to be wholly distasteful to her, though she hid her exact state of mind by taking Marty off to exhibit the studio to her and to

83

explain the mysteries of oil cups and brush pots.

Patricia looked lovingly after her. "Judy's up to some of her old tricks, Norn," she hazarded. "I shouldn't be surprised if she set up a regular detective agency around my new friend and made a whole set of new thrilling tales about her."

84

CHAPTER VI

PATRICIA MAKES ANOTHER FRIEND

"Isn't it really lovely and cozy?"

Patricia was seated on the side of her narrow bed and Elinor occupied the one easy chair by the casement window.

The little room had been transformed into a perfect bower by Elinor's good taste and Patricia's eager fingers. The small iron bed was hidden by a canopy of frilly lace and a coverlet of transparent, delicate mull with an underslip of blue. The dresser, improvised from a chiffonier, had a quaint mirror from Bruce's studio, with two silver candlesticks, to serve Patricia for all purposes of dressing. A small reliable table held a golden-shaded brass student lamp, a gift from Elinor, who knew how Miss Pat disliked the white, cold light of the electric bulbs. Some magazines, a tiny bookshelf, and a dainty tea-tray peeping from the under shelf of the reliable table, gave an air of great coziness to the whole.

85

Elinor looked about with much satisfaction. "Yes, it's dear," she admitted. "I don't think Miss Merton will be disappointed in her new room-mate when she sees this. It's a pity she isn't here to see it when it's absolutely crisp."

"It seems queer that she should have gone out to Rockham with her cousin to stay at Red Top, doesn't it?" said Patricia. "It's awfully nice, though, for we shall have so much more to talk about now. I felt rather stupid with her at first, when I met her at Madame's last week. She seemed so grown-up that I hardly knew how to get along with her—much less live in the same rooms with her."

"You didn't show any shyness that I could discover," smiled Elinor. "I'm sure you'll get on famously with her now that you're installed. I wish I didn't have to go," she added, rising reluctantly. "But I promised Bruce to go to the Salimagundi show with him and he'll be waiting for me if I don't fly."

86

Patricia went as far as the green entrance door with her and kissed her warmly.

"I begin to feel like a pilgrim and a stranger," she laughed. "To be in town and not be with you and Bruce seems too queer for words."

"You'll have splendid times as soon as you get acquainted," said Elinor brightly. "I envy you the fun you're going to have among all these attractive girls. Good-bye once again. Bring Doris over to supper with you on Sunday if she is back by then. Be sure to take good care of yourself and have a good time."

Patricia watched her till she turned the corner, and then she closed the door and went slowly across the wide paved courtyard and up the little private stair, smiling to herself.

As she closed the door of the sitting-room behind her, she could not resist a prance of joy. "I'm here!" she told herself rapturously. "Oh, how glorious it is to have really started in earnest!"

She practiced her breathing exercises and tried a few three-note vocal exercises, and was delighted that her voice seemed clearer than it had ever sounded to her.

87

"It must be because I am so happy," she told herself. "I wish I had a lesson this afternoon. I hate to wait till the morning."

After she had sung as long as she dared, she practiced some accompaniments till her fingers tired, and then she took up a magazine and read a couple of stories, becoming so absorbed in the last one that she hardly heard a clock below striking loudly, though some sense of its strident tones made her start from her chair in dismay lest she should have missed the tea-hour.

"How stupid of me—" she began, glancing at her plain little wrist-watch. Her face fell as she looked unbelievably at the hands pointing to three o'clock.

"It must be run down," she said, frowning and holding the watch to her ear. "No, it's going. It must be slow."

A glance at the big clock in the tower opposite her bedroom window convinced her that her watch was to be taken seriously. There was nearly an hour and a half before she might venture

down into the tea-room and make such acquaintances as she could without the aid of Doris Leighton or Rosamond Merton.

88

"I wish I hadn't been so particular about that mending," she thought ruefully. "It was a shameful waste of time to do it at the studio. I was so particular to have everything done up to the last notch that there isn't a single letter to write, or button to sew on, or—or—anything. I simply can't sit down like a tame tabby this first exciting afternoon, when all sorts of wonderful things may be going to happen to me after while."

She sighed over the prospect of being bottled up for such an interminable period and regretted that Milano's orders were so strict in regard to her intercourse with her family.

"It's a perfect shame that I can't go home every day," she thought suddenly, rather pitying herself for the privations she was suffering. "I am going to miss them terribly and I shouldn't wonder if I'd get rather hard-hearted and self-centered, living this way just for myself."

She never thought of seeking Miss Ardsley, although that lady had given her the most cordial invitation to visit her in her own rooms any time that she wished, particularly insisting on her bringing Mrs. Bruce Hayden in to call at any time she might be in the building. Somehow, the atmosphere of Miss Ardsley's luxuriant rooms had rather stifled Patricia on her one admission to them when she went with Elinor and Rosamond Merton to make the necessary arrangements for procuring the little room.

89

"If Doris Leighton hadn't gone off for a week just as we got that first glimpse of her," she mourned, fussing about the trifles on the dainty dresser. "Or if I only knew someone to say a word to. It seems like a week since I heard a human voice. I'd go out and take a walk if——"

Rap-a-tap! Someone was using the diminutive knocker on the sitting-room door.

Patricia flew to open it, and a dark, medium-sized girl in a shabby bronze velveteen frock stood on the threshold, looking very much surprised indeed.

90

"Is Miss Merton in?" she asked, looking beyond Patricia into the vacant rooms.

Patricia was sorry to have to confess that Miss Merton was away for the rest of the week. She hoped the girl might come in notwithstanding, but she turned to go without much ceremony and was half-way across the hall when she suddenly paused and came back to where Patricia lingered on the the sill.

"Are you the new girl?" she asked with surprising directness. "Pupil of Tancredi?"

Patricia answered eagerly that she was very new and that she had taken two lessons from the noted teacher.

The other girl turned and walked into the room, selecting an easy chair and seating herself with every appearance of meaning to stay.

Patricia was delighted.

"I'm so glad you came," she said with great cordiality, seating herself near the other and beaming on her. "I haven't seen a soul since one o'clock and I was beginning to petrify."

"First day?" inquired the girl laconically.

91

On Patricia admitting it was not only her first day, but first afternoon, having parted from her sister only after a light and early lunch in her own room, the newcomer nodded.

"H—h'm. It gets you, doesn't it? The first time you're stranded on a lonely shore certainly makes home look good," she said thoughtfully. "Funny thing is, that no matter how dressy the shore happens to be," she threw a glance about the luxuriant room, "it's just as lonely—the first time. Ever been away from home before?"

Patricia explained that she had never had a real home till nearly two years ago, but that she had never been entirely separated from both her sisters and friends until now.

"Plenty of nice girls here," the girl acknowledged. "But you have to pick out your own sort for yourself. Have you known Merton long?"

Patricia recognized the art student in the use of the last name, and she said eagerly, "I hardly know her at all. You aren't studying with Tancredi, are you?"

As she expected, the girl laughed a quick negative. "Not me," she returned, ungrammatical and emphatic. "I can't croak a note and my fingers never would make melody if I tried till I were a hundred. I'm doing the other side—paint and the like."

92

"I knew it!" cried Patricia, much pleased by her own perception. "I was sure I smelled paint when you came in. Have you a studio, or are you studying at one of the schools?"

"Both," answered the other, briskly. "I have a sort of studio across the hall here, and I am going to night life at the only school in New York. How did you recognize the hall-marks? I thought you were vocal and Tancredi?"

Patricia told her that she had spent some months at the Academy in another city, and that both her sister and brother-in-law were artists, and though she had just started in as a music student, she was much more familiar with the fraternity than with the song birds.

"I see," said the girl. "You must be worth while, even though you are located in these fluffy apartments with the ultra Merton. I think I shall become better acquainted. What's your name?"

93

Patricia was much diverted by this direct address. "I am Patricia Kendall," she returned with

equal candor. "I like your looks, too, and I'm quite willing to be as chummy as you like."

"H—h'm," said the girl again. "Don't bank on me. Merton isn't in my class, and if you're her chum, I'll have to decline anything more than mere acquaintance."

Patricia began a hasty explanation of her presence in the luxurious rooms, but the girl waved her words aside with abrupt good humor. "You may not know her well," she insisted, smiling a pleasant wide smile. "But you simply must be some sort of a bob or she wouldn't take to you. Merton is not a wasteful child."

Patricia understood that the girl was entirely in earnest, and the idea that she was committed to an exclusive and perhaps unpopular set among the democracy of talent at Artemis Lodge rather chilled her.

"You are a friend of hers yourself," she accused with a trace of indignation. "You wouldn't be coming in here to see her if you weren't." 94

"Oh, am I, indeed?" grinned the girl. "Don't jump at conclusions at that reckless rate, Miss Patricia Kendall. I'm merely connected with the ultra Merton by means of a piece of canvas and some paint tubes. In other words, I'm at work on a panel of peacocks and goldy sunbeams for her music room at home, and am only tolerated because I can draw little birdies with pretty eyes in their tails better than anyone who happens to be here now."

Patricia forgot Miss Merton in her sudden interest. "Oh, are you doing some panels for her?" she asked, leaning forward with shining eyes. "You must be awfully clever. Will you let me see them? I want to tell Bruce all about them, if I may."

Her interest seemed to please the girl. She rose abruptly and held out her hand. "Shake on good fellowship," she said heartily, and Patricia accepted the queer invitation with great good will.

"Come along over," invited the girl, jerking her head toward the opposite side of the hall. "Everything's in a mess, but you won't mind. You'll have to put up with that sort of things if we're to be friends." 95

"Indeed, I'll love it!" said Patricia enthusiastically. It was very good to be taken into fellowship so informally. "Bruce and Elinor mess up their studios terribly and I used to trail clay all over the place when I had the modeling mania."

The girl threw open the door of a large bare, well-lighted room, that somehow managed, in spite of rather poor furniture and much disorder, to look attractive and inviting; and Patricia saw on a huge easel a tall canvas with beautiful, gorgeous peacocks strutting proudly against a background of ruddy gold.

"How stunning!" she cried with such conviction that the girl smiled and then grew serious. "How wonderful! How can you do it, when you're so young? Where did you learn to make such lovely things?"

"My father was an artist and he taught me when I was a little tad," replied the girl in a subdued tone which made the sympathetic Patricia's heart warm toward her. 96

"Was he—" began Patricia, hesitating.

"He was Henry Fellows. He died three years ago," said the girl quietly, and as though closing the subject, she added, "My name is Constance. I am nearly twenty years old, though I look younger." And then in a changed tone she added, "Tell me who this Bruce and Elinor are. I ought to know them if they aren't the rankest newcomers."

Patricia was gratified at the expression which Bruce's name brought to the clear hazel eyes.

"You're a fortunate piece," commented Constance Fellows, with a familiarity which was not too intimate. "Tancredi and Bruce Hayden and a real family of your own—not to mention being a chum of Rosamond Merton."

Patricia thought she caught a flavor of sarcasm in the last name, but instantly decided that it was her own suspicious nature that suggested the thought. She was beginning to like Constance Fellows in a sincere and unaffected way that could not be compared with the ardent admiration she had felt for Miss Merton, and, as she always attributed the best motives to those she liked, she felt quite ashamed of her ungenerous thought. 97

The hall clock sounded again, this time heard clearly through the open door, and Patricia was astonished to find that the tea-hour had arrived without her knowing it.

"Am I all right to go down just as I am?" she inquired rather anxiously of her new friend. "Ought I put on a hat or something?"

"Put on anything you please. Take a parasol or a pair of galoshes if you feel that your system craves them," replied Constance calmly. "I am going just as I am. We girls who are in the house usually are glad to sneak in without prinking."

Patricia giggled. "Lead me down," she commanded briskly. "I'm perfectly crazy to see what's what and who's who. I was going to find out all about the various girls from Doris Leighton, but I'm sure you'll do very well in her place." 98

"I call that a real compliment," declared Constance with evident sincerity. "Leighton is the squarest damsel in the whole troupe and she isn't spoiled by her beauty either."

They found the tea-room filled as on the other day, and Patricia, thanks to Constance Fellows' kindness, found herself one of a gay group near the piano, as much at home among the

chattering girls as though she had known them for weeks.

"I tell you what it is, Avis Coulter," Constance was saying to a very plain, angular girl with large spectacles when the tea was almost over, "we've got to show this budding genius a little friendly attention, or she'll get homesick and mopey before the resplendent Merton returns to coddle her. What are you going to do to liven her dragging days?"

The spectacled girl rubbed her nose thoughtfully. "I've tickets for a concert at Carnegie Hall tomorrow afternoon," she hazarded doubtfully.

"And I have a perfectly good studio party at my cousin Emily's," said another girl. 99

"And I'm going to have a spread in my room tomorrow night," volunteered a third member of the party.

Constance Fellows nodded approval. "That sounds very well to me," she said. "I accept for Miss P. Kendall and myself. Who's to bring the chaperone for these festivities?"

Avis Coulter, on the score of the concert being in the afternoon, declared that it was all stuff to think of such a thing, while Marie Jones said that her cousin Emily was chaperone enough for an army of buds, and Ethel Walters sniffed at the idea of a chaperone for a spread in one's very own room, under the roof with Miss Ardsley and the dependable Miss Tatten, the house-keeper, whom Patricia had not yet seen.

Constance would have none of their reasoning, however, and insisted that one of the older students at Artemis Lodge be in charge of all the festivities shown Patricia in the interval of Miss Merton's absence.

"I am responsible for her," she said firmly, "and I am not going to present her to Merton with the slightest social blot upon her dazzling whiteness. Chaperoned she must and shall be, or she doesn't budge a step." 100

Patricia was very much amused and surprised to see that Constance had her way. Instead of rebelling, as she had expected, the girls gave in at once, showing as much meekness in fulfilling the wishes of this decided young person as though it were she and not they that was granting the favors.

Patricia went back to her room cheered and exhilarated, and found the brief time before the dinner hour all too short for the necessary amount of practicing she had portioned off for herself.

Dinner in the gay little restaurant with its decorated walls and sociable small tables was a far more enjoyable affair than she had thought it could be when she had looked forward to it in her lonely interval, and after another half hour of chat by the fire-side in the library she went to her room highly delighted with her first day at Artemis Lodge.

Stopping at the public telephone in the hall—she decided not to use the one in Miss Merton's sitting-room until the owner was at home again—she called up Elinor and gave her a brief report. 101

"I'm having a perfectly lovely time," she told her. "And as Doris isn't coming back till next week, I am going to bring someone who has been very nice to me home to supper on Sunday, in her place. I know you'll like her, and," here she laughed a little, "tell Judy she isn't at all pretty."

CHAPTER VII

A DINNER FOR TWO

Rosamond Merton came home unexpectedly to find Patricia grown very much at home indeed during the four days of her absence.

She opened the door of the sitting-room, after a light tap of the tiny brass knocker, to find Patricia rising from the piano-stool with pleased expectation in her face, an expression which rapidly became one of joyful surprise. Rosamond was so much prettier than Patricia had been picturing her that she fairly beamed as she came to greet her.

"How lovely of you to come back so soon," she said with such warmth that Rosamond Merton felt glad that she had been compelled to cut her visit short.

"It's lovely to be welcomed home," she returned, beginning to pull off her gloves. "I always dreaded the empty rooms after I had been away. Have you been quite comfortable? I left so hurriedly that I hadn't time to arrange for your arrival." 103

Patricia assured her that she was absolutely in clover, and she showed her the little bedroom as

a proof, exhibiting the easy chair, the cosy table and all her other small comforts with a great deal of pride.

Rosamond was genuinely interested in all the contrivances which had been installed for Patricia's well-being and she showed so much of what Patricia called "human" feeling that she won the last citadel in that young lady's affections.

"Do you know I was dreadfully afraid of you that day at Tancredi's?" she confessed when they were once more in the sitting-room by the fire.

Rosamond had laid aside her traveling dress and slipped on a soft fur-trimmed crepe lounging robe with her feet in embroidered satin mules, and the impressionable Patricia was feasting her eyes on her. She was used to beauty—and beauty of a much higher class—in her own sister Elinor, and every day her mirror reflected quite as attractive features as those of her new companion, but the extreme luxury with which Rosamond indulged her fancy in the matter of clothing was a revelation to her. 104

She looked at the shimmering cloudy-blue folds of the robe, at the soft dark edges of fur with their under-ruffles of pink chiffon, at the lace and ribbons of the petticoat which showed where the robe fell away, and she forgot they were merely outer trappings, to be bought from any department store or private shop. They seemed part of a superior charm belonging exclusively to Rosamond Merton, and Patricia sighed as she saw in the mirror over the mantel-shelf the image of a fluffy-haired girl in an unpretentious blouse.

"I wonder that she can put up with me," she thought ruefully, smoothing down the folds of her simple corduroy skirt. "She must be very kind-hearted indeed. I wish that I might do something to show how I feel about it."

As Rosamond chatted on, telling of her visit to Red Top and describing the house party with a good deal of cleverness, Patricia became so interested that she forgot her grateful intentions in listening to the gossip which her new friend retailed so sparkingly. She laughed over the description of the model poultry farm and chaffed Rosamond quite freely on her lack of technical terms; she smiled a little uneasily over the dinner party at the rectory, feeling a bit guilty that she should find matter for mirth in the precise and dainty entertainment offered impartially by the gentle rector and his ladylike maiden sisters; and she was frankly disturbed by the careless fashion of treating the attack of measles which had disbanded the house party a week earlier than planned. 105

"Of course, you weren't in any danger," she said, more to herself than to Rosamond. "Measles aren't much to be afraid of, anyway, unless one is a perfect Methuselah. I think it was hard on Mr. Long to have his nice party broken up after all his planning, just because a lot of grown-ups got scared about *measles*. If I were the girl he's in love with, I'd stayed and helped nurse Danny, instead of running away from the place."

Rosamond laughed her indolent laugh. "And been quarantined for three weeks out there in the desolate country," she mocked. "My cousin isn't that heroic sort, even if she were devoted to a man. She doesn't care two pins for your Mr. Long, and I fancy he knows it by this time." 106

"Not care for him?" cried Patricia in amazement. "Why in the world did she and her mother come to see him then? I thought they were engaged."

Rosamond shook her head slowly and emphatically. "Not at all," she said calmly. "She thought she might like him well enough last fall, but he has developed such queer tastes recently—burying himself on that ridiculous chicken-farm and taking up with stupid little boys who develop measles when they run away from school to visit their benefactor, that she really has had quite enough of him without marrying him."

Patricia was silent, puckering her brows over the problem of unrewarded virtue, while Rosamond Merton watched her with something like a twinkle in her long eyes.

"It seems pretty hard that Mr. Long has to lose his happiness just because he's done right and been kind," she said finally, with a little sigh at the topsy-turvy ways of this wilful world. "He's saving Danny Sneath from growing up a horrid worthless man like his father—that's plain from Danny coming back on the sly to see him—and he's doing splendidly with Red Top, and yet he doesn't get what he wants." 107

"He shouldn't want what he can't get then," smiled Rosamond, indulgent as far as Patricia was concerned. "Don't worry your pretty head about such stupid things—men always get over disappointments like that. He'll probably be in love with the next girl who happens to look at him twice. Tell me how you've been putting in the time since I ran off so unceremoniously. Have you been fearfully homesick?"

Patricia abandoned Mr. Long and his deserts reluctantly. "He ought to be happy and I am sure he will," she insisted warmly. "People always get paid back in the same coin they use." A sudden memory of her own debt made her add, more shyly, "You ought to believe in that—after all the kindness you've shown me. And I do want you to know that I'm going to pay you back just a tiny bit some day. I don't know how, but I'm going to do it." 108

Rosamond's slow smile answered her fully, and she plunged into an eager account of the way in which she had been taken into the inner circles of Artemis Lodge and made to feel so entirely at home. "They've been wonderfully nice to me," she said gayly. "I've had a splendid time each day, and my lessons have gone beautifully, too. I haven't had a single dull moment. I'm so grateful to you for taking me in."

The little cloud which had slightly dimmed Rosamond's smile faded at these words and left her face serene. "We will have better times yet," she promised as she rose to glance at the clock in the tower across the housetops. "Let's begin by having dinner upstairs here by ourselves. I'll phone down to the office at once. Isn't it stupid to have to call up Tatten every time one wants a tray in one's room? They take great care of us here," and she shrugged her shoulders gracefully.

109

Patricia feared that the expense of such select dining might be too much for her small store of funds and she was determined not to sail under false colors with this luxuriant companion.

"It would be jolly enough, but how about the cost?" she asked frankly. "I can't stand many extras, you know. I'm rather poor as far as cash is concerned."

Miss Merton paused with her hand on the receiver. "You surely didn't think I was intending you to pay for my treat," she said in such a gently grieved tone that Patricia became most uncomfortable.

"It's sweet of you to ask me," she said with a good deal of courage. "And I can't be horrid enough to refuse this first time, but I do want you to understand that I can't spend money like you do. I'm not really stingy, as you may think—I'm only trying to be careful. I'm so afraid of being selfish."

Her speech was rather unintelligible to Rosamond, who could not know of Bruce's compact with Patricia, but she smiled pleasantly and took down the receiver.

110

"I don't think you could be stingy or selfish or anything that wasn't sweet," she said and then proceeded to announce to Miss Tatten that Miss Kendall and she were dining in their own rooms that evening, and would she please see that dinner was sent up promptly at six-thirty, adding a list of dishes that seemed to the anxious Patricia recklessly expensive.

The dinner was great fun, however, and Patricia felt very pleasantly luxurious as she slipped into her new kimono, a poor affair indeed compared to the fur and crepe robe, and lounged before the fire listening to Rosamond's accounts of the travels and studies which had filled her life.

"You must have been almost everywhere," she murmured admiringly. "You have seen such a lot—for a girl. I'm only two years younger, but I've never been to Niagara Falls, nor Hot Springs, nor the Tower of London—"

A ripple of laughter broke in on her confession. "What a delicious jumble!" cried Rosamond, springing up to adjust a lock that had fallen. "One can't tell which is the place of confinement and which the playground. For Heaven's sake, though, don't *complain* that you've never seen Niagara Falls, no self-respecting person nowadays is willing to confess that such a place even exists. It went out of date with the bridal bonnet and the what-not."

111

Patricia laughed, but this troubled her, and later on she recurred to it while they were beginning on their salad.

"Why shouldn't one see all the wonderful places and things in the world?" she asked. "I should think Niagara Falls was quite as important as those snippy little falls at that camp in the Adirondacks that you said were so much admired."

Rosamond laid down her fork and looked at her very carefully. "Are you actually in earnest?" she inquired with a polite repression of any hint of a smile. "My dear Miss Patricia Kendall, you forget that the most exclusive families have their camps near that snippy falls, while only the cheap tourist makes the pilgrimage to Niagara."

Patricia was obstinate. "I don't see what that has to do with it. The falls were there before the exclusive families were thought of, and it's a wonderful, wonderful falls. It seems rather stupid to me to ignore such a big thing in nature," she insisted with flushing cheeks.

112

Rosamond waved the argument away. "Never mind the falls, large or small," she said, with unruffled amiability. "Tell me some more about yourself and your doings."

Patricia was won instantly. She was to learn later on in her friendship with Rosamond Merton that this was one of her readiest answers to argument, particularly when she was not faring so well as she would like. As yet, however, she had not learned the skilled defences which Rosamond kept for her protection against better logic than her own, and she responded with her usual impetuous generosity.

"I've told you almost everything," she said brightly. "I'd rather hear about you. It's twice as exciting as my humdrum accounts of myself. Tell me about your studio at home. Is it so gorgeous as the peacock panels that Constance Fellows is doing for you?"

113

"It's hardly gorgeous, but it's rather good." Rosamond's interest was plainly forced. "Constance is getting on with them, is she? I must see them in the morning. How do you like her? I suppose you have heard that she is very eccentric. She refused to live in a perfect palace with an aunt of hers, merely because the aunt objected to her going to life class. Fancy her giving up such a life for a mere trifle."

"She didn't feel that it was a trifle, I suppose," replied Patricia lightly. She did not sympathize with Rosamond's view of the matter, but she had learned in this short hour to steer her bark away from the shoals.

"I think she showed very little judgment," said Rosamond, selecting a bonbon with care. "She should have lived peaceably with her aunt and had her own models in her own studio, and she'd have been comfortable and the aunt would have been happy. There is always a way of doing as

one wishes if one will only take the trouble to look it up."

Patricia hid her uneasy feelings as best she could, but her face was never hard to read, and Rosamond shook her head at her with the slow smile curving her red lips. 114

"You think me a monster of deceit," she accused. "Your big eyes are quite horrified at such shallow cunning. Don't worry, my dear Miss Kendall. I'm not half so bad as you think me."

Patricia flushed. "I know you are far above any such mean doings," she said stoutly, "but I wish you wouldn't talk that way. It makes me feel—but I'm not going to be such a goose as to preach. Do go on about the yachting trip. You were in the middle of it when dinner came in."

Rosamond, always graceful, responded readily enough, and the evening sped rapidly. Patricia had enjoyed herself tremendously, as she very truthfully told her hostess when she said good-night and shut herself into her own snug little room, and she looked forward to the morrow with Rosamond Merton with a thrill of pleasure.

She could not help wondering, though, as she shook out the kinks and tangles of her bright hair, why she had not told about the Sunday evening supper in the studio, nor the spread in Ethel Walters' room. 115

"I must be getting terribly secret and crafty," she thought with some surprise. "I suppose that's the effect of being thrown with so many strangers all at once."

She did not realize that it was Rosamond Merton's slow smile that had held her confidences back and if anyone had told her so, she would have denied it most emphatically.

Ethel Walters' spread had consisted of crackers and sardines, with olives and oranges and walnut bars for side dishes. The studio supper, though beautifully correct in most details, had Constance Fellows and a very shabby yet delightfully entertaining friend of hers, as chief guests. And how was anyone to know what Rosamond Merton might think of such swift intimacies?

CHAPTER VIII

PATRICIA RECEIVES AN INVITATION

The next few weeks sped pleasantly for Patricia.

Rosamond Merton was an ideal room-mate. She never intruded on Patricia's privacy, nor withdrew unsociably when Patricia felt inclined for chat. She allowed Patricia to make her own hours for use of the fine piano in her sitting-room and was patient under the many changes which the despotic Tancredi inflicted on the submissive Patricia, shifting her own practicing with such delicate tact that her fellow student scarcely realized her sacrifices.

"She's perfectly wonderful, Norn," declared Patricia, standing at the studio window one Sunday night about the middle of February. "She never gets cross or fussed like I do, and she is always so beautifully dressed. I am sometimes quite ashamed of my plain self when we are going about together. I do look awfully little-girly and prim in most of my clothes. I wish I were more ornamental," she ended with a tiny apologetic frown. 117

Judith looked at Elinor and nodded. "I knew it," she said. "I knew Miss Pat would be getting spoiled by spending all her time with such a showy person."

Patricia laughed a short, annoyed laugh. "Nonsense, Judy. I'm not a bit different. I only wish I didn't have to put all my patrimony into Madame Tancredi's pocket. I hate to go about with Rosamond, looking like her maid. I've worn that same suit to every place we've gone and I believe people think I sleep in it now."

Elinor looked slightly troubled. "If you'd only let us get you a new frock—" she began.

Patricia cut her short. "Hardly," she said emphatically. "I've told you all along that I wouldn't sponge on any of you. It's bad enough to take so much from dear old Ted. No, I'll go on exactly as I planned, and I won't get a single new thing until spring." 118

This virtuous declaration did not seem to stimulate her as it should have done, for she added, rather dolefully for her, "I wish I were like Constance Fellows or Ethel Walters. They never seem to mind being shabby."

"You can scarcely call yourself shabby—and I'm sure Constance loves beautiful things," said Elinor with gentle firmness. "You couldn't look at her work and not realize how she gloried in color and form."

Judith wagged her head wisely. "Perhaps she can stand doing without pretty things for herself,"

she suggested, "because she can put so much of it into her work."

This thoughtful sifting for motives was so like Judith that Patricia forgot her grievances in an amused laugh. "Good for you, Judy-pudy," she cried, flinging an arm about her small sister. "There's a hint for me, is it? I'll try to take it, Miss Minerva, and if you hear that my exercises are growing too frilly for Tancredi's taste you'll know the reason why."

Judith was not at all discomposed by her light-minded raillery. "I should think it would be a very good thing for you to try, Miss Pat," she said sedately. "Clothes go out of fashion so dreadfully soon nowadays and the singing exercises will last most of your life." 119

Patricia watched her leave the room to arrange the materials for the salad dressing—Bruce always made the dressing on Sunday nights—and she smiled at Elinor in a very tender fashion.

"Judy is a wonder," she confessed. "She has a mind of her own. I wonder why she's taken such an aversion to Rosamond lately? She never misses a chance to undermine her. Not openly, you know, but in a quiet way. I've noticed it ever since Doris Leighton came back and we had the spread that evening in her room."

"Judith couldn't have gotten it from Doris," said Elinor positively. "I heard all that Doris said about Miss Merton, and it was rather nice. I think you must be over-sensitive, Miss Pat. Judith has been at the Lodge several times since then and she may have been talking with someone who is envious of your Rosamond. She isn't as popular as she might be, you know." 120

"Of course, she isn't," exclaimed Patricia, on the defensive at once. "She doesn't choose to hobnob with everyone, and so they say she's stuck up, and ultra, and exclusive. If she were as much of a snob as they say, she certainly wouldn't have chosen to take me in."

Judith had returned, carrying the salad in its green bowl. She held it precisely between her slender, pale hands as she stood still to confute this heresy.

"You know perfectly well, Miss Pat, that there isn't a prettier girl in the musical set in Artemis Lodge," she declared with a touch of wrath in her calm tones. "You are related to a famous artist, and you have Madame Milano for a friend. Miss Merton wouldn't look at you, either, if you didn't have nice clothes and good manners, besides being very well-born indeed, as she certainly knows."

With this blast delivered, Judith set the salad-bowl carefully down on the table and left the room, her head high and her mane tossing. 121

Patricia, instead of being amused this time, looked annoyed. "Judy's getting spoiled, Elinor," she said, turning away to ramble idly about the room. "She's as conceited a young imp as I know. These stories of hers have about turned her head. I wish you'd tell her for me that she must behave properly to Rosamond, or she'll have to stay away from the Lodge. I won't have her putting on her superior airs and looking mysterious over nothing with me."

Elinor sighed over this change in the sunny Patricia, but only said with a regretful glance at the discontented droop of her sister's golden head:

"Judith's fancies are sometimes short-lived, my dear. I shouldn't notice this one if I were you." And then to make a diversion she asked how the lessons were coming on.

Patricia brightened at once. "I believe I'm doing pretty well," she said hopefully. "Madame hardly says a word to me now, but she nods her head a good deal. And she's letting me take some new exercises already." 122

"That looks promising," began Elinor, pleased to have turned the current toward happier channels. "That is the best news——"

Here the door opened and Bruce, who had been out, came in. "Hullo, all alone?" he said, with some surprise. "I thought Constance Fellows was coming tonight. What's up? She's not ill, is she? There's a lot of gripe going about just now, I hear."

Elinor explained that so far as they knew Constance was not affected by the impending epidemic. "Miss Pat forgot to ask her in time," she said. "And so she made an engagement with one of the girls, that is all, Bruce. Are you going to make the salad in here? Judith has it all ready for you."

"Just as soon as I shed my skin," returned Bruce gayly, throwing his great-coat on the divan, with his hat and gloves. "I tell you, it's fine weather—this. The stars are snapping and the moon-crescent is like silver. It makes one glad to be alive." 123

Patricia, with her disquiet mood still hovering about her, came over to the table to watch him begin operations. She always liked to see Bruce mix the dressing and make the salad, and tonight his strong cheerfulness seemed particularly good to her.

"I'm sorry I forgot about Constance, Bruce," she said, as he uncorked the oil bottle. "I had two concerts with Rosamond and the music was so perfectly heavenly that I didn't get back to earth until it was too late to get her for tonight. I'll bring her over next week."

"Right-o," said Bruce genially. "We're all strong for Constance, you know. Besides being a paint slinger of promise, she's the straight goods. See as much of her as you can, little sister, for she's the sort that true friends are made of."

Patricia really liked Constance immensely and had it not been for the overshadowing Rosamond, would have chosen her for the close intimacy for which Constance had shown she was quite ready and willing. But she had a feeling that in so praising Constance, Bruce was neglecting 124

Rosamond, and she said rather petulantly:

"I can't be always looking her up, Bruce. You know she's busy and out of the house most of the time. It would be different if she were studying with Tancredi like Rosamond."

Bruce opened his eyes at this unusual peevishness on Patricia's part, but he went on mixing his ingredients without comment, while Elinor, who had been bringing in the rest of the picnic supper, flitted about, straightening the room preparatory to lighting the candles for the feast.

As she picked up Bruce's overcoat from the divan, some letters fell out of the pockets, scattering over the floor. She stooped to collect them, and gave an exclamation of surprise.

"Bruce Hayden, when did these come?" she asked, sorting the letters rapidly into little piles on the table at his elbow.

Bruce regarded the envelopes with undisguised astonishment, and then he broke into a guilty grin.

"Oh, thunder, I must have forgotten them!" he cried. "How in creation did you unearth them?" 125

Elinor explained, while Patricia eagerly seized on one addressed to her in Bruce's care and began to tear it open.

"It's from Madame Milano!" she cried excitedly. "Oh, Elinor, she's inviting me to her afternoon reception today, and it's hours and hours too late."

Bruce looked crestfallen. "But is Milano in town?" he argued. "She isn't singing till Tuesday night, you know——"

Patricia thrust the sheet before him. "See for yourself," she said. "It says the seventeenth, doesn't it? Look, Elinor, what a big sprawling hand she writes."

Bruce shook his head dolefully over the clearly written date. "It's today, all right," he admitted ruefully. "You've lost a jolly fine chance of seeing opera folk at home, thanks to my block-headedness."

Judith joined the group, and when she heard of Patricia's misfortune she put a consoling arm about her sister. "Never mind, Miss Pat dear," she said. "Perhaps when Madame Milano knows how bad you feel about missing her reception she'll do something that's a lot nicer for you." 126

Bruce chuckled and his face cleared. "Wait a minute," he said hastily, and disappeared into the other room.

"What in the world——" began Elinor and then she, too, smiled. "He's telephoning to Madame Milano. Listen, Patricia."

Patricia heard with rising hopes the deep regret of Bruce's rich tones as he explained to the prima donna the reason Patricia had not availed herself of the gracious invitation. The pauses in which Bruce listened must have been filled to his satisfaction, for after he had hung up the receiver he came back into the studio rubbing his hands gleefully.

"Did you hear me put it to her?" he asked, grinning. "I got her hotel and then her apartment and then her maid, and finally the Madame herself. She is sorrier than she was ten minutes ago and she is going to ask you to her Monday 'Hour,' as she calls it, a much more intimate affair, I can assure you."

Patricia clasped her hands rapturously. "Oh, you *duck!*" she cried ardently. "You're the cleverest thing in the world to get me another invitation. Am I to go alone? And what time am I to come?" 127

"You're to have your elder sister for a chaperon and your distinguished brother-in-law as attendant," replied Bruce gravely. "I wanted to put in a word for you, Judy, but I was afraid to push her too hard this time."

"I couldn't go, thank you," returned Judith composedly. "I have an extra in French tomorrow after school and I've made an engagement to go to the French church with Mademoiselle afterward."

Patricia was in the seventh heaven of delight at the prospect of actually taking tea with the noted singer and her intimate friends. She plied Bruce with innumerable questions and grew so Patricia-like and merry over the absurd answers he manufactured to meet her demands that the picnic supper was the gayest family affair they had had since Patricia left them.

"I'll be over at three tomorrow, Elinor," she promised as they left her at the green entrance door of Artemis Lodge after having walked home with her through the sparkling night. "Don't let Bruce be late, or she'll never forgive us." 128

Elinor promised to keep an eye on her erring husband and see that everything went smoothly this time.

Patricia watched the three figures walking briskly down the street, and she closed the door with a little bang.

"Won't Rosamond be surprised?" she smiled to herself, seeing the light in the windows which told that their rooms were occupied.

She found Rosamond wrapped in a sumptuous down quilt, sitting over the fire in a drowsy state, and she had to repeat the glorious news twice before her friend responded. Even then she was not as interested as Patricia had hoped.

"Yes, it's lovely," she said, slowly, "and I'm sure you'll have a good time. Do you mind getting out

my night things? I'm awfully sleepy and I'm going straight to bed."

Patricia did as she was asked and then helped the heavy-lidded Rosamond to her rose-and-gold room, saying good-night a little coolly. 129

"She might have tried to wake up for such splendid news," she thought, a little dampened by this casual reception of her glad tidings.

The next morning Rosamond was still too sleepy and tired to rise and Patricia was afraid that she might be really ill. But she denied more than a slight cold—a "sleepy headache," as she called it—and asked to be left alone to sleep it out.

Patricia left her still in bed when she started to the studio in the afternoon, though she seemed almost herself again.

"Come in and tell me all about it the moment you get back," she called as Patricia left her.

And Patricia promised blithely.

CHAPTER IX

ROSAMOND'S FRIEND

Patricia kept her promise. She ran upstairs to the pretty rooms in Artemis Lodge with such a radiant face that Rosamond, who was sitting up trying to get interested in a magazine story, laid down the book with a sigh of relief. 130

"You've had a wonderful time, I know," she said expectantly. "Throw your things on the couch and tell me all about it."

Patricia complied joyfully. "Do you want to hear every scrap, just as it happened," she asked, "from beginning to end?"

"From the very beginning to the very end," nodded Rosamond.

"Well, then, I hustled over to the studio," Patricia told her, "and found them waiting for me. Elinor looked as sweet as ever and Bruce, of course, was just as he should be. We took the car to the hotel and just as we were going in, a violet-man pushed his tray right in front of me, and I must have looked at it pretty hard, for Bruce bought me the dearest duck of a bunch with cords and tassels on it. And, of course, that made me feel better still, for my suit isn't terribly gay, you know, having been selected when I was expecting to spend the whole winter in the country." 131

"Was Elinor wearing her gray furs?" asked Rosamond with critical interest.

Patricia nodded. "And her amethyst velvet," she said, with appreciation of her friend's fondness for such matters. "She has the sweetest hat to go with it, too, and she looked lovelier than anyone there. Norn is the dearest thing, and I believe she's so pretty because she's so good."

This digression was not received with any show of enthusiasm, so she hurried on.

"We went into the lobby—it's a stunning place. Awfully select and quiet, you know. And after sending up our names the page took us to her rooms, and we had to wait a moment in an outer room while the maid announced us; then we went right in, and there was Madame Milano, in the midst of a lot of chatting people, looking just as sociable and everyday as you please. She came straight over to us and shook hands as tight as Constance does, and then she introduced us to all the people there. Oh, Rosamond, I was never so excited in my life!" 132

"Was it the musical set, or social?" asked Rosamond.

Patricia looked puzzled. "They seemed like both to me," she confessed. "They were beautifully dressed and they had lovely manners, and some of them were singers and others seemed to be just society people, from the way they talked about things. Madame Garti was there, and Sculke, the baritone, and Mrs. Winderly—she was perfectly lovely——"

"Social climber," Rosamond ticketed her with a calm that made Patricia wince.

"And there was a plain girl with a gorgeous hat, whom Madame called Felice—I didn't catch her other name, but I liked her immensely." 133

Rosamond sat up and bent forward. "Felice Vanding?" she asked, and at Patricia's rather uncertain nod, she said decisively, "That is the most exclusive girl in New York. Was her mother there?"

Patricia searched her memory. "Is she sort of stiff and dried-up?" she hazarded. "With a big nose?"

"That is Mrs. Vandling!" cried Rosamond with more animation than Patricia had known her to show. "Milano must be quite the proper thing, or the Vandings would never take her up. Tell me some more about her."

Patricia felt rather disconcerted. This was not the point of view she could sympathize with. She went on less gayly.

"Madame Milano was very kind. She asked all about my lessons, and said she was going to ask Tancredi to lunch with her tomorrow to find out how I had been shirking. She asked about Artemis Lodge, too, and how I like the life here. I told her how jolly it was, and I told her, too, how dear you'd been to me."

"Did you indeed?" said Rosamond with a pleased look. "Was she at all interested?"

"I should say she was!" cried Patricia, glad to recall the tone and look. "She smiled and said in the nicest possible way, 'I should like to meet your friend, Miss Pat. It is rare to find such good comradeship among rivals.' I told her that we weren't rivals, that we couldn't possibly be, for you had a wonderful voice and were far, far more gifted than plain me."

"What did she say at that?" demanded the now eager Rosamond, forgetting to contradict this generous statement.

"She laughed and pinched my cheek," Patricia had to confess shamefacedly. "And she said something about violets and I thought she meant my bunch, so I took it off and offered it to her, feeling so glad I had the chance to give her even that tiny gift. She took it and pinned it on her, and told me to be a good child. It was rather puzzling, though, for the other people laughed and I was sure I'd made a mistake of some sort. I felt horribly uncomfortable."

"Didn't your sister know what she meant?" inquired Rosamond, sinking back into her cushions again.

"No, Elinor and Bruce were both over at the other side of the room, talking to Madame Alda, who had just come in. To tell the truth, I didn't say anything to them about it," Patricia said. "It wasn't much, anyway, for in a little while I was introduced to Felice and we had a good time together behind the palms while the music was going on. She knows lots about music, and I learned a good many things from her."

Rosamond approved. "She's worth cultivating," she declared warmly, her long eyes brightening. "But tell me, Miss Pat, was that all that Milano said? Did she know I'd been with Pancrì in Rome and Martona in Paris? Did she say that Tancredi had spoken of me?"

"I told her every last thing I could possibly think of that would make her realize I had a good angel to watch over me," laughed Patricia. "But, of course, we couldn't keep on talking all the afternoon. There were a good many other people who wanted a word with her."

Rosamond subsided into her usual amiable indifference. "You must have had a charming time," she said pleasantly. "Tell me how they were all dressed."

Patricia very willingly launched into an enthusiastic account of the beautiful garments worn by the hostess and guests, and the topic was so absorbing that neither girl noticed the speeding hour, until a tap on the door brought them back to the needs of the present.

Constance Fellows in her shabbiest frock, paint stains on her hastily washed hands, looked gayly in on them.

"May I break my rules and use your phone?" she asked. "I haven't time to chase down across the courtyard to the other phone, and it's very important."

They went on talking in subdued tones, but it was impossible not to hear all that Constance said, since the telephone was on the table at Rosamond's elbow; and what she said made Rosamond's long eyes droop in a very peculiar manner.

"Tell Auntie," Constance said briskly after having gotten her number, "that I can't possibly have it done in time, unless I stick at it tonight. I'll hold the wire. Be as quick as you can, please. She'll understand."

In the interval of waiting for the reply Constance smiled cheerfully at them, receiver at ear, taking meanwhile a lively interest in Patricia's description of Madame Alda's wonderful coat.

"Sounds very uppity to me," she said with a humorous glance at her own ancient gown. "Been associating with the song-birds in the upper air, Miss Pat? I thought you'd left town. Haven't seen hide nor hair of you since Friday."

Patricia was about to explain that she had been occupied with musical matters under Rosamond's direction, when the answer came to Constance's message. It seemed satisfactory, for she accepted it cheerily and hung up the receiver with an expression of great content.

"Thank you so much for allowing me to grab your luxuries," she said with a smile to Rosamond. "Are either of you going down to dinner now? I can't get there, but if you'd tell Christine to bring me some milk and rasp-rolls when she's at liberty, I'd be awfully obliged. I have some dates and peanuts in my room," she added as though to relieve their possible fears that she was denying herself too strictly.

"I'm going down, and I'll be glad to do it," said Patricia quickly. She was so afraid that Constance might see the amused look on Rosamond's face that she jumped up at once and took her arm, twirling her around toward the door as she asked, "Is there anything I can order for you, Rosamond?"

"I think not, thank you," returned that young lady amiably. "I usually order by phone, you know. One is sure of getting what one wants then."

Patricia felt a bit uncomfortable at this untactful speech, but Constance merely laughed and nodded back over her shoulder at the indifferent Rosamond.

"That's the difference between us, Lady Rosamond," she smiled. "You are so sure of getting what you want, while I am always trying to make up my mind what it is I want. Sometimes I simply ache for prunes and ice cream cones, and other times I hanker after caviar." 139

Rosamond smiled indulgently, but after Patricia had returned from her dinner and her own dainty tray had been sent down, she said in a slow thoughtful way, "Constance Fellows is an absurd creature at times. I wonder what she meant by caviar?"

Patricia was often surprised by the lack of penetration on the part of her admired friend, and she said without hesitation, "Why, I supposed she meant living with her aunt. Shabby frocks and peanuts mean the other side of it."

"Do you think so?" insisted Rosamond. "I fancied she was joking about the prunes and cones, but of course there's no accounting for Constance. I'm glad she has my panels finished, for I have a feeling that she isn't too dependable, after all. I wonder what she is phoning to Mrs. Blakely for? I thought they were not on good terms." 140

"Oh, they're quite good friends," said Patricia, as she lighted her gold-shaded lamp. "Constance told me that her aunt often came to see her at the school, though she won't step foot in Artemis Lodge, because she vowed never to countenance Constance in her desire to live like a savage," Patricia giggled with enjoyment. "She seems to think we're a bit too primitive for her here."

"Indeed! I'd like Miss Ardsley to hear that," frowned Rosamond. "Mrs. Blakely should remember that though there are some poor art students here, there are quite enough of a better class to give tone to the place."

Patricia adjusted the shade and then smiled over it at her perturbed room-mate. "But you can't deny that, according to her estimate, we are Bohemian," she said gayly. "She declares that any place is Bohemian where they give parties in their sitting rooms and wash the dishes in the bathrooms."

Rosamond shrugged her shoulders quite impatiently. "Bother Mrs. Blakely," she said in the most downright way she had ever spoken before Patricia. "I'm going to bed." 141

Patricia came into her bedroom to turn out the light for her after she was in bed, and as she had her hand on the button, she gave a little start of remembrance.

"Oh, and I forgot to tell you that Bruce has tickets for Tosca tomorrow night for all of us," she said eagerly. "I don't know how I was so stupid as to let it slip my mind. Elinor and Judy and Bruce and I are going, and we want you to go with us."

Rosamond turned drowsily on her pillows, pulling the satin coverlet up to her chin.

"Awfully kind," she said indifferently. "I had tickets for us two and Miss Ardsley was to chaperone us. It was to surprise you, but we can give our tickets to her and let her take someone else. I fancy she can find some one who will go."

She turned over with so definite an air that Patricia snapped off the light and went slowly to her own little room, where she sat down before her table and got out her writing materials. She had a letter to write to Mrs. Spicer, but somehow the bloom seemed to be rubbed off of her wonderful afternoon, and she sat staring at the heading, 'Dear Mrs. Nat,' for a long time before she began to write. 142

Her mind was ranging over the costumes which Rosamond had made her describe so minutely and she was thinking with an earnestness new to her how much she should like to be like Rosamond, with her lovely voice and sumptuous clothes.

At last she dipped her dry pen and laid the blotter ready. "I guess Mrs. Nat will be glad to hear all about it," she said with a little self-conscious smile twisting her pink lips. "She hasn't much chance at really splendid doings, and she does love pretty things."

She stopped before she had written a sentence to muse again. "I wish she hadn't taken a sort of dislike to Rosamond when she saw her out at Red Top," she said wistfully. "It's so hard to write without putting Rosamond in. She's in almost everything I do now."

CHAPTER X

Patricia found that Rosamond was still more interwoven into her daily life when she went into her room the next morning, and found her breathing heavily and entirely oblivious of all about her.

"Oh, dear, she must be really ill," said Patricia, half aloud, as she bent over the bed and looked at the flushed face anxiously. "I wonder if I ought to call Miss Ardsley or Miss Tatten."

She tried to find out just how ill poor Rosamond was, but in spite of her careful attempts to rouse her, Rosamond refused to come back to wakefulness, and Patricia was forced to give up the effort.

"I wish I could go to Miss Tatten," she thought, drawing the door softly to behind her and hurrying through the sitting-room. "She's the one in charge, after all. And she doesn't make so much conversation about things as Miss Ardsley does." 144

A picture of the fastidious, affable Directress rose clearly before her and she saw what a contrast to little efficient "Tattie," as the girls called the sturdy little house-keeper behind her back, Miss Ardsley would make at a sick-bed.

"I suppose I'll have to go straight down to the office," she said aloud, as she went out into the hall. "Oh, dear, I hope she isn't going to be ill."

Constance Fellows was at her door, unseen by Patricia, and she caught the distressed words. As Patricia hurriedly started for the stair she called to her.

"Is the fair Rosamond under the weather again?" she asked lightly.

Patricia turned, indignant at her levity in the face of trouble.

"Rosamond is in a stupor and I can't wake her up. I'm going for Miss Ardsley," she said shortly.

Then Constance dropped her bantering tone and, closing her own door, came over to Patricia. "Let me see her before you call out the authorities," she said earnestly. "She may not be seriously ill, and if they once get hold of her they'll keep her in quarantine for weeks after she's all over it." 145

Patricia remembered Rosamond saying something much to this effect, and she agreed eagerly.

"I'll go in first and see if she's waked up," she said on the threshold of Rosamond's room.

Rosamond was lying in the same position as she had been and was as unresponsive to efforts to rouse her as before. Patricia beckoned Constance into the room.

"I'm afraid she's very ill," she whispered, as Constance came to the bedside, and she waited in great suspense for what should come next.

Constance felt Rosamond's head and listened to her heart in quite a professional manner. Then she disappeared for a moment and came back with a thermometer and an alcohol bottle.

"Get some hot water ready for me," she said in a business-like way that won Patricia's confidence. "I think it's an attack of the grippe, but I'm not sure yet." 146

When Patricia came back with the steaming pitcher, she had finished her investigations. "It's grippe, all right," she said, contentedly. "I know the symptoms without being told a word. I've had it every year since it became the fashion, drat it! We'll have to get the doctor, of course, but I think she can be made more comfortable in the meanwhile."

"Shall I tell Miss Ardsley before I phone to the doctor?" Patricia asked anxiously.

Constance shook her head. "Tell her just as soon as you are sure he is on the way," she advised. "The Countess is a nuisance about illness. She is scared stiff for fear she'll catch it—whatever it may be. Of course, she has to know—necessary evil—but don't let her in on me till I've freshened up this poor girl."

Patricia hurried off to telephone to Rosamond's doctor, whom she was fortunate enough to find in his office. And then she came back to the bedroom. Rosamond had her eyes open. Her face was flushed and miserable looking, but she was allowing Constance to arrange her pillows with something like gratitude in her long eyes. 147

"I've given her an alcohol rub and kept the hot-water bottles to her all the while," said Constance briskly. "She'll be feeling better after a by, won't you, Rosamond?"

Rosamond dropped her eyes in a way that meant yes, and Patricia flew to bend over her and whisper her grief at finding her so ill.

"Better not take in any more germs than you can help," said Constance in a business-like way. "Clear out, now, young one, and get your breakfast. The restaurant will be closed if you don't hurry."

Patricia went off, feeling that she was leaving her friend in competent hands, and after she had finished a hasty meal she went to Miss Ardsley's room to notify her of Rosamond's plight. There was no response to her knock and she was forced to leave without having done her errand. She met Miss Tatten on the way upstairs, however, and she poured out her tale of woe, grateful for the chance of enlisting the sturdy common sense of the house-keeper. 148

"Ah, indeed," was Miss Tatten's only comment. Her arched eyebrows rose with nervous twitches and her deep contralto voice rolled sonorously. "Have you notified Miss Ardsley? Has a physician been called?"

Patricia explained why the directress had not been told. "You'll do beautifully in her place, won't you?" she asked with such evident desire for an affirmative answer that Miss Tatten, being only human and liking Patricia exceedingly, showed signs of melting from her official starched dignity, and promised to come at once.

They went together into the sick-room and Patricia revised her former opinion of Miss Tatten as a just yet severe automaton when she saw the real kindness and tender consideration she showed there.

The doctor was coming up the stairs as Patricia pinned on her hat and hurried away for her singing lesson, and only the sternness which Tancredi showed toward late-comers kept her from lingering to hear his verdict. 149

In the courtyard she met Miss Ardsley, coming placidly from her milliner's. "At this most unearthly hour, my dear, because the obstinate creature refused to make my new hat for 'Varnishing Day' on Friday unless I gave her a sitting this morning."

Patricia was not at any time much interested in Miss Ardsley's hats, but now they grew intolerable. She waited for a period in the gentle flow of criticism on the prevalent modes, and then she boldly broke in.

"I'm sorry I have to go," she said apologetically. "I must tell you, though, before I fly, that Rosamond Merton is ill with the grippe and we've sent for the doctor. He's in her room, now, so you'll have to go right up if you want to see him there."

Miss Ardsley gasped. "Ill with grippe! How—how very annoying. Really, I was hoping to keep Artemis Lodge free from that taint," she said with a slightly sharp edge to her gentle tones. "Is she suffering much?" she added more sweetly, being recalled perhaps by the incredulous expression in Patricia's very speaking eyes. 150

"She's very miserable indeed," Patricia returned promptly, determined not to spare the Directress. "She was in a stupor when I went in to her this morning, but she's better now. Constance Fellows had been with her and Miss Tatten has just gone up—"

"Miss Tatten?" began Miss Ardsley in a somewhat vexed tone, which swiftly changed to a pleased one. "Ah, yes, Miss Tatten. She is most capable and will do all that is necessary. Thank you so much, my dear, for telling me of this sad affair. I shall notify Madame Tancredi at once." And before Patricia could offer to carry the message, she sailed off serenely to her own quarters, leaving Patricia wasting yet more valuable time by standing quite still in the middle of the courtyard staring blankly after her.

"Well!" was all she found voice for as she gathered herself together. "Well." 151

Notwithstanding Miss Ardsley's intentions, Patricia told Madame Tancredi of her favorite pupil's illness and was gratified at the warmth of her solicitude. She carried home from her lesson a strong impression that Rosamond must be a very remarkable person indeed to call forth such expressions of regret from her teacher.

"I shouldn't wonder if she were going to be a great opera singer like Madame Milano," she thought, somewhat awed by this high fate for Rosamond, and she went to the sick room with more anxiety for the future prima donna than she had felt even for her friend.

Constance Fellows was still in charge and tremendously relieved at her appearance. "She's keen enough now," she replied to Patricia's eager questions. "She won't hear to a nurse, and the doctor doesn't insist. I fancy he knows her better than we do. I'd stay longer, but there's something I have on hand—but I'll be back later if you want me." 152

Patricia thought she could manage the rest of the day very well, and as soon as the medicines were explained and the diet understood, Constance hurried off.

Rosamond was looking much better when Patricia went to her, and she improved so rapidly that her objection to the nurse was justified. Patricia found her an easy patient, though to her inexperience the hours for medicine came swiftly and the nourishment seemed to be always waiting to be administered. By the time night came she was completely exhausted, but she bore up gallantly, love of her gifted friend giving her strength and courage in the long hours before the happy moment when she felt safe in going to bed.

She wakened a great many times in her short night, to sit up and listen or to steal to the door of Rosamond's room and noiselessly peep in to see how she fared; but Rosamond was sleeping heavily each time she listened, and after the dawn came she gave herself up to the deep fatigue which overpowered her.

The sun was shining into her room when she awoke to hear someone knocking on the outer door. It was Constance on her way up from breakfast, bringing some flowers from Tancredi and the mail. 153

Flowers from Tancredi! Patricia thought that must rouse any pupil of her's, even from the dead!

But no, the gifted Rosamond lifted them to her face as indifferently as if they had been common weeds and sighed as she turned her pale face away from the insistent odor of the jasmine.

"How suggestive to send white ones," she murmured with half a smile, and Patricia, who had been half-way to the skies at this condescension on the part of Tancredi, became aware that she was making a mountain out of a very mediocre mole-hill.

She took the flowers and laid them in the box while she could fill a vase with water, and when

she lifted them again she saw an envelope cuddling under the green paper. It was addressed in Tancredi's hand, and she looked at it reverently despite herself.

Rosamond waved her to read it and she had the fun, at any rate, of seeing the actual words. 154

"I have news to cheer the invalid," wrote the good-natured Tancredi after a few phrases of regret. "The Milano was asking about you at luncheon today, and if you are able, I am to bring you to her next 'Hour' when she returns to New York within the fortnight."

Patricia beamed. She knew that it was her account of her friend which had brought this honor to Rosamond and she was eager to hear her grateful acknowledgment. She looked expectantly at Rosamond, who was on fire at last.

She sat up in her dainty bed and she actually clapped her hands.

"Oh, how lucky I got that embroidered crepe!" she cried, out of the fullness of her heart. "Oh, Miss Pat, my dear, I must order the stockings dyed to match! I will surely be well—I'll *have* to be well. Get the paper and see when she sings again."

Not a word about the loving praise which had won her this. Not a single syllable of gratitude for the generous love that had so forgotten self in admiration for another. But Patricia was so happy in what she felt she had helped bring about that she flew for the paper and found the advertisement for the coming operas with as much speed as though she herself were to be the guest. 155

After they found that it would be exactly eleven days till the next opera Milano was appearing in, Rosamond lay back with a sigh of relief.

"I'll surely be well by that time," she said positively. "I am feeling so much better this morning, and I always get over things very rapidly."

Patricia was bubbling with sympathetic pleasure. "I'll take the sample of the dress and get the stockings this morning," she offered. "Is there anything else you want me to do?"

Rosamond pondered for a moment and then replied amiably, "I can't think of anything else just now, but I'll be glad to have you go as soon as you can with the sample. One never knows how long those stupid stores may take. It's awfully good of you, Miss Pat," she ended carelessly. 156

"Oh, I just love to do it!" cried Patricia. "I love to do anything for you—you've been so nice to me. I'll go the very first minute after I've straightened you up and had some breakfast. I'm so glad it isn't my lesson morning."

Rosamond's improvement delighted her, and she danced off to attend to her various duties with a light heart. Breakfast over, she did her errand, and after a short walk in the Park she came back to find Rosamond in a flush of fever.

The doctor, when he came at her anxious bidding, assured her it meant nothing, that Miss Merton was recovering as rapidly as possible; but Patricia was so disturbed and unhappy over her friend's condition that she sat down and telephoned to Elinor that she could not go to the opera with them and that she had asked Constance Fellows and Marie Graham—the shabby entertaining friend—to go in the place of Rosamond and herself.

To Elinor's expostulations and arguments, she had one answer: "She has been too good to me for me to leave her now," and her disappointed sister was forced to be content with that. 157

When, the next morning, she found that Rosamond was fulfilling the doctor's predictions and getting well by leaps, she was not sorry for her self-denial.

"I'm glad I could do it for her," she said, nodding at herself in the quaint mirror above her dresser. "I shall always do things for her, because I just *love* to."

CHAPTER XI

THE REWARD OF THE FAITHFUL

"I think Miss Pat is simply foolish over Miss Merton," said Judith, with an uneasy note in her calm voice. "We haven't seen anything of her for a week, and now she's trying to back out of coming Sunday night, just because her Rosamond is going to sing at Mrs. Filmore's and they've asked Miss Pat to come and worship."

Elinor had just come in. Her cheeks were tinted with the crisp air and her eyes were dancing with the brisk walk home through the Park. She tossed her muff on the divan and made a laughing face at her disturbed small sister. 158

"Never mind, Judy, you still have us," she said brightly. "Constance is coming and Doris Leighton too, and we'll have to give Miss Pat up to such a fine opportunity. Rosamond has not been singing 'publicly,' as she calls it, so it will be a great treat, no doubt."

159

"Yes, but she will simply have to miss it," declared Judith firmly. "Tell her, will you, Elinor, when she comes in that she must come tomorrow?"

Elinor hesitated, and Judith burst out, "Well, then, if I have to tell! Mrs. Shelly told me that Mrs. Nat was coming in to surprise us, and of course Miss Pat must be here."

"What's that about me?" asked Patricia, appearing in the doorway from the bedroom, where she had been sewing a button on her glove while she waited for Elinor to come home. "Who's requesting the pleasure of my society?"

"Judith was telling me some very good reasons why you should come to the Sunday spread," answered Elinor quietly. She scanned her sister's face while they talked and her own was none the brighter for what she saw there.

Patricia tossed her head impatiently, as though to evade Judith's persistent attacks.

"You know I can't come," she said with that petulance which had grown upon her recently. "I have to go with Rosamond. I've been fixing my dress, and everything's ready. Besides," she added, "I promised Madame Milano I would only come home once a week, and as I've been here today, I couldn't very well come tomorrow again."

160

"Been here today?" echoed Judith, shaken out of herself by this unexpected reasoning. "You've barely stopped five minutes, and you haven't taken off your hat!"

Patricia looked as nearly sulky as she could ever manage to be. "I can't help it; I simply won't come," she said without concealment. "I'm going to Filmore's and that's an end of it."

Judith fired her last gun. "Mrs. Nat is coming as a surprise and we've asked Doris and Constance, too," she said reproachfully.

Patricia faltered and then recovered her firm stand. "I'm sorry, but I have accepted," she replied.

"But Mrs. Filmore doesn't care a snap whether you come or not," persisted Judith with flaming cheeks. She was making a fight for her old-time sunny Miss Pat against this careless devotee of Rosamond Merton's, but she had not counted on the days of intimate companionship with the alluring Rosamond which had been Miss Pat's in the past fortnight of illness and convalescence.

161

Patricia was silent.

"They didn't even ask you to come with your Rosamond," rushed on Judith. "You're only invited with the outsiders, after the dinner is over."

Elinor's scrutiny told her it was time to interfere. Patricia was not the forbearing joyful Miss Pat of yore. Since the spell of Rosamond Merton had fallen so strongly upon her, she was growing—of all things for merry Miss Pat—strangely self-centered. The life at Artemis Lodge, with its gay comradeship of restaurant and tea-room, of dim library and cosy salons, seemed to have passed her by, and Rosamond Merton filled her heart and mind. Swiftly, while she was speaking, Elinor determined that some change must be made, yet all she said was in her gentlest tone and with an arm about Patricia's shoulder.

162

"We'll have to give her up this time, Judy dear, though we'll all miss her more than we can say; but we won't let her off next time, I promise you that."

Patricia was touched by the fondness in the sweet voice, though she was immensely relieved, too, for she knew that if Elinor vetoed her plan she must give it up.

"I might come over after I'm dressed," she suggested gratefully, with a smile at the discomfited Judith. "I wanted to ask if Bruce would walk over with me—it's in one of those old houses across the Square—but Ju was so fierce I was afraid to open my lips."

Elinor promised for Bruce and after a little chat Patricia left, feeling that she was making quite a concession to the family tie.

"As Rosamond says, I can't give up everything to other people, or I'd lose my personality," she mused as she went briskly along the frosty streets toward the Lodge. "And personality means so much to a singer."

163

She felt rather proud of herself now. It had been difficult for her to come to this point of view and Rosamond had rambled on in her amiable fashion many a time on the subject before she had brought her impressionable room-mate to see it as she did.

"If I merely went to the studio and nowhere else, I'd grow one-sided," thought Patricia, cheerfully ignoring the fact that she spent most of her time nowadays between her lessons and practicing either at home with Rosamond or doing errands for that luxuriant young lady.

In the weeks she had been in Artemis Lodge she had been absorbing Rosamond, living, breathing and sleeping Rosamond, until she was merely a variation of the older girl's charming self. She did not see that Rosamond was more self-centered than anyone she knew. She forgot how eager she had once been, and how proud, to mingle with the people who were always dropping in to see Bruce and Elinor. In a word, she was, for the time, like the man who points his telescope at the flower by his side and cries out that the world is made of pink petals and yellow stamen. She was no longer Patricia—she was Rosamond Merton's version of Patricia.

164

And the most remarkable part was that she had come to this state of mind through her best impulses and by the way of her generous admirations. The manner of her coming had been so whole-souled and liberal, too, that she deserved to have arrived at more than this.

She went to the studio on Sunday evening and showed her pretty simple evening frock, decorated with a wide band of glittering trimming from Rosamond's ample store, and she had the one real quarrel of her life with Elinor because that tender sister made her rip it off before she would consent to her either appearing at the studio spread or going to the musical.

Patricia never forgot that evening.

The supper, with its merry chat, was gall and wormwood to her. Mrs. Nat's kind eyes seemed probing for something Patricia could not show her. Doris Leighton's quiet pleasantries and Constance's gay quips were dust and ashes in her mouth, and when finally she had walked across the Square to the big brick house and the door had closed on Bruce and the outside world, she was actually ready for tears.

165

"I'll never go anywhere again, if this is the way they are going to fuss about it," she said to herself, as she went slowly upstairs to the dressing-room. "I don't see how they can be so mean."

The brilliance of the house and the guests, together with Rosamond's gracious greeting as she met her and led her to be introduced to the hostess, soon worked a cure for her low spirits and she began to enjoy herself at once.

"This is real life," she thought joyfully.

"Milano was asking me about you," said Rosamond as they threaded their way through the crowded rooms.

Patricia nodded. "I know," she returned brightly. "At her tea-party the other day. You told me about it."

166

She was so taken up with the delightful agitation of finding herself in such a large and imposing assembly that she scarcely thought of her words.

Rosamond laughed her slow laugh. "No, tonight," she corrected. "She is here, you know. Mrs. Filmore is giving the dinner in her honor."

Patricia had room for swift surprise. "Why, you never told me!" she exclaimed impetuously. "How strange!"

"I imagine it slipped your mind," suggested Rosamond carelessly. "I am sure I told you. Come, let us speak to her before she sings. Mrs. Filmore has persuaded her to give just one song, and I don't know when she will choose."

Patricia demurred, feeling suddenly rather small and insignificant in her girlish white net frock among all the glittering costumes about her. It is sad to confess that her anger at Elinor returned hotly as she thought of the forbidden trimming. That Rosamond had tactfully ignored to speak of its absence made her more angry at Elinor.

167

"I'd rather sit down here and look about for a while," she said, dropping into a tiny divan in a half-deserted corner with such a determined air of gayety that Rosamond, after a rather weak protest, went off by herself to make one of the group about the prima donna.

Patricia watched her moving across the crowded room with all the assurance of long experience of such scenes, and admired her more than ever. Her perfect gown and the graceful way she carried her dark head with its jeweled band convinced the impressionable Patricia that this sumptuous creature was far too high above her for criticism, and her cheeks flushed at Judith's presumption.

It was delightful to her to see how agreeable everyone was to Rosamond. She was stopped a dozen times in her passage of the wide apartment, and she joined the group about Madam Milano with three attractive men in her wake. Patricia found it very exciting. She thought of the dances at the Tennis Club with something like scorn, and even the parties at the studio last winter seemed to pale before this splendid entertainment.

168

After an hour she began to change her mind, however, and she looked about for any sign of Rosamond in vain. There was no one in the rooms she knew. She could not even see her hostess, whose peculiar head-dress and angular shoulders she was sure she could recognize at any distance. Madame Milano had not sung and there seemed, from the lively hum of conversation that rose above the music of the famous orchestra, little hope of it.

She felt suddenly very lonely. These strangers with their indifferent stares made her more uncomfortable than she had ever been in her life. She longed to be able to speak one word to some friendly creature. And then, just as she was actually about to rise and flee to the shelter of the dressing-room, there was a stir, and the soft undertone of the orchestra stopped in the middle of a Hungarian Czarda.

169

Patricia leaned forward. Rosamond was going to sing!

Her loneliness dropped from her and her face shone. She drank in the trills and flourishes of the selection which her friend had chosen as though the notes were golden ambrosia. After Rosamond had ended her song and gracefully yet firmly declined an encore Patricia was still glowing.

She came to herself, though, when a woman near her, without lowering her voice, said with an amused look, "I'm glad that nice child in the corner is looking happier. It's positively cruel to

allow so young a girl to mope about like that."

Patricia retained enough of her spirit to look the amused lady calmly in the eyes, while her pretty tipped-up nose assumed a more sprightly angle. That made her feel much better, and after Madame Milano had poured out the liquid jewels of her faultless voice, she felt better still.

She waited then in expectancy that now Rosamond would appear to take her to Madame Milano, but no one came, and in a shorter time than it seemed to her she rose, spurred by the amused lady's eyes, and made her way among the chatting throngs straight to the dressing-room, where she ordered her wraps and made her way downstairs with the calm of hope destroyed. 170

She passed the footmen at the door, quite aware of their stares and equally undaunted by them. Through the lane of canvas she gained the pavement and so was out in the night streets—alone for the first time in her sheltered life.

Artemis Lodge was only a few squares distant and she almost ran the short blocks, arriving at the green entrance door out of breath and suddenly realizing that the custodian left at eleven o'clock and Rosamond had the night key which Miss Ardsley allowed only to privileged ones.

As she hesitated, a couple of figures came toward her, and she was overjoyed to recognize Mary Scull, one of the oldest residents, and little Rita Stanford, whom she had been chaperoning to a concert given by the blind. They were so full of the wonderful work done by these afflicted musicians that they scarcely listened to her limping explanation of her dilemma. 171

They took her in with them and left her at the foot of her own stair, and she could hear them as they went across the courtyard in the quiet starlight, discussing the difficulties of song-reading by the blind.

She rushed upstairs and undressed hastily, flinging off her clothes and dropping into bed without brushing her hair, so afraid was she that Rosamond might come in before her light was out.

She cried softly in the dark because she could not say her prayers. The tumult in her heart was too loud.

CHAPTER XII

PATRICIA MOVES

She received Rosamond's careless chiding for her unconventional behavior with an uneasy feeling. Her divinity was showing the first flaw.

"I don't think I was entirely to blame, even though I did feel shy at first," she defended herself with some hesitation. "Couldn't you have sent for me, even if you didn't want to come yourself? The footmen were going about constantly with those cute little ices."

Her sense of justice was not appeased by her friend's evading this very reasonable statement, and Rosamond's laughing indifference to her disappointment in not meeting Madame Milano again stung her to the quick.

She was too proud to show her feelings openly, however, and she went to her lesson very miserable indeed, feeling that she had lost both the splendid Rosamond's interest and her dear Elinor's sympathy. 173

That was one of the worst mornings Patricia ever knew. She sang so unevenly that Tancredi scolded her and put her back in her first exercises for punishment. She was longing to ask about Madame Milano, but her lips were sealed by her own fault. She would not trespass on her teacher's indulgence and she left the house so wretched that she hated even the dear music she had so longed for and lived in.

"I'll never be a real singer," she thought dolefully, as she walked slowly towards Artemis Lodge. "Tancredi doesn't care a rap about my voice and I don't believe she'd have bothered with me if it hadn't been to please Madame Milano, and Madame Milano only told me to go on because she wanted to please Elinor and Bruce because they are friends of the Van Kelts, who are such chums with her Dutch friend."

If she had not been so woebegone she would have laughed at this string of disheartening reasons for her being so falsely encouraged to compete with gifted creatures like Rosamond Merton, but her gloom was too deep and too real to see the funny side of anything just then. 174

The clock in the tower was pointing to twelve as she passed along on the other side of the Square, and she looked wistfully up at the big window of the studio, where she knew that Elinor or Bruce would be just dismissing a model and making ready to clean their brushes and tidy up

for the one o'clock luncheon which they always had sent in to them.

"I wonder if they'd care if they never saw me again," she thought with what she instantly knew to be shallow sentimentality. "I suppose they would care," she acknowledged, and her sense of justice saved her from any more silly speeches like that. "They think I'm an awful goose, though," she amended, and she knew she was rather safe in this.

As she turned the corner toward her own street, she saw a couple of figures come out of the rather imposing entrance of the studio building, and her dejection deepened. She could easily recognize Elinor's blue coat and Doris Leighton's black suit with the white fur collar. They were coming briskly toward her and she hastily turned on a sudden impulse and crossed the Square in the opposite direction. 175

"I simply can't see anyone just now," she told herself miserably.

She walked with her head up, though the tears were in her eyes, and she went along very briskly, not caring at all where she went, so that it was away from Artemis Lodge and her troubles.

She walked for more than an hour, and found that her troubles would not leave her so readily, so she turned toward the down-town section again and went resolutely back to them.

It was one of those days when spring seems to leap suddenly into the sunshine, and Patricia, though very miserable indeed, could not help responding a little to the waking season.

"Perhaps I was a bit hard to manage last night," she thought, as she reached the green door, and the fact that the caretaker smiled at her added to her conviction that she had been hasty. 176

She ran up the stairs and with a light tap came into the room where she expected to find Rosamond, but the words of contrition died on her lips, for the room was filled with a litter of lovely gowns, hats and slippers, in the midst of which sat Rosamond criticising and selecting, while a deferential young woman in correct black made notes on a little pad. The name of an exclusive outfitter was on the box-lids and wrappers.

Rosamond looked up smiling at Patricia. She seemed to have forgotten that there had been any coolness between them.

"Come and help me select some of these things, Miss Pat," she said amiably.

And Patricia was instantly ashamed of her resentment.

Rosamond, it seemed, had received an unusually large remittance from home, and was employing it in enlarging her wardrobe, which she declared was scandalously shabby. She bought recklessly, while Patricia sighed over the beautiful things and felt that she must have been childish and unreasonable indeed to accuse this friendly, chatting girl of wilful neglect or unkindness. 177

They were pleasantly engaged in this delightful fashion when the knocker tapped and Constance Fellows' bright face appeared in the doorway.

"Ods-bodikins! What have we here?" she asked with a twinkle in her clear hazel eyes. "Going to be married, Fair Rosamond, or is it merely preparation for the dance next week?"

Rosamond disclaimed either. "I'm just getting a few things to freshen up my old clothes," she said with a tinge of ostentation, which was not lost on Constance.

"My word, but you need a lot of freshening," she said gayly, glancing at the array on chairs and divan. "One quarter of this would make me absolutely over. That's what it is to be ambitious."

Patricia thought Rosamond seemed vexed at this free speech, but Constance gave her no time for reply. 178

"Your sister is in Miss Ardsley's rooms and they would like to speak to you," she said to Patricia. "They were coming up here, but they saw the dray-load of hats being taken in, and they concluded there would be more breathing room downstairs."

Patricia had a sudden misgiving that something might be wrong at the studio—Judith or Bruce ill. Constance saw the thought in her face and shook her hand.

"Everything's O.K." she assured her. "Miss Ardsley's got a room for you at last, that's all. They want you to come down and deliver sentence."

To Patricia this seemed a veritable finger of destiny.

"Shall I bother you if I move out?" she asked Rosamond rather wistfully.

If she had hoped for comfort, she got very little. "Why should you go at all?" asked Rosamond, while she held a hat up for inspection, viewing it first on one side and then on the other. "I thought you were very well as you are." 179

"But," faltered Patricia. "I was only to stay till I could get a room."

She hoped Rosamond would lay down the hat and look at her with friendly eyes. Rosamond kept on with her scrutiny.

"Stay as long as you will. I'm sure we've got on beautifully together," she said with her air of amiable indifference.

After that Patricia felt she had no choice.

She followed Constance into Miss Ardsley's rooms without knowing how she got there, and even

Elinor's gentle words of greeting sounded stiff and formal to her quivering, over-wrought humor. Miss Ardsley's genteel accents grated horribly on her. She was anxious to have the interview over and she readily agreed to take the room at once, without evincing any interest in it or anything else. All that she wanted just then was to get away by herself, so afraid was she that the tears so near her eyelids might pop out at any moment.

Elinor very properly put her changed manner down to the incident of the night before, and she did not insist on going up with her to talk it over with Miss Merton, as she would have done if all had been as usual between Patricia and herself. 180

She sighed a little as she kissed her good-bye in the corridor, and wondered sadly at the stony face her dear Miss Pat turned to her at parting.

"You'll want me to come over and help you move?" she asked, with a world of tender concern in her tones.

Patricia heard only the mere words. She was wild to get away before she disgraced herself before the others. "I'll move in tomorrow. Constance will help me if you're busy," she said, hardly knowing how her words sounded.

Elinor went home too hurt to reply and too generous to insist on intruding, while Patricia ran upstairs and shut herself in her room, where she could hear the murmur of Rosamond and the saleswoman going on monotonously.

"I won't wait another moment; I'll go straight down and get the key," she said, springing up after a bad quarter of an hour, wherein all her idols had tottered from their pedestals. "I can't stand being cooped up forever like a mummy!" 181

Miss Ardsley gave her the key most willingly, even going so far as the courtyard to point out the windows of the room, which was on the opposite side of the quadrangle, recommending her to call on Martha or Christine if there were anything she needed.

Patricia found the room and opened the door with a sense of relief at finding a shelter for her wounded feelings. She liked the queer shape of it, with the two odd windows giving toward the sunset, and the angle where her cosy corner seemed already to have appropriated.

"It's perfectly dear, and I'll love it!" she said passionately. "I'll move in this very instant, no matter what Rosamond may say."

Rosamond had very little to say, though that little was regretful and apparently sincere. Patricia suspected her now of insincerity, but that was not one of Rosamond Merton's faults. Had she feigned more, Patricia would never have left her. She was sorry for Miss Pat to go, but since she seemed so eager for it, there was nothing else to be done. 182

"We'll see just as much of one another," she said, still absently intent on her purchases. "You'll practice here, of course."

Patricia had forgotten the piano, but she was not given to retreat.

"There's plenty of room for one of my own over there," she said with a forced smile. "I'll miss hearing you sing, though." She was afraid she was going to break down, but she didn't. "I'll get my things out now, so that you can have the little room for cold storage," and she motioned to the jumble which lay gloriously about.

Rosamond made the best of it. "It will be hard to get anyone to help now," she said, rising. "It's just tea-hour and the maids will be busy. I'll see that you have someone at once."

Patricia wanted to protest, but the words stuck in her throat and she was forced to accept the sturdy charwoman whom Rosamond's telephone secured. 183

The moving was over sooner than she had thought possible. She was settled in her room, and Rosamond had come over to declare it the cosiest spot in the world, while Constance Fellows and Doris Leighton had been in a couple of times on visits of congratulation before the clock across the housetops spelled out her usual bed hour on its illuminated face.

Patricia felt very strange as she put out the light and got into the narrow bed with its transplanted canopy and frills, yet there was a feeling of independence that was perhaps all the sweeter because she would not acknowledge it.

"I'm more lonely than I ever was in my life," she told herself as her head sank against her pillow.

But she forgot that she had said her prayers very thoroughly tonight, which showed that she had passed the darkest spot of her loneliness, for no one is quite desolate who can talk to God.

The next morning she awoke with a start, thinking she heard Rosamond calling her, but all she saw was the bright spring sunshine flooding into her pleasant, queer room, and all she heard was the trilling of the girl across the hall, little Rita Stanford, whose mother had died since Patricia had come to Artemis Lodge. 184

"Poor little brave thing," she thought with a warm rush of feeling, "I'll ask her over to practice as soon as I get my piano."

All about her she heard sounds of life that the private stair had shut her away from. Someone was unlocking her door and going whistling down the corridor, and in the room next to her the girl was rushing about in great haste, banging doors and slamming down the windows.

Rosamond would have sighed over such intimate contact with the rank and file of student life. It charmed Patricia. She loved democracy, although she had been shunning it ever since she had

come to room with Rosamond Merton, and she jumped out of bed with a lighter heart than she could have dreamed possible the night before.

185

Unconsciously she had begun to fulfill Madame Milano's purpose in sending her to Artemis Lodge.

186

CHAPTER XIII

THE TURNING POINT

It was very hard for Patricia to go over to Rosamond's room after breakfast for her hour at the piano, but she did it so bravely that the self-centered Rosamond never guessed how much it cost her.

That was her first unconscious victory over herself.

Next she found that the other girls, from whose comradeship Rosamond's constant presence had barred her, now made room for her in the jolly, hail-fellow style which went straight to her bruised heart and soothed her wounded feelings sooner than she knew.

She kept her place at the little table in the café with Rosamond, of course, but after the first day she did not go into her room at tea-time, going instead into the big room downstairs where the girls and their guests came every afternoon to consume thin bread and butter, and innumerable cups of tea and packs of petite-beurres. Rosamond had thought her own dainty service with an exclusive friend all that could be desired, but Patricia rejoiced in the atmosphere of the club room with its great grand piano and the groups of interested girls, with a sprinkling of equally interested and clever guests. The steaming, gleaming samovar with Doris Leighton's friendly face behind it brought a warmth to her heart the first afternoon that Constance had insisted on her cutting the hour with Rosamond and going with her to the tea-room below.

187

She found the easy chat and gay banter of the friendly groups the more to her taste, because she had come from a rather trying quarter of an hour in Rosamond's room, where Mary Browne—with an *e* as she always explained carefully—was being shown the purchases which had seemingly consoled Rosamond for her withdrawal.

Mary Browne, a slim, dark-eyed, good-looking girl with a bored manner, was lounging in a chair, looking with reverent yearning at the articles as they were exhibited—Rosamond trying each on and enlarging on its points of excellence.

188

Mary Browne, though of the purest blood, was, as she put it, "rather strapped," and wore her shapely garments longer than even Patricia did. Her soul was in the matter, as anyone could see by the way in which she looked at each article, murmuring tensely through her aristocratic teeth, "It's a stair. It's a *star*."

Patricia had just come from a flying visit to little Rita Stanford, whom she had suspected, from certain little sounds coming over her open transom, to be crying, and the contrast to that heroic little person putting aside her fresh grief to try to be entertaining to the newcomer in her hall made Patricia suddenly rather contemptuous of this worshipful attitude toward the mere accessories of life.

She had sprung up with relief when Constance's knock gave her the chance to escape, and in spite of Rosamond's rather absent protests, she had gone downstairs with Constance.

189

The tea-room was very full that afternoon and Doris had little time for talk, but she asked Patricia to stay for a chat after the samovar was taken away, and Patricia very willingly promised. The guests left at the proper time, but the girls seemed loath to leave. They lingered, talking about all sorts of glorious futures they were planning and discussing the eager present with great animation.

"Tancredi says that Rosamond Merton is going into opera as soon as she is done with her," a girl whose name Patricia did not know leaned across a space to tell her. She knew that Patricia was Rosamond's closest associate and she was following the social impulse to please.

Her friendly action brought the color to Patricia's cheeks and her eyes shone.

"How splendid!" she said ardently. "How did you hear it? Do you know Tancredi?"

The girl shook her head. "My sister knows her," she replied, "and she told her that Carneri, the director of the Cosmopolitan Company, told her she should have a place whenever she was pronounced fit by Tancredi. Pretty great for the Fair Rosamond, isn't it? They say she met him at a luncheon she gave to Milano and her teacher at the Ritz last week. It pays to be rich as well as talented, you see."

190

"Is she really very rich?" asked Patricia, and then was sorry she had spoken. It seemed as though she were prying into Rosamond's private affairs.

"Of course. She's old Cedar-tank Merton's only thing," replied the girl rather flippantly, Patricia thought. "She's hordes and gobs of coin, as well as being gifted with a voice and a family tree that makes the California redwoods look like mere bushes. You're with Tancredi, too, aren't you?"

Patricia nodded.

"I suppose she has a name, though I haven't heard it," the girl said to Constance, who was chatting with someone at an opposite table. 191

Constance did not hear her, but Patricia readily supplied the deficiency.

"I'm Patricia Kendall," she said, feeling rather apologetic for herself, though she did not know quite why.

"I'm Louise Woods," replied the other. "I'll look you up some time after I've spotted you and tell you what Tancredi says about *you*."

"Oh, it couldn't be much," cried Patricia in dismay. "I've just begun to study and Tancredi only bothers with me because a friend of hers asked her to."

The girl seemed not much impressed. "You've got something up your sleeve, I think," she smiled as she rose. "Tancredi doesn't cast her pearls before swine that way."

Patricia watched her making her sociable way out of the room, and she decided that she liked her.

"I wonder why I never met her before?" she thought, and then realized how completely Rosamond had blocked her view of all the other girls. "I guess I'll not be half so lonely as I thought. They all seem so kind." 192

She felt still better content when, as the twilight gathered and Doris came to make one of their group, one of the girls went to the big piano and illustrated her idea of the Swan Song in Lohengrin, striking passionate chords with her finger-tips and throwing her full-toned contralto into the dimness with an effect that was thrilling to Patricia.

Then another girl pushed her from the seat and, interrupting herself from time to time with explanations of the method, sang part of the scene where Louise leaves her home.

The magic of the dim hour was on them and they gave themselves to the music entire. The great winged Victory above the bookshelf showed back of the singer's dark head. The real everyday world dropped away and a more real and vital world took its place. One after another, the music students took their place eagerly on the seat, and sang or played the melody that was surging within them, to which the magic moment had given utterance. 193

Patricia never knew how it ended or if it were herself that was back in the everyday world of the café, eating dinner with Rosamond as usual, or whether she was still in that twilight world of melody listening to the voices, until Rosamond said rather sharply for her:

"Are you ill, Miss Pat, that you look so strange?"

Then Patricia drew herself together and managed to appear as normal as she could, but her one desire was to get away by herself to gloat over the riches that had been flung in her lap.

"I'd never, never known how splendid it was if I hadn't left Rosamond," she marveled. "Oh, how much I've been missing all this time!"

She was so taken out of herself by the beautiful experience that she hurried to her room and sat down to write a note to Elinor, begging her to forgive her silly conduct and her rank ingratitude for all their care. She made it as strong as that, and when she had sealed it she went down and put it in the mail-box herself, so eager was she that it should speed on its way. 194

She went to her room with a lighter heart and the day ended triumphantly with her. She counted the good things that had come to her on her fingers. First, she had cheered Rita Stanford—that she was sure of. Next, she had not shown any ill feeling towards Rosamond—her visits in morning and afternoon proved that. And third, she had been received into the fellowship of the musical set in a way that set her dreaming of the hour when she, too, might take her place on the seat of the grand piano in the twilight and sing out what was in her heart. Then, she had conquered her reluctance to make the first overtures to Elinor, and she had discovered that the girls in the next room were going to be worth while.

That finished off one hand and she paused as she began on the other. What was it the Woods girl had said about Rosamond entertaining Madame Milano at luncheon last week? Patricia would have thought it a mistake a week ago, but now she believed Rosamond capable of forgetting to tell her such a momentous fact. 195

"She doesn't care for me at all any more," she thought, with a sort of slow contempt rising through the sadness that the memory had brought back to her.

"I don't believe she ever did care for me," she said, a few minutes later. "I think she only tolerated me because she thought that I must be going to have a wonderful voice since Milano recommended, but when she found that I was only a stupid beginner, and not worth bothering with, she forgot I was in existence except when I was in sight."

She had so loved and admired the sumptuous Rosamond and in spite of the break had felt so

little resentment that her feelings were now a surprise to her.

"I'm getting dreadfully cross-grained, I suppose," she said sadly, as she sat down again to write to Mrs. Spicer. "I quarreled with Elinor—of all people—and I've broken off with Rosamond. I must be growing horrid."

196

This dismal idea took full possession of her and she sat staring at the papers strewn on her table, seeing a tragic picture of herself grown desolate and lone in the long years wherein she lost, one by one, the friends who had once loved her. Mrs. Nat's puzzled face rose vividly before her as it had looked across the studio table, and she shook her head dolefully.

It was not often that Patricia had given way to such a mood, and if there had been anyone within reach to talk to, she would have shaken it off before it took full possession of her. But she was alone for the evening and it had free access. She actually believed that she was grown unlovable, and the conviction that her voice was not worth considering haunted her morbidly.

She had, without knowing it, a touch of grippe. Not enough to make her feel really ill, but merely sufficient to emphasize her dismal sensations into actual mental misery, and she lay awake half the night wondering mournfully why she had been allowed to leave the country and thrust herself among the talented and fortunate. She was really quite thorough in her distrust of herself.

197

In the morning she found a messenger with two notes, one from Elinor and one in Bruce's strong hand, waiting her as she went down to her late breakfast. Elinor's was very loving, ignoring the disagreeable Sunday night and telling her that they were suddenly called away on business of Bruce's, and that Judith, after spending a few days at Rockham with Mrs. Shelly, was to come to share her room at Artemis for the rest of the time. All had been arranged with Miss Ardsley by telephone while Patricia was yet in bed.

Patricia was so excited by this surprising news that she hurried off to Miss Ardsley's rooms with Bruce's unopened letter still in her hand.

Miss Ardsley explained that Elinor had called up about eight o'clock and as the Directress had been positive she had seen Patricia cross the courtyard on her way out just before that hour, she had told Elinor that her sister was not in.

Patricia had to go away without expressing her indignation at the mistake, and after she had read Bruce's short note in her own room, she was glad to remember that she had not sinned again.

198

"Small Sister Pat," the note ran. "I know it isn't time for the puncture you requested, but would it bother you if I asked when our own Miss Pat is coming back? We're mighty lonesome for her. Elinor is dropping some big tears while she thinks I am not looking, and I know it is because she misses her old chum. Judy is divided between the desire to go to her Mama Shelly's and her wish to find her jolly sister Pat. Do you think you could look her up and tell her we're all sure that she wants to see us as much as we want to see her?"

Patricia sat for a long time with the note in her hand, and then she put her golden head down on it and cried heartily.

Then she sat up, and her face showed that the mists were beginning to clear from that doleful future which had haunted her since last night.

"What a goose I've been, and what a perfect duck Bruce is," she said heartily and then laughed out loud at her zoological titles. "Oh, how I wish I'd had a chance to talk to Elinor. She couldn't have my letter by the time she left, and she must still think me horrid."

199

She rose and stood looking out of the window at the blue expanse above the housetops, with part of the smile still lingering on her pink lips. She knew that she had come back, as Bruce called it, and a delightful sense of relief stole over her.

"I'm so glad, glad," she whispered, clasping her hands tight against her breast. "I'll have a chance to show them that I'm really sorry for my silliness. I'll do something, I'll have something ready for them when they come back that will prove I'm done with sentimental nonsense now and for always."

She could not think what it should be, but she knew she could find out and she turned from the window with the old sunny expression on her face.

"I'll try to be unselfish, even though I am a failure," she said determinedly. "Bruce never guessed that it might be quite as hard for a failure to be unselfish as for a successful person. He's always been successful, thanks to Aunt Louise and his own splendid self."

200

The memory of her unknown aunt's secret disappointment came to her now with a throb of understanding love. The dark, brave face over the desk in the library at Greycroft rose vividly before her, and, as at other moments of need, courage and determination flowed from the serene eyes into Patricia's wistful ones.

"I'll bear my troubles, too," she whispered, smiling back at the vision. "I'll remember that I am your namesake."

201

CHAPTER XIV

CONSTANCE'S OTHER SIDE

Whatever Patricia did, she did thoroughly.

She had almost a week before Elinor's return, and she set about finding something to do that should prove her return to herself, and more even than that, for she wanted tremendously to be better and stronger than she had ever been.

The haunting sense of failure was with her, but she would not stop to listen to it. She practiced her exercises with the greatest care, she went to the concerts for which she had cards, and, remembering Madame Milano's song at the Filmore evening, she bought the music and learned the thing by heart. She was afraid this might not be strictly honorable, since Tancredi had forbidden her to sing songs, but she had such a strong conviction that she was already a failure that she hoped she might be pardoned this solace to herself.

202

"You're looking a lot gayer since you got settled," said Constance Fellows one afternoon as she sat in Patricia's room, mending the russet frock. It looked odd to see Constance with a needle, but she was deft with it.

"I guess I'm more used to being by myself," replied Patricia, not wishing to go into details. "I'd never been alone, you know, and it was strange at first."

Constance nodded, but her clear eyes showed she understood. As she went on with her sewing she said cheerfully:

"It *is* better to rub up against all sorts of people. You don't come to realize what living means till you've seen what the rest of them are up to. Cotton-wool isn't the environment to bring out beauty, after all."

Patricia smiled absently. "But all the pretty things are put in nice pink cotton-wool," she said, thinking of the jeweler's boxes in Rosamond's case.

"Ah, but that's when the pretty things are finished and done," cried Constance, dropping her work and leaning forward with fire in her eyes. "How about when they are being shaped? There are hammers there then, and fires, too, and they are battered into their beautiful shapes with cruel blows. My word, Patricia Kendall, can't you see it? It takes plenty of hammering and burning before it gets to the cotton-wool stage."

203

Patricia caught her earnestness. "The trees and flowers and skies aren't hammered into shape," she argued, with half a vision of what Constance meant.

"They are the result of hammering, perhaps," returned Constance quickly, "but that doesn't matter so much. They're the works of God, and that sort of thing can just grow, like a lovely disposition, but the things of earth have to be made into shape with rough hands. Look at the people you know. How many of the selfish, pampered ones amount to a row of pins? Can you honestly say that you know anyone who hasn't been the better for a little hammering?"

204

Patricia thought swiftly of Doris Leighton, of Mrs. Nat, and she shook her head.

"That's all that's the matter with the Fair Rosamond," Constance explained. "She's been in cotton-wool all her life, and it's going to rob her of her chance to give something to the world —"

She broke off abruptly, seeming to be much moved, and, rising with a disturbed air, walked up and down for a few minutes while Patricia tried to go on with her own darning as though nothing unusual had happened.

Constance dropped into her chair with a low laugh. "Don't mind my preaching, Miss Pat," she said without any suggestion of apology in her candid tone. "I always get so excited when I'm proclaiming human rights."

Patricia looked puzzled and she answered quickly: "Human rights—my rights to the bit of hammering that belongs to me. Auntie, you know, advocates cotton-wool so strongly that I suppose I'm a bit daft on my end of the argument."

Patricia had been silent, but she spoke slowly and with a light breaking on her face. "I believe it's true, Constance," she said earnestly. "I can see now that it's the only way. I was getting terribly spoiled in cotton-wool, and—" She stopped because she did not want to seem to complain of Rosamond. "I'm glad Miss Ardsley got this dear room for me," she ended brightly, "I've had such fun since I've been here."

205

She saw that Constance was not too much deceived, and to turn the talk she seized the first thing that came into her mind.

"Does your aunt still object to your living here?" she asked, and then was annoyed with herself for her own lack of tact, for she recalled that it was not Constance but Rosamond who had told her of the aunt's objections to Artemis Lodge.

Constance laughed easily. "She's coming around," she replied as though she were used to discussing her private affairs with Patricia. "She is so pleased with my altar-piece in All Saints

that she's ready to forgive me anything. Auntie is really awfully good."

206

Patricia was alight at once. "Your altar-piece, Constance?" she cried. "Oh, how splendid! When did you do it? Why didn't you tell me about it sooner? Where is it now?"

Constance laughed, yet she was deeply gratified, for she had been more drawn to Patricia than to any of the others. "It's in All Saints, of course, where it should be. You didn't think it was in the Bandbox or the Comique, did you?" she bantered. "Auntie paid for it, and so she's privileged to criticise, you know."

"Do let me see it," begged Patricia. "I haven't a thing to do this afternoon. Let's go and see it."

Constance demurred at first and then gave in. "The air will do us good, anyway," she said, "We've been cooped up here for an hour or more."

Patricia found the altar-piece a revelation of another side of Constance—a side she had not dreamed of, and she gave it the tribute of silence for a long five minutes.

207

Then she spoke very softly: "I know now why you believe in bearing the everyday toil and trouble of the world. It's because you've been painting that. Why, Constance, it's—it's—*triumphant*."

Constance was looking at the painting and she forgot she was not speaking to herself alone.

"And why not?" she said in a deep breath. "He didn't fear that poverty and pain would keep anyone out of the kingdom of gladness. It was what He was telling them all the time—those exclusive, rich men who wanted to get the secret of His serene life. It wasn't that He liked pain and poverty, but He wanted everyone to know that it was the fear of them that shut people out of the kingdom of gladness. Why shouldn't He look triumphant when He'd opened the door so wide?"

Patricia was too much stirred by this revelation of the depths of Constance's nature to speak, and they soon went out of the dim church into the sunlight of the avenue, with its roar of hungry life and surging energies.

208

"I think I'll run over to Auntie's now that we're so near," said Constance at the next corner. "You don't mind, do you?"

Patricia didn't in the least mind. She wanted to go for a walk in the Park and try to catch and put in order the whirling thoughts that pulsed through her. "I'll see you tonight after dinner," she promised.

The Park was full of people. The spring was in the air. Patricia felt strange sensations, stirring thoughts which Constance's picture had called into life.

"The Kingdom of Gladness," she repeated over and over again, making it a rhythmic march to keep step with. "The Kingdom of Gladness. And I thought Constance Fellows just a nice, clever, funny girl!"

She looked at the people on the walks and in the vehicles with a new eye. She wondered if they were putting in their probation for that kingdom and when she saw a pinched face or a shabby coat, she felt like crying out to them, "Oh, don't mind it very much, for it's the best way into the kingdom."

209

She was very much agitated and excited, and she felt she could not go back to the Lodge, where she had given a half promise to spend the five o'clock hour with Rosamond. She walked about for a long time and sat down on benches when her mood ebbed, starting up again with a shining face as her emotions got the better of her again.

She was sitting on a bench when she saw Mr. Long coming briskly along the bridle path on a beautiful bay horse. He did not see her, and she jumped up and ran over to the side of the path, holding up an eager hand to attract his attention.

He was off his horse in one moment and shaking hands with her the next.

"This is very jolly," he said heartily. "I didn't know you were in town or I'd have tried to look you up. Miss Merton told me when we were at the theater with the Filmores last night that your family had left town for a while."

Patricia explained, and Mr Long in his turn told her that he was only in for a brief stay. He needed a secretary, a sort of caretaker for his chicken books, he said, laughing, and it must be a female person, since he had determined to bring Danny home from school for good and all, and he felt that a woman-body was a crying necessity.

210

Patricia understood at once. "He wouldn't get on with Mrs. Jonas," she admitted with a smile. "Have you anyone yet?"

Mr. Long had not. He had seen dozens of them, but they were all either too young or too old or too stupid or too clever.

"It's going to be mighty hard to fit Danny and the hen accounts, too," he confessed. "He's so dead set on pretty people, and most of the pretty ones are stupid or conceited."

Patricia had a sudden thought that made her dimple. "Must she be very old?" she asked eagerly.

"Mrs. Jonas will chaperone the place as ever," replied Mr. Long. "She's needed mainly for Danny, if the truth must be told. I've got to try the mother act on him now. Poor kid, he's never had anything to look up to in that line."

211

"I know someone," said Patricia guardedly. "I can't tell you about her now, but if you'll come to the dance on Friday I'll show her to you and you can do the rest."

Mr. Long thought Friday was too far off, but Patricia was firm, and he ended by saying he'd come. They parted at the next entrance and Patricia hurried off to Artemis Lodge feeling much elated.

"I'll ask Doris about it in a roundabout way, so she'll say just what she thinks," she planned, and she was so eager to seek out Doris that she hurried through her dinner before Rosamond had begun on her first mouthful, excusing herself by saying that she had some business on hand that would not wait.

She found Doris in her room, trying to make up her accounts, and the process was evidently not very agreeable work, for she flung down the pen at Patricia's knock and slammed the covers of the book with unusual vigor. 212

"I never can bear to face that horrid book," she confessed with a little laugh. "I'm always spending more than I should and it makes me so ashamed of myself, when Mother needs so many things."

Patricia was finding it very easy. She had not much trouble in learning that Doris was in search of a more paying position. Her domestic science was only half a day's work and she needed more. Patricia thought it safe to hint at something that might be in sight if she came to the dance on Friday.

Doris had not intended going to the dance, since her gowns were rather shabby and she could not think of anything new, but on Patricia's insisting, she said she would go if she could be late. She had a lesson in French at the Settlement House—Patricia almost shook her head at the thought of Doris taking free lessons in anything until she recollected the Kingdom of Gladness—and she could not afford to miss it.

"I'll wait for you," Patricia promised. "I haven't any guests—or only someone who won't mind. Come over to my room for me, and we'll go down together." 213

Constance met her on her way to the Red Salon, where the girls often gathered after dinner for chat, the Blue Salon across the way being reserved for reception of visitors.

"The dance is going to be quite wonderfully fine," she told her with as eager interest as ever a girl showed in a party. "Auntie's coming and I'm going to have a splendid, gorgeous new dress. I've planned it all out since I made up my mind. I'll get the stuff tomorrow and have it made in a jiffy."

Patricia looked at her in some wonder, until she remembered that the kingdom Constance was trying to enter was one of gladness.

"Of course you want to have a good time," she said aloud. "What color is it to be?" meaning the dress.

"Yellow—goldy yellow," replied Constance deliciously. "And I'm going the whole length, gold slippers and all!"

Patricia beamed. "You'll look perfectly stunning," she said, and then she caught her breath. "Who's playing?" she asked, with a look toward the open door. 214

Constance listened. "That must be the little Polish countess," she replied. "No one else does it that way."

Patricia had a vision of a fascinating, elegant creature with sorrowful eyes and plenty of furs, and she gave a little cry of expectation.

"Come along. She's beginning the 'Papillion'," she cried. "And I simply can't miss it."

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CHAPTER XV

PATRICIA DECIDES TO MAKE THE BEST OF IT

"Oh!" said Patricia on the threshold.

"S-s-sh!" warned a number of restrained voices.

They smiled kindly at her as she stood in the doorway, though they plainly would not tolerate an interruption. Patricia had not meant to interrupt. She was only surprised.

The firelight played over the lounging figures of the girls who were grouped about the dim warm-colored room, lighting up a golden head or the gleam of some piece of polished furniture

or glass, picking out the faces of some of the intent listeners and flinging a ruddy shadow over others, flickering over the grand piano and the figure seated before it.

Patricia had cried out her "Oh" at the sight of this figure. It was so very different from her idea of what a countess—and a Polish one, at that—should be that it gave her quite a shock, and for the tiniest fraction of a second made her forget even the Grieg music. 216

The little woman at the piano was small and rather wrinkled, and was wearing an old-fashioned ulster which fitted her small form rather carelessly. The small sealskin cap on her drab hair did not even pretend to be a stylish one. It was rather worn, even in the kindly firelight, and gave an emphasis to the shabbiness of the whole figure.

Patricia sank down beside Rita Stanford and stared under cover of the fire-flicker. How disappointing some countesses were!

But she did not stare long. She soon forgot there was a shabby figure at the big piano, because she was seeing the butterfly soaring up and up in the sunshine, with the jewels glowing on his gorgeous wings, wings that were soon to be broken and trailing. She saw the pulsing of the broken wings, and felt the pity that was pulsing through the sunny world at this darkening tragedy. The wings pulsed slower and slower. The butterfly was dead! 217

Patricia found her eyes wet, and she heard the soft applause in a sort of daze—the music that melted her also always intoxicated her—and she sat without a word till the countess began again.

It was Schubert's Fantasia Impromptu this time, and there was absolute silence as it ended.

The little shabby countess gave them a moment for recovery, and then, whirling about on the stool, she said, with only a trace of accent:

"That is my farewell. Tomorrow I leave for the home-land."

There was a chorus of questions at this and that ended the music. Patricia enjoyed the humorous chatter of the experienced, happy-go-lucky countess, and she laughed over her accounts of her travels and privations while lecturing in the West and writing books at odd times, but she did not want to rub out the "Papillion" and she soon left the Red Salon and took her way to her own room, thinking of a number of things. 218

"She's had a hard time, too," she thought. "I suppose she'd never have played so if she hadn't known trouble and tragedy, too, perhaps. Oh, dear, it's very comforting when one is rather in low spirits and things have gone wrong, but it doesn't look half so attractive when there's fun ahead."

She shook her head and then laughed her rippling laugh at herself. "I'm getting too deep," she warned herself. "I've got to stay where I can touch bottom. Constance may go far ahead, but I've got to go slow or I'll be getting silly again on the other side."

She kept to this wise decision and whenever she found herself beginning to pose as a being enlightened through suffering she made a face at herself in the quaint mirror and ran away to do something "plain and practical" for someone.

And so the days sped and Judith came back from Rockham full of news and wondering greatly at the change in her dear Miss Pat. 219

"You're awfully meek now, aren't you?" she asked her suddenly, after Judith's little trunk had been unpacked and the things stowed in the most convenient drawers. "You used to be nice, but you didn't give up to younger persons like you do now."

Patricia started to say that she had learned a great lesson, but she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror, and she said instead that she was treating Judith as a guest now, and so she had to be polite.

Judith was only half convinced. She had not been studying people's faces and searching for meanings in their expressions all these months for nothing. The tales about Rockham alone would have sharpened her to that extent.

"You're different," she said positively. "And I don't know whether I like you better or not. You seem too good to be true, somehow."

Patricia's derisive laughter only made her more emphatic. "You aren't half so gay as you were, and you practice as though you were doing a lesson instead of because you couldn't help it, like you used to," she declared. "You're nice to that gorgeous Rosamond Merton and you let her wipe her feet on you every time you go in there. I've seen how meek you are. If it wasn't you," she said with a pucker in her brow, "I'd think you were up to something. Why don't you sing like you used to?" 220

Patricia said that she had been at a song, but it was not to be known, and she made Judith promise not to tell Constance or anyone else at home before she would sit down at the shining piano Bruce had got a musical friend to select for her, and sang the song through to its end.

Judith still looked puzzled. "It's lovely, of course. Your voice always is," she said loyally. "But somehow it doesn't *ring*. The glad sound has gone out of it. That's it!"

Patricia had been knowing it herself ever since she had realized that Tancredi was only keeping her for friendship's sake, and it had been almost too much to bear alone. Without thinking, she blurted it out. 221

"I can't really sing, after all, Ju," she told her passionately. "Tancredi is only keeping me on for this quarter and then she'll let me down."

Judith was aghast, but she kept her head. "When did she tell you?" she demanded sharply.

"She hasn't just exactly told me in words," confessed Patricia. "But she's shown me very clearly. And Madame Milano hasn't ever asked to see me again, though I know she's seen Rosamond twice since I went to the 'Hour' at her hotel. If I hadn't been with Bruce and Elinor to hear her in opera every time she sang, I'd never known she was in New York at all."

Judith was very white and still. At last she said with conviction, "I think you're making a mistake, Miss Pat. I don't believe it's true that you aren't going to be a success. You know how you tried and tried to make yourself ready and fit for the music, and I don't believe that all that hard work is going to be wasted."

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Patricia smiled with the new knowledge that had so recently come to her. "Oh, Judy dear, you are too young to understand," she said with serene satisfaction; "but it will not be wasted. One must suffer to grow glad."

Judith opened her eyes. "Now I know you're queer," she declared with a wag of her head that made her uneven mane quiver. "You didn't use to talk such stuff."

Patricia wanted to tell her it wasn't stuff, but somehow she could not find the right words to explain her feelings, and so she left it go, feeling very old and wise indeed beside the crude, inexperienced Judith.

They had a very good time together, nevertheless, and Judith made friends with the girls in a way that pleased and surprised Patricia. "That kid sister of yours is a wonder," said the slangy ones, and the others declared that Judith was a dear. Altogether, Patricia had never enjoyed Judith's company so much.

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"I'm sorry you can't come to the dance," she told her with regret, but Judith did not care in the least, she said. She was going to spend the night with Rita Stanford, with whom she had struck up a close friendship—the first that Patricia had known her to make.

She seemed much absorbed in Rita. She took walks with her while Patricia was at her lesson or otherwise occupied, and she went to afternoon service with her. She was so much with Rita when not with Patricia that it was a surprise to Patricia to see her coming in the afternoon of the dance entirely alone and wearing a rapturous expression. She said she had been doing an errand and Patricia was too much occupied with the finishing touches to her white net—she was putting the dearest bunches of apple blossoms at odd places on the skirt and waist—to be too inquisitive.

She noticed that Judith hung about her, seeming to be trying to make up her mind to say something, but she did not stop to ask what it was, as she supposed it merely a trifling comment or criticism on her dress.

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She sent Judith over to Constance's room to borrow a spool of pink silk and then forgot her in the delightful task of deciding whether the apple blossoms ought to go on the sleeves or not.

Judith came back with the spool and a yellow envelope which she had signed for. "That's what made me so long," she explained, but Patricia had hardly missed her.

The telegram was from Elinor. They were coming back and would be at the dance. "Coming home tonight. Save a dance for Bruce. Love. Elinor."

Patricia was wild with delight. "Oh, Judy, won't it be fine?" she cried with quite her old gay laugh. "I'm so glad they're coming."

But before Judith could add her rejoicings the bright look had died into a quieter expression and Patricia said, "I was forgetting that you weren't going to be there. I wish, oh, I wish you could go."

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"Well, I can't and there's an end of it," said Judith calmly. "And I hear Rita beginning to get things ready. We're going to make fudge, so I'll have to be off."

She was at the door before she remembered. "Constance told me she'd stop on her way down for you if you changed your mind about going late," she said briskly. "She wants you to see her dress, anyway, before anything happens to it. She says she's sure to wreck it. She's so used to good tough stuff that she'll walk right through this one."

Patricia nodded brightly and Judith hurried off across the hall, where Rita's welcome reached Patricia's ears. "Dear old Ju," she thought fondly. "She's always doing the right thing. She's such a comfort."

Then she smiled to herself at Constance's message. "It's good of her to come away over here, when the ball-room is so near her," she said gratefully. "I'll be glad to see her dress. She's been so secret about it."

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Her face grew wistful as she thought of the dance. "I'll have a good time, I suppose," she said slowly. "Rosamond will sing, and that will make me remember I'm a failure. But Bruce and Elinor and Constance will be there, and I can have the fun of showing Doris to Mr. Long without her knowing it."

This brought the light into her eyes again, and she held up her golden head very bravely.

"I'll have a good time," she said again, with a nod at the mirror. "I may be a failure as a singer,

CHAPTER XVI

THE DOOR OPENS AGAIN

Patricia had got into her apple-blossom dress and had smiled at herself with a good deal of real satisfaction.

"You do look very nice," she said to the girl in the mirror. "If you were only a little bit less addicted to yourself, my child, you'd not be half bad. That's a thing you're going to get over, though, so I won't scold you tonight about it."

She shut off the light and sat down by the window to watch the first arrivals. The night was warm, even for spring, and the window was open.

"It's just like being at the play," she told herself, smiling into the warm darkness. "I'm glad I had to wait for Doris."

The courtyard was light with torches and the entrance was ablaze with torches and the windows across the quadrangle she could see figures moving to and fro, shadows fell on the curtained oblongs and inside the open ones she saw girls who were late in dressing getting frantically ready, others who were putting on their gloves, and still others with their guests even making ready to go down to the ball-room, which was the transformed tea-room not to be seen from Patricia's point of vantage.

Maids came and went across the courtyard. The first guests came in a straggling fashion, and then suddenly everyone seemed to be rushing in at once. Patricia laughed as she recognized the tall, lanky figure of Bob Wetherill, whose attachment to Rosamond Merton was the bane of that young lady's life. Then she gave a little cry. She had recognized Bruce and Elinor.

She flew down to them for a rapturous greeting and though the courtyard was filled with hurrying people she hugged both of them heartily, dropping some tears of real delight on her own apple blossoms.

"I'll be down later," she told them. "I'm waiting for Doris Leighton. Do look after Mr. Long if he comes in before I do, and for goodness sake tell him not to breathe a word about what I was talking to him about in the Park the other day."

"Mysteries, and with your late rival in the hen-yard?" cried Bruce with feigned concern. "I'll have to look into this later, Miss Pat, and see what you've been up to behind our backs."

"You'll find out later, I hope," laughed Patricia, giving Elinor another squeeze before she ran off laughing at the thought of her conspiracy with Mr. Long coming under Bruce's notice in this unexpected way.

"I had to tell him," she thought, as she hurried back to her post. "He might have found it out before it came to anything and then I'd have felt so silly."

As she sat down again she thought she heard the door open and she asked, "Is that you, Constance?"

It was Judith with her kimono over her nightdress and her bare feet poked into her slippers. She came over and cuddled down beside Patricia.

"Don't send me back right away, please. I have something to tell you, Miss Pat," she said earnestly, and Patricia made room for her on the wide seat.

"What is it, Judy-pudy?" she asked kindly. "Bad dreams?"

Judith gave a little sound that seemed to mean satisfaction with the question. "Oh, no, not bad dreams," she answered happily, cuddling closer. "Not bad dreams. Very pleasant ones. About you, Patricia."

Patricia patted her. "Tell me," she said, not because she wanted to hear the dream, but to please Judith.

"I dreamed," began Judith, sitting up to look earnestly in Patricia's face in the dim light reflected from the courtyard. "I dreamed that you were unhappy and it was because you thought that you would never be a real singer."

Patricia interrupted her with a little laugh. "Sounds perilously like wide-awake news to me, Ju," she said lightly, determined to conquer the idea which possessed her small sister that she was unhappy over her discovery of failure. "We've put that on the shelf long ago, you and I."

Judith went on, scanning her face. "I dreamed that you cried about it when no one saw you and that you felt you'd never be happy again. Now don't say 'Stuff,' for it's true. And I couldn't bear it, so I thought and thought and then I went out and walked straight down to Tancredi's and I asked for her, and found her in. She was in the music-room and I went in and said, 'I am Judith Kendall, and I've come to ask about my sister.'"

231

"Good little Ju," said Patricia as she took breath. "I believe you could really have done it."

It was rather dim to read expressions, but she thought a strange look flitted across the eager face that was staring so hard at her. "You mustn't take it so seriously, Judy," she said, but Judith went on.

"I've come to see if it's true that she'll never be a great singer and I know you'll tell me," I said to Madame Tancredi, and she just put her arm about me and kissed me quite hard."

"That's what she would have done. How did you guess it?" cried Patricia.

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"And she said very seriously, 'Your sister, my dear, is going to be the greatest singer I have ever taught, if she keeps on as she has begun, or if some stupid silly one doesn't take her from the only right method.'"

Patricia felt a surge of agonizing regret for all the bright hopes that she had lost forever, but she tried to laugh down into Judith's eager face.

"That sounds exactly like Tancredi," she declared. "How strange you should dream it so truly."

"It sounds true, doesn't it?" persisted Judith. "Should you be very cross with me if it weren't all a dream, Miss Pat?"

Patricia's heart stopped beating for a moment and then it leaped to her throat.

"What do you mean, Judith?" she called out, clutching her tightly by the shoulders. "What are you trying to tell me?"

"Ow! you hurt!" returned Judith, wriggling, and then she responded to the agony of appeal in Patricia's big gray eyes. "It isn't a dream. It's true," she said. "I went this afternoon."

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Patricia could not take it in for a while. She had to question Judith again and again before she could accept this gift from the dark heavens.

"Are you sure?" she asked over and over until Judith became impatient.

"I may be only fourteen and a half and very small for my age," she said with withering dignity, "but I surely know what happened just this afternoon. I'm going back to bed now, and you can believe me or not just as you please," and in spite of Patricia's protest, she stalked away and slammed the door behind her—a very unusual thing for Judith.

Patricia sat by the window in a trance of delight. The future glowed with all its old alluring colors and new ones were shining out every time she looked ahead. She was to be a singer after all. What did anything else matter?

Suddenly she laughed aloud and jumping up she ran to the mirror and snapped on the light to make a radiant face at the girl in the frame.

"We'll try to put up with being a failure as a martyr, won't we, my dear?" she said breathlessly. "Oh, how hard we'll try not to grow too pleased with ourselves now! Just remind me about it when I'm getting top-lofty, will you, please? I'm afraid I'll forget to be meek."

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"What's that you're talking about?" asked Constance's voice, and Patricia turned to see her standing smiling in the doorway.

"Oh, oh, you lovely thing!" she cried in instant approval. "Why, I'd never known you in that heavenly rig."

"Thanks for the tactful way you pay tribute to my frock," replied Constance smoothly. "It is rather nice, so I forgive you on the spot."

"Nice?" exclaimed Patricia with scorn for the word. "Nice! It's splendid, gorgeous, *transcendent*. Nice, indeed! Turn around and let me drink you in."

Constance turned. The dress was of dull gold-colored net with great flowers about its hem wrought into the net with gold thread and the bodice was one great gold flower with trailing net for sleeves. Gold bands held down Constance's dark hair, and the simplicity of the whole made it suitable.

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"I think I shall stay here and look at myself," she said with quaint gravity. "It's been so long since I've had a real whole dress that I fear it has turned my head. I'll be asking everybody what they think of it if I go down."

Patricia pushed her out the door. "They'll tell you without asking," she promised. "I wonder what Rosamond will say when she sees you."

At that Constance came back into the room and closed the door.

"Rosamond won't be here, after all," she said with a little laugh. "She sent word to her father to do the polite thing to Madame Milano when she came to sing in Boston, and her father sent a special car down for Rosamond to take Milano up to the Hub. She's on her way now. That's going some, isn't it?"

She evidently wanted to break the news to Patricia before she learned from others, and she

seemed surprised at Patricia's easy acceptance of it.

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"You're getting to be a wise child," she said with an approving nod. "You know that it isn't always the highest flier that gets there the soonest. Keep smiling, my dear, and it won't hurt half so much."

Patricia did smile, not so much at the slang as at the friendly spirit which prompted it. "It doesn't hurt at all now," she answered, truthfully, and then she told Constance of Judith's visit.

Constance was delighted. "Plucky Judith!" she cried. "Lucky Miss Pat. You're about the happiest girl in the world just now, aren't you?"

"Just about," Patricia confessed.

"I'm not so wretched either," said Constance with a whirl of her golden draperies. "I've come out of the woods myself. Auntie is so pleased with my altar-piece that she's giving in at last. I'm to go home next week and I can go to night life or anything else I please. She considers me safe since I could paint that picture. Funny, isn't it, that she couldn't have known me for herself?"

Patricia congratulated her with great sincerity. "I'll miss you terribly, but I'm glad for your sake," she said warmly. "You really need someone to look after you."

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Constance pretended to be indignant. "After all the mending I've done in your presence, too!" she cried reproachfully. "I'll not stay to be maligned like that."

She stopped at the door to add joyfully, "Do come down soon. I want you to meet Auntie," and she then turned again to go, but again halted.

"Hello, here's the Lodge beauty in all her loveliness," she said, welcoming Doris Leighton with a cordial handshake. "Come, Doris, let's grab the future prima donna and tote her to the ball-room. I don't believe she'll ever get there by herself."

Doris was lovely, even though her dress was not so radiant as Constance's nor so fresh as Patricia's, and her serene face shone at the news which Constance poured out to her on the way down. She could rejoice in other people's good fortune, Patricia saw and, remembering the Doris Leighton of the Academy days, marveled at her calm unselfishness.

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"Do come over and say how-do-you-do to Elinor and Bruce," she begged, catching sight of them across the room. "I want you to meet Mr. Long who is with them, Doris."

Constance chuckled. "Talk about clothes bringing one into the limelight," she commented. "Here I am all done up beautifully and I'm passed over for a mere beauty. I won't come and meet your snippy Mr. Long, Miss Pat. I know him, anyway, and he engaged a couple of dances with me when I met him in the corridor going over to your room. I'll find Auntie, and wait for you, when you're through with your Longs and such."

It was delightful to find herself again in the bright world of her hopes again, and even the dullest place would have seemed radiant to Patricia that night, but the ball-room with its flowers and music, with its pretty girls and agreeable men, remained in her memory as a sort of Olympian festivity, part dream, part reality, long after she had forgotten the names of the men Bruce brought for her to dance with.

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She had introduced Mr. Long to Doris and left her with him and Elinor as she went off to dance with Bruce. "I think he'll like her," she said, with a backward glance, and when Bruce demanded an explanation she told him all about it.

"Do you think it a good plan?" she asked rather anxiously. Bruce's good opinion meant much to her always.

"Fine," he replied with such heartiness that she feared he was joking. A glance at his serious face convinced her of her mistake.

"It'll be the very place for Doris," he said, "Mrs. Jonas will be quite devoted to her in her way, and Danny will love her at sight. Long, of course, will have to put up with her for the sake of the others," he added with a twinkle.

Patricia pretended not to understand, though Rosamond Merton's words about the "next girl" came back to her. "I'm not going to have Doris laughed about," she said warmly. "You know she's the dearest girl we know."

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"Outside the family, I believe she does stand pretty high," admitted Bruce, with a smile down into his partner's eyes. "Small Sister Pat, may I tell you how glad I am?" he asked in a lower tone.

Patricia thought he meant about Tancredi's verdict, and she beamed on him. "It's too splendid, isn't it?" she exulted, and then he stared and had to be told.

He carried her back to Elinor and there he scolded her well for ever doubting that they would have allowed her to go on if there had not been definite promise in her.

"Tancredi told me herself when I went to see her about you that she would take no one, however recommended, unless they were going to make good," he said sternly. "You unbelieving little wretch, what right had you to make yourself miserable without telling us about it?"

Elinor drew her closer as she rose to meet Mr. Long, who had left Doris Leighton with Constance's aunt and was coming to claim her for the next dance.

"Never mind, Pat dear," she said with her brightest look of love. "It's all come out splendidly and

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you've learned how much you really care for it. That's something, you know."

Mr. Long nodded at Patricia as he addressed Elinor. "I am sorry to be late for my dance," he said, with significant emphasis; "but I was making plans with my new secretary and the time passed quickly."

Elinor did not understand that it was Doris he was speaking of and she smiled her acquiescence and went gracefully out on the floor.

Bruce sat down in her vacant chair next to Patricia. "And now your mind is at rest about your friend's future," he said with his nicest smile, "let's talk about your own."

Patricia laid an eager hand on his arm. "Oh, Bruce dear, we won't have time," she bubbled. "It's going to be so long till I have a future. I have to study for ages and ages, and, you know, something might, *might* happen to me. Don't let's plan too far ahead. I'm just looking forward to finishing up the spring here at Artemis Lodge, studying with Tancredi, and then I'll be ready to go out to dear old Greycroft with the rest of you to see the summer through. What's behind that I'd rather not think about just now. I'm so glad, glad, *glad* to come back to the dear hopes, after I thought I'd lost them!"

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Bruce smiled again at her flushed face. "You've come back with something in your hands, Miss Pat," he said with kindly gravity. "I think I see unselfishness and courage in them now."

And as Patricia's eyes filled with grateful tears, he rose, holding out a hand to her.

"Come and see Constance's aunt," he invited. "We've no right to be gossiping here all night."

Patricia sprang up with her eyes alight. "It's all come out right after all," she whispered to herself. "Oh, how happy I am, and how hard I'll try to study. I won't mind waiting a long, long time for the future. I am so glad, glad, *glad* that it's there!"

As she followed Bruce across the room her face was glowing with rosy hope. She whispered to herself, "Some day I shall sing in the light, too. And tomorrow I shall sing the little song Milano sang, and Judy shall tell me that the ring has come back to it."

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