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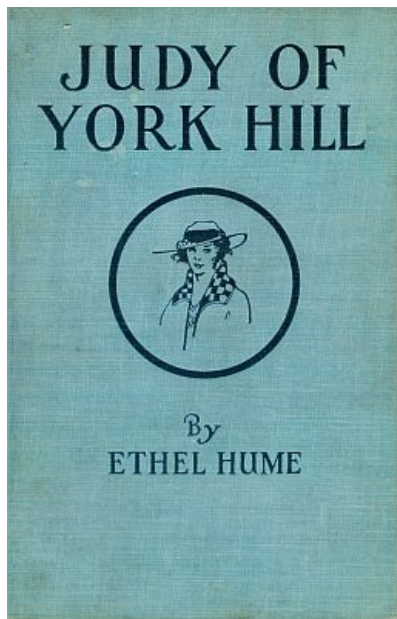
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**PILLOWS WERE SORTED
OUT, AND NANCY WITH THE
TINY LIGHT LED THE WAY**
([page 59](#))

Judy of York Hill

BY

ETHEL HUME

With Illustrations by
HAROLD CUE



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AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
TO YOU WHO IN
THE OLD SCHOOL LEARNED

*"To set the cause above renown,
To love the game beyond the prize,
To honour, while you strike him down,
The foe that comes with fearless eyes;
To count the life of battle good,
And dear the land that gave you birth,
And dearer yet the brotherhood
That binds the brave of all the earth.*

.

*To-day and here the fight's begun
Of the great fellowship you're free;
Henceforth the School and you are one,
And what You are, the race shall be."*

HENRY NEWBOLT

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JUDY OF YORK HILL

[3]

CHAPTER I

BEGINNINGS

"Yes, we're nearly in," said Uncle Tom, glancing out at the flying landscape. "There's the lake, and here comes the porter to stir up the dust."

Judith's heart beat a little more quickly. Toronto and York Hill School had been the centre of her thoughts for months past, and now she was almost there and a new life ahead of her!

"I suppose you've read your 'Tom Brown,' Judy, eh? 'Like young bears with all your troubles to come,'" quoted Uncle Tom as he left her a few minutes later with Aunt Nell who had come to the station to meet them. "Can't help having trouble, I'm afraid, but when you're going to be expelled for not having solved your geometry problem, just drown your grief in an ice-cream soda in the tuck shop"—and he dexterously inserted a crisp bank-note into Judith's bag.

"Don't mind him, Judy, darling, he's always teasing. We'll do our shopping first of all. I've arranged for a fitting at Madame's for you." [4]

"Mother and Daddy sent their love," said Judith a little soberly as they got into the waiting motor. "Yes, I think Mother seemed a little better—and she's just sure that Florida will make her perfectly well."

Her lips quivered ever so slightly as she remembered how every hour was taking her mother farther away from her.

But Aunt Nell, who had promised her sister to finish Judith's shopping, made haste to introduce the fascinating question as to whether taffeta or crêpe would be best for the afternoon frock, and how many sweater coats would she need.

They spent a busy and a delightful morning. Who doesn't like to get a new outfit? And then, after luncheon at Aunt Nell's club, they motored out to York, for they had an appointment with the Head Mistress at three o'clock.

"Just around this curve and then we can see the School—there!" said Aunt Nell, and Judith leaned forward, her eyes shining with excitement.

"Blessed old York! I can't have quite the same affection, of course, for these new buildings as I had for the old School in town—York Ladies' College it was then; but this certainly is handsomer, and we've still got Miss Meredith and some of the old staff, so it's the same York." [5]

Judith looked eagerly at the great pile of grey stone vine-clad buildings.

"That's the main school with the bell-tower," continued Aunt Nell in her character of guide. "The classrooms and offices are there, the two wings are East and West Houses, farther to the north—there, you see—is North House, and here is South where you are to be. That's Miss Meredith's house over there by the maple trees, and back of the main school are the gymnasium and the tennis courts. I hope you've brought your tennis racquet; you'll get excellent practice."

Aunt Nell paused for a moment, and then she laughed a little ruefully.

"I'd love to give you a bit of advice or guidance that would help, Judy; but honestly I don't know how to do it. Fathers and uncles in the school stories always seem to know what to say. I do know that you're going to have a splendid time—I wish I were sixteen again and my first year at York before me." Aunt Nell looked reminiscent for a moment, and then added, "One thing—York is going to help you to grow; and if I didn't feel rather like a very heavy uncle who was being [6]

listened to for the tip he was to bestow, I'd conclude by quoting from 'Hamlet'—yes, I will—it's the soundest piece of advice I know.

'To thine own self be true,
And it shall follow as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.'

There, that's my last will and testament. York is going to show you how to be true to the best that's in you; perhaps the girls will teach you as much as the staff will—you've got some very important things to learn from them."

Judith looked politely astonished, but not very deeply interested. Fancy having to listen to "Hamlet" when a perfectly fascinating new world lay just a few yards away! But Aunt Nell really was a dear—that new blue taffeta was going to be stunning.

Judith had dreaded a little the interview with Miss Meredith; she was sure that the Head of this great School must be an awe-inspiring person, stern and somewhat like a judge. But Miss Meredith's welcome was so warm and gracious that Judith felt surprisingly at her ease. She was conscious of a dignified presence, kind yet keen blue eyes, a beautiful, low-pitched voice, and a personality, which, even in that first short interview, Judith recognized as strong and powerful. [7]

Judith's course of study was discussed, and then a charming-looking girl—who was apparently waiting in the corridor for the purpose—was summoned and introduced as Nancy Nairn, a classmate, and member of the same house.

They made way for another newcomer and her mother, and the moment Judith had dreaded was come. She kept Aunt Nell a few minutes in the hall sending messages to Doris and Bobby and Uncle Tom, and a miserable aching lump rose in her throat, though she swallowed hard.

"Head up, honey," whispered Aunt Nell, holding Judith's hands firmly. "Ask Miss Marlowe to let you 'phone me if you need anything, and on Friday I'll come for you. What a lot you'll have to tell me!"

For one desperate instant Judith felt that she must follow her or else let the wretched lump, which was growing larger and larger, compel her to tears, but there at her elbow was Nancy whose blue eyes were dancing and who apparently had no sympathy for tears. [8]

"Let's go over to South and see about your room," she began. "Do you know any one here?"

Judith shook her head.

"Oh, well, you'll soon know heaps. What a perfectly sweet bag," she added tactfully, surveying Judith's beaded treasure from Paris. "Do let me see it."

Judith wondered if she could speak, but Nancy didn't wait. Her soldier brother had brought her a bag from Liberty's. Would Judith come and see it? She did hope Judith's room was near hers; at least hers was not a room, but a cubicle. Judith's eyes questioned. Cubicle had to be explained as a room with low walls about six feet high, such a friendly place to live in, "five or six of us in a row and we're never lonely," finished Nancy; "but then no one is lonely at York."

By this time they had crossed by a cloister to South House and were standing at the House Mistress's door. [9]

"Miss Marlowe must be a very popular person," thought Judith. Outside the green baize door was a chattering mob of girls, all apparently talking at the top of their voices. Indeed, it seemed to Judith that they were screaming.

"Nancy, *darling!*" cried one, and Nancy was literally dragged from Judith by several impetuous young persons who all talked at once.

"Glorious time . . . Did you?" . . . "Temagami" . . . "camped out for three weeks" . . . "Indian guides" . . . "*Such* diving" . . . "Heavenly time" . . . "Murray Bay" . . .

Then a louder voice—

"Miss Marlowe wants Peggy Forrest."

"Here, Piggy, hurry along"—and a fat girl was propelled through the crowd.

"Jane, my dear, I thought you were never coming," heralded a new arrival.

"Miss Marlowe is a brick; we are to have thirty-three."

Squeals of delight and the retreat of three inseparables.

Judith began to feel that she would drown amidst all the noise, but Nancy had a tight grip of her arm again, and at last it was her turn at the door. [10]

Judith never lost that first picture of Miss Marlowe in her study, a pleasant, sun-flooded room, low bookcases, the gleam of brass, colorful pictures, a cosy fire, and Miss Marlowe herself, grey-eyed, ruddy-haired, and low-voiced. The quiet voice began to work a magic, and after a few minutes' chat Judith felt less like a lost soul and more like a normal girl again. Then Nancy was summoned from without.

"Judith is to be in number twenty-five, Nancy; will you take her up and see that she is settled? Her trunk is there already; it came this morning. You can be very busy at once, Judith"—and Miss Marlowe's smile was friendly and comforting.

Nancy squeezed Judith's hand impulsively as they left the room to make way for other girls.

"Twenty-five! I *am* glad you are in our set of cubicles."

Twenty-five proved to be the tiniest room Judith had ever seen, more like a ship's cabin than a room, she thought, surveying her new abode with disfavour. A couch-bed, writing-desk and bookcase, a bureau, a wicker chair—how was there room for them all? And how dreadful to have only half a wall—well, three quarters of a wall between you and your neighbour! [11]

There were five of these little cubicles in a row, she saw; then a closed door evidently opening into a bedroom at the end, and the six rooms had their own hall which was closed off from the main corridor by a big door.

Judith unlocked her trunk and began to unpack her treasures. Wherever was the clothes-closet? Surely there was one?

In a few moments Nancy's voice was heard again—

"Come and see my new evening frock before I put it away."

Judith began to realize the advantages of a cubicle. How nice to be able to talk to one's neighbours in this friendly fashion—and a new frock! Judith adored clothes, and she was soon admiring Nancy's pet frock.

The cupboard was discovered, one of a row in the hall, and the two spent a happy hour, unpacking.

Nancy explained the use of the shelf on the inside of the cupboard door to hold toilet articles, and pointed out the towel bars and a wooden locker for hats on the cupboard shelf. [12]

"It's great luck," said Nancy, "to have our trunks up so soon; we can get our things put away before the others come, and then we'll have plenty of time for visiting."

"I wonder who is coming to the other rooms! I know Josephine Burley is trying to get into this set of cubicles, but Miss Marlowe has her own ideas about which rooms we're to have."

"You'll love Miss Marlowe. She's a dear—strict, you know, but just—and she helps with the plays—she can act anything. Aren't you glad you're in South? Of *course* South is the crack house! We won the basket-ball cup last year and our captain is School Captain this year."

While they talked, they finished their unpacking, and Judith, who was naturally very orderly, soon had everything in its place. Her mother's parting gift had been couch-cover, cushions, and hangings for the new room—homespun of a lovely deep blue for cover and cushions, and a delightful rosy chintz for hangings.

Judith was eager to see how her room would look and worked quickly and deftly. She was hanging her curtains when she heard excited voices in the corridor, then a banging of doors and screams of delight as the newcomers found Nancy. [13]

"Good work, Nancy," said some one in a gruff voice. "How did you do it? I never thought Miss Marlowe would let us three be together again."

"My blameless character, Miss Josephine Burley, did the trick," retorted Nancy. "I pointed out to Miss Marlowe the good influence living with me would have on a reprobate like you."

"Reprobate! I like that," said the owner of the deep, boyish voice, and sounds of scuffling feet, the creaking of the bed, and bursts of laughter proclaimed a tussle.

Nancy apparently had the worst of it, and she was sat upon literally and heavily and then fed with chocolates.

Scraps of conversation floated over the walls:

"Rosamond's in thirty-seven—very, very mad is Rosamond. Hope we'll have Pat as prefect."

"No such luck. Pat is in number ten."

"There's a new girl in twenty-five"—this from Nancy in a lowered voice. [14]

In a moment there was a knock at the door and Judith was introduced to the owner of the deep voice, Josephine Burley, and her satellite, Jane Fenton.

"Why, you've got your room fixed already," said Josephine admiringly. "Somebody's been working hard! Look at her lovely curtains! I wish I'd had rose now, instead of yellow."

"'T wouldn't have made a speck of difference, Jo, and you know it," commented Jane with a wicked twinkle. "You know you say you were made untidy, and untidy you'll stay."

"I promised Miss Marlowe I'd reform. I'm not going to forget anything, and I'm going to get a *beautiful* record for my room, and my hair and clothes are going to be so irreproachable that Miss Watson will have nothing to do but create masterpieces all term."

"Are we going to have Miss Marlowe for English, by the way?" asked Jane. "I hope so. And is Eleanor here yet? I've got to see her about a new basket-ball."

"I never saw three girls so different," thought Judith as she sat eating chocolates and listening to School gossip. "Nancy's much the prettiest—I love gold hair, and she has such aristocratic hands and feet—she's lovely—I do hope we'll be friends. Josephine's almost rough—and what an untidy mop of hair! I wonder if her eyes are brown—she shuts them up so tight when she laughs I can't see—and she seems to be laughing most of the time. She's awfully big—I don't think I'd like to be quite so tall. Jane's funny—she's almost square—fair and solid—and how straight her hair is; she's got a wicked grin—she's a monkey, I do believe."

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The dressing-bell rang before the three friends had caught up on the latest news, but thanks to the low walls conversation could proceed even while they dressed. Nancy remembered to ask Judith if she needed any help with dome fasteners, and then they went down to the dining-room together.

The tables were laid for six, each headed by a sixth-form girl.

"At dinner we usually have a teacher at each table," explained Nancy, "but this being first night the staff are by themselves."

Judith was introduced to the prefect, Esther Harriman, a tall, black-haired girl who enquired at once what games Judith played, and learning that she preferred tennis assured her that she could have a game the next day.

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Nancy continued to point out notables: the brown-haired prefect at the next table with the frank, boyish look was Eleanor Ormsby, the Captain of the School, and next to her was Rosamond

Esther interrupted them in order to introduce a newcomer who had arrived late, evidently just from a journey.

"This is Sally May Forsythe, Nancy, from Richmond, Virginia, and she's going to be in your set of cubicles, Miss Marlowe says."

Sally May was almost as pretty as Nancy, Judith decided, but not quite, though her eyes were big and brown, and her soft Southern voice wholly charming.

"We're to go back to Miss Marlowe's room so she can talk over your schedule of lessons with you," announced Nancy as they left the dining-room, "and then we'll go over to the gymnasium."

"Gymnasium?" gasped Judith.

"Oh, just for a dance," said Nancy, "It'll be good fun. Wait for me in the corridor outside Miss Marlowe's room."

It *was* good fun, Judith decided a little later as she had her first dance with Nancy, and then with Sally May—but bewildering. There had been only about fifty girls in the dining-room at South, and even there she had been confused by the number of voices, but here the whole School, some two hundred girls, were gathered, and there was a perfect Babel of sound.

[17]

Nancy piloted them back to South, and as Sally May's luggage had not come she was fitted out with what she needed. Nancy went to the housekeeper's room for soap and a toothbrush—Mrs. Bronson kept a supply for such emergencies; Josephine donated her best crêpe nightie—in which Sally May was presently to look quite lost, so large was it; and Judith got out her newest and prettiest kimono.

"You'll feel as if you'd been here all your life by the time you get all these and my old bath slippers on," said Jane saucily. "Come into my room as soon as you're arrayed in all this glory—there's a little cake left and I'm going to do my best to find some ginger-ale."

Judith was brushing out her pretty brown hair and looking rather solemnly at her reflection in the mirror when shrieks of delight testified to the arrival of some one, who, to judge by the commotion, must be very popular.

[18]

"Cathy, you darling, are you *really* to be ours? What precious luck!—Josephine and Jane, and—yes—two new girls—Judith Benson in twenty-five and Sally May Forsythe in twenty-one."

There was a knock at the door and a clear voice said, "May I come in?"

Judith opened her door and straightway lost her heart when the newcomer smiled a welcome. Catherine was adored by every beauty-loving girl in the School, for she had beauty of a rare type—a slender, graceful body, a well-set little head crowned with a big braid of softly waving dark brown hair, and haunting, black-lashed Irish blue eyes.

"Isn't she simply lovely?" whispered Nancy after Catherine had gone to her own room. "And she's just as good as she looks. Oh, goody, I'm *so* glad she's our prefect!"

Miss Marlowe put her head in the door to say good-night just before the "Lights out" bell rang, and then Judith was at last alone. She was bewildered by the mass of new impressions; the twinkling of the trainman's lanterns as she looked out of her berth in the early morning; the cold, chilly touch of homesickness when she followed the porter out of the Pullman; Aunt Nell's

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welcome; the exciting shopping; the first glimpse of the school set high on the hill; Aunt Nell's little sermon; Nancy's merry eyes; the Babel of voices in the gymnasium; Catherine Ellison's beautiful face; her mother's proud good-bye, "I can trust you, Judy, darling—"

Suddenly Judith realized that Mother and Daddy were many hundreds of miles away, that Aunt Nell had gone, and that she was alone, alone with these hundreds of strangers. The thought terrified her: the ache in her throat grew intolerable: she would have to sob and disgrace herself.

There was a rustling of paper on the other side of the partition, and then—

"Catch," said Josephine in a hoarse whisper, and something dropped on to Judith's bed.

"Catch," came in a shriller whisper from the other side, and a second something followed.

Judith groped for them in surprise and discovered a chocolate bar and a huge sticky Chelsea bun wrapped in tissue paper. [20]

"Promised Cathy we wouldn't have a picnic to-night," said Nancy, "but we didn't say that we wouldn't sit up in bed like little ladies and partake of some light refreshment."

Sheer surprise made it possible for Judith to say, "Thank you." A moment ago she would have felt one word was an impossibility and then—oh, blessed bun!—one cannot sob and eat a large Chelsea bun at the same time.

Judith ate slowly and carefully, set her lips, and kept back the miserable lump. The chocolate was still to finish, and Jane began an interminable story of a canoe trip in Algonquin Park, but before it was nearly ended, tired Judith was fast asleep. [21]

CHAPTER II

IMPORTANT THINGS

JUDITH never forgot morning prayers on the first day of school at York Hill. In some miraculous way the throng of girls, who crowded the corridors before nine o'clock, formed in lines at the doors of their old classrooms, new girls were piloted to a special position, and when the prayer-bell rang, an orderly procession, beginning with the little "Removes" and ending with the serious and important-looking Sixth Form, filed into Big Hall and took their places.

The beautiful arching Gothic windows, the soft music from the pipe organ, the dignity of the high, oak-beamed ceiling, all this to Judith's beauty-loving mind was curiously satisfying. The service was short but reverent; a hymn, the reading of the lesson, the prayers for the day, and then the Head Mistress was reading out the promotion of old girls and the placing of new girls.

Form Five A was announced; "Judith Benson, Josephine Burley, Sally May Forsythe, Joyce Hewson, Nancy Nairn, Frances Purdy"—Judith's cheeks glowed as the list was read. Five A! How pleased Daddy would be, and how glad she was that she had stuck to the hated mathematics this summer! And to be in Nancy's form, what joy! [22]

Then followed a busy morning; new books piled high on the waiting desk, new teachers, each seemingly more interesting than the last, new rules to be learned, new girls to meet.

Judith was quite ready for buns and milk at eleven-thirty and enjoyed her fifteen minutes in the open, and by the end of the morning she was both tired and stimulated, for she found that she was required to think for herself in order to take part in the discussions. There was to be a written test to-morrow on the books which had been set for Form Five A's summer reading and Judith had thought that she was prepared for it. But as Miss Marlowe proceeded with her keen questioning, Judith began to wonder if she knew anything at all about "The Idylls of the King." Miss Marlowe had a way of saying, when answers were given, "Yes—yes—what do *you* yourself think?" which Judith, accustomed to teachers who had spoken with a voice of authority, found disconcerting but highly interesting. [23]

After luncheon and a rest period, Nancy took Judith for a tour of inspection; tennis courts, cricket field, gymnasium, common room, and library were visited in turn, the etiquette of the stairs explained—Judith learned that it was considered fearful "side" for a Fifth-Form girl to use the front stairway to the entrance hall—and the round ended in the tuck shop where Judith was introduced to the presiding genius—Mrs. Wilcox, the housekeeper's sister—a bright-eyed, cheerful little Englishwoman, who, to judge by the way the girls greeted her, was immensely popular.

Sally May and Josephine hailed them from a coveted table by the west window, and the four of them were soon busily and happily engaged with peach sundaes and the foibles and peculiarities of teachers new and old.

The four-thirty bell caused a hasty scattering: Judith was enrolled in music and studio classes and introduced to study hour in the library.

It was a busy day. Judith, as she drifted off into the sleep that claimed her before she had time [24]

to think over the events of the last twenty-four hours, wondered drowsily whether she had been at York a day or a week, and however was she going to tell Mother and Daddy *all* about it as she had promised!

By the end of the week the new girls had been so well shepherded by the old that Judith had lost her first shyness and bewilderment at living with so many new people, and was beginning to feel that she herself was an old girl and ready to uphold and defend York Hill traditions. Everything had so far been made so easy for her that she had lost sight of Aunt Nell's cryptic remarks concerning the important things that the girls were to teach her. But the week was not to end without the beginning of the discipline Aunt Nell had been thinking about.

When Nancy and Judith ran upstairs after luncheon on Friday, Judith was surprised to find on her bedroom door a card. There was one on Josephine's too.

"Oh, dear," groaned that young person, "bedroom inspection already! And I left my boots under my bed last night. 'C,' of course, and I did want to have at least 'B's' this term. What've you got, Judy?" And looking over Judith's shoulder she read aloud, "A. Excellent. A pretty room in exquisite order." [25]

"My word, Judy, you're in Miss Watson's good books all right. Did you hear that, Cathy?"—as their prefect appeared in her door dressed for going out, "Judy has 'A' on her card."

"Splendid," said Catherine approvingly; "I wish the rest of you would take Judith's room as a model. You may thank your lucky star, Sally May," she continued as Sally May joined them, "that Miss Watson hadn't time to inspect your room. It's in a shocking state. Run along now and have things ship-shape by dinner-time."

"Isn't she simply lovely?" breathed Sally May when Catherine had gone; "I'd do *anything* in this world for her. But I don't see how I could *ever* be tidy. I never looked after my things before and there's *so* little space in these tiny rooms."

"They certainly are tiny," agreed Judith. "I couldn't think of anything but a cabin on board ship when I saw mine."

"Well, if Cathy wants us to be tidy, we've just got to be," said Nancy with finality, and Josephine and Jane were summoned to help eat the last of Judith's chocolates, and lend their brains to a scheme "for furthering extreme and painful neatness," as Sally May put it. [26]

"We might have a box for fines," suggested Josephine hopefully.

"I have it!" cried Nancy. "Judith's idea of the cabin was an inspiration. Let's pretend we *are* a ship. Cathy'll be the captain and we'll be the crew and we'll have to be disciplined if we're not orderly."

Nancy's plan was received with enthusiasm, chiefly because, since sororities were not permitted in the school, it gave them a chance to band themselves together. They had great fun discussing a name before they finally settled on Josephine's suggestion of the "Jolly Susan." "Jolly," because we *are* jolly, and 'Susan,' because, well—don't you think of 'Susan' as tidy, and a ship?"

So the cubicles were formally christened the "Jolly Susan" by Jane, who donated a bottle of ginger-ale for the purpose, and Judith's empty candy-box was hung up beside Catherine's door to hold the fines which were to be used "for the sustenance of disabled (or dejected) seamen." [27]

Sally May entreated Judith to show her how she managed to stow away all her belongings so neatly, and when the half-past two bell rang for outdoor recreation, the "Jolly Susan" was ready for Captain Catherine's inspection.

A basket-ball practice for South House had been posted on the bulletin board, but Judith felt lazy and wanted to finish "The Scarlet Pimpernel," so, taking her book, she went across the quadrangle to a sheltered spot under the big beech tree where she meant to spend a blissful hour reading and lying at her ease on the soft warm grass.

The story would be sure to be interesting, but she postponed the treat and lay watching the big white clouds sailing lazily across the blue of the sky, and enjoying the brilliant splashes of colour in the maples at the foot of the garden.

It had been a very happy week, Judith decided, reviewing the events which she planned to chronicle in her letter to her mother to-night. How nice everybody had been to her! No one could have a better chum than Nancy! How pleased Mother would be that she had received such an excellent mark for her room; and Daddy would be delighted at the high mark Miss Marlowe had given her on that initial literature test; Nancy and Josephine were loud in their admiration of the way she had translated for Miss Langton in Latin class. Altogether, as Judith rolled over on to her elbows and found the place in her book, she was feeling happy and a bit too complacent. Only a page or two had been turned when a shadow blotted out the flickering tracings of the beech leaves, and a surprised voice said— [28]

"Hullo, aren't you Judith Benson of South?"

"Yes," said Judith, sitting up and smiling politely, unconsciously ready for a little more praise: she knew that this was Catherine's friend, Patricia Caldwell, another South House prefect.

"Well, then, why aren't you playing basket-ball?"

"Because I don't want to play," said Judith calmly; "I prefer tennis."

Patricia almost gasped; this from a new girl—"She didn't want to!"

"Every girl is expected to join in the first practice matches so we can pick our players for South," she said pleasantly but firmly. "Weren't you at the Athletic Union meeting on Wednesday? I suppose you didn't understand. However, you can join in the second half." [29]

Patricia was Senior basket-ball captain and secretary of the Athletic Union, and basket-ball was to her at present the most important thing in the School. Judith felt rebellious, but made no reply. She watched Patricia's retreating figure and wondered whether she dare skip the practice.

Nancy, who had come to look for her, was questioned.

"Skip it? You had better not!" she exclaimed in horrified tones.

"But it isn't on my time-table," objected Judith. "Mayn't I do as I please in spare time?"

"Why, but Patricia said you must," said Nancy.

Nancy, brought up in the traditions of York Hill, felt that it was almost sacrilegious to question the authority of a senior prefect.

Judith was aggrieved and a bit defiant. She wanted to finish her story. It was extremely pleasant out under the beech trees. She didn't want to get up and dash about getting all hot and untidy, and making all kinds of mistakes in a silly old game that did nobody any good as far as she could see. Anyhow, her afternoon was spoiled now, and she began to wish that basket-ball had never been invented. The very idea of action grew more and more distasteful, but at the sound of the three o'clock bell she got up very reluctantly and crossed over to the basket-ball court. Fortunately she was dressed ready for the game, since at four o'clock she was due at a gymnasium class. [30]

Esther Harriman, who was umpiring, gave her a red scarf to tie on her arm and briefly explained where she was to play and what she was to do. Unfortunately the girl she was to check was Georgia Fisher for whom Judith had taken an unreasonable dislike; partly because she disliked the way Georgia giggled, and partly because she thought her impossibly stupid. Judith hadn't much patience with stupid people!

"No, I haven't played much," Judith said loftily in answer to Georgia's question. "I don't care about basket-ball—I'd sooner play tennis. Last year I won the tennis prize." Georgia wasn't to think that she, Judith, couldn't play games if she wanted to. [31]

Esther blew her whistle, and instantly the two centres were leaping for the ball, and before Judith could remember that she was supposed to be on guard Georgia quite easily caught the ball, and passed it neatly to Josephine who threw for the basket and made the first score for the Blue scarves.

Judith looked annoyed and Georgia giggled, sympathetically.

"You got to keep your eye on me, *and* on the ball," she explained good-humouredly, and proceeded to take the ball again in spite of Judith's utmost endeavors to prevent her.

An exhausting half-hour followed. Georgia seemed to be *all* arms, thought Judith despairingly, trying in vain to check her. Once she did get the coveted ball, and in the excitement of at last outwitting Georgia, she threw it straight into the outstretched arms of Josephine who wore the enemy's Blue scarf. Josephine threw her a kiss of thanks when the ball was safely landed in the net, and Georgia's unflinching giggle helped to heighten the colour in Judith's cheeks.

Up went the ball again and then swiftly it came, passed from one Red scarf to another. "I *will* have it this time," said Judith fiercely to herself, too engrossed in a desire to win from the Blues to remember the most elementary rules of the game; she caught the ball and ran, yes, just ran to the goal and threw. The proverbial good luck which attends the beginner was hers, but instead of the applause which Judith expected there was a burst of good-natured laughter. She had run with the ball and all in order to throw it into the Blues' goal! [32]

Poor Judith, it was all she could do to smile feebly when Georgia met her with a grin, and, "This ain't football, you know." She hated being laughed at, and when the practice was finally over, left the campus humiliated, cross, and hardly able to bear herself or any one else.

On the way back to the beech tree and the story-book, she consulted her time-table to make sure of the time of the gymnasium class. Yes! thank goodness, she was free until four o'clock—there was just time to finish the chapter.

Four o'clock found Judith in line, a pair of dumb-bells tucked under her arms, ready to march into the gymnasium as the three-thirty class marched out. She had had two lessons already and was beginning to like her class. Last year's instructor had been adored by the girls and consequently their work was excellent. Miss Evans, a young teacher, new to York Hill, busy finding out what her new classes could do, scarcely realized how much *she* was on trial. This afternoon she called out a last year's girl to lead the class while she stood aside to watch and criticize. [33]

"Wrong, wrong," she cried, and held up her hand as figure five was concluded. Now Miss Evans, as we said, was young and new at her job, and did not count on the adoration which the girls had given her predecessor.

"Quite wrong," she said again.

"That is the way we did last year, Miss Evans," stiffly replied Jane who was leading.

"Indeed!" said Miss Evans, who did not like Jane's tone; "that doesn't make it right. Is there any one here who belonged to another class who can do this figure correctly?"

Alas, Miss Evans, your Irish impetuosity will cost you dear! Condemnation shone forth from thirty pairs of eyes, the hot, unreasoning condemnation of the young. Alas, Miss Evans, it will take you many a day to recapture what you have just lost! Alas, poor Judith, here was the opportunity to regain her lost self-complacency. It happened that she had been taught figure five in a different fashion, and, eager to show that she at least knew how, her hand went up. [34]

"Ah, Judith knows how? Judith, stand out and do the figure."

The music began and Judith went through it accurately and perfectly, entirely to her own satisfaction and to that of Miss Evans.

"Good," said Miss Evans, "that's right. Now once more, Judith, so that the others may follow."

Judith's eyes flew to Nancy's. She loved to see the admiring affection which she had been finding there. But Nancy's eyes were cold and unseeing. Judith, like most clever little girls, was extremely sensitive to public opinion, and she almost dropped her dumb-bells in an agony of shame and humiliation as she saw the coldness of Nancy's eyes faithfully repeated in all the eyes about her. Alas, poor Judith! "Teacher's pet," terrible phrase, was whispered as the class filed out, and when Nancy and Josephine rushed down to the tuck shop for an ice-cream cone they affected not to see Judith, who at first followed disconsolately, and then fled to her room, where, with head buried under the pillows, she sobbed herself into a misery of self-pity and supposed homesickness. [35]

Five o'clock bell rang. Horrors! She had forgotten that Aunt Nell was to be here at five o'clock to take her out for dinner. Aunt Nell would be cross at being kept waiting. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Would she never find her gloves? Where was her new scarf? She must have left them down in the cloakroom after morning walk. A hurried flight to the cloakroom, another search, and an entirely discomfited Judith presented herself in the drawing-room.

Aunt Nell would look displeased, she thought, as she entered. Judith really did not care that Aunt Nell had been inconvenienced, but merely that disapproval, instead of the approbation for which she thirsted, would be her portion. But Aunt Nell looked amused. Indeed, when they were once in the motor she laughed outright.

"I must say, Judy, considering that you have been in school only a week, you seem to have got rid of any superfluous neatness very quickly." And she pointed to a mirror at the side of the car. [36]

Judith's eyes rounded with horror; she had washed her face, but a grimy streak still outlined one side of her chin, her hair was rough in spite of a hasty brushing, and her hat was comically askew.

"I have been so busy," said Judith, turning scarlet and blinking to keep back the tears of mortification at this last straw.

"Busy!" said Aunt Nell quizzically; "busy learning important things?"

"Very important things," said Judith. [37]

CHAPTER III

DRESSING UP

"Got your costume ready for to-night, Judy?" asked Nancy one glorious sunshiny morning a few weeks later.

"I have *not*," came from Judith in dismayed tones; "I absolutely forgot about it. Why didn't you remind me? I haven't heard any one mention it all week."

"Well, there hasn't really been time to do anything, has there? And, anyway, we usually concoct something at the last minute. I do love dressing up, don't you?"

"I do if I don't have to make up the dress," said Judith honestly, as she finished making her bed and leaned out of the window to take deep breaths of the glorious October air. "Nancy, do come and look at the maple grove, and the oaks and the beeches against that lovely sky, and isn't the vine on Miss Meredith's house simply a gorgeous colour? I could almost eat the sunshine, it's so good. Tell me what to wear to-night. I don't know what I should have done without your help last Friday." [38]

"Let's think it over," said Nancy, pulling on a sweater and cap and running off to play tennis with Jane; "see you at recess and we'll decide then."

But when recess came Judith confessed to not having given it a thought, she had been kept too busy for the consideration of such frivolities as a Friday party, and Nancy on her part had a doleful tale of returned lessons to be made up during the afternoon.

"Oh, *why* didn't I prepare that French prose?" she wailed when the crew of the "Jolly Susan" foregathered after luncheon in her room. "I begged Madame to let me make it up *any* other time, but of course she wouldn't."

"Oh, well, we're not going to dress alike this time," said Sally May, "so it doesn't matter. It *was* fun, though, wasn't it, making sailor-boy costumes out of sheets and pillowcases, and I never laughed so hard in my life as when North House came in. You really ought to have seen them"—this to Jane who had been away for the week-end—"not one of them looked more than six months old—they pasted paper over their teeth and had on the cutest little bonnets and long dresses and carried bottles—really cold-cream bottles with a glove finger on top—" [39]

"I think the Hindus were the cleverest," said Judith.

"The question before the house is, what are we going to do to-night?" observed Josephine. "Now my idea"—

But what Josephine's idea was the rest never knew, for Rosamond put her head in at the door and called, "Long distance 'phone for you, Jo; Miss Martin says hurry"—

Judging by the speed with which Josephine vanished down the corridor she was anxious to oblige Miss Martin.

The half-past two bell rang and Nancy and Judith went off to music lessons without deciding anything about the costume for the party, and when Judith came upstairs after an early dinner she was still as undecided as ever. The corridor was as busy as the proverbial beehive, for the "borrowing-rule" had been suspended for the day, and everybody seemed to be making the most of the opportunity.

Judith was besieged with requests the moment she appeared.

"I bag your white slippers, Judy, if *you* don't want them," called Rosamond. [40]

"And I want your black beads—"

"Your blue scarf, please, Judy," called Catherine from her room, "I'll be awfully careful of it."

Squeals of delight came from the various rooms where tryings-on were proceeding. "Every one seems happy but me," thought Judith dismally when the borrowers had departed.

What would a Southern costume be like, anyway? Africa? No that would be too hard and she hadn't the least idea how the Australians dressed. South America? India? Was India south? No, it couldn't be, because she had heard Audrey Green of East House describing a perfectly sweet Hindu costume which her roommate was going to wear. Southerner? How stupid of her! Why not a Virginian lady of the Colonial period? Why not? That's settled. Now as to the how; whom could she ask? But no sympathetic friend presented herself and Judith again began to feel aggrieved.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" cried Josephine excitedly rushing into the room. "Jim—my brother—arrives to-night from Alberta and he'll call here to-morrow first thing. I believe," she added in a lower, confidential tone, "I believe I must have been a bit homesick and didn't know it—there'll be letters and messages, and probably a box, too, from home. Oh, I can hardly wait till to-morrow! Jim says Mother is all right, though she misses me dreadfully—you see our nearest neighbour lives fifty miles away, and sometimes she doesn't see a white woman all winter." [41]

"Fifty miles!" repeated Judith in amazement.

"Yes, we have to have a lot of land for the horses, and sometimes Dad is away for several days visiting the outlying parts and Mother gets pretty lonely."

"You're joking, Jo—your father couldn't spend several days travelling on his own farm."

"Not farm, Judibus," said Josephine, laughing, "it's a ranch, and it has to be big, as I said, for the horses."

"How big?" demanded Judith, still thinking of the farms she had seen in Ontario and Quebec.

"We had twenty-five thousand acres last year, but Dad has leased another ten thousand on the other side of the river. Oh, Judy, my dear, if ever you come to the West I'll show you what real fun is! Sometimes I ride all day—and such riding! I've a gem of a little mare—Patsy's her name—she's as good a chum as I ever had until I came here last year. Aren't mothers bricks?" she added with a little catch in her voice. "Mother really needs me, but she just insisted on my coming—she taught me in her spare time until I came here last year, and because spare time wasn't plentiful there are big gaps in what I know, and as I'm stupid to begin with, the lessons sometimes seem so hard that I just want to give up and run home. But of course I'm not going to," she finished, laughing at Judith's sober face; "that *would* be a poor way to say 'thank you' to my blessed little mother. What are you going to be to-night?" [42]

"A Colonial lady from Virginia," answered Judith superbly.

"Good—isn't that funny? I'm going to be a Virginian Colonel. Let's be partners. Molly was to be mine, but she certainly can't go with a sprained ankle. We'd better get busy—there isn't much time left." And Josephine disappeared into her own cubicle where Judith could hear her opening and closing drawers and singing in her funny boyish voice their new nonsense song:

[43]

"Of all the ships that sail on land,
There's none like 'Jolly Susan.'
Her crew works well with heart and hand,
And sometimes they're amusin'."

Sally May and Jane whirled into the "Jolly Susan" like small hurricanes in time to sing the verse over again, and then the snatches of talk she could hear told Judith that her neighbours were thoroughly enjoying the fascinating business of dressing up, and had evidently forgotten all about her.

Perhaps it was a little reaction after several weeks of new and exciting experiences; perhaps Josephine's reference to mothers being "bricks"; whatever it was Judith felt lonely and homesick. She didn't know how to make her costume; she didn't think of Sally May, and she hated to confess to Josephine—to whom, it must be confessed, she had always felt a little superior—that she hadn't a ghost of a notion how to make, out of nothing at all, the dress of a Virginian lady of fashion.

But although Josephine had convulsed the class and enraged Madame Phillippe by translating *hors de combat* as "war-horse," and although her ideas as to angles and triangles were so hazy as to be of no service to her in a geometry class, she was not at all stupid where her fellow humans were concerned, and she had seen the quickly restrained quiver on Judith's lips when mothers were mentioned.

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"I guess she's homesick and doesn't know it," said Josephine to herself. "I'd better buck her up a bit and give her a good time." But because she had a generous admiration of Judith's cleverness she never thought of offering her any suggestions as to how to put her costume together.

A little later she appeared in Judith's doorway in black tights, blue silk stockings, buckled shoes (cardboard buckles covered with silver paper), a white shirt blouse buttoned high, and a long black ribbon in her hand.

"Please wind it round my neck, Judy, several times as high up as you can. Why, where is your dress?" she asked in surprise.

Poor, proud Judith, how she hated to confess that she simply could not think of anything. But the despised Josephine rose to the occasion: she took charge with an assurance which immediately dispelled Judith's gloom.

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"Colonial lady—um—you will look awfully nice with your hair powdered—let me see—your chintz curtains will do for panniers—put on your frilliest blouse and a white skirt, pull down your curtains, and I'll drape you in a minute or two."

Josephine was as good as her word. Blouse and skirt by means of an overdrape of window curtain were made into the dress of a lady of quality; Judith's pretty hair was piled high and liberally powdered with talcum, and Josephine even produced a tiny bit of rouge and a black patch, and insisted that to make the picture complete Judith must have the buckled shoes, and as there wasn't time to make more buckles she'd wear her old pumps.

Josephine was having such a good time admiring the result of her handiwork that Judith accepted the shoes with a good grace, and off they went to join the throng in the Big Hall. So successful had Josephine been that Judith had quite a little triumph as she entered the hall on her colonel's arm, for she had discarded the spectacles she wore during school hours, and the powder and rouge had discovered a hitherto unnoticed pair of beautiful arching eyebrows, and altogether her appearance was so distinguished that numbers of girls turned to ask, "Who's that pretty Virginian with Jo?"

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It was a thrilling evening. Indeed, it is to be doubted whether bona-fide balls of later years would ever bring such thrills and such intoxicating happiness to the Pierrots and Pierrettes, gypsies and Arabs, Spanish dancers and flower girls, Elizabethan ladies and cavaliers, Red Cross nurses and college dons, Indian chiefs and squaws, cowboys and "habitant" girls, who were so thoroughly enjoying themselves.

Judith laughed and danced away her blues, and to all the compliments paid her was glad to be able to say with honest admiration, "Oh, I couldn't do it—Josephine did—isn't she just wonderful?"

And when, after "the loveliest party ever," Judith tucked up in bed and her thoughts ran to the absent mother, instead of tears she smiled happily and whispered, "What a lot of nice people there are in the world, mummy, dear—I've got an awful lot to learn—but I'm going to try *hard* to be unselfish and kind like Josephine and Nancy."

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CHAPTER IV

A SUPPER PARTY

"Oh, goody!" Judith heard Nancy saying, "isn't it splendid that it came on Friday! We never have anything but buns and milk after a Friday night lecture. Your mother is an *angel*, Sally May; she must have guessed that this was going to be a Friday without a party."

"That you, Judy?" came in Sally May's pretty voice; "come on in." And Judith was soon seated on Sally May's couch.

The crew of the "Jolly Susan" were invited, she learned, to partake of an elegant cold collation consisting of roast chicken, meringues, cakes, candies, etc., etc., which Sally May's mother was thoughtfully sending them from a caterer in town.

"Have you asked Miss Marlowe if we may have the small sitting-room?" asked Nancy after Judith had been informed of the feast awaiting her.

"Asked—Miss Marlowe?" gasped Sally May; "well, of all the queer schools! Ask a teacher if we may have a midnight supper? Well, I reckon *not!*"

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"Why, that's the way we do," returned Nancy; "the lecture will be over early and then we'll go up to the sitting-room and have our feed."

"Oh, that," said Sally May, "is ridiculous and no fun at all. Why, at Knowlton Manor we always waited until twelve o'clock, at least, and had our feasts in the loveliest places. Once we had supper in the cellar, and the engineer caught us and we had a terrible time bribing him; and last June, at Miss Gray's school, five of us were caught in the teachers' own sitting-room at three A.M."

Her hearers looked horrified enough to satisfy even Sally May, who loved to tell a story, and she related one epic after another, until the York audience were convinced that life would not be worth living unless they too could recount similar tales when they went home for the Christmas vacation.

Miss Marlowe and her rules were forgotten, and they laid their plans for a midnight supper.

"But Miss Marlowe knows that your box has arrived," objected practical Nancy.

"Then we'll buy some buns at tuck and have a *camouflage* supper after the lecture, and the real one at midnight," retorted Sally May, not to be done out of her scheme.

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"I wish we could ask Cathy, don't you?" said Josephine; "she's been such a dear that it seems a shame to have a glorification without her."

Catherine, hard at work at her desk in her own room, caught the sound of her name, and the next sentence in an excited voice revealed the fact that a midnight supper was being planned for that very night. Her first impulse, of course, was to tell the crew that she had unwittingly overheard them, and use her influence as captain and prefect to stop the whole proceeding; and then, because she was taking her duties as a prefect very seriously, she stopped to consider the little escapade in a new light.

Sally May, Catherine could see, was going to be troublesome. Already she had chafed at several time-honoured rules and customs, for her sense of reverence for traditions had been stifled by her ceaseless change of residence, and Sally May was becoming exceedingly popular. Her soft Southern voice, with its delicious inflections and its lazy drawl, was most persuasive. The crew of the "Jolly Susan" had so far been a model crew and Catherine had not yet had to enforce discipline, but at the last prefects' meeting Sally May had been mentioned as the cause of two practical jokes perpetrated in other parts of the house, and, "Such things are not done, they are simply not done," said the School captain severely; "Catherine, you must take Sally May in hand." Perhaps this was her chance. She waited until the four o'clock bell scattered the conspirators to practising and gymnasium classes and then went down to the captain's study.

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"Come in," said a clear ringing voice as Catherine knocked at Eleanor's door; "you're just in time for tea—here, you toast the crumpets and I'll brew the tea."

"Wait a jiffy and I'll get some jam—wild strawberry with crumpets is heavenly."

Catherine was back in the specified jiffy, and in a few moments the two friends were chatting comfortably over their tea-cups.

York Hill like most modern schools had adopted a modified form of self-government. Each of the four Houses had its quota of prefects appointed by the staff, and a House captain; the Senior House captain was known as the Captain of the School, and this year South House had the honour of providing the School Captain—Eleanor Ormsby. The prefects, usually members of the various Sixth Forms, were girls who had shown themselves worthy of responsibility and privilege and who could be trusted to set the tone of the School.

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Eleanor Ormsby was deservedly popular: there was a frankness and a directness about her almost boyishly clear-cut face which inspired confidence, and the girls who brought their difficulties to her found in her a wise and sympathetic counsellor. Eleanor was not beautiful like

Catherine, not brilliant like Patricia—in fact it was with difficulty that she held her place in the Sixth-Form classes, but on basket-ball court, hockey-rink, or gymnasium floor she had no rival. Above all she was a born leader, and having spent all her school days at York was steeped in its traditions and ideals.

Just now Eleanor was keen upon getting the two plays given just before the Christmas vacation well started before the busy time at the end of term: it was the custom for the Old Girls to entertain the New Girls at a play and for the New Girls to return the compliment.

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So the absorbing topic of Queen's new hockey coach being exhausted for the time being, "Got any good stuff for the play in your cubicles, Cathy?" asked Eleanor; "looks to me as if they are a nice lively little bunch. What a little witch Sally May is, and what lovely eyes Judy has! I'm glad she and Nancy are such pals—they make a good team."

"They're darlings, all of 'em," said Catherine enthusiastically; "but 'not too good for human nature's daily food.'" And she unfolded the plan for the midnight supper.

"Well, of course," said Eleanor, laughing reminiscently, "you couldn't expect them to go home for the holidays without a story of some such adventure as that. Remember the time we went down to the gym and Pat fell over the dumb-bell rack."

"And it was such a mean supper to get punished for," added Catherine, grinning; "only cold baked beans and apples. The trouble is that Miss Marlowe is death on suppers since Christine Dawson caught pneumonia last year when they climbed out on to the sun-parlour roof, and of course now that I know—"

"Oh, of course we'll have to do something. But what?"

[53]

Various plans were discussed, but nothing satisfied their desire for poetic justice until suddenly Catherine exclaimed: "I've got it! Let them have their supper, and then we'll make them wish they hadn't—let's lock the door of the common room (that's where they mean to go) and give them a good long time in which to repent of their sins. I've got the key—Miss Marlowe loaned it me for the dress rehearsals."

"Good," said Eleanor. "I'll see that the windows are kept shut during the evening so that they won't catch cold, and I'll oil the lock at tea-time."

And in spite of the solemnity befitting prefects, their eyes danced as they pictured the dismay of the young sinners when they discovered themselves caught; for prefects, notwithstanding their dignity and general "high and mightiness," are not by any means above a bit of a lark themselves.

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CHAPTER V

"ENOUGH IS AS GOOD AS A FEAST"

THE crew of the "Jolly Susan" did little work during the evening study hour; Judith, especially, found that she could not keep her mind on her tasks. This was the full flavour of life at a boarding-school, surely, to break the rules, and creep down the corridor in the dark to eat forbidden food! She even let her mind play round the food itself—chicken, meringues! She could hardly wait for bedtime.

If Catherine had not been in the secret, she would have been amazed at the swiftness with which her family went to bed. Josephine was usually incorrigibly slow, and Sally May always needed reminding that the devotion bell would ring in two minutes' time. To-night clothes were neatly arranged ready for the morning, rooms were in impeccable order, hair was properly brushed, and there was no mad rush to be at one's own door when the fatal bell sounded.

At last "Lights out" bell rang and silence descended on South House. Ten o'clock, and the prefects put out their lights, only the tiny red fire-escape lamps shone dimly at intervals down the corridor. Eleven o'clock, and the night watchman had creaked by on his way to East House. The way was clear.

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Out of bed slipped the conspirators. Judith's cheeks burned with excitement as, obedient to orders, she put on her warmest kimono, and, carrying mug and sofa pillow, followed Josephine and Jane to the corridor.

Nancy and Sally May had already gone, Josephine informed her in a piercing whisper, and Nancy had said to be *very* careful of the boards opposite Miss Marlowe's door because they sometimes squeaked horribly.

Stealthily in Indian file they crept down the corridor.

Horrors! The boards certainly did creak! Miss Marlowe's light was still on! What if she should open her door!

Judith, with her eyes glued on the crack of light, clutched her kimono more tightly as if to escape being seen, and in some inexplicable way her mug slid from her cold fingers.

The fate of Sally May's party hung in the balance for just so long as it takes a mug to fall to the ground, and Judith for a nightmare second felt the bitterness of having betrayed her friends to the enemy; but Jane, with a magical dexterity, caught the mug "on the fly" as Judith described it later, and for the time being they were saved.

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Judith's heart was still thumping from their narrow escape when they joined the rest of the party in the common room at the head of the stairs. The blinds had been pulled up to let in the pale moonlight, and in the semi-darkness Judith could see five shadowy forms seated on their pillows around the precious box.

"Are we all here?" said Sally May in a sepulchral whisper.

"We are—thanks to Jane," said Judith, and the episode of the mug was told to appreciative listeners.

"Put on your flash, Nancy," commanded Sally May; "no one is going to pass this door and we'll never manage to carve the chicken with this miserable knife unless we have more light."

With infinite precautions the papers were unwrapped, and mouths began to water as certain favorite goodies appeared.

"Who's going to carve?" asked Sally May surveying with a certain dismay a plump brown bird and a seemingly inadequate pocketknife.

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"Draw lots," suggested Rosamond.

"Uggledy wuggledy doo,
Rackety wackety boo,
Out goes you!"

"Here, Jane, you're it." And Jane lost no time in attacking her job.

"My children! what *do* you think? Here's a jelly or a mousse or something—it's all creamy and quivery, anyway, and we haven't any spoons!"

"I asked you—" began Jane reproachfully.

"Yes, I know you did, but Mother never mentioned a jelly and I thought spoons would make a noise."

"Well, we'll have to have some," said Nancy practically.

"Uggledy wuggledy doo,"

Judith felt in her bones she was going to be *it*. And she was.

"Let me go," said Nancy generously.

"No," said Judith, "Certainly *not*. Where'll I get spoons?"

"Oh, just collect what you can," said Sally May, handing round rolls and sandwiches. "I've got a shoe-horn and a medicine spoon, and so has Jane. Watch out for Miss Marlowe."

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Fear and the desire to partake of the "eats" speeded Judith on her way, and she lost no time in gathering up what utensils the "Jolly Susan" could offer. Her thoughts flew to Catherine for a moment as she passed her door and she wished their beloved captain could be with them. She little knew how nearly her wish was fulfilled.

On the return journey as she hurried up the corridor, having safely passed Miss Marlowe's door, she suddenly heard a soft footfall or the swish of a kimono, and then discovered a dark form bearing down upon her. Could it be Miss Marlowe? No, it wasn't tall enough. It must be Miss Ashwell. Judith flattened herself against the wall, which was fortunately in the shadow, in the hope that she would not be seen. But it was a very slender little hope, and for the second time that evening Judith was sure that their plans for a good time were ruined, when, just as she had given herself up for lost, the figure turned about and a voice, unmistakably Miss Ashwell's, said, "Bother! I've forgotten my sponge again."

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Another disaster averted!

What a *gorgeous* time they had! What a heavenly chicken!

What luscious meringues! And if you have never in semi-darkness balanced a precious morsel of jelly on the end of a nail-file, you have missed one of thrills of *real* living.

"The spiffingest feed I ever had," declared Judith as they began to pack up the remains and remove all traces of their feast.

"Well, we haven't had all the thrills that you've had to-night, Judibus, but for once I've had a perfectly good meal," confessed Rosamond, who was holding the useful little flashlight, "and now I'm good and ready for my perfectly good bed." She was voicing a unanimous thought—they had had a jolly time, but their feet had gone to sleep and their eyes were beginning to feel drowsy—yes, certainly bed would be good.

Pillows were sorted out, and Nancy with the tiny light led the way. She tried to open the door;

it would not budge! She pulled hard. Josephine pulled harder; Sally May tried; and then consternation took possession of their souls. Some one *had them*, had them with a vengeance! Whatever would they do now?

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Sally May was not in the least daunted, whatever the others might feel. "I'll tell you," she said; "it's some one who wanted to come to the party doing it for a joke"—but that brought little comfort. The party was a secret, and who would know where to find them? Forebodings as to tomorrow's punishment filled their minds.

Sally May, however, was accustomed to punishments. "Sufficient unto the day" was evidently her motto. "Come on, let's tell ghost stories," she said, and the others obediently seated themselves on the floor again. Sally May produced a large box of chocolates which they were keeping for another time, and began a long tale of a ghost who followed, and followed, and followed a man up and down, up and down, the corridors of an old manor house. The hero could hear the ghost's footsteps and its blood-curdling laugh, but he was afraid to turn his head, and when he did—very, very, very, slowly—the muscles of seven little necks stiffened obedient to Sally May's suggestion—he saw a terrible—but here Rosamond broke in with an hysterical cry, "Please, Sally May, I can't bear any more"—and Sally May's spell was broken.

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Indeed they all began to be frankly miserable, for they were chilly by this time, and even schoolgirls' stomachs are susceptible to unlimited cake and candy. Nancy fell asleep and leaned on Judith, making her most uncomfortable. Sally May confessed quite openly to a feeling of sickness, and in a steady whisper poured into Judith's ear the ghastly details of how ill she had been at Knowlton after a lobster supper. The night wore on. Most of them finally went to sleep in uncomfortable attitudes, but about four o'clock in the morning, Judith, who was much too unhappy and too uncomfortable to sleep, got up stiffly from the floor and walking about the room, tried the door once more. To her huge astonishment and joy it opened! Catherine had come up a couple of hours before, but the striking of the big clock in the hall had covered the very slight noise of the turning of the lock.

"It was open all the time," protested several unhappy voices.

"You didn't try it properly."

"We did," said other cross voices, and sulkily and stiffly they creaked down the hall to their longed-for beds.

The rising bell rang in about an hour's time; at least so it seemed to eight very sleepy girls. Pancakes and maple syrup, the favourite York Hill breakfast, brought them no solace; indeed, to the surprise of their friends, they refused them. Sally May, who demanded much sympathy, reported to the nurse after breakfast.

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"I don't feel well, Miss Anderson, I don't really. I'm tired all over. I think if I had a little rest—" she added plaintively.

"Put out your tongue," said Miss Anderson cruelly. "Hm, blowing up for a bilious attack. Oh, yes, you can go to morning lessons, but report at the Infirmary this evening for a dose of calomel."

Poor Sally May! The thought of the horrid dose haunted her all day, and when evening came her punishment was indeed complete.

Judith, Nancy, and Josephine had separately and independently resolved by hook or by crook to escape the hated morning walk or "crocodile." A walk after their wakeful night seemed simply impossible and the weather was too bad for games. Many excuses were thought of and rejected, but eventually they presented themselves to the mistress-in-charge, a certain zealous Miss Martin.

"Too tired to go out, Nancy? Very well, early bed, of course"—and she chalked up Nancy's name with "Bed at eight-thirty." Judith and Josephine were treated in like manner; not that they minded very much, for bed at eight-thirty had a soothing sound. But Madam Retribution was not done with them yet.

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For a week or more they had been expecting an invitation from Catherine to supper in her room. It was a regular first-term institution that a prefect should entertain her set of cubicles, and rumours of other suppers had already reached the ears of the crew of the "Jolly Susan." Judith, especially, had been looking forward to this treat. An evening in Catherine's room, what a delight!

At evening prayers it was announced that to-night's lecturer would not be able to come, and promptly afterwards Catherine gave the longed-for invitation. "Supper in my room at eight-thirty," she whispered to each of the five; "we'll have a jolly time." Her surprise and astonishment at their stammered refusals were great.

"Slacking the walk?" she said coldly. "Of course, then, you can't have a treat"—and she wasted no sympathy on them. Judith could have wept with vexation and disappointment.

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At half-past eight the crew of the "Jolly Susan" crept sadly into bed and listened to the laughter of the prefects gathered in Catherine's room, devouring *their* supper. Sally May had gone to the Infirmary, but one vow was registered by the other chastened souls in the "Jolly Susan"—"No

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CHAPTER VI

PUTTING IT THROUGH

THE last two weeks had been so full of other things that lessons and their preparation had taken a somewhat secondary place in the thoughts of Form Five, and, in consequence, they had merited and received many rebukes.

Sally May had spent two hours of a precious Saturday afternoon learning poetry, for she had failed miserably in the last literature test; Josephine had been her companion in disgrace, and had even had to spend a precious Friday evening "in durance vile" because of returned lessons.

Judith's pride had been badly hurt by Miss Hilton's comment written in her geometry exercise book, "Very poor work, indeed, untidy and careless," and, worse still, when the lists were posted for the mid-term Latin examination, Judith's name had been halfway down with fifty-six marks to her credit. At Miss Graham's she had always headed the list. Just for a moment she almost thought that there must be some mistake, and then she realized that Five A standards were high and first-class standing meant first-class work. [66]

Literature and history were Judith's strong subjects, and on the morning when she saw her Latin marks she made a mighty resolve to head the list in at least one of these. It wouldn't be easy. Joyce Hewson and Phyllis Lovell had been steadily piling up marks all term, and the whole form was watching their tussle for first place. Christmas reports and class standing for the half-year were made on class work and on the examinations at the end of the term.

"I've just *got* to have one 'first' on my report," said Judith to herself as she put away her books after morning school. "I've just *got* to—Daddy'll be awfully disappointed if I don't." And then, taking her place in the line that was filing into Big Hall, she whispered to Nancy, "What're we going to have this morning?"

"I'm not sure," said Nancy, "but I think Ruth Laughton's going to speak. I saw her going into Miss Meredith's study this morning."

The last period of Friday morning school belonged to Miss Meredith. [67]

"It's like a grab-bag," Nancy had inelegantly told Judith; "you never know what you are going to get—sometimes it is a lecture, sometimes Miss Meredith reads us a story, sometimes we have carol singing—I do like that—and during the War we had talks from people who had been there. Once we had a Polish Countess who spoke the funniest English, but she was awfully brave, and once a man from Serbia. He was in the Red Cross and he told us a terrible story about the state of the Serbian children. We held form meetings the Monday following and voted to give up candy for a whole term, all of us, and we sent the money to him for the relief work. I think it's the nicest time of the week."

Judith too was coming to look forward to that last hour of the school week, very often to schoolgirls a wasted hour at the fag end of things.

This Friday an Old Girl was to speak to them. Miss Meredith held that a school like York Hill, in order to justify the time and effort, the money and brains, the service and consecration put into it, should send out girls who would be leaders and workers in everything which would make for the betterment of the community in which they lived, and unconsciously the Nancys and Judiths of the School, through these Friday morning glimpses of the great world of service, would be steadily and surely prepared for the part which they were to play. Social service, as such, was not talked about; most girls dislike what they call "preachments," but when Form Four decided to make baby clothes as a Christmas shower for the crèche where an Old Girl worked, and when Form Five promised a woolen sweater from every girl for the Fourteen Club at the University Settlement, social service became a real and vital fact in their lives. For, as Judith learned, knitted sweaters mean work, and wool costs money, which had to be deducted from an already painfully shrunken allowance, and baby clothes, although fascinating and cute, represent many hours of careful stitching. [68]

Meanwhile the seeds planted on Friday mornings grew and flourished until "Noblesse oblige" became a natural and an actual attitude towards life. Social service of some sort or other, after one left school, was an established fact like unlimited tea-parties and dancing partners. And Miss Meredith and many of her staff made it the business of their lives to see that it should be social service of the right kind. [69]

About once a term the Old Girls' Association provided a speaker. Miss Meredith had entertained many distinguished guests who had spoken in Big Hall, but none were made more welcome than the Old Girls, for the Head Mistress knew the appeal which they alone could, and did make. To-day the speaker was to be Ruth Laughton, a nursing sister decorated for gallantry by the King. Catherine had been a Junior when Ruth was Captain of South House, and she had pointed out to Judith Ruth's name on the tablet in Big Hall where the names of House and School

captains were printed in letters of gold.

Judith considered, as Form Five marched into the Hall, what it would be like to carry out wounded soldiers under fire. Nursing Sister Laughton must be big and strong and brave, perhaps she was always brave and did not really mind the explosions. What was courage, anyway? And then, before she could decide this puzzling question, Miss Meredith was coming down the centre aisle with her distinguished guest. The School gave a thunderous welcome and settled back after Miss Meredith's brief introduction to hear a thrilling story. [70]

Form Five confessed among themselves afterwards to a distinct feeling of disappointment when the speaker came forward. She was small, "not a bit pretty," the girls decided, and her voice seemed tired and lacking in vitality. The decoration on her breast appeared to be the only significant thing about her. Evidently Ruth was nervous.

"If she is not afraid of bombs, she is afraid of us," thought Judith, for the Sister's face grew white, her lips dry, and her assertion that she was glad to be back at dear old York Hill seemed to be all that she could remember of her speech. Three hundred pairs of hands had clapped her a warm welcome, but now she confronted three hundred pairs of critical eyes. She faltered, began again, and finally looked appealingly, a schoolgirl once more, at her Head Mistress.

"Never mind about your own experiences just now, Ruth," said Miss Meredith's calm, reassuring voice, "we'd like to hear a little more about the children's hostels in the north of France. We are all interested because we are sending clothes to Jean Warner to distribute." [71]

And then a miracle happened, the whole School saw it. Ruth was transformed before them, her eyes brightened, her shoulders straightened, her voice had an inspiring ring in it as she told the story of the heroism of other Old Girls.

She had an interesting story to tell and she told it well: even the First-Form wrigglers sat with their eyes glued on her face as she told of the brave fight which was being made for the life and health of the children of Europe. "There is one thing especially I should like to tell you," she finished, looking down into the sea of upturned faces, "wherever I found a York girl—and you know my duties have taken me into all sorts of queer places these last four years—whether she was a V.A.D. ambulance driver, a nurse in hospital, a Y.W.C.A. secretary, or a Child's Welfare worker, always the record was the same, that when a York Hill girl undertook something, she *put it through*—especially if it were a hard job! That's what the General said when he pinned on Gwen's Mons Star—'Another of the ladies from Canada! They have taught you out there to put things through with a will!' York Hill Old Girls look to York Hill present girls to maintain the record of the School." [72]

And if the applause meant anything, it surely stood for a determination on the part of her listeners to maintain the York Hill tradition.

Without considering the matter overmuch, Judith was convinced that the thing she was "to put through" during these last few weeks of term was hard study, and she bent to her tasks with a will.

"But the best laid schemes of mice and men
Gang aft agley."

The School seemed suddenly to become very busy, though about what Judith did not know. Much whispering was heard in the "Jolly Susan"; Nancy and Josephine looked very mysterious, girls from all parts of the School seemed to be in the same secret, and Judith heard tantalizing phrases, "scenery committee"—"scene shifters"—"costume committee"—"the Play." Very soon she herself was in a big secret, for a meeting of all New Girls was called by the School Captain, and Eleanor explained that the New Girls would be entertained at a play in the last week of November; that the custom was that the New Girls should return the compliment by an entertainment given during the last week of term; that since the New Girls were decidedly in the minority, two of the prefects and she herself would help in any way they could; and that, in a word, she was now ready to receive nominations for the various committees. [73]

An exciting hour followed. To her dismay Judith found herself on the Costume Committee and she hated sewing. Sally May gave her little comfort—"just be glad you don't have to paint scenery; that's a dirty and hard job if you like," said Sally May. "Miss Ashwell makes us work like demons. If she didn't work like a demon herself, we just wouldn't do it," was her sage comment. Committee meetings multiplied. The play chosen was to be kept a secret from its audience and a delicious air of mystery pervaded the whole School.

After much discussion and help from Eleanor and Miss Marlowe, the New Girls chose the "Christmas Carol." Many other things were suggested, but Scrooge and Tiny Tim had apparently a warm place in their affections, and the appropriateness of the Christmas story for the end of term was irresistible. [74]

The choosing of the cast was a difficult and a tedious job, and Miss Marlowe and Eleanor spent much time trying out various candidates, but at last the list was complete, and, a little to her relief, and, it must be confessed, a little to her regret, Judith was not included. She had never acted, and she had a firm conviction that she could not, so that the regret was merely that she didn't like to think that other people had the same conviction.

Her membership on the Costume Committee was no sinecure. Coveted Saturday afternoon and

evening leisure had to be given up to the stitching of long seams. Mathilde LeBrun, who was another Josephine in that her brain seemed to be in her fingers, was convener of the committee, and under her direction Judith sewed and cut out, and, it must be confessed, ripped. Tiny Tim's coat and trousers were her task, and although the smallest of the new girls, Edith Holland by name, had been chosen for this rôle, Judith found the utmost difficulty in making her look like a Tiny Tim. Twice did she make and un-make that wretched little suit, but she was nothing if not conscientious, and at last it was finished.

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"Twelfth Night," which was the Old Girls' play, was a huge success. Nancy and Josephine had been so excited all week that Judith had found it about impossible to keep her own attention on her lessons. Catherine must be a chief character in the play, decided Judith, for Catherine's room was the centre of numberless committee meetings and endless discussions, and Genevieve Singleton—who, to Judith's envy had established herself as Catherine's chief messenger—ran hither and thither, bursting with importance. Nevertheless the secret was kept, and as Judith sat with Sally May and Frances Purdy and all the other new girls on Friday night and listened to the noise behind the green curtain, she felt that she could bear the suspense no longer.

And then, when the curtain rose, the Master Magician waved his wand and Judith, who had seen very few plays, was transported to a land of beauty, romance, and sweet adventure. Helen made a noble Duke, and Catherine an enchanting Viola. Judith had never quite recaptured the thrill of delight she had felt when on the opening night of term she had first seen Catherine, but now to the charm and witchery of first impressions of beauty was added the knowledge of Catherine's sweetness and gentleness. Nancy might be a witty Maria, and Josephine a rollicking Sir Toby; Judith had eyes and ears for Viola only, and as the play progressed she envied passionately the Duke who seemed criminally stupid in his misunderstanding of Viola's love. The surprise of the play was Genevieve Singleton's Malvolio. Even Judith was moved out of her trance of adoration to laughter and admiration.

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"That was real acting," said Sally May with the air of a theatre habitué as Malvolio pranced off the stage in the immortal scene of the yellow stockings and cross-garters.

After the last bravos had died away and the actors had bowed their thanks before the footlights, both audience and players were refreshed with lemonade and cakes, and Judith transferred her envy to the fortunate ones who stood talking over the evening's triumph with Catherine and Genevieve and the rest of the cast. She envied Genevieve who had had such a success, and she wished, but did not dare, to join the group. "Perhaps," thought silly Judith, "if I run upstairs now and get her room ready for her, Catherine may kiss me good-night." Judith was on the verge of what is technically known as a "crush."

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Meanwhile preparations went forward in earnest for the "Christmas Carol," and "All costumes must be finished for Monday. Full rehearsal at eight o'clock in the Big Hall." So ran the Order-in-Council.

"I'm certainly glad Tiny Tim's costume is done," thought Judith as she ran downstairs for the rehearsal; "four more days till the literature exam. I'm going to work like everything."

"Come on, Judy," Sally May hailed her as she found her place behind the curtain where she was to help shift scenery; "you're late, but who ever heard of a rehearsal starting on time?"

"Seems to be some sort of a row on," said Judith as a distinct groan reached their ears. "What's up?" she asked as they joined the group on the stage.

"Marjorie Jones has measles," answered Eleanor, their stage manager: "come here, all of you, and think *hard*. Who can take Scrooge at such short notice? Is there any new girl with a good memory? It's the longest part by far."

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Various names were proposed and rejected for one reason or another, and then Eleanor's eye fell on Judith, who saw her consider for a moment, speak in a low tone to the two other prefects; then very reluctantly she answered the summons, "Judith, come here and read this page for me, will you, please? Perhaps you'll do."

Judith read the page and a tiny feeling of resentment began to make itself felt. She hadn't been asked to do anything nice, or anything she wanted, and now they weren't even asking her if she would be willing to take Marjorie's place.

"I guess you'll do," was Eleanor's uncomplimentary comment when Judith had finished.

"There's really no one else," she said, turning to Patricia, "and I think Judy can be word-perfect by Friday. I'll coach her every spare minute myself. Come along, Judy," she added, "and read over the part before we begin."

Somewhat breathless from this prompt decision, Judith obediently took the manuscript and seated herself at one corner of the stage. Suddenly as she read, the full meaning of this new turn of events flashed into her brain. The final term examination in literature was listed for Friday morning, and Judith had planned to spend all her spare time between now and then in the thorough revision of her work, for there was still much to be done, and this examination would really decide whether she or Joyce or Phyllis would head the list.

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For a long ten minutes Judith read her part and at the same time debated within herself, while Eleanor settled some difference of opinion about exits and entrances. Self number one tried to

hoodwink self number two—"Top Self" and "Deep-Down Self," Judith as a little girl had christened these two voices within her. "Daddy would like you to come out first; you oughtn't to disappoint him. Lessons must be done. Just go and tell Eleanor you can't do it and then your time will be your own."

"No," said Deep-Down Self, "be fair, Judy. You know you can't act well, you won't be a success like Genevieve. You don't want Catherine and the others to see you fail, and honestly, do you want to come out first for Daddy's sake or for your own? I really believe you don't think enough fuss has been made over you. You'd *rather* work at your literature and come first, perhaps, but you can memorize quickly and they need you. Which *ought* you to do?—never mind whether it's hard or not."

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Judith had always been honest with herself and she knew quite well what the real issue was.

The struggle was hard, the hardest, perhaps, which Judith had ever fought. Mechanically she turned the pages while the argument continued within her. She seemed to have no way of deciding, when suddenly she remembered Nursing Sister Ruth's words, "York Hill girls have the reputation overseas of being willing to tackle any job—no matter how hard—and of *putting it through*." Top Self hadn't a chance after that. Filling in here seemed her most immediate duty and Judith settled down grimly to her task.

The rehearsal was long and tiring, and twenty times during the first hour Judith was tempted to give up. But she did her best, and although Eleanor was distracted by all the numberless things demanding attention, she found time to stop and say at the end of the first act, "Good work, Judy! I knew I could depend on you. You'll make a first-rate Scrooge, and you are a brick to get to work without any fuss." And although Judith did not believe the remark about her acting, her face flushed with pleasure and she determined that she would not spend another moment in questioning. This job must be put through.

[81]

And it was. She woke early in the morning and learned her part by the light of Nancy's flashlight. She cut her recreation time and scamped her lesson preparation. She thought and lived Scrooge, and as she had a good memory she was word-perfect before Eleanor had thought it possible. Eleanor and Patricia coached her whenever they could, and Miss Marlowe gave her Wednesday evening and Thursday afternoon.

Friday morning, and with it the literature examination! Judith read the paper with a sinking heart. She would not fail, but, as she had guessed, the extra reading which she had planned to do during these last few days would have given her paper "The little more, and how much it is" which would have lifted it to the first rank. Came Friday afternoon with its last rehearsal and then the fateful night.

Judith will never forget the thrill of terror that ran through her as the curtain rose and she saw the rows of faces staring at her out of the semi-darkness. For an instant she was paralyzed with terror, and it was only the audience's delight at finding Frances arrayed as Scrooge's irrepressible nephew that covered the gap between "Merry Christmas, Uncle," and "Bah! Humbug!"

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The first short scene was wooden enough in all conscience, but Judith remembered her words, and as the story progressed she got a better grip on herself surprising and delighting Eleanor and those who were in the secret by her spirited acting.

But at the end of Act Three, Nancy, who had slipped behind the scenes to congratulate her chum, and to tell her that her wig was the least bit askew, was surprised and alarmed to find Judith almost in tears.

"I can't do the last act, Nancy, I simply can't. My face feels all stiff and solemn. I can't laugh and joke, I can't, no matter how I try"—and two tears actually rolled down her cheeks. She was tired out, and the very imagination which had made it possible for her to be for the moment the gloomy old miser, now made it seem impossible for her to change him in a few minutes into a jolly, generous, incarnation of old Father Christmas.

[83]

Nancy was horrified and distracted. She did her best, but with seemingly no avail, and then she had one of those inspirations, which seem almost heaven-sent. Hurrying back and learning that there were still four or five minutes before the curtain would rise, she sought Catherine, who luckily had left her seat during the interlude.

"Captain," she said, saluting, "there is one of the crew who needs your help; can you come at once?"

And then, as they neared the stage—

"It's Judy, Cathy," she whispered; "do buck her up. She has been such a brick, but she is so tired that she feels that she can't do the last act."

Catherine waited for no more explanations, but went swiftly behind the curtain, where she found Judith trying to look cheerful, but making a dismal failure of it. "Careful," said Cathy to herself. "I mustn't be sympathetic or she will break down."

Judith looked up, and instead of the dreaded warning that the curtain was going up, here was Catherine saluting her merrily.

"Good work, Judy! The 'Jolly Susan' needs a first mate; can I induce you to accept the job?" And she put a steadying arm round the new mate's shoulders. "You've been splendid; we're all proud of you, and especially we of the 'Jolly Susan.'" [84]

No more question of can or can't. Judith felt that she could do anything for her captain and here was a chance. She threw herself into the unforgettable scene of Scrooge's awakening, and the whole school was infected with the joyousness of her declaration: "I am as light as a feather. I am as happy as an angel. I am as merry as a schoolboy. A Merry Christmas to everybody, a Happy New Year to all the world. Hullo, here, whoop! Hullo."

And every one was quite ready to agree with Scrooge's declaration at the end of the scene, "Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, won-der-ful happiness!"

The New Girls were cheered to the echo by the School, and the party which was voted a great success ended with cake and lemonade and a delightful Sir Roger de Coverly in which every one took part.

Judith, dancing with Bob Cratchit, felt supremely happy, and her cup was filled to overflowing by Miss Meredith's words as she said good-night. [85]

"Congratulations on your success, Judith, you gave us a fine presentation of Scrooge, and Eleanor tells me you had very little time for preparation."

And then the delightful whispered conferences upstairs after "Lights Out" bell had rung—Catherine turned a deaf ear, for discipline must occasionally be relaxed.

"Did you see Mr. Fezziwig's coat, Judy?"

"Wasn't Mrs. Cratchit too funny for words?"

"Wasn't the ghost splendid?"

"I shivered all over when he was speaking," Nancy declared; and so on and so on, until Judith fell asleep and dreamed that she was dancing the Sir Roger with Miss Meredith arrayed as Mrs. Cratchit, and that, so arrayed, Miss Meredith had proceeded to the platform and had read out the term's marks beginning with Five A. First, Judith Benson; second, Joyce Hewson; third, Nancy Nairn.

It was a good thing that Judith had the fun of her dream because in the lists read out after prayers next morning our heroine stood fourth, in Five A, but that didn't spoil her morning, such a happy morning. Desks were tidied, Christmas presents tied up, suitcases packed, and at twelve o'clock a short Christmas service was held in Big Hall. [86]

The carols which they had been learning the last few weeks at morning prayers were sung now with a right good will to the accompaniment of the School orchestra. And then Miss Meredith, having read the beautiful Christmas story, explained the meaning of its message so clearly, so simply, and yet so earnestly, and with such a passionate longing that from York Hill there should indeed radiate "Peace and good will towards all men," that not the stupidest nor the most frivolous girl but was touched to a sense of higher ideals and nobler living.

Every girl in the School knew that the Head Mistress was humbly striving to embody in her own life the high ideals she held before her pupils, and because of this they listened. Doubtless some of the seed fell by the wayside, some into hard and stony ground, some was choked by the deceit and riches of this world, but other seed fell into good ground and brought forth abundantly, "some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred-fold." [87]

CHAPTER VII

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS

THE Christmas holidays brought a much-needed rest.

"No parties these holidays," said Aunt Nell firmly, as she ushered Judith into a pretty sunshiny room; "bed at nine o'clock, breakfast at nine o'clock, and any amount of skating and tobogganing in between. I promised your mother that you should have a very quiet time."

But a very quiet time was not just the holiday that Judith had planned to have, and after a long night's sleep and a peaceful day devoted to letter-writing she was lively as a cricket and ready for anything.

Christmas shopping absorbed the first two days: Aunt Nell found it tiring, but to Judith the shops all glittering with Yuletide gaiety were wholly fascinating. There were toys to be bought for six-year-old Doris and little Bobbie and Baby Hugh, and something very nice for Nancy. Nothing seemed good enough for Nancy, but at last she found a little string of white coral faintly touched with rose which she was certain would look "just perfectly lovely" with Nancy's roseleaf [88]

complexion, and, after much anxious calculating as to what money would be left for pocket money during the holidays, the corals were finally bought and sent off to Quebec.

Up to the day before Christmas the weather had been very uncertain, and Judith, who had bought Bobbie a new sled was afraid that she would have to pull him on bare sidewalks, and that the stories of Santa Claus and his reindeer would fall rather flat if there were no snow on the ground to add a touch of reality to the tale.

But on Christmas Eve to every one's joy the snow fell softly but steadily all day, and next morning the sky was so blue, the sun so bright, and the ground so dazzling white in its snowy covering, that Judith running out to the verandah fairly danced with joy.

"Do come out and see!" she cried to Aunt Nell; "it's exactly like a Christmas-card Christmas if only a little English robin would hop into the picture."

Stockings had already been emptied and their contents exclaimed over, and no wonder Judith was happy. Perhaps Santa Claus had an especially soft corner in his heart for schoolgirls whose mothers were far away at Christmas-time. Judith had never had such enchanting presents—a string of beautiful amber beads from Daddy; the daintiest of shell-pink crêpe kimonos with satin slippers and cap to match from mother; a pretty camisole from Nancy; a woolen skating-set of palest primrose from Uncle Tom; and—joy of joys! a new white and silver evening frock from Aunt Nell. [89]

Judith promised to take Bobbie for a sleigh-ride, but ran upstairs to have another peep at the new frock first, and Aunt Nell found her gloating over it.

"I know," she said, smiling at Judith's raptures; "I've been there myself. I'm sure your mother thought two frocks ample for a sixteen-year-old, and I expect you have worn them so often already that you never want to see them again. Hannah shall help you freshen them up with a new flower or a bit of gauze, and I hope you will have jolly times in the new one."

Judith folded away the delicious bit of finery in its tissue wrappings, and then, standing at her dressing-table and looking dreamily and happily into the mirror, she made a picture of herself dancing in her silver frock with Catherine, admired by Nancy and Josephine, and envied by all the girls of South House, and she privately resolved at once to save enough out of her allowance for silver shoes. [90]

"Hurry, hurry!" shouted Uncle Tom, and hastily donning her new skating outfit Judith joined the group in the hall.

They had glorious fun in the snow. Doris and Bobbie, rolled up in furs so that they looked like little 'possums, had turns riding in the new sled to the park, and then the whole family were packed into the big toboggan and Uncle Tom had more fun even than Bobbie. Oh, it was good to be alive!

Next morning brought a welcome letter from Sally May who was spending the holidays with Nancy in Quebec. Judith had just been thinking about them and wishing she could compare notes about Christmas presents, and have a really good gossip.

"Quebec is the most enchanting place," wrote Sally May; "you know how I've hated learning Canadian and British history—well, here the history is *real*—Nancy's father is awfully keen about the monuments and things and I'm getting to be keen myself. Jack has a couple of R. M. C. boys here for the holidays, and then there's His Lordship Brother Tim—Mrs. Nairn is a dear and is giving us an awfully good time. If only you were here, Judy, it would be perfect." [91]

If only she were! Judith sighed and wished *she* had two big brothers—or at least that Nancy had included her in the invitation. She was right in her surmise that Sally May had been chosen because she was so far from home, but she couldn't help wishing—

Judith had heard Aunt Nell talking to a gentleman in the drawing-room across the hall, and now, to her surprise, Aunt Nell left him and came into the library looking somewhat puzzled.

"Mr. Nairn, Nancy's father, is here, Judith. I find that Mrs. Nairn and I are old friends. I hadn't guessed that your Nancy's mother was the Elizabeth Dalton I knew years ago. She has sent a very kind invitation for you to spend the New Year's week-end with them. Mr. Nairn is going to Quebec by to-night's train, and could take you with him and bring you back on Tuesday. I don't know whether I ought"—but at the sight of the ecstatic joy on Judith's face she did not finish her sentence. "Run along, dear, and pack the new frock. I don't need to ask you if you want to go. You have been a good child and I think you have had enough rest. Come first and be introduced to Mr. Nairn. It *is* kind of him to take you." [92]

A radiant Judith packed a club bag and suitcase. Could Uncle Tom and Mother have guessed that such a fairy-tale was going to happen when they planned their gifts?—But, of course not. Where were her skates and plenty of handkerchiefs? Silver shoes she must have sometime, but here were the old white ones in the meantime.

Nancy and Sally May were in the limousine waiting for the travellers at the station next day, and as Judith caught sight of them she realized with a joyous leap of her heart how homesick she had been for the sound of Sally May's pretty voice and the sight of Nancy's dear, merry face.

Ever so many things had happened, and better still were going to happen. Sally May had had

her hair bobbed, and very *chic* it looked curling under the rim of her little fur hat. Nancy had a thrilling tale of Christmas presents to tell, and they had not reached the end of the Christmas happenings when the car drew up before a comfortable-looking, rather old-fashioned house surrounded by what was evidently a big garden under a thick mantle of snow.

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Mrs. Nairn's welcome made Judith feel at home at once, and she gave her aunt's messages to her hostess so prettily and so modestly that Mrs. Nairn was quite charmed with Nancy's new friend.

At dinner the sons of the house appeared, and with them Tom Southam, Jack's roommate at college. Jack had the same merry blue eyes and sunny smile as his sister, and Judith forgot to be shy with him. Thomas was a cheery youth, whose chief interest at the dinner-table was the food, and Judith gave him scant attention. But Tim, the elder brother, who had been in the Flying Corps and had several enemy machines to his credit, who still limped from injuries received during an air-fight, and whose grey eyes had the keen, piercing, and yet dreamy look of the genuine bird-man, was sufficiently a hero to prove undeniably attractive. Tim was courteous and kind, but from the height of his five-and-twenty years a trifle condescending, and indeed he was wishing within himself that "Mum wouldn't fill the house with such kids."

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The boys had planned to go skiing next day and after some private suggestions from Mrs. Nairn, they asked the girls to come and watch the fun. Neither Sally May nor Judith had ever been on skis, but here was a splendid chance to try.

"Drive us over to the Ramparts, Tim, please," said Nancy as they started off. "I don't want Judith to be in Quebec another hour without seeing our view."

"Right you are," answered Tim, "we'd better go while it's clear—though, of course, the only way to see Quebec is from the river."

"I always get thrills," said Nancy, "when I come down the river and see the big rock and the town. Think of being Jacques Cartier—the first to see it. For a while, you know, I used to put at the top of my letters, 'Quebec—the Rock Fortress of New France.'"

"Cheek, that's what," said Jack; "I hope you apologize to Wolfe when you do it—there, by the way, is the Wolfe-Montcalm Monument—see, shining over the tops of the trees—I bet you can't recite the inscription, Nan, for Judith, who ought to improve her mind."

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"Lost your bet," returned Nancy promptly—"a pound box, if you please—no, half a pound will do, for I can't say it in Latin, but I certainly can in English."

"Valour Gave Them a Common Death,
History a Common Fame,
And Posterity a Common Monument."

"Bravo—I'll make it a pound—but of course you looked it up to show off to Sally May."

"Well, I did look it up," confessed Nancy, "but Father promised to take us to see the sights as soon as Judy came and he would have disowned me if I didn't know that much."

They had reached the Ramparts and Judith caught her breath in amazement at the wonderful scene. Away below them flowed the majestic St. Lawrence, its snow-clad banks pierced here and there by tiny villages each with its heavenward-pointing spire; to the north were the Laurentian Hills, now glistening in a dazzling white mantle; at their feet was the town, quaint and picturesque, its spires and monuments reminders of its romantic past.

"There's the Ursuline convent, Judy," said Sally May, eagerly pointing out the group of buildings. "Mr. Nairn told me the most interesting thing about it—there's a lamp there that was lighted over two hundred years ago by a girl, Marie de Repentigny—just imagine all the things that have happened since that flame was lit."

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"En avant—forward march," said Jack; "this is not Mr. Nairn's personally conducted tour—we, I might observe parenthetically, intend to ski this afternoon."

They bundled into the motor once more and were soon on the slopes a little lower down where several flying figures could already be seen. It was an ideal place for the thrilling sport—for there were a number of high places where experts could take high jumps, and lower slopes in plenty for the learners and the more timid, and great snowy fields beyond where the whiteness was broken by the gay-coloured caps and scarves of tobogganers and skaters.

Tom took Nancy down to one of the ponds to skate, while Tim and Jack gave Judith and Sally May their first lesson.

Tim proved a splendid teacher and Judith made such progress in the management of the long clumsy skis that at the end of an hour the boys left Nancy in charge of their pupils, and went off to try some of the higher jumps.

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Judith found that she couldn't do as well without Tim's precept and example, and neither she nor Sally May was sorry when Nancy declared they could have just one more jump—they had no idea how stiff they would be to-morrow.

Judith stood for a moment enjoying the scene. The sky was still blue, but there were bands of colour in the west and the shadows of the pine trees had lengthened considerably. She drew a

deep breath of unconscious enjoyment drinking in the wonderful air that tasted like clear spring water, and then, making sure that both skis were quite straight, she pushed off.

For a moment like a bird she felt herself flying through the air. How glorious! Then quite suddenly came a sense of suffocation and thick darkness. In some way the long curved wings on her feet had tripped her and she had pitched head foremost into a deep snow-bank. Nancy, who saw her disappear, halloed to the boys as she sped to the place where Judith was buried, and they appeared with magical swiftness.

They pulled Judith out—not without difficulty—and wiped the snow off her face.

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"Are you hurt?" said Jack anxiously.

Judith struggled to get her breath.

"It's—too—beautiful," she said, without opening her eyes, her mind evidently still on the river view,—"perfectly glorious!"

Jack burst into relieved laughter.

"Judith's a game little thing," he said to his mother later on; "I suppose we shouldn't have left them so soon, but she seemed to get the hang of it very quickly—she slid into that bank as neatly as an arrow—I'm mighty glad she isn't hurt."

Judith could hardly keep her eyes open at the dinner-table, and she was glad enough to accept Mrs. Nairn's suggestion that she go to bed early.

Nancy and Sally May perched on the foot of the bed ready to talk over the day's happenings, but found to their astonishment that Judy seemed asleep almost as soon as her head touched the pillow. They tiptoed gently away, but they need not have been afraid of waking her.

"Doesn't she look sweet?" whispered loyal Nancy to Sally May as she turned off the bedside lamp. Judith was smiling happily, for in her dreams she was flying, flying through sunlit skies, and Tim, of the grey eyes and the half friendly, half quizzical smile, was flying beside her.

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CHAPTER VIII

CASTLES IN THE AIR

NEXT morning Judith could scarcely move; her limbs were stiff from the unaccustomed exercise and one shoulder was bruised and wrenched from her fall, so Mrs. Nairn kept her in bed all morning and gave her much petting and mothering.

The plans for the afternoon had included a skating party on the river, ending with a drive out to the Nairns' summer cottage, which had been opened in preparation for this week of winter sports. A neighbouring farmer's wife had promised to have a roaring fire ready for the skaters when they should appear about five o'clock, and the farmer himself was to meet them at the river with his big sleigh. Clearly Judith could not skate to-day, so other plans were made for her. Nancy, of course, must be with the skaters, since she was the hostess, but Sally May insisted on staying at home with Judith. Naturally this embarrassed Judith, for she knew that Sally May loved skating, and an outdoor party of this kind would be a novelty to a Southerner. Finally Jack talked things over with his mother, and, as Judith declared that she was well enough to go, Mrs. Nairn agreed that she should drive with Jack to the cottage and he would leave her there with Mme. Berthier, while he rejoined the skaters on the river.

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Tim, to Judith's disappointment, declared that he had an engagement and couldn't come.

"I can't think what's happening to Tim," grumbled Nancy as they changed into warm clothes for their long drive; "usually he's a dear about helping to entertain, but he's not a bit like himself, he looks so glum and 'grouchy.'"

"Oh, Nancy!" Judith protested, "I don't see how you can say such a thing! I think he looks just lovely!"

"Just lovely," Nancy laughed wickedly; "he'll be pleased when I tell him."

Poor Judith crimsoned.

"Oh, Nancy," she begged, "you wouldn't, surely you wouldn't. I just meant that he had nice eyes."

But Nancy would make no promises.

Promptly after an early lunch the skaters set off, and Jack appeared with a horse and a little old-fashioned cutter which he had borrowed from an uncle who scorned motors and still clung to

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his horse. Judith was tucked up in a fur robe in the cutter and off they went.



**JUDITH WAS TUCKED UP IN
A FUR ROBE IN THE CUTTER
AND OFF THEY WENT**

"It's almost as good as skiing or flying," laughed Judith as the light sleigh flew over the snow and the bells on the horse jingled a merry accompaniment to their talk. It was another day of magical colouring—all blue and gold and dazzling white, and "Little Oaks" was reached all too soon in Judith's opinion. To their dismay there was no friendly column of smoke announcing the fire that Mme. Berthier had promised.

"It's a good thing the Berthiers are only a mile away," said Jack; "whatever can have happened?"

He came out of the little whitewashed cottage with a grave face. "Jacques is away at the lumber camp and Toinette and the two younger children are down with flu—Toinette seems very ill; luckily Jeanne is old enough to do the nursing, but they need a doctor, and I'm afraid I'll have to go off at once. Nancy will be disappointed, but it can't be helped. We'll pin a note on the door for her as we go back—it would take too long to open the house and get a good fire going—and a wood fire wouldn't keep in all afternoon anyway—and I couldn't leave you alone—"

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"Oh, please, please," begged Judith, "do let me stay—couldn't that small boy by the door be coaxed to stay with me for company—I couldn't bear to have Nancy's party spoilt."

Judith knew how to be very persuasive and Jack finally gave in. Little Pierre came with them to carry the wood, he was

told.

Jack opened up the house, carried in the baskets of provisions, and lit a fire of blazing logs.

"I'll 'phone to you when I get in, and if you should need anything, or if you feel lonely, ring up Mother in the meantime."

"I shan't have a minute to spare for feelings," declared Judith, "Pierre and I have plenty to do."

She didn't quite realize how much was to be done when she watched Jack drive off. The living-room to be swept and dusted—that would come first—and no small task when one's arms and back are bruised and aching; then to the kitchen, and judge of her dismay when on opening the baskets she found that, though there were cakes and fruit and salad stuff in plenty, of bread there was only one small loaf. Whatever could—oh, here was a small bag of flour and a tin of baking powder. Judith groaned as she remembered hearing Nancy tell Sally May that Mme. Berthier was a splendid cook and had promised to make heaps of waffles and hot biscuits for them to eat with their baked beans and salad.

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Twenty hungry skaters appearing in an hour and one small loaf to feed them! Judith had never made waffles, but she had made baking-powder biscuits once or twice, though only, of course, in small quantities. Her first thought was to walk to Mme. Berthier's cottage and ask for directions. No, that wouldn't do—the precious hour would be gone. And Nancy must *not* be disappointed.

"Put on some more wood, Pierre, please. I want a good hot oven," she called to her little helper, and then as he looked blank she tried first her scanty stock of French words and then showed him what to do.

While she was thinking, she was rapidly unpacking the baskets and setting the table, disregarding meanwhile the twinges of pain from her hurt shoulders. At last everything was ready but the biscuits—she couldn't remember, try as she might, the proportion of baking-powder and flour and milk. A mistake would be such a tragedy! Then just as she had decided to make three or four batches and hope that one or two might be good, she suddenly thought of the telephone.

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"Well, I am a silly, petit Pierre, now we'll be all right—Yes, Mrs. Nairn, it's Judith—Jack will explain—please tell me how to make biscuits!"

The explanation must have been easy to follow, for when Nancy and her party arrived a little later three pans of beautifully browned fluffy tea-biscuits were ready to put on the table. Judith had never been as proud of anything in her life as of those same biscuits, and when later the company toasted her in hot cocoa and sang, "For she's a Jolly Good Fellow," with Nancy and Jack looking their special thanks, Judith decided she could never be any happier than she felt right then.

Mr. Nairn was as good as his word next day and took them on a sight-seeing tour ending with a delightful luncheon at the Château Frontenac. Judith had never lunched in such a big hotel and felt very important and grown-up. Jack and Tim refused to be instructed on historical matters, but were on hand for the luncheon.

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"I guess you two have won Dad's hard heart and no mistake," Jack confided to Judith while they

waited for Mr. Nairn, who was speaking to an acquaintance. "I see the favors are 'chien d'or' bonbon dishes," pointing to the quaint little china dishes. "He always presents a copy of 'The Golden Dog' to highly honored visitors."

"Your father has been telling us about it," said Judith, "and he promised me a copy when we get home."

"I'm coming back to sketch here some summer," announced Sally May; "Quebec's simply full of places wanting to be painted."

After the luncheon the boys took them home, and as Judith was still tired from her exertions of the last two days, they voted to spend the afternoon at home, and curled themselves up in comfortable chairs in the sitting-room prepared to discuss a box of chocolates and the universe in general.

"What're you going to do after school, Judy?" demanded Nancy; and then without waiting for an answer—"I believe Mother is going to let me train to be a nurse. I've just been crazy to be a nurse ever since I was about ten. Mother has laughed at me and said I would get over it, but she sees that I really mean it, and I think she is willing now. I don't know where I'll go. Florence Matthews says you can get the best training in New York, but Mother thinks New York is too far away, and anyway I have to take a Domestic Science course first."

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"You'll look perfectly sweet in a uniform, Nancy," said Sally May; "I simply adore the kerchiefs the nurses wear in some of the hospitals. It's too bad the war is over. Wouldn't it have been thrilling to nurse soldiers!"

"I'm going to be an artist," Sally May continued, "with a studio in New York. I'm going to buy all sorts of lovely embroidery and pottery in the East—I know a perfectly lovely shop in Shanghai—and I'll make a gorgeous room. I'm sure I could make it perfectly fascinating, full of atmosphere, you know," she continued vaguely. "I'll have afternoon tea every day and invite heaps of people, interesting people, who do out-of-the-ordinary things. Patricia Caldwell's cousin had the loveliest time. Patricia says her studio is just like an old-fashioned French salon."

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"What about your pictures?" asked Judith slyly.

"Oh, of course I'll work hard," said Sally May happily. "I simply love to draw."

"What are you going to be, Judy?"

"I'm not sure," said Judith slowly, "but I think I'd like to be a teacher."

"A teacher?" chorused the other two in surprise. "Why, Judy, what a funny idea!" said Sally May.

"I don't see why it's funny," Judith objected. "I think it would be splendid to be like Miss Marlowe or head of a school like Miss Meredith."

"Well, you'll never get married if you are a teacher," said Sally May with finality; "at any rate, not for ages and ages."

"Why not?" said Judy.

This was a poser.

"W-e-l-l—you'd have to learn so much, you see."

Judith laughed. "I hadn't thought of that, but I thought you were going to be an artist," she added teasingly.

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"But not all my life," expostulated Sally May, and Judith and Nancy laughed to think of Sally May's picture of a hard-working artist.

Judith considered the matter of her future seriously as she dressed for dinner.

It might be nice to be married—think how lonely she and Mummy would be without Daddy—but of course she couldn't marry Daddy; and then she laughed at herself as she remembered Daddy's story of the small girl who sobbed that she didn't ever want to get married because, as she couldn't have daddy, she'd have to marry a perfect stranger.

"Perhaps some one like Tim would be nice," thought Judith, and after the fashion of most sixteen-year-olds she began to weave a shadowy romance with a Prince Charming as its central figure. Tim had walked to the Château with them this morning, and although he had not condescended to talk beyond the merest civilities, this silence had merely served to enhance his romantic value in Judith's eyes. She wondered what he was thinking of. Perhaps he was living over again a battle in the clouds—as a matter of fact, Tim was wondering why he hadn't received a certain letter which he had hoped for on Christmas Day. Judith hoped he would like her new frock, and wondered how many dances he would ask her for on New Year's night.

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The Nairns were a musical family. Nancy always went to the piano and played for her father after dinner, sometimes Mrs. Nairn joined in with her violin, and to-night Tim appeared with his 'cello.

Judith loved to attend symphony concerts and the tuning-up of the orchestra never failed to

give her delicious thrills, but she had never had a speaking acquaintance—so to speak—with a 'cello before this, and the beautiful mellow tones delighted her more than anything she had ever heard before. As she undressed that night she revised her plans for the future. She would devote herself to music and study hard so that when they were married she might be her husband's accompanist. "On wings of music" they would soar, and when they did come back to earth it must be to a bungalow, a dear little grey-stone bungalow. She spent a happy time planning the furnishing of her music-room and fell asleep before she had decided on the respective merits of old oak and mahogany.

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Next day began with "Happy New Year" and ended with the jolliest of family parties. All the members of the house-party spent a busy day, for Mrs. Nairn had plenty for the two maids to do in the kitchen. Sally May was discovered to have a talent for decorating, so she and Jack and Tim hung evergreens and holly and placed ferns and flowers where they would show to the best advantage, while Nancy and Judith whisked about with dusters and brushes.

"Music in the living-room, dancing in the drawing-room and hall, and cards upstairs in Mother's sitting-room," said Nancy as they set the small tables. "That's what we always have, and then everybody dances a Sir Roger de Coverly—you should see Uncle Phil and Aunt Maria dancing—and afterwards we have supper."

They had a picnic tea at six o'clock in the sitting-room as the maids were arranging the supper-table in the dining-room, and then came the fun of dressing.

Judith had kept her new silver frock as a great surprise, and now it was thrilling to burst into Nancy's room in all her new finery. Nancy and Sally May said it was "perfectly sweet," and even Jack, "who never notices" (according to Nancy), looked and whistled his admiration as Judith came downstairs, her eyes shining, her cheeks glowing with excitement, and her pretty frock swishing about her in a highly gratifying manner.

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Guests were arriving at an unfashionably early hour, since it was largely a family party, and Judith was introduced to a bewildering number of cousins and cousins' cousins and aunts and uncles.

But where was Tim? He had not been home for tea, and although Judith listened and watched there was no sign of him.

"Tim went out early this afternoon to pay calls and he isn't back yet," Sally May informed Judith. "I think Mrs. Nairn is rather worried about him."

The younger set had been dancing for an hour or more and Jack had proved an attentive host, but Judith was still half unconsciously looking for Tim when suddenly she saw him in the doorway with an exquisitely pretty girl beside him. Perhaps it was Tim's radiant look which he was making no effort to hide, perhaps it was his partner's radiant looks which she was trying to hide, but however it was Judith had the quick conviction that this was a very special partner. The newcomer was slim and graceful, and Judith saw with sudden envy that her hair was like spun gold and her eyes as blue as forget-me-nots.

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Tim danced with no one else, and in spite of Jack's attentions and no lack of interesting partners, Judith began to feel a little disconsolate. However, it was hard not to be merry at such a merry party; there was happiness in the very air.

The Sir Roger was a great success, and Uncle Phil, aged seventy-two, upheld his reputation as the gayest dancer of them all.

At supper-time Nancy and Judith were helping to serve the little tables in the library when Judith saw Tim with his partner come in and go over to Mr. and Mrs. Nairn. Nancy suddenly squeezed Judith's arm.

"Oh, Judy, Judy, they're engaged! I'm sure they are! Look at Tim! We were pretty sure he was in love with her, and Lois is such a darling!"

Then she rushed over to put her arms around Lois, and Judith was left alone feeling bereaved of husband, home, and career at one cruel stroke.

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"The nicest party I ever was at," said Sally May enthusiastically as the three said good-night after a long discussion of the evening's fun, "and I think you looked nicer than anybody else, Judy. I do hope you won't get conceited about the way you look in that new frock. I know I should."

"The nicest party I ever was at," thought Judith before she fell asleep, "and the very nicest people. Jack is a brick—he's been awfully kind to me. I wish I was half as pretty as Lois Selkirk. What *would* it feel like to be engaged?—I guess it would be exciting! However, then I wouldn't be going back to York Hill—and that will be exciting next term and no mistake. Oh, how glad I am that I've got Nancy!"

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CHAPTER IX

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER

WHAT fun it was to get back to York Hill!

As Judith stood in the front hall waiting her turn to sign the register, she almost laughed aloud as she remembered how, standing in this very spot, she had clung desperately to Aunt Nell five short months ago. How different it was now! She could hardly wait to get over to South, and see Nancy, and Catherine, and Jane, and Josephine, and all the rest of them.

She peeped into the drawing-room, and there sat a stiff, solemn little figure—a new girl, no doubt—and, yes, here was Eleanor bringing Peggy Forrest to introduce to the newcomer. And as Judith ran across to her own house, she felt a warm glow of gratitude that Miss Meredith had chosen Nancy to be her "pilot" during those first difficult days.

Cries of welcome greeted her in the corridor.

"Hi, there, Judibus! Had a good time?"

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"Sally May was looking for you, Judy."

"Good old Scrooge!"

"Merry Christmas, everybody—Happy New Year to all the world," quoted Judith promptly, seizing her letters and making her way through the crowd around Miss Marlowe's door down to the good old "Jolly Susan" and Nancy.

Yes, there was Nancy's pretty yellow head, and in another minute she was looking into Nancy's merry eyes and trying to answer three questions at once and say "hullo" to Josephine and Jane and Sally May.

Judith was the last to arrive, so they all crowded into her room and sampled Aunt Nell's Christmas cake—thoughtfully provided for the occasion—and the big box of chocolates which Josephine's brother had sent.

Five tongues wagged merrily in spite of cake and candy, for there were endless things to tell—Josephine had been to her first real dance, and Jane had been down to New York with Phyllis Lovell, and you may be sure that Nancy and Judith were not behind the others in their accounts of "perfectly gorgeous" times. And when Catherine joined them and added her tale of a gay winter fête in Winnipeg, Judith felt that no home-coming *could* be happier.

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"Oh, isn't it nice to *belong!*" said Judith to herself as she dressed for supper. "I wonder how that new girl is getting on—I guess she's in our form when Eleanor got Peggy for her—I wish I could do something to make her feel at home—"

Josephine's head appeared in the door and she whispered mysteriously, "Come on down to the common room when you've finished."

"What *do* you think," she said when Judith joined her, "that mean Genevieve Singleton has been trying to get in here in Jane's room! Jane said once at the beginning of last term that she wished she was down in Peggy Forrest's cubicles, but that was ages ago. Genevieve went to Miss Marlowe and said that Jane wanted to change her room, and may she please have Jane's room, as she hasn't been very well during the holidays and her mother doesn't want her to climb stairs. Miss Marlowe sent for Jane, and you should have heard her when she came back! Genevieve is in Catherine's room now telling her how heartbroken she is, I suppose. Silly thing, I wish she would try holding *my* hand."

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Judith laughed at Josephine's disgusted expression, and blushed a little as she remembered her own foolishness about Catherine.

"Genevieve's queer, isn't she? I can't make her out—you remember how crazy she was about Helen, and Helen didn't seem to like her a bit."

"She's a silly owl," said Josephine decidedly, "but—my word—wasn't she a dandy Malvolio?"

At supper Judith, who was talking as hard as any one else, realized what a Babel of sound they were making when she saw the bewildered look on the face of the new girl whose name she learned was Florence Newman. She smiled across at Florence in a friendly manner and said, "Did you know that we're going to dance afterwards—give me the first spare one you have, will you—and I want to introduce you to Josephine Burley—she's from Alberta, too—and she's a perfect dear, although she doesn't look it."

The talk about Christmas presents and parties and new frocks and next term's doings buzzed on, but Florence felt less lonely and frightened. The "girl from Alberta" sounded friendly and comforting: *she* would know what this turmoil meant after the silence of the prairies.

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Judith was as good as her word and shared with Peggy the duty of "piloting" the new member of Form Five. But she found Florence very quiet and unresponsive, and gradually the excitement of the new class in figure-skating and the inter-form and house hockey matches absorbed her attention.

There was plenty of hard work done in the various classes, and the staff congratulated themselves that the School was in good working form, but, judging from the conversation in the sitting-room and at table, the girls apparently did nothing but think and talk and play hockey and figure-skating.

Judith did not join a hockey team, but Josephine was one of the Junior captains, and as she kept the crew of the "Jolly Susan" well informed as to the "points" of her team, Judith was an interested "fan" at all the matches.

There were two cups given for the fancy skating and Judith and Nancy resolved to enter the competition. After a long morning in the classroom they could hardly wait to get out to the rink to begin again on the figure eight. A beautiful curve seemed the most important thing in the world. [120]

The rink these zero days was a pretty sight. Miss Meredith, on her way out for a walk, used to love to stand for a few minutes and watch the charming scene. "What lovely things girls are," she would murmur to herself as they flashed by in their bright-coloured caps and coats, their cheeks glowing and eyes bright from the wholesome exercise in the ozone-laden air.

Judith did not win a cup, "but it was great fun trying for it, Mummy," she wrote to her mother, "and Patricia did beautifully. Aunt Nell says I have lost my stoop, so perhaps that's my reward instead of the cup, and I think I must have gained another five pounds. We're so hungry when we come in for supper that I believe we'd eat our books—if there were nothing more appetising!

"We had great fun last night at a sleighing party—the Domestic Science Form invited forty of us and you may be sure we accepted. We were bundled up in all the warm clothes we owned, and there was lots of straw in the bottom of the sleigh. We packed into two big sleighs, and as soon as we got out into the country we sang songs, and tooted horns, and had an awfully good time. Josephine said she was 'glad to goodness' it was a Domestic Science party, for the eats were sure to be good, and they sure were! I never was so hungry in my life." [121]

Then it was Five A's turn to entertain, and after an enormous amount of talking they decided on a skating party. The invitation list gave the committee a great deal of trouble. It grew and grew until they realized that they never could afford to feed such a large and hungry mob. Nancy, who had been elected Form President on her return, took the difficulty to Miss Marlowe and she came out of the study with a beaming face.

"Miss Marlowe's a brick," she announced. "She says that if we are going to have a hurdy-gurdy and coloured lanterns and a moonlight night, why not ask everybody; the House'll provide cocoa and Chelsea buns, and we can get any extra cakes we like ourselves." And so it was happily arranged.

Nancy proved herself a born organizer, and on Friday evening each Five A girl shared in the duty of being hostess. Even Florence, who remained persistently quiet and difficult to know, was given her share of work to do. Sally May and her committee were responsible for decorating the supper-room, Peggy Forrest was to look after the coloured lanterns, Judith was to see that the smiling Italian and his wife, who took turns at the hurdy-gurdy, each had a rest in the warm kitchen and some supper, "and be sure," cautioned wise Nancy, "that the maids keep back enough for our own supper afterwards." [122]

Friday afternoon saw Form Five A hard at work getting ready for their guests. Nancy flew hither and thither; she worked out on the rink helping with the lanterns, and down in the supper-room with the decorations, and then she was off to the housekeeper's room with a list of special requests. She was making a splendid Form President, every one agreed, and that was very high praise, for the post was by no means an easy one to fill.

So far Nancy's chief difficulty had been in keeping silence when the form was lined up ready to lead into morning prayers, but later on in the year she was to tackle the problem of how to deal with persistent petty cheating which remained undiscovered by the authorities. The Form Mistress may be a wise counsellor and a constant friend, but the Form President is often—as Nancy was later on—kept from seeking advice by the schoolgirl's horror of "telling tales." [123]

By six o'clock everything was ready for the skating party, and Five A went in to supper with a good appetite and the happy consciousness that they were going to have a good time.

"Glistening snow, tingling air, glittering stars, shining moon," said Judith gleefully, as she and Sally May waltzed on the ice, while Peggy was turning on the coloured lights. "It's going to be a perfectly blissful party."

And it was. The night was perfect to begin with, and the Chinese lanterns and the music of the hurdy-gurdy all combined to form a scene of magic enchantment that fairly entranced beauty-loving Judith.

The snow lay about the rink in a great glistening white bank, splashed here and there by a pool of coloured light, far away glittered the stars in a dark blue winter sky, and over all the moon shed a pure, cold, white light.

Form Five didn't stop to think about the beauty around them, but they enjoyed it nevertheless. What a good time they had! They waltzed—those who could—and they "cracked the whip," and they hummed the tunes the Italian was industriously grinding out, and they laughed and shouted and were perfectly happy. Judith had three "bands" with Nancy, and two with Catherine who looked exquisitely lovely, and what more could heart desire? Indeed, as she and Nancy drank their third cup of cocoa and divided the last piece of chocolate cake, she agreed enthusiastically that she had never had such a "perfectly gorgeous time in all her born days!" [124]

The fine cold weather lasted for almost six weeks, and then quite suddenly came an

unmistakable thaw.

"If only it had come in January," sighed Miss Evans as she surveyed the dirty pond, which had once been a rink, "but it is too late in the season now to hope for steady skating again."

She was justified in her pessimism; the skating season was over. Every girl in the School regarded the dull weather almost as a personal insult, and every teacher in the School realized that the most difficult weeks of the year had now to be faced, for unless precautions were taken, sickness and mischief were bound to flourish in this in-between-seasons time. Wise Miss Meredith marshalled her forces and took counsel with the Heads of Houses; the gymnasium staff put on extra dancing classes, and indoor basket-ball matches, but in spite of all their efforts many of the girls seemed languid and uninterested. [125]

Nancy, who seemed to hear more news than her mates in the "Jolly Susan," burst into Judith's room late next afternoon during the dressing hour.

"What do you think? Genevieve Singleton got an anonymous letter in the evening mail and she is upstairs now crying in her room."

"An anonymous letter," repeated Josephine from the next room. "I'd like to know what sort?—"

"Yes," said Nancy excitedly, paying no attention to Josephine, "nobody knows who wrote it, and it was about Catherine." She paused to enjoy the full effect of this mysterious bit of gossip.

Judith, whose hair was only half-done, put down her brush and demanded impatiently—

"What about Catherine?"

"Well, you know very well, Judy, that Genevieve has a crush on Catherine. Why, Cathy had fairly to put her out of her room the other day, and on Wednesday evening, when we were dancing after evening prep., I heard her tell Genevieve that she wouldn't dance with her again until she stopped being such a goose." [126]

"But the letter?" said Judith.

"I'm coming to that. It was printed and I can't remember it exactly, but it was something like this:

Don't hang around Catherine Ellison any more, Genevieve Singleton, she can't bear the sight of you. A word to the wise is sufficient.

She is crying like anything and Peggy Forrest says it is a perfect shame."

"What's a perfect shame?" asked Josephine pointedly.

"Why, the meanness of the person who sent that letter," said Nancy; "whoever did it, is a mean horrid thing, every one says so."

Every one was having one opinion or another, for the news spread like wildfire throughout the house, and at tea-time poor Catherine knew that this choice piece of gossip was being discussed at every table. She was not long left in ignorance as to the fact that some of the girls thought that she herself had written the note in order to get rid of an unwelcome visitor, who was very difficult to snub. Other girls, who had resented the prefect's attitude towards crushes, expressed great sympathy for Genevieve, and there was much speculation as to the probable author of the letter. [127]

Catherine took counsel with Eleanor and they decided that it was a tempest in a teapot and that Genevieve would be quite all right by to-morrow. However, next day Genevieve's eyes were still red and she began to assume the attitude of an early Christian martyr.

Catherine, who had been very much vexed by the whole affair, felt remorseful. "Poor Genevieve," she thought, "she's feeling very badly. I can't help wondering why she let the others see the note; but there is no use judging; I'd better go and say good-night to her." This last was looked upon as an act of special favour and condescension on the part of a prefect, and Catherine felt that she was being very magnanimous.

In the visiting time before "lights out" bell, she tapped at Genevieve's door and to her dismay Genevieve flung her arms round her neck.

"Oh, Catherine, say you didn't mean it." [128]

"Mean what, you silly?" replied Catherine, crossly realizing that every girl within hearing distance was pricking up her ears. "Surely you don't imagine that I would stoop to write an anonymous letter."

"No-o," stammered Genevieve, "but I am sure you don't like me"—and she began to sob afresh. "I can't bear you to dislike me. Do say that I may still come to your room sometimes."

Catherine was only human, if she was eighteen and a prefect, and although annoyed with Genevieve, she was touched by the genuine distress on the girl's face.

"Of course you may come, silly," she said. "Dry your eyes and do try to be sensible and don't talk that way any more," she added, sitting down on the edge of the bed, where to Genevieve's

delight she sat and gossiped about sundry School matters—to the great edification of the surrounding cubicles—until the bell rang.

Next day, to the astonishment of the inmates of the "Jolly Susan," Genevieve simply haunted Catherine's room, and on the following day they could hear poor Catherine getting rid of her. [129]

"Really, Genevieve," they heard her say as she opened the door, "you are too foolish. Do run along; I must finish my essay for Miss Marlowe, and I dare say you have *something* to do," with a sarcasm not lost upon her hearers, who grinned appreciatively, for Genevieve was noted for the ingenuity with which she escaped anything like work.

Next day when the girls hurried out of afternoon study as the five o'clock bell rang, they made their usual wild rush for the mail-box. One would have thought that every girl in the school expected most important news. Suddenly a little choking cry was heard, and Genevieve, who had taken out her letter and was standing at one side of the group, turned white, as she drew out from its envelope another printed letter. Here was sensation, indeed! Several of her friends pressed closely around her to read it.

Can't you take a hint, Genevieve Singleton? Stay in your own part of the house. Catherine simply hates the sight of you.

Tears ran down Genevieve's face as she re-read this precious epistle and then crumpling the paper in her hands she ran to her room. Sympathizing friends followed, and "Poor Genevieve!" was heard on all sides. [130]

Judith had been a distressed spectator of this scene. How sorry Catherine would be! How sorry she was for Catherine! Whoever could be writing the letters?

This, indeed, was the sole topic of conversation in the "Jolly Susan" during the dressing-hour, and before the evening was over the School was enjoying a thoroughly good gossip. One amateur detective had suggested that jealousy must be the motive of the unknown writer, for most of the girls dismissed the suggestion that Catherine was the author. Some one else contributed the story of Genevieve's unsuccessful attempt to obtain a room in the "Jolly Susan," and then some one, who had overheard Sally May's indignation thereat, suggested Sally May as a likely culprit.

As was inevitable these mere suppositions grew by their many tellings into "facts," and by the next evening many of the girls were convinced that Sally May, "who is absolutely devoted to Catherine, my dear," was "wildly jealous of Genevieve," and was actually "seen putting a letter into the box."

Miss Marlowe, who remains in the background in this story, but whom we must never forget, sits in the midst of South House like some omniscient and benevolent providence, decided that something must be done to stop these mischievous wagging tongues, so she summoned her prefects and said frankly: [131]

"A little bird has told me something about these anonymous letters. I know they are very trivial and silly, but when one girl begins to be accused by the others, it is time to clean up the matter. From what I know of Sally May, I cannot believe that she has written them. Don't tell me anything more about it. I leave it to you; please do your best to get them stopped." And she left them to solve the puzzle.

The prefects held a meeting at once and decided that the matter was not serious enough to call a special house meeting. Such meetings called and addressed by the captain were held on very special occasions, and this—"Well, this is *too* silly," said Patricia Caldwell, giggling. "Poor Cathy! its a pity you are so bewitching. I don't know how you will manage your affairs after you leave school," she added teasingly. "I'm afraid the morning papers will have to devote front-page space to the duels fought in Miss Catherine Ellison's honour." [132]

Catherine could stand being chaffed by her peers and equals, but she really hated the gossip of the younger girls.

It was decided that every prefect was to keep ears and eyes open and report to Eleanor anything suspicious. A special watch was to be kept on the mail-box. Two prefects were to make it their business to saunter past the box whenever they could and keep an eye on pigeon-hole "S." Perhaps they might catch the criminal at the box.

There was much laughter about it, and with the exception of Catherine they rather enjoyed the importance and the mystery. They realized, however, that so much gossiping was bad for the tone of the house. "It must be stopped." [133]

CHAPTER X

JUDITH PLAYS DETECTIVE

WHILE the prefects were sitting in solemn conclave, Judith at her desk, writing to her mother, found that the story of the week's doings centred about Genevieve and the mysterious letter.

"She is hard to describe, Mummy," she wrote; "she isn't exactly pretty, but her face changes so often when she is talking that she is interesting to listen to. She doesn't play many games and I don't see very much of her, but you remember I told you how clever she was as Malvolio in 'Twelfth Night.' She acts awfully well and she just loves doing it. And she's always getting frightfully fond of somebody and feeling badly if they don't like her." Judith sat rolling her pen absent-mindedly up and down her blotter as the picture of Genevieve filled her mind.

Perhaps it was a matter of "thinking of angels and hearing their wings"; at any rate, just at this moment, Genevieve, returning from a fruitless attempt to catch Catherine in her room, knocked at Judith's door. [134]

"Come on down and see me, Judy," she begged; "I've got some biscuits and some Washington coffee and I'll beg some hot water from Mrs. Bronson."

Judith who loved coffee needed no second bidding, and was soon enjoying a steaming cup and listening to Genevieve's woes; but Genevieve was scarcely well started on the subject of the letters when a heavy step was heard in the corridor and she jumped up in alarm.

"Throw the coffee out the window, Judy," she begged—"that's Miss Watson doing laundry—she's in Joan's room now." And with amazing swiftness she emptied her laundry bag on the bed, covered the contents with her eiderdown, spread out two dainty sets of immaculate French underwear, and was seated with a darning-basket and a pair of stockings in her hand, before the astonished Judith could take in the significance of her actions.

"Come in," said Genevieve sweetly as Miss Watson knocked. "Oh, is that you, Miss Watson? I'm just finishing my stockings."

Miss Watson, who was short-sighted and a bit indolent, hated the weekly task of inspecting the newly returned laundry in search of missing buttons and rents, all of which were to be recorded in her little black book and checked off when the owners testified that the said garments had been made whole. So remembering the immaculate clothes which awaited her each week in Genevieve's room, she made a cursory examination of the dainty undies and checked O.K. opposite Genevieve's name. [135]

"There's a funny odor in here," she commented as she turned to go; "you haven't—"

"Yes," said Genevieve politely, "I've just had a hot drink. Mrs. Bronson thought I'd better have one because I felt so tired."

And Judith, watching with wide-open eyes, to her amazement saw Genevieve's sensitive mobile face actually grow tired and sad-looking while she watched, and then the moment Miss Watson was safely out of sight, with a slight grimace and shrug Genevieve was smiling triumphantly at her own cleverness, and slyly watching the effect of it all on Judith.

"You'll keep it dark?" she asked, realizing that wholesale neatness would arouse Miss Watson's suspicions and that the game would be up. [136]

"Certainly," said Judith a little stiffly, wondering that Genevieve would ask her—Nancy wouldn't have, nor Josephine; but then neither would Nancy have taken advantage of Miss Watson's short sight in order to present each week the same set of underwear kept especially for the purpose.

"Yes; certainly she's clever, but she's got queer ideas about some things," thought Judith as Genevieve began again on the meanness of the person who wrote the anonymous letter.

"I'd give anything I've got," was Genevieve's parting word, "if I could find out who did it."

"So would I," was Judith's thought as she dressed for a walk. "We've just *got* to find out, for Sally May and Catherine look perfectly wretched—as if Sally May *would*; but some of them believe it. *How* Genevieve can act! She just hoodwinked Miss Watson completely; looked like a good little prig who'd done everything she ought to do—and she was thoroughly enjoying herself. I guess she'll go on the stage when she leaves school—it would be interesting to have people applauding. I believe she was glad I was there to see her do it—and I believe—she was glad the girls were round to sympathize when she got the letter—" [137]

Perhaps it was because of her determination to help Sally May and Catherine, perhaps because of the little scene she had just witnessed, or perhaps for no particular reason at all, suddenly a new, and at first glance a crazy, idea popped into her mind.

What if Genevieve enjoyed an audience so much that she wrote the anonymous letter herself!

"Well that *is* a silly idea—think how she cried and cried—yes, but she had Cathy sympathizing with her—"

Judith started out to find Nancy to share her idea, but before she found her she decided she'd say nothing about it—it was too far-fetched. Nevertheless, she determined to keep an eye on Miss Genevieve.

Next morning, according to the prefects' plans, Patricia and Catherine haunted the front corridor. Patricia even took up a post just inside the sitting-room door and watched through the crack, but the corridor was deserted all morning. Helen and Esther took the afternoon watch and had no better luck.

Esther saw the mistress distribute the evening mail, putting several letters into pigeon-hole "S," which had been empty until now, and then came a rush of fifty girls crowding round the box. Esther reported afterwards to Eleanor that whoever did it managed very quickly, for she was watching all the time. Genevieve put up her hand, drew out of pigeon-hole "S" another printed letter, and with a faint cry collapsed in a dead faint. At least so her condition was described to those few who were not privileged to be present. Ambulance classes had not been held in vain at York Hill, and in less time than it takes to tell Genevieve found herself on the sofa in the housekeeper's room, where she proceeded to indulge in an old-fashioned fit of hysterics.

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Judith, who had helped carry her in, wanted to stay and see, if possible, whether Genevieve were shamming, but Mrs. Bronson shooed them all out saying that Genevieve must have an hour's rest and then she could go to the Infirmary.

Judith returned to the corridor where she found excited groups discussing this third terrible letter. Some of the girls talked with lowered voices and several looked almost as white as Genevieve had, and when our heroine entered the "Jolly Susan," it was as little like its name as possible. Sally May was sobbing audibly and Nancy was trying in vain to comfort her.

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"Horrid things! I hate them all. Why should they think I would do such a nasty trick?" she heard between the sobs.

Josephine appeared in Judith's doorway.

"It's a shame, isn't it?" she whispered. "I would like to knock their silly heads together. I don't wonder Sally's mad, and I believe that Catherine is crying, too."

Judith was horrified.

"Catherine crying! Why in the world should she cry?"

"Well, you know," said Josephine, "it's rotten for her, and probably she believes that Miss Marlowe thinks she has been silly, too. I don't know for sure, but she wouldn't let Eleanor in a few minutes ago, and her voice sounded shaky."

This was awful! A prefect weeping!

Two days passed without any further development and Eleanor was beginning to hope that the nine days' wonder was at an end. On Wednesday evening, however, Judith heard Genevieve's protest when Catherine hurried off to a gymnasium class, after a vain effort to get rid of a now increasingly unwelcome visitor.

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"You don't have to go yet, Cathy. It's five minutes before the bell will ring. Do stay and talk to me; I'm awfully miserable."

But Catherine was evidently exasperated and held the door open for Genevieve, who had no choice but to go too.

"Now," said Judith inelegantly to Nancy, "Genevieve will have another spasm."

Privately she resolved to play the detective.

She awoke next morning to hear the rain falling steadily. "Ugh," she thought, "a rainy day and my Latin isn't finished—two horrid things to begin with." And then she remembered her plans of the night before. Instantly she was out of bed; she wouldn't try to keep her secret any longer. Nancy should share it, but she wouldn't tell Sally May until she had caught Genevieve. Nancy was impressed by Judith's cleverness in thinking of such a thing, but doubtful about Genevieve's guilt.

"Why, she cried and cried; I saw her," Nancy kept repeating. "She couldn't have done it herself."

But Judith was not to be shaken in her resolve, and leaving the study room a little before one o'clock she settled herself in Helen Richard's cupboard to watch. Fortunately for Judith's plan Helen was in the Infirmary with a sore throat and through the keyhole of her cupboard Judith had a clear view of the letter-box.

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At a quarter-to-one Miss Marlowe put out the mail, but no one else came near the box until one o'clock when every one came as usual. Then, when everything was quiet again, Judith slipped out and caught up with the others as they went down to the dining-room. Before dinner was quite over, she asked permission to leave early, and she hid herself once more in the cupboard.

The afternoon seemed interminably long, and as the cupboard was stuffy and close, if it had not been for Nancy's chocolates Judith felt that she could not have kept awake. Her knees ached horribly, for she was in a cramped position, but she never dreamed of giving up, so sure was she that something would happen.

And something did happen.

At a quarter-to-five the mail was put out, and as no one had appeared, Judith was beginning to think that she would have to watch another day, when suddenly she saw Genevieve come swiftly down the corridor, pause for an instant at the box, slip in a letter, and then vanish as quickly as she had come.

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Judith could hardly wait to get the letter into her own hands. Yes, it was the now familiar printed envelope.

"Genevieve Singleton."

What should she do? Whom should she tell? Nancy? Eleanor? Miss Marlowe? No; Catherine was the one most concerned. Judith fairly ran with the precious missive to Catherine's room and fortunately found Catherine there studying. Her story was soon told and Catherine was scarcely less excited than Judith.

"Judy, you are the brickiest brick, and the trumpest trump! Come here and let me shake you. Hasn't it been horrid—such a little thing, but everybody in such a stew," she added in a confidential tone, which was ample reward to Judith. "And now we can be rid of her, the little wretch! Three cheers for the first mate of the 'Jolly Susan!'"

The two of them went arm in arm down to the Captain's room. Judith told her story but so modestly and so simply that Eleanor forgot the necessity of "keeping a fifth-form new girl in her place." [143]

The six o'clock dressing-bell rang before they could do more than decide to have a formal prefects' meeting at which they would confront Genevieve with the letter.

"She'll confess, of course, right away," whispered Catherine scornfully to Judith as they went down to tea; "she's that sort."

And this proved to be a true prophecy. Confronted by the prefects, sitting like judges at their study table, Genevieve turned pale and looked unmistakably guilty, and when Eleanor said in her sternest voice: "You were seen putting this letter, which you addressed to yourself, in the letter-box," Genevieve made no denials; she broke down and confessed to all four letters. Her misery and humiliation were so genuine and so overwhelming that Eleanor wisely sent her to her room in the care of Patricia, who could be trusted not to give Genevieve too much sympathy.

Then the prefects faced the difficult question of the culprit's punishment. Esther wanted a special house meeting called at which Genevieve and her ways could be denounced; Catherine thought that a public apology should be made to Sally May, for Genevieve, it seemed, was responsible for the spreading of the false accusation; Helen remarked that Genevieve would like nothing better than to be the centre of such a romantic picture, and she added shrewdly, "Half the girls would make a martyr of her and think we had been awfully cruel and unfair." [144]

Finally, after much discussion it was decided that Eleanor should consult Miss Marlowe, who must be informed that the culprit had been discovered. Miss Marlowe was interested and sympathetic.

"I'll send her to the Infirmary for a few days," she said; "the child is really not well. She is growing too fast and she is morbid and self-centred. Every one thinks of her as seventeen and she has just turned fifteen. Then after she is back again let the facts be made known about the letters; that's only fair to Sally May and to Catherine; but do it as casually as possible. Nothing is so bad for Genevieve as too much attention—and keep an eye on Judith," she added; "she is worth watching, Eleanor. She and Nancy ought to be prefects next year, so we mustn't let Judith be spoiled over this." [145]

Genevieve was safely tucked up in one of the cheerful Infirmary rooms, and for the time she suffered as only a sensitive, highstrung girl of fifteen can suffer. Her one interest in life at the present time was her emotions; her passionate attachments were usually short-lived, but for the time being they blotted out everything else. Just now she desired Catherine's love and approval with all the force of her undisciplined nature, and, born actress that she was, it was the wish to attract Catherine's admiration, or at least her attention, which had made her Malvolio last term so outstandingly good. She lacked a sense of proportion in all her thinking, and even now that she had been found out, and knew that she would be shamed in the eyes of the whole school, the only thing that mattered to her was that Catherine would have even less to do with her than before. Eleanor's stern voice might have been the buzzing of a fly; Genevieve's eyes had been fixed on Catherine's face and she had read her sentence there.

For two whole days she wanted to die, and then quite suddenly she transferred her affections to a young nurse who was temporarily assisting the school nurse. She made Miss Burton promise her at least three dances for the prefects' dance on Friday night, and she did frantic sums in mental arithmetic trying to calculate whether she had enough in the bank to buy a posy of sweetheart roses for her new idol's adornment. [146]

Genevieve returned to school to find every one discussing the dance, and the anonymous letters seemed entirely forgotten. But Eleanor found her opportunity a day or two later. The usual crowd was about the letter-box at five o'clock, and Eleanor noted with satisfaction that both Sally May and Catherine were there.

"Any for me?" she called to Sally May, who was at the box.

"Not one," was the answer.

"Oh, well," said Eleanor, clearly and distinctly, "of course I can always follow Genevieve's example and *write one to myself*, a printed one, I mean; but no, on second thoughts I don't

believe I shall, they are rather horrid things, don't you think?" And she walked quietly away.

For days afterwards at mail-time Jane, who loved to ride a joke—"till it died of sheer exhaustion," as Peggy said—could always raise a laugh at Genevieve's expense. "Any a-non-y-mous letters for me?" she would inquire plaintively. "No? I really must see about it. I suppose I must attend to it myself."

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CHAPTER XI

FRIENDS

EASTER examinations, although a month away, were already looming darkly on the horizon and Judith settled down to a long and hard pull.

"So much to learn and so little time," she groaned to Nancy. "I'd like to spend all my time on my essay for Miss Marlowe, but there are French and geometry tests next week, which need every minute of study time I have. Why can't the days be forty hours long?"

However, most of the school thought the days quite long enough, and in fact some happy souls had already counted up the number of hours until the holidays began and were ticking them off with great glee.

Judith's delight in lesson hours was steadily increasing. Even in mathematics classes which she disliked, she was beginning to feel the joy of triumphing over difficulties, and she looked forward to her literature lessons as the happiest hours of the week. Loving Nancy as she did, Judith was always trying to share her enjoyment of some beautiful lines of poetry or an interesting scene in the play they were studying, and not always with pronounced success. Nancy's mind was of a practical turn; she was very lukewarm about poetry.

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"Listen to this," Judith had commanded one day as she sat waiting for Nancy to finish dressing for dinner:

"How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank:
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold;
There's not the smallest orb which thou beholdest
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims;

"Isn't that beautiful?"

"Y-e-s," said Nancy, "I suppose it is. The words sound nice when you read them, but I'm sure I haven't a ghost of an idea what it means. Why does he put his ideas into poetry? Why doesn't he say it out plainly so we could all understand it without studying? It's an interesting play, though I believe it is Miss Marlowe who has made it so interesting," she added shrewdly; "I mean if any one had given me the 'Merchant of Venice' to read just like any other book, I'd never have gotten through it. Why can't Shakespeare say things right out plain?"

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This was a poser for Judith. "But," she stammered, "it's like—like music. Music isn't right out plain; it's *meant* to be beautiful."

"Nancy must be joking," thought Judith as she tried to decide why the cherubims were "young-eyed." But no; a few days later Nancy was quite pettish about the preparation Miss Marlowe had set them.

"Find three stanzas of poetry which you could say are 'A joy forever.'"

"How do I know whether they are a joy forever?" she demanded irately of Judith; "I've been hunting for an hour and I can't find any. I don't know what it's all about most of the time."

"But didn't you like 'The Skylark,' and 'The Forsaken Merman,' and 'The Lotus-Eaters,' and 'Ulysses,' and 'The Lady of Shalott' and—oh, Nancy, there are lots to choose from. Let's find some that sound nice and some that have beautiful pictures in them."

They spent a happy hour together, for Judith loved poetry, and it was nice to share it with Nancy.

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Looking back afterwards that seemed to Judith to be the last happy hour she had with Nancy for some time. Judith hardly noticed just when it began, but for some reason or other Nancy and Sally May were together now a great deal of their time.

"Choosing partners" was a sacred rite at York Hill, and now it seemed that Nancy and Sally May were always partners for walks, for church, for the symphony concert, and for Miss Meredith's dinner-party.

This last was a great disappointment to Judith. Miss Meredith's dinner-parties were very special treats; about once a fortnight she entertained half a dozen girls at her own dinner-table and, when Nancy had told Judith about these parties, Judith had taken it for granted that they would be partners if they happened to be invited together. And now Sally May was going with Nancy! An ugly little spirit of jealousy began to whisper in Judith's mind. Top Self listened to his hints and surmises: "Nancy doesn't care about you any more; she and Sally May have secrets from you; perhaps they were laughing at you last night when you heard them whispering." Deep-Down Self made protests, "Why couldn't Nancy have two good friends? Of course she still loves you; you can't expect her to be always with you."

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But Judith's heart was sore, and a teasing remark of Sally May's as they were dressing for the dinner entirely spoilt the evening for her. Sally May came in to ask Judith to help her with a difficult fastener, and she surveyed Judith's reflection in the mirror while Judith snapped the refractory dome.

"You look stunning, Judy; I'm sure that if Tim could see you he would return the compliment and say that you looked 'just lovely,'" she added wickedly.

The colour flowed over Judith's face and then receded leaving her quite white. So Nancy had told Sally May about her foolish speech in the Christmas holidays! How horrid of her! How mean! Judith had almost forgotten about Tim by this time, but her love for Nancy had steadily grown, and Nancy had been making fun of her behind her back! Judith gave herself up to angry thoughts; almost she hated Nancy; she wanted to go away, to be alone, to hide some place; and instead she must go to this miserable dinner and perhaps sit just across the table from Nancy. The thought of Nancy's disloyalty hurt; it hurt horribly.

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Judith finished dressing, put on her wraps, and went down to the sitting-room to wait for the others. To her disgust she found Georgia Fiske there, Georgia whom she positively disliked for no reason at all and who looked up at her now with a beaming smile.

"I was just thinking about you, Judy," she said, "and wondering if you had a partner. Do sit beside me. I'd have asked you before, but I didn't know you were going till just a few minutes ago."

Poor Judith!—there was apparently no escape; she must sit beside Georgia, and listen to her silly remarks. Judith was in no mood to be fair to any one; she hated Georgia, she hated Sally May, she hated Nancy.

The dinner-party was a failure as far as Judith was concerned. Miss Meredith, stately and dignified in black velvet and beautiful old lace, was a charming hostess, and the girls were soon talking naturally and easily. Judith looked down the table at Nancy; she didn't want to look at her and yet she must. Nancy, radiating friendliness and good-humor, smiled at Judith as much as to say, "Isn't it jolly?" But Judith hardened her heart and pretended that she didn't see her. The ice-cream was delicious and the tiny cups of black coffee afterwards made them feel very grown-up, and every one but Judith seemed perfectly happy.

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"What's the matter, Judy?" whispered Nancy, as they went into the drawing-room, for Judith not only felt miserable, she looked miserable—so much so that Miss Meredith made a mental note to ask Miss Marlowe to keep an eye on her and find out if anything were troubling her.

"Nothing's the matter," said Judith coldly, turning away and calling out to Frances to wait for her.

Nancy felt rebuffed, but loyally sought to find excuses for her friend. "She's been working too hard over that Jessica essay," she said to herself; "she looks awfully tired."

Then followed a miserable week. Judith was both jealous and angry; she felt that in telling Sally May what she had said about Tim, Nancy had betrayed their friendship. It was true that Nancy and Sally May were much together; they were making scenery for the Studio Play and were spending many spare hours upstairs working under Miss Ashwell's direction. Judith knew about the play, but she was too angry to be reasonable, so she shut herself up in her books and avoided Nancy as much as possible.

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Nancy knew quite well now that something had come between Judith and her, and she made two more attempts to find out what was wrong so that if possible things might be righted, but each time Judith rebuffed her, and Nancy was too busy to spend much time coaxing. Sally May, who was held to be a wise little person, told Nancy not to worry.

"Judy'll be all right; she is just cross and tired. I really can't see why she works so hard."

Sally May, it may be remarked, would never work very hard as long as she lived: she wasn't that kind.

"Did you hear Judith give Jane what-for the other day?" she continued. "Jane went into Judy's cubicle with an orange peel and an old piece of rubber cut in the shape of a heart, and called out, 'What price for these personal relics of our beloved Captain Catherine? Her pretty foot has pressed this piece of rubber; it can be conveniently sewed to the camisole and worn next the heart. Her pretty lips once touched this piece of peel!'—and she dangled the peel right in front of Judy's eyes. 'Get out of my room quick,' said our polite little Judy, 'and take your garbage with you!' Jane said it gave her a nasty turn. It's my belief that Judy wants to come first in history or

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something, and she wants to be left alone to study."

Nancy was only half-convinced, but the easiest thing was to accept Sally May's explanation. Nancy had many friends and she was able to love them all. She found it hard to understand Judith's exclusive attitude. Judith wanted but one friend at a time; she might admire Josephine and Sally May and enjoy Jane's pertness and Joyce's cleverness and adore Catherine's beauty, but Nancy was her friend, her pal, and she wanted Nancy to feel the same about her. But Nancy was differently made, and although Judith had come to be perhaps her best friend in the school, she was able to feel genuine affection for many other girls and would have been incapable of Judith's passionate jealousy because of her affection for some one else.

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Meanwhile Judith's hurt decreased not at all. It may take a poet to sing adequately of "the wounds by friendship made," but a sixteen-year-old schoolgirl, if she be blessed or cursed by her fairy godmothers with a sensitive soul, can feel those wounds and feel them bitterly.

The after-dinner half-hour of rest had been a time when the crew of the "Jolly Susan" had shut their door on the outside world and had taken their ease. Visiting without permission at this hour was not usually allowed, but Catherine was often quite willing that Judith and Nancy should be in each other's rooms, for they could talk quite quietly and made no disturbance. Now Judith could hear Nancy in Sally's room, and this was more than she could bear. Instead of coming up to her room directly after lunch, she asked to have a practising period put on her time-table from two to two-thirty, and the odd fifteen minutes before the two o'clock bell rang, which was legitimate time for visiting, she was spending in other girls' rooms; in fact Judith was beginning to find out that there were other interesting and lovable girls in the school besides those select few in the "Jolly Susan."

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There was Rosamond, for instance, whom Judith had at first regarded with mild contempt because she was greedy, but Rosamond, she found out, was aware of her besetting sin and this Lenten season was disciplining herself strictly, and no one could be more sympathetic if one were in trouble than the same Rosamond; and there was Joyce Hewson whom Judith had thought proud, but who seemed unapproachable because she was really shy and very conscious of her unusual height; and then there was Florence Newman who had seemed at the beginning of the term so unresponsive and dull. Florence and Josephine had become friends, drawn together by love for their far-away Western homes, and dropping into Florence's room one day with Josephine, Judith had been entranced by the tales of mountain climbing and hunting which Florence had to tell. Florence had scarcely seen a girl of her own age until she dropped suddenly into the hurly-burly of York Hill, and it was no wonder that a painful shyness had made her seem ungracious and almost rude. She simply hadn't known how to meet the advances of these kind, jolly girls.

And then there was Miss Ashwell. Miss Ashwell had slipped on the ice a couple of months before and had sprained her ankle so badly that, although she was able now to get up and down to the studio, she walked slowly and with a cane. Judith got into the way of knocking at Miss Ashwell's door after lunch to see if she could do any errand for her. Sometimes she carried her books up to the studio, or ran downstairs to see if there were any word of the model who was to come for the two-thirty class, and sometimes she went in and sat in Miss Ashwell's comfortable chair and felt rested and happy, for Miss Ashwell seemed to possess some curious secret of healing.

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Judith was a beauty-lover, and if any one had asked her why she liked Miss Ashwell, she would probably have replied promptly, "Because she is so pretty." Miss Ashwell *was* pretty, with her clear blue eyes, gold-brown hair, and a skin so fair and soft, that it made one think of apple-blossoms; and she had charm, that indefinable something, which like a magnet drew others to her.

The week after the miserable dinner-party was rainy and cold, and something of the grey dulness out-of-doors seemed to have penetrated within. For Judith, at least, the mornings dragged heavily; everything seemed to have lost its flavour. At recess she would look over at Nancy, who seemed to be having a jolly time with Sally May and Joyce, and want to join them and laugh, too. There wasn't any reason in the world why she shouldn't do so except the nasty little spirit which had taken possession of her. But she hardened her heart—and was quite miserable in consequence.

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Towards the end of the week, one day after lunch she stood hesitating for a moment at the head of the stairs. Should she go down to the "Jolly Susan," or visit with Florence or Miss Ashwell. The thought of Miss Ashwell was comforting, her room was the "homiest" place Judith knew, so she tapped at the door of the pleasant little brown room at the end of the corridor.

Miss Ashwell was knitting to-day. She was nearly always knitting for some one else, thought Judith, as she idly watched the needles flashing. Knitting made her think of Red Cross work, and that led straight to the awful thought of a Current Events test shortly coming off. While they were to be examined on the whole term's work, part of the test was the writing of an essay on a subject chosen from a list of three. Judith had decided to write on "Red Cross Work in Italy." Her father's brother, Brian, was a brilliant engineer who had been loaned to Italy by the British Government, and Judith naturally knew more about the war in Italy than anywhere else. She would have to get Uncle Brian's letters out and piece together the bits of information he had given her. She and her father had read several magazine articles last summer, but she couldn't even remember what magazines they were. Oh, dear, what a lot of work it would be! How tired she was! If she could

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just stay here and sleep all afternoon! She heaved a big gusty sigh. Miss Ashwell looked up quickly.

"What's wrong, Judy, dear?" Miss Ashwell never seemed to be in a hurry herself, a miraculous achievement at York Hill. Judith told her tale of woe, sure of sympathy.

Miss Ashwell seemed even more interested than usual.

"I believe I can help you, Judy," she said, her cheeks flushing; "just hand me my despatch-case from the table." She opened it and took out snapshots, pictures cut from magazines, and several descriptive articles dealing with the subject in hand. [162]

Judith looked her amazement. It seemed almost too good to be true. Miss Ashwell smiled and her cheeks grew pinker than ever.

"I'm especially interested in Italian work, Judy—because I had a friend out there during the war. He sent me these snapshots. I'll show them to you now and you may take the magazine articles with you. The Red Cross did such magnificent work there that I don't wonder Miss Kingston chose that as one of your subjects."

"Oh, Miss Ashwell, it's just like the manna in the wilderness," gasped Judith,—"I mean I'm so grateful," she explained incoherently, "although the Jews were not always properly grateful, were they? But I am. I didn't see *how* I could hunt up all those references with all I have to do."

Miss Ashwell showed her the pictures, but Judith's mind was divided between interest at the skilful ways in which difficulties of transit in the mountains had been overcome and interest in Miss Ashwell. Was it possible that Miss Ashwell was interested in a soldier-man the way girls were? Of course, she wasn't so *very* old, perhaps twenty-two, and as Judith ran off with her treasure she kept saying to herself, "Wouldn't it be funny—he looks awfully nice in the snaps—she's a perfect dear, anyway, and I'll get at that Current Events prep. right away." [163]

Next day Miss Marlowe handed back the "Jessica" essays to her Five A class in English composition. Five A looked glum as they read their marks and the somewhat caustic comments written in their exercise books. Judith flushed as she read: "Neatly and carefully written, Judith, but hardly interesting. You were not asked to give a résumé of the play, but a character sketch of Jessica. What do you know about Jessica now that you didn't know before you wrote your essay? How have you enlarged your knowledge of human nature?"

How, indeed? Judith felt distinctly aggrieved. What impossibly hard things Miss Marlowe expected them to do! She had worked hard over that essay and had looked for a little praise, but instead here was Miss Marlowe thumping the desk and telling them they never used their brains. Five A sat at attention. Miss Marlowe, indignant, was apt to be interesting, but no one desired to be the luckless offender against whom her Irish wit might be directed. [164]

She gave them a lively two minutes on the foolishness of not using the brains they had, and then came down to the subject in hand.

"You didn't try to *understand* Jessica; you knew that her conduct was unfilial, to say the least, and don't imagine that I am forgetting the wrong things she did, or that I want you to approve of her. I *don't*, but I do want you to try to understand. That's just the reason why you were assigned this lesson. Only one of you made the effort to re-create Shylock's home. Read your essay, Florence, please."

The class looked surprised as Florence, white with shyness, began to read, falteringly at first and then more convincingly. Every one, with the exception perhaps of Judith, was surprised at the excellence of the essay. Florence Newman, that quiet, shy, stiff, little thing! They had expected that Joyce or Phyllis or Judith, or even Frances, would be held up to them as models, but not Florence.

"Run down to the common room, Nancy. You're nearest the door; and bring me Lamb's 'Life and Letters,' a big red book lying on my table." And then, turning to the class, "Now, never mind about Jessica, though I hope you see the difference between your way of approach and Florence's, but remember this, it's far, far easier to criticize, to judge, and to condemn, than it is to sympathize and to understand; it's the little people of the world who do the judging; it's the big people who do the understanding." [165]

"Thank you, Nancy. Now listen to the words of a wise woman, Mary Lamb. What do you know about Mary Lamb, Frances? Yes, she wrote many of the 'Tales from Shakespeare,' and she lived with her brother Charles and was his greatest friend, and the friend of his friends. She is writing to a friend of hers who has been confessing to actions which Mary might just as easily have condemned as you condemned Jessica's. But this is what she writes:

You will smile when I tell you I think myself the only woman in the world who could live with a brother's wife and make a real friend of her—partly from a knack I know I have of looking into people's real characters and never expecting them to act out of it. Never expecting another to do as I would in the same case. I do not expect you or want you to be otherwise than you are. I love you for the good that is in you.

"There's wisdom," concluded Miss Marlowe, "and next time you find yourselves saying, 'I [166]

wouldn't have been so mean or horrid or selfish,' just ask yourself, how do you know you wouldn't, and what has that got to do with it, and what do you know about it, anyway? Are you showing sympathetic insight or merely conceit? You'll meet plenty of Jessicas who are easier to condemn than to understand. Don't lose your friends by a lack of loving understanding. Be grateful for them; they are your most precious possessions. Love them for the best that is in them.

"There, that's a longer sermon than usual. Take your pens now and write that sentence from Mary Lamb's letter at the bottom of your essay, and after I have dictated it make your corrections and jot down the new things about Jessica that you haven't noted before."

Five A heaved a sigh of relief. Miss Marlowe was through with them once more. There was the usual clattering of inkwells and requests for new pens, and then Miss Marlowe went to her desk, and according to custom one by one the class brought up their books to receive her suggestions and criticisms.

Judith wrote her corrections mechanically and slowly, but her mind was working swiftly. That's what she had been doing, judging Nancy, saying, '*I* wouldn't have done it'; criticizing, not trying to understand, and she had judged herself, condemned herself to do without Nancy and the precious possession of Nancy's friendship. Darling Nancy! She might have been loving her all this time for the good in her, her sweetness, her unfailing kindness, her absolute squareness, her dearness.

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Judith's eyes were shining as she carried up her book to Miss Marlowe, and the fervency with which she said, "Thank you," when Miss Marlowe had finished her criticism, brought a happy smile to Miss Marlowe's own eyes.

"That child's got the idea," she said to herself; "Well, if *one* seed falls into good ground it's worth while—splendidly worth while."

The recess bell rang and Five A lost no time filing out to the corridor and thence to tuck shop and gymnasium, but Judith was delayed by her duties as monitress and Nancy was not to be seen when she reached the corridor. Down to the tuck shop sped Judith.

"Seen Nancy?" she asked Jane who was rapidly consuming two large buns and an ice-cream cone.

"Gone up to her room, I think," said Jane.

Upstairs fled Judith without waiting for permission and found Nancy just leaving the "Jolly Susan."

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"Oh, Nancy, I have been hunting for you everywhere."

"Oh, Judy, I was just looking for you. After what Miss Marlowe said—about our friends—I didn't want to wait another minute feeling that you were still angry with me. Do tell me what I did and let me tell you how sorry I am."

"And I was looking for you, Nancy, dear—to tell you how horrid I'd been. It was just a little thing not worth mentioning now, but I didn't wait to try to understand. Oh, Nancy, I've missed you so!"

And they kissed and were friends.

"I wouldn't teach English composition for all the world," said Miss Hilton, eyeing the big pile of sixth-form books which Miss Marlowe was attacking late that evening.

"And *I* wouldn't take all the world *not* to teach English composition," retorted Miss Marlowe proudly. "Besides," she added with true Irish lucidity, "it isn't English composition I'm teaching. It's Life, and it's the biggest job in the world."

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CHAPTER XII

EASTER HOLIDAYS

THE last two weeks of the Easter term were a long and a hard pull. Some of the girls were spurred to study by a remembrance of the reception of the Christmas report at home; father's sarcastic remarks, and mother's distress. In Five A, which was considered a good working form, competition was very keen, and most of the form were putting forth their best efforts to stand high in the term's examination lists. Judith coveted a first place in English literature, partly because of the joy of triumphing, partly because of the pleasure her success would give her parents, and partly because she wanted to show Miss Marlowe how much she had appreciated her classes.

This term-end there was no distracting play to interfere with studying, and Judith had a chance to do her best. She tried to look unconcerned when on breaking-up day Form Five A stood up in Big Hall while Miss Meredith read their general proficiency list. "First, Joyce Hewson; Second,

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Judith Benson." There was such a buzzing in Judith's ears that she didn't hear the next few names. Second! Wouldn't Daddy be pleased! Nancy squeezed her hand. Dear Nancy! and she wasn't even listening to hear where Nancy was placed. "Tenth, Nancy Nairn," read Miss Meredith.

"Bully for you and pretty good for me," said Nancy when they had led out of Hall.

"Congrats., Judy," said Phyllis heartily. "Joyce had better watch out next term."

Judith glowed—fancy being ahead of Phyllis. There was a crowd around the bulletin board: "The subject lists," said Phyllis excitedly, and she and Judith fairly ran down the corridor and eagerly scanned the board. "Five A, English Literature, 1. Judith Benson, Phyllis Lovell, equal. 2. Joyce Hewson." No need to congratulate each other, but you may be sure they did.

"It *is* nice to get what one wants," philosophized a very happy Judith as she finished packing her suitcase. "I wonder if anything is nicer."

Aunt Nell had sent her a little note the day before telling her to ask several of the girls to tea who were staying in school for the holidays. "The first afternoon is a horrid time for the girls who are left in," she wrote; "perhaps we can save a few of them from homesickness. I'll come for you in the car at two-thirty." [171]

Judith had a delightful time choosing her guests; Josephine and Sally May, of course—Nancy had gone home—and Florence and Joyce; but what about Genevieve Singleton? Judith knew that Genevieve was disappointed about an expected invitation for Easter week, for she had been loud in her lamentations. "I'd better ask her," thought Judith; "she doesn't know that I played detective, and she's sure to feel badly when she sees the others going; her pride'll be hurt."

So Genevieve was invited, and it was a merry little party that gathered in the front hall. They weren't going very far, to be sure, but they were going away anyhow, if it was only for the afternoon. Aunt Nell took them for a run through the park and out into the country before they went home for tea.

They had a jolly tea-party; Aunt Nell poured tea for them, supplied them with plenty of toast and muffins, sandwiches and cake, and then very soon vanished. [172]

"I knew they would talk more freely if I were not there," she said afterwards to Judith, "and unless things have changed very much since I was at York, I can give a pretty good guess as to what you talked about. Confess now," as Judith blushed a little under Aunt Nell's laughing quizzical eyes, "didn't you discuss every teacher on the staff from the cut of her Sunday coat to the cut of her Monday temper? Of course you did."

And of course they had. Genevieve convulsed them by a dramatic representation of a stormy scene between herself and Madame Philippe; then Miss Evans's new evening frock, Miss Marlowe's incomprehensible taste in preferring Jane Austen to Dickens, Miss Langton's terrifying sarcasm, Miss Ashwell's sweet new sweater coat, all were discussed with an enormous amount of interest and delight.

Next day life was "flat, stale, and unprofitable." Judith didn't realize how tired she was; mentally and emotionally she had been keyed up to a very high pitch during the last two or three months and now had come the inevitable reaction. No wonder she was dull and miserable. But next morning the sun was shining brightly, there was a fresh, clean-washed feeling in the air, and as Judith stood at the open casement window in the dining-room waiting for the others to come down to breakfast, she saw to her joy that the maple trees in the garden were beginning to put out their tiny red flowers. Was spring really coming after all this dismal weather? Judith's spirits went up with a bound. Oh, if summer were only here and one could stay out-of-doors! [173]

The others came in to breakfast; Uncle Tom buried himself in his newspaper and ate at intervals; Doris, as pretty as a picture in her pink gingham frock, began a long monologue about a dolls' tea-party she had had in a dream last night; Bobby busied himself with his porridge; Aunt Nell cooked the eggs in a little electric grill; and Judith found she had plenty to do attending to the electric toaster and her porridge at the same time. Usually Lizzie brought in a plate of hot toast and then some one at the table made additional pieces on the toaster, but this morning there was no supply to begin with.

Judith chatted happily about the plans for the week: Aunt Nell mustn't forget that she had promised to take her to do her spring shopping; Daddy had sent a cheque; she did hope there would be a letter from Nancy this morning saying that she could come for the last week-end; and did Aunt Nell remember, too, that she had invited Miss Ashwell for dinner on Thursday? Judith noticed that Aunt Nell's smile was somewhat forced. Was anything wrong? Didn't Aunt Nell want Nancy, after all? How dreadful! She would have to ask her after breakfast. [174]

Uncle Tom finished his breakfast with a rush and then, gathering up letters and papers, made for the hall. Aunt Nell, Bobby, and Doris were kissed good-bye, and he was gone with a great banging of doors.

Aunt Nell came back rather slowly into the dining-room, folded up Uncle Tom's table napkin, pushed back Bobby's chair and then said tersely, "Lizzie has gone."

"Gone!" said Judith stupidly; "gone where?"

"I don't know that I care very much where," said Aunt Nell; "the point is that she has gone. She gave me notice a week ago, and I've been trying desperately hard ever since to get some one else, but I've had no answers to advertisements. Lizzie just sent a note saying that she had decided to get married at once and that she and 'her friend' had gone to Buffalo for the holiday and she wouldn't be coming back here. I did think she'd stay her month, at least, after all the time she's been here—but I suppose he had a holiday and overpersuaded her. I don't feel that virtue has been rewarded either," she added ruefully, "for if I hadn't given her all of Easter Monday for herself she might be here to wash the breakfast dishes, instead of which you and I must do them."

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"Instead of which *I'll* do them Aunt Nell," Judith said laughingly. "Dishes aren't anything. Come on, Doris, let's see how quickly we can do them. Don't worry, Aunt Nell. I'm not Lizzie, of course, but I'm just spoiling for something to do." And she gave Aunt Nell a reassuring hug and kiss.

"You're a little brick, Judy—of course we'll manage. I'll 'phone for Mrs. Webster to come this morning instead of this afternoon to look after Hugh, and then you and I can do the rest."

But alack! Mrs. Webster's sister answered the 'phone—she was very sorry, her sister was in bed with tonsillitis and she had just sent for the doctor—it would be a week or two, anyway, before she could come back to look after the baby.

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Here was news, indeed—Bobby and Hugh were work enough for one person at any time. Baby Hugh had a cold, and was cross and fretful because a certain tooth was reluctant about making its first appearance.

They had a busy day. Aunt Nell went out in the afternoon to try her luck at various employment agencies and Judith took the children for a walk. She rather enjoyed it at first, but after three-year-old Bobby had demanded the repetition of the story of "The Three Bears" for the sixth time, and had fiercely resented the changing of a phrase with "Dat's not in the tory," Judith began to feel tired and cross.

Doris was very little trouble, for she was, as usual, entirely engrossed in an endless game of her own invention. She furnished each house they passed with a large family and gave every member a name and occupation: thus the big white house at the corner where Judge Wilton lived was peopled in Doris's imagination with Mr. and Mrs. Black and their eight children, Mary and Martha, Robert and Thomas, Geoffrey and Susan, Billy and Minnie. Judith could hear her describing them. "Mary is a cook, she writes nice letters and makes lemon pies; Martha is a nice girl, she has yellow hair and blue eyes; Robert is tall and strong, he is a coachman and squints with his left eye"; and so on and so on. A few families of this size absorbed Doris's attention for hours at a time.

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Judith took most comfort out of Baby Hugh; he was so sweet and so kissable, his eyes so blue and his cheeks so like wild roses that sometimes Judith felt that she would just have to take a little bite out of the adorable crease at the back of his neck.

The first of the precious two holiday weeks was gone before either Aunt Nell or Judith had accomplished any of the things they had meant to do, and the good times, especially Nancy's visit, which Judith had looked forward to with such pleasure, seemed to have vanished into thin air.

There was no doubt that Aunt Nell needed her, for there was endless dusting and dishwashing to do, and some one always had to be with the children.

Judith was making gravy one evening—a task she detested—when Uncle Tom came into the kitchen looking particularly pleased with himself.

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"You're late, dear," was Aunt Nell's greeting; "please hurry; I haven't had time to give Bobby his supper, he'll have to have it with us, and I'm afraid Baby isn't asleep yet."

"Hurrah, hurrah!" said Uncle Tom—very irrelevantly, Judith thought indignantly; gravy-making time was no occasion for being funny, but Uncle Tom was like that, you never knew.

"It takes a man to tackle a job," said Uncle Tom complacently as he carved the roast—"you wouldn't let me wait to tell you some good news I had brought home. Perhaps we'd better wait now until dinner is over," he continued. But of course he couldn't wait—modesty was not Uncle Tom's strong point. "Well, if you must know, as I said it takes a man to tackle a job. I just mentioned to Stewart that we were in a fix, couldn't get a cook for love or money. 'This time for love and money you can,' said Stewart. 'My wife and I are going down to Bermuda to-morrow and we didn't quite know what to do with our Chinese boy—Mrs. S. had promised to lend him to her sister, and quite suddenly her sister decided to go with us.' So there you are," finished Uncle Tom superbly—"he arrives to-morrow, tip-top cook, takes complete charge of kitchen arrangements. Not bad, eh?"

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Not bad! Aunt Nell almost wept for joy. If it hadn't been that she had had to spend so much time hunting for help, the housekeeping would have been nothing, she declared stoutly to Uncle Tom later, with her head tucked under his chin. She did weep a tear or two into his favorite tie. "Judith has been splendid, and of course we could have managed perfectly; it was the time I spent going from one bureau to another and following up this trail and the other that has tired us both."

"Strikes me," said Uncle Tom, "that Judy couldn't have tackled the pots and pans last year the way she does now."

"Of course she couldn't," said Aunt Nell, trying vainly to repair the damages Uncle Tom had done to her hair in his desire to show his sympathy—he inevitably wound the loose strands of her hair tightly around her ears. "Judy has had to tackle all sorts of things this year, more things than she ever dreamed of, and she's caught the York Hill spirit of putting through any sort of job that her hands find to do."

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"Look here," said Uncle Tom, "wait until I get settled on the Chesterfield before we begin on York Hill. I often wonder how I manage to get on at the office without having had the inestimable privilege of being trained at York Hill Ladies' Academy!"

Yip arrived next morning at the promised time—it seemed too good to be true—bland, smiling, competent, and one of the first things Aunt Nell did was to send a telegram to Nancy inviting her to come just as soon as her mother would spare her. The answer came almost before Aunt Nell and Judith had finished planning their shopping expedition for the next day—Mrs. Nairn and Nancy were coming up to Toronto for a week's visit with some relatives from Boston who were passing through on their way to Vancouver, and Nancy "accepted with pleasure" for the last few days of the holidays.

Judith had a happy day buying her spring "trousseau"—Nancy had cautioned her to lay in a goodly supply of white skirts and middies for the "sports" term—and then came the looked-for morning when she waited for the Montreal express that was to bring her this best friend—whom she hadn't met a short seven months before and whom now she was sure she couldn't live without!

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Seven months ago! Was it really less than a year ago that she herself had come into this very station feeling a little bit frightened of the new life at York Hill? Judith smiled happily. How different things were now—but that must be the train. Her heart beat quickly as she scanned the faces of the incoming travellers. Yes, there was Mrs. Nairn and there was Nancy's adorable little self. Oh, how good it was to see her again!

Breakfast over and Mrs. Nairn escorted to her cousins' hotel, the two chums settled down to a long morning's gossip. So many things can take place in two weeks! Judith had to hear every single thing that had happened to Nancy since they parted, and Nancy, every single thing that had happened to Judith.

"Jack thinks that is one of the funniest things about girls' friendships," observed Nancy after she had received a very full account of the two weeks' doings, "our wanting to know *everything* about our friends; he thinks it's awfully queer, but I think it's queer not to. Why, when he and Tom meet on Monday he'll say, 'Hello, Tom;' and Tom will say, 'Hello, Jack,' and then they'll begin talking about the state of the cricket crease very likely."

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Nancy was very full of all the delightful events of next term; there would be the Cup Matches first of all, and the teams of the various houses were discussed "up and down and round and about"; then would come Field Day. "I'm not sure," said Nancy, "just which is the nicest day of all at school; sometimes I think it's the day of the Reunion suppers when the Old Girls come back, or Prize-giving Day, or the day of the final Cup Match, and then when Field Day comes I'm perfectly certain it's the best of all."

Then there was the Reunion play to discuss; it was to be "Pride and Prejudice" this year and Judith had been reading the story during the holidays. Would Catherine be the heroine or would Eleanor be chosen, and what about Genevieve for one of the other parts? She would make a good Mrs. Bennet. Of course she could act splendidly, but still—Judith expressed her astonishment at Genevieve's returning popularity. "After what she did I don't see how some of the girls can admire her so much," she said to Nancy.

"But popularity's queer, anyhow," said Nancy; "look at Rosamond Fraser. I suppose some people would say that Rosamond was one of the most popular girls in the house, and we know it's because she always has such good 'eats' to give away. And then there's Eleanor, we know she's popular because she is such a brick. There ought to be another word for *her* kind of popularity. Genevieve is clever, you know, and she's awfully funny," she continued, smiling as she remembered Genevieve mimicking Miss Langton in a temper; "anybody who is amusing can be popular," she concluded sagely.

Judith was impressed with Nancy's wisdom. "Well, but—Miss Ashwell and Miss Marlowe are popular, too, aren't they?"

"Yes," said Nancy; "but it's not the same kind of popularity as Miss Morton's. Miss Morton is



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EVERY SINGLE THING THAT
HAD HAPPENED TO NANCY
SINCE THEY PARTED**

like Rosamond; the West House girls say you can always get a special permission from her if you're sweet enough to her. She positively likes 'slush.'"

"And Miss Marlowe is like Eleanor," assented Judith thoughtfully. "Nancy, which do you like the best, Miss Ashwell or Miss Marlowe?"

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But this was a question not to be easily settled; they spent a most enjoyable though perhaps not highly profitable morning discussing this and various other items of burning interest; they loved to gossip, as all schoolgirls—and most of the rest of us—do, but it was harmless enough and never unkind.

Aunt Nell, apparently, was determined that Judith should have a gay week-end, for after luncheon she warned them that this was to be their last quiet morning. Yip, it seemed, was so proud of his skill in concocting wonderful salads and ices, that he had no objection to company—and Judith was to invite any one she liked for dinner to-morrow, and they were to lunch with Mrs. Nairn downtown and go to a matinee, and Aunt Nell would be delighted to give them a tea-party the day before school opened.

They had the jolliest time possible; Judith loved playing hostess, and *carte-blanche* for a dinner and a tea-party was a great treat; and to have Nancy to discuss everything with—"just bliss" Judith confided to Aunt Nell.

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And if holidays *will* end, it wasn't hard to go back to the "Jolly Susan" and look forward to the good times which were promised in "the best term of all."

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CHAPTER XIII

THE MESSENGER

"COME on, do, Nancy," urged Judith; "it's on Friday, there is nothing else doing and it's sure to be interesting, for there are to be pictures of the work in Italy and in Russia. Miss Ashwell's going to take us. I'm going to be her partner," she added importantly.

"Well, that settles it," said Nancy; "you and your Miss Ashwell! I won't go if I can't go with you. It's a long walk from the University to the cars and I'm tired of Red Cross, anyway."

Judith and Jane were curled up on Nancy's couch eating chocolates; Nancy had just had a birthday and Jack had sent her a gratifyingly large box of candy with the injunction to go "fifty-fifty" with Judith and thus save herself from a bilious attack.

"I can't see why you are so keen on another Red Cross meeting, Judy. I should think you'd be tired of the subject after writing that long essay for Miss Kingston—but I forgot about your Uncle Brian.—Get off my foot, Jane, do."

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Jane selected another chocolate, and said with a chuckle:

"You should have been in our French division this morning! *Dear* Miss Watson, how she hates me."

"I don't wonder," said Catherine, who was on the window-seat mending a lace ruffle. "Don't tell me that you've been tormenting her again."

"Certainly; we always do at the beginning of term, though we get tired of it after a while. We had verbs this morning with lots of *r*'s in them—*accourir* and *servir* and *reconnaître*—so I winked to Althea and Maggie and we had a dandy time. It saves lots of work," she added reflectively. "Every time Miss Watson rolled an *r*, one of us put up a hand and asked to have the word repeated. We just couldn't understand her. We made it last for most of the period, and the poor dear didn't get to the exercise at all."

"I'd have sent you packing, the whole lot of you, to Miss Meredith. You deserve it, and then I guess you'd be sorry, you little worms!"

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"Oh, would you?" retorted Jane shrewdly; "not if you had reported us all two days ago for setting a metronome going in class. That *was* fun! Miss Meredith is getting tired of Miss Watson's returned lessons and bad marks, though she gave us a jolly good scolding, I must say. No, I think we are pretty safe for this week." And she chuckled reminiscently.

"Choose some one your own size, Jane," suggested Catherine, hunting for a piece of chocolate ginger; "'t isn't sporting to pick on Miss Watson like that."

"Well, why not?" demanded Jane. "She isn't on her job—she's just plain stupid—I don't believe she ever thinks about anything."

"Well, you're wrong there—she's just crazy about reading—she reads everything—her room is full of books, and Miss Ashwell says she knows more about Russian literature than most people in

this country. None of you children been bothering Miss Ashwell, have you?"

There was an indignant denial, and Judith, remembering that she had seen her friend and comforter looking very much as if she herself stood in need of comforting, asked quickly:

"Why do you ask, Cathy?"

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"Oh, well, she seems bothered," was the rather vague answer.

Judith ran down to Miss Ashwell's room at visiting time that night, and tapping at the door put in her head and enquired, "May I come in?"

"Not just now, Judith," said Miss Ashwell, "I'm busy."

Judith with a mumbled apology disappeared at once, but not before she had seen that Miss Ashwell's busy-ness had to do apparently with the snapshot of a handsome soldier propped against the reading-lamp—a despatch case lay open on the floor beside her and there were letters strewn over the table and in Miss Ashwell's lap.

"Now, wasn't that too bad of me to rush in like that," thought Judith, as she hurried away. "I wonder if that's the picture she showed me the other day—she was probably going to write to him—wouldn't it be exciting?"

Miss Ashwell looked complacently next day at her line of forty girls as they were ushered into reserved seats near the front of Convocation Hall. They might some of them look like young hoydens in middy blouses and gymnasium bloomers—which costume most of them affected during school hours—but now, in their trim serge suits and *chic* little hats, they were a credit to their chaperon, and as it was considered bad form to misbehave "in line" at church or concert or lecture, Miss Ashwell settled down and gave herself up to the luxury of her own thoughts.

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Judith, sitting beside her and looking eagerly at the portraits of founders and benefactors, decided that they could not be very happy thoughts, for she heard one soft little sigh and then another. Miss Ashwell was unhappy again! Something pathetic about the droop of her lips made Judith feel sudden anger against the unknown cause of Miss Ashwell's melancholy. It might, of course, have been a large millinery bill, or indigestion, or a blouse that wouldn't fit, but Judith's romantic soul would have none of these. It must be that man in the Italian snapshots. How pretty Miss Ashwell had looked that day when she had showed Judith the Italian pictures! How her eyes had deepened until they were almost violet, and how her cheeks had glowed! Perhaps he was an unfaithful lover, perhaps he had married an Italian girl, or even a German in a sudden impulse of pity, and now could not come home to Canada to face his old love. No, not married, just betrothed, because of course he must come home, and Judith was already staging Miss Ashwell's wedding when the President and faculty members, together with distinguished guests and officials of the Red Cross Society, took their places on the dais.

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Judith leaned forward eagerly. How delightfully the red and blue splashes of colour of the professors' academic hoods showed up against the old-oak panelling. That must be an Oxford hood, and there was an Edinburgh one. Daddy had showed her one like that—but the President was speaking. He regretted that Dr. Johnson, who was to have lectured this afternoon, was unavoidably absent through illness, but a distinguished graduate of their own, who had been with the Intelligence Staff in Italy and had won the Military Cross because of a particularly brilliant piece of work there, who had been a prisoner in Russia for nearly a year, and who had recently been engaged in relief work in Serbia, had been prevailed upon to take Dr. Johnson's place. He had much pleasure in introducing Major David Phillips.

The York Hill line bent forward eagerly—an M.C.—a Russian prisoner—name David—David was a favourite name just then—one of their own University boys, wounded, tall, thin, dark hair turning grey at the temples in the most approved fashion! How satisfactorily romantic!

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But just how romantic, not one of the forty guessed but Judith. She alone heard the quick intake of Miss Ashwell's breath, she alone saw the flood of colour sweep over Miss Ashwell's face, she could almost hear the thumpings of Miss Ashwell's heart, and Judith guessed at once that the here who was being enthusiastically applauded was the hero of the Italian snapshots, and Miss Ashwell's face was sufficient confirmation. How thrilling, how wonderful! He was home again, Miss Ashwell would be happy, everybody would be happy! Probably they would be married right away—she had forgotten the imaginary German bride—and maybe Miss Ashwell would let her help her in her shopping. She could go down on Saturday mornings. Aunt Nell knew an awfully good shop for linens, an Irish shop.

"Say, Judy," whispered Frances, "isn't that your Uncle Tom in the back row on the platform?"

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Yes, it was. Judith blushed with vexation. Why couldn't Uncle Tom be more careful? His tie had slipped its moorings and was gradually working its way to the top of his collar. Really, relations ought to be less conspicuous unless they could be more presentable; she hoped Catherine wouldn't see him. He did look ridiculous. Whatever had he done to his hair? It looked as if he had gone to sleep in it, thought Judy indignantly.

Judith stole another glance at Miss Ashwell; the colour had faded and her face was white; it looked almost stern. Whatever was the matter? The lights went off for the lantern slides and Judith, greatly daring, whispered:

"Isn't that the Major Phillips you used to know, Miss Ashwell? The one who was with Uncle Brian in Italy?"

"Yes, I used to know him, Judith, a long time ago," in stiff, cold, dignified tones.

Judith felt dazed for a moment; then a happy inspiration came to her; a lovers' quarrel—that's what's the matter. Now, if they could just meet again without either of them having to give in, they would be sure to make it up.

It was very trying having no one to talk to. She wished fervently that Nancy or Sally May or Josephine or Joyce or some one other than Frances were beside her; she must think hard. Miss Ashwell was in love with Major Phillips, that was clear. Major Phillips must be in love with Miss Ashwell, that went without saying. Miss Ashwell was unhappy. Of course it wasn't her business at all, at all, but Judith didn't think of that. There was something appealing about Miss Ashwell at all times, and Miss Ashwell in trouble made Judith certain that something must be done. She hardly heard a word the lecturer said, but sat frowning, thinking hard; then her face cleared; she had a plan. She would make a dash for the platform and Uncle Tom the minute the last picture was put on the screen, and beg him to introduce her to Major Phillips, and she would ask him if he would speak at the Arts and Letters Club, for she knew they wanted some one for next week. Probably Miss Ashwell would be very much annoyed and would come after her, and then—further than that Judith didn't go, for she was immediately involved in the difficulties of how to get away from Miss Ashwell in order to make her dash for the platform. The York Hill girls would wait, of course, a few minutes until some of the people had gone before they tried to leave the building; perhaps by that time Major Phillips would have disappeared. Judith was still struggling to think of something plausible to say to Miss Ashwell when the lights came on again; and when the organist began "God Save the King" and the audience rose, Judith knew that she must act quickly if she were to save the situation. Her heart thumped so loudly that there was a buzzing in her ears and her hands were icy cold. Miss Ashwell would be angry; she might even report Judith to Miss Meredith; Judith quailed at the thought; the last note sounded.

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"Excuse me, Miss Ashwell, but there's Uncle Tom. I simply *must* speak to him." And before an astonished and, it must be confessed, a dreaming Miss Ashwell could say yea or nay, Judith had slipped past her down the aisle and was making her way to the platform. The line was transfixed with horror.

"Judith Benson! Who does she think she is, anyway, going right up there amongst all those 'brass hats?' Is she crazy?"

Judith was lost to York Hill eyes as she disappeared into the group of people at the back of the platform, who were apparently waiting to have a word with the speaker. She clutched Uncle Tom's arm with both hands, and if the warmth of her greeting astonished him he made no sign.

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"Why, yes, I know him," he replied in answer to her eager questioning. "What you doin' here by yourself? Oh, are they?"—and he turned to get a view of the line. "Arts and Letters Club, eh? Sounds frightening. I don't know whether he'd dare." This in Uncle Tom's facetious manner. "Hey, Phillips"—to the hero who was making a determined effort to escape his questioners—"Here's a young lady who is a hero-worshipper." And as he made the necessary introduction, he added, to Judith's huge disgust, "She wants your autograph or something."

Judith made her request politely and, as with sinking heart she saw that he was going to refuse, she added clearly, "Miss Elizabeth Ashwell is waiting down there for us with the others—the line I mean." Judith was thrilled at the change in Major Phillips's face.

"Oh, then, you are Miss Ashwell's messenger," he said eagerly.

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"Not exactly," stammered Judith; "but she's waiting for us," she repeated firmly.

Major Phillips lost no time.

"In that case we had better go, not keep a lady waiting, eh, Mr. Hilton? Perhaps I ought to say forty ladies," he continued as they made their way down the aisle.

Judith's knees were trembling. She didn't dare lift her eyes, as Uncle Tom greeted Miss Ashwell and she heard him say,

"Major Phillips I believe you know already."

Major Phillips had Miss Ashwell's hand in his and was clearly paying no attention to Uncle Tom. The line was divided afterwards as to whether he shook her hand eagerly or just held it. The majority favoured the latter opinion, but all agreed that he looked right into her eyes and that his voice was "as different as anything from what it was before."

Somehow or other they started on their homeward way with Miss Ashwell and Major Phillips bringing up the rear, for Williams the janitor had magically appeared with the latter's stick, and Uncle Tom thoughtfully made his adieus and departed.

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If Major David Phillips hadn't been too ecstatically happy to notice anything except the curve of Miss Ashwell's pink cheek and the length of her eyelashes and a soft little curl which hung in front of her ear, he might have been surprised at the extreme quiet of the forty girls in front of him; they might have been walking to a funeral. What he wouldn't have guessed was that every ear in the line was stretched backwards to catch his slightest word or he might have lowered his

voice. As it was at least half the line could hear him:

Yes, he was glad to be back in Canada.

Yes, two months ago.

He'd been delayed in England over the Serbian work.

No, he wasn't in town. He had a cottage, really a little old farmhouse, about ten miles out of the city. His Aunt Joan had died while he was away and had left him "White Cottage." He was living there with his batman, who was awfully handy and did the cooking and everything, and between them they had turned the parlour and the spare bedroom into a studio. They had made a great northern window and Jennings was now building a piazza. Elizabeth must come and see it. However, she would have to come soon, as he was going to France in June. [199]

"Elizabeth," said the line to itself, "and she didn't call him David?" They felt they wouldn't have been so behind-hand.

Judith meanwhile, being partnerless, had wormed her way down to the prefects who were leading the line.

"Cathy," she whispered urgently, "do go slow, please; he's limping, you know, and don't stop when we get to the cars. Please, please, just walk on slowly, and perhaps Miss Ashwell won't notice. I'll tell you why later. It's awfully important."

"Right you are, Mr. First Mate," answered Catherine, and Judith, not without some whispered chaffing, got back within earshot.

Major Phillips was talking about his experiences in the Russian prison and Judy needn't have worried lest Miss Ashwell should notice when they reached the cars; Miss Ashwell was in another world entirely; the line did not exist for her. They walked on and on and Major Phillips's voice became lower. The line began to feel rebellious.

"Fourteen blocks," said Frances Purdy to her neighbour. "I'm nearly dead. I shouldn't wonder if we had to walk all the way." [200]

And they did. Miss Ashwell didn't "notice" till they began the ascent of the hill and Major Phillips was obliged to go very slowly, indeed. Miss Ashwell was full of remorse. His leg must be hurting, but the school was in sight. He must come in and rest. He had walked too far, and lines of pain and fatigue were plain to be seen. Miss Ashwell decided that she must take him to the common room, and then get Mrs. Bronson to make him some hot tea. But probably he couldn't walk so far! Perhaps he would faint. Whatever should she do? Suddenly to her great relief she saw Miss Meredith in her car evidently returning from town. Miss Ashwell moved over to the side of the road, Major Phillips limping after her, and the line stood still awaiting developments. Miss Ashwell explained her predicament to an amazed Head Mistress. Miss Meredith thought and acted quickly. Major Phillips was welcomed with both hands and tucked into the car. Catherine was summoned.

"My compliments to Mrs. Bronson, Catherine, and please ask her if she can provide you all with hot cocoa and cake after your walk. Miss Ashwell is coming home with me for tea." [201]

The car drove off, and though the line moved on decorously towards the much-desired rest and cocoa, Major Phillips would have been considerably surprised if he could have heard its sudden galvanization into speech.

Catherine, who took Miss Ashwell's place at the end of the line, was obliged to send a runner ahead with the request,

"Less noise till we reach bounds, please."

But the instant they reached the school gates the line dissolved and Judith was surrounded by an excited mob.

"Oh, go on, tell us, Judy."

"Whatever were you doing on the platform?"

"Who is he, anyway?"

"Don't be a piker! Tell us, Judy."

"Fancy Miss Meredith whisking him off like that."

"Is he really Miss Ashwell's?"

But Judith, though triumphant, was loyally discreet. He was an old friend of her Uncle Brian's. She had to speak to Uncle Tom, and then Uncle Tom and Major Phillips came down to speak to Miss Ashwell. [202]

There were some who felt that this was not all, but Catherine supported Judith and adjured them not to go into their own houses and spread romantic tales.

But there are some things which even a popular prefect cannot achieve. The affair was discussed in all its details by the tired forty as they consumed much cocoa and cake in the sitting-

room, and even later, when the running of many bath-taps proclaimed loudly the fact that forty tired bodies were being refreshed, scraps of conversation floated over the bath partitions.

"Good thing it's his left arm that's hurt."

"Isn't his hair lovely? I adore hair that is slightly greying!"

"Is it a V.C. he's got?"

"When do you suppose they'll be married?"

"Did you say he was an artist or an engineer?"

"Won't she look lovely in a wedding gown?"

"I wouldn't be married in anything but white."

"Judith Benson thinks she's *it*. What is she doing in it anyhow?"

Judith smiled happily in her bath. She had decided on her bridesmaid's frock.

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CHAPTER XIV

JUDITH WINS THE TENNIS CUP

SPRING came early this year and the school spent much time out of doors during the last term. Many classes were held in the big sun porches and in the sheltered spots in the grounds, and the various teams were hard at basket-ball and cricket and tennis, even before breakfast.

It was not so hard now to get up at a quarter to seven, and Judith and Florence even joined the B.B.B.'s—"Before Breakfast Brigade"—who pledged themselves to get up in time for a dip in the swimming-pool or a game before the breakfast-bell rang.

Judith was especially keen about tennis, and she improved her game so much that, to her surprise and delight, even high and mighty prefects like Patricia and Catherine were asking her for practice games in preparation for the House and School Tournaments later on. Catherine was a very busy person, indeed, just now; she had an important part in the play given during prize-giving week and she was a member of the Senior basket-ball team. Judith would never be a basket-ball enthusiast, but she filled a very respectable position on the Junior team and she could share in the excitement about the Senior match which was to be played against Queen's School. Patricia was working her team hard; every spare hour was devoted to goal practice, and team practice came every day as a matter of course.

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Nancy had much to tell Judith of last year's triumph when Eleanor's brilliant play had won the coveted trophy for York Hill. This year Queen's were reported to have a marvellous centre and school gossip held that the York Hill team would have a hard battle to keep the shield. Unfortunately, the very day before the match, Helen Burton, a prefect of West House, slipped and wrenched her knee, so that her playing was out of the question. She was not their most brilliant player by any means, but she was steady and used her brains in the game better than most. Althea Somerset was put in as a substitute, but it was disconcerting to lose a tried warrior before the fight began.

Nancy was a timekeeper, and on the day of the match Judith took her stand beside her with the lemons for the refreshment of the teams. The whole School had lined the campus to watch the game; at one end were a group of Old Girls and the staff; near by was a splash of scarlet marking the visitors from Queen's School. Judith, watching the trim figures of the players line up, Queen's with scarlet ties and bands, York Hill with gold ties, felt a sudden rush of loyalty at the sight of her own well-loved prefects.

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"They must win—they must—there can't be a doubt of it," said Judith to herself.

The much-talked-of Queen's centre was as wonderful as gossip had reported. She seemed like a veritable spider, all arms and legs; try as she would Althea could not prevent her getting the ball. And there was a fair-haired girl—Pamela by name—who was the best shot Judith had ever seen.

The score mounted rapidly for Queen's and at half-time, when Judith distributed her slices of lemon, things looked rather dark for York Hill.

But Patricia had been using her brains while she played, and Judith and Nancy ministering to the team heard her final injunctions.

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"We'll beat 'em yet. Watch that right centre and Pamela Price on the left guard; they're both dandy shots, and they both want a chance to show off. Mark my words, we'll get some fine shots the last half. Their weak point is team-work, and I'm glad to say we're playing together—watch your passing—we're bound to win!"

Judith and Nancy went back to their posts in a state of great excitement. There was an

infectious courage and cheeriness about Patricia's words. Certainly Queen's had five points to their favour, but just as certainly York Hill would win!

Up went the ball again and up went the spider-like centre's long arms, and away went the coveted ball in the wrong direction. Judith's heart sank—this half was going to be just like the other—how terrible!

Thirteen-eight—Fourteen-eight.

The whistle blew. Judith couldn't see what had happened, but evidently there had been a foul, for Catherine had a free throw.

York Hill let themselves go for a minute. Good for Cathy! Seconds were precious now and the play was swift.

Again the whistle.

This time Patricia took the ball.

York Hill held its breath.

Fourteen-ten.

Nothing succeeds like success!

The York Hill team quickened and became tense during those last few seconds like a great orchestra for the finale of a symphony, in answer to the conductor's baton. Patricia felt a thrill of pride. How magnificently the team was responding—they were playing like one person—and that person meant to win—there could be no doubt of it.

"Fifteen-fifteen," said the umpire calmly.

Judith standing quietly beside Nancy wanted to shriek and shout like a young savage—"We're going to beat you! We're going to beat you—yah!"

Fifteen-seventeen! Good for Althea!

Ah, Pamela Price has scored!

"Good play," said York, generously applauding a neat shot.

Seventeen-all—and a minute more to play!

Althea has the ball—no, there it is—Patricia's got it—

That must be Pamela again—no, Catherine has it!

Catherine poised herself and threw.

A soft sighing sound from hundreds of lips marked the safe arrival of the ball in the basket, and then spontaneous cheering drowned the umpire's voice.

York Hill had the cup for another year!

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The cheering over, the teams departed for afternoon tea, and the audience, breaking up into little groups, settled down to a discussion of the points of the game.

"They've certainly a dandy centre, and that fair girl was a great shot—but wasn't Cathy gorgeous! If we'd only had another two minutes—one minute—we'd have beaten 'em all hollow."

"Wasn't our team-work simply splendid?" gloated Judith. "I should think Patricia would be awfully proud. By the way, that reminds me—Patricia said I must play off in the House Tournament to-morrow afternoon. Come on over to the tennis court. I'll play you two—I've got a new serve I want to try. Oh, dear! I wish there weren't any exams this term; I'd like to play the whole time."

Next day when Judith looked at the tournament lists she was astonished to find that she was to play against Catherine. Catherine for the last two years had been South's choice to play in the School Tournament, and although she had been beaten by Nelly Smith of West last year, it was pretty generally conceded that she would win in the preliminary House Tournament and play again in the finals.

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"Rather rough on me to have to play against a champion," laughed Judith as they tossed for counts a little later, "but I'm going to give you a hard fight, Cathy, see if I don't."

Perhaps it was the spirit of the blue and golden May day, cool enough to be pleasant, warm enough to be a joy, or the little breeze which came floating across the campus carrying an intoxicating scent of lilacs, but whatever the reason, some sprite seemed to have taken possession of Judith, and she threw herself into the game with such enthusiasm, such abandon, such elfin-like nimbleness that Catherine couldn't touch her balls.

There was not a large audience, for cricket and swimming claimed many, but the crew of the

"Jolly Susan" were there, you may be sure, and most of South House, for it had been whispered about that Judith's game was worth watching.

"Well played," said Eleanor heartily, as Florence called out the score. "Game and set in Judith's favour! You've improved your game tremendously, Judy." [210]

"Thanks, Judy," said Catherine; "hardly a good fight, I'm afraid, rather a good beating." Try as she did to keep it out there was a little coldness in Catherine's voice. She was tired after yesterday's match, and it wasn't particularly pleasant to be beaten by a youngster after she had been champion for South for two years.

Judith's quick ears had caught the note of coldness, and her gay spirits deserted her instantly. What did winning a game matter if Catherine were displeased with her! She was almost angry with Nancy, who remarked gleefully after Catherine had gone, "You're almost sure to be chosen to play for the House now, Judy, dear. What tremendous luck!"

Judith wouldn't hear of it, and when a little later Eleanor told her that she was the choice of the Committee she begged to be let off.

"It really wasn't fair," she protested. "Cathy was awfully tired and not in good form, and I was feeling tip-top. I'd hate to take her place."

But Eleanor was firm. "Catherine," she said, "is not playing so well—she's had too many irons in the fire, so we'll look to you to win for South. Patricia says she'll take you for fifteen minutes every morning before breakfast. Your net play needs a little steadying—get in as much practice as you can before the tournament." [211]

Eleanor's word was final, and of course it was gratifying to be chosen, but Judith's pleasure was spoilt by her fear that Catherine was hurt and would never be friends with her again. That night at visiting hour she knocked at Catherine's door with the resolve to tell her in some way or other that she was sorry. She didn't know quite how it was to be done, because she might only make matters worse. But instead of Catherine's usual cheerful "Come in," a preoccupied voice said, "Who's there?" and to Judith's answer, replied, "Will another time do, Judy? I'm awfully busy."

Judith went off disconsolately, and when she did try to express her regret at being chosen in place of Catherine, her endeavours, as she feared, were not a success. Catherine merely said that of course she was glad Judith was to play, but again her voice was cold.

"Cathy doesn't really mean it," protested Nancy, in whom Judith confided. "She's just busy with the play—you know she's to be the heroine—and she's writing on her diploma examination too. Cheer up, Judy, don't look so like an owl." [212]

Judith refused to be comforted; the honour of the House meant less to her than the friendship of Catherine whom she had adored from the first day she entered York Hill. However, she practiced hard—Patricia saw to that—and when Tournament Day came she had profited not a little by the week's coaching.

But Patricia was worried. True, Judith's serve had improved, but she lacked the nerve and spirit which had made her playing so irresistible in the House match, and Nelly Smith was an old hand at the game.

The great day came. Surely Catherine would wish her luck, and while Judith put on a fresh white skirt and blouse and made her hair as trim as possible, she listened for the sound of Catherine's footsteps—but no Catherine came, and Judith went off to the match with a heavy heart.

The central courts were lined with spectators, and as they tossed for courts Judith realized that this was an occasion. The cup was to go for a year to the winner of this one match, for Nelly Smith had already beaten Althea Somerset of North, and East, being largely a Junior House, had no representative. [213]

Over by the umpire's stand Judith could see the crew of the "Jolly Susan"—Nancy's pretty golden head and Josephine's untidy red one. Jane seemed to be holding a flag—yes, it must be the "Susan's" flag. If only Catherine—!

Nelly had the first serve, and the white balls began to fly back and forth. Nelly won her serve and then Judith hers. It was steady, interesting playing. They were well matched. But Judith's mind was only half on her game, for while with one half of her brain she countered Nelly's tactics, the other half was still occupied with Catherine and the possibility of losing Catherine's friendship if she won the game.

Suddenly in a flash Judith saw a solution. Supposing she didn't win—and of course she mightn't—Nelly was no mean rival—would Catherine restore her to friendship? Supposing she didn't try her very hardest?

Judith's thoughts were centred on Catherine and the full dishonour of what she was contemplating did not occur to her. She only knew that nothing seemed to matter if she lost Catherine. Nancy, meanwhile, who surmised what was troubling Judith, was watching her anxiously, and because she knew her so well she saw that Judith was not putting her whole self into the game, although she had won the first set by a very narrow margin. Nelly's score was [214]

climbing steadily now—five-three, five-four.

"Game and set to Nelly Smith," called the umpire as the players changed courts, and when Nelly stooped to tighten a shoelace, Nancy made a quick decision and whispered in Catherine's ear:

"Judy's nervous, Cathy; please say something to cheer her up the way you did at the play."

The colour deepened ever so slightly in Catherine's cheeks, for she had been mentally shaking herself that she had not been more generous to Judy, so she was quick to seize her opportunity as Judith passed.

"Good for you, Judibus—you're certain to win—you're doing splendidly. Remember we're trusting ourselves to you—but we're sure of the cup—you *can* play!"

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Catherine's old self, all the coldness gone, spoke in the words.

They seemed to be magic words, for a miracle happened then and there. Nelly fought hard and it was a battle worth watching, but Judith was quite certain now that she would win. Nelly really hadn't a chance against some one who suddenly realized that she had not been answering up to the trust her friends had given her; some one who saw herself restored to the favour she coveted; some one who knew now that it didn't matter a bit whether she lost or won as long as she did her very best; some one who was suddenly walking on air, whose eyes and cheeks were glowing with joy, and whose feet and wits seemed so nimble that strategy and tactics were blown to the winds.

The last set went rapidly, and it seemed afterwards to Judith only a few exhilarating moments until the umpire was announcing, "Game and set in favour of Judith Benson," and three cheers were being given for her and three cheers for South. South House had the cup back again!

Judith had just sufficient presence of mind left to shake hands with Nelly and thank her for the game, and then she was in the midst of a happy throng of Southerners who shouted congratulations and told her she was a brick, and a wonder, and a credit to the House.

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Invitations for tea at the tuck shop poured in thick and fast, but Catherine answered for her:

"Not a bit of it; she belongs to the 'Jolly Susan' *first* of all, and we've a spread of ship's rations in my room all ready for the occasion."

Judith looked so radiant at the party that Sally May, who always knew the latest bit of gossip, said disappointedly,

"I suppose you know about Miss Ashwell, Judy?"

"What about her?" said Judith eagerly. "Is she—?"

"Yes, she—is—engaged! It's frightfully exciting—some of the girls saw her ring this afternoon, and she said yes she was, and what *do* you think?" Sally May paused dramatically.

"Well—?"

"She's going to be married in prize-giving week because the Major is going back to France—and Miss Meredith is giving her a school wedding—only all the Old Girls are going to be there—so they're not sure whether we'll be invited."

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Sally May paused for breath.

Here was room for discussion, indeed. A wedding! A York Hill wedding! And their own Miss Ashwell! Surely they would be invited!

Field Day proved another exciting topic—they all decided to enter the suitcase race and provide some merriment for the School by the costumes they would produce. The party broke up reluctantly to dress for dinner. But Catherine managed to detain Judith for a moment and say in an undertone:

"I've been horrid lately, Judy—too busy with the play to be decent. I suppose you're getting busy, too, on the Properties Committee; but I wonder if you could spare time to hear me my part to-night?"

Could she?

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CHAPTER XV

JUNE SHOWERS

THE next two weeks were the busiest and the happiest that Judith had ever known. It would have been a joy merely to be alive on such blue, unclouded days of golden sunshine. Even examination tests, which she still dreaded, were bringing with them a curious happiness.

"I don't know how it is," Judith confided to the crew of the "Jolly Susan" one morning as bed-

making was in progress, "but there is something nice about exams after all."

"Nice!" came from Josephine and Jane,— "Nice!"

"Well, it may be all very well for you if you want to show off how much ancient history you've crammed up," said Sally May rather crossly; "I don't see anything nice about them. I hate this ancient history, silly old names! I don't know who won one of these battles"—and she continued to mutter to herself a list of battles of the Peloponnesian War, which she was memorizing in preparation for the history test. [219]

"But," Judith persisted, "there is something nice about them; it must be measuring ourselves against others and doing our very best, just like the high jumping on Field Day. Now you know very well you enjoyed that," she continued, going to Josephine's door and noting with surprise that Josephine was actually cleaning her white shoes.

"Course," said Josephine; "ça va sans dire. Ha! Thought I'd make you open your eyes quoting French as to the manner born, and cleaning shoes into the bargain! Mademoiselle made me learn five phrases—had to write them out a hundred times. What I say is, lessons are lessons, and jumping is jumping; one's nasty and t'other's nice if you like."

Judith was interested in Josephine's French.

"Let's have the other phrases, Josephine."

"Not me," answered Josephine elegantly. "Moi, I shall scatter them about gracefully. Dad will probably think I'm well-educated when I go home, and if I'm tidy, too, my mother will be perfectly satisfied."

"Well, you'd better begin on your room," said Jane who had joined them. "I notice, Miss Burley, that you received 'C' and a disorderly mark last week, and friend Genevieve says that Miss Watson is on the war-path this week." [220]

"Miss Marlowe says I'm incorrigible," said Josephine, sadly shaking her head. "Heigho! It's hard luck being born so careless; I get blamed for everything. 'Eh bien! mademoiselle,' I shall say gently the next time I'm reprov'd, 'Je ferai mon possible!' and by means of these choice little French phrases and a perfectly clean pair of shoes, my reputation will improve. Voyez!"

Every spare moment was being spent out-of-doors these days, so Sally May and Judith took their history books out under Judith's favorite acacia trees, and Judith good-naturedly, for every moment was precious, gave Sally May a half-hour's grind on her ancient history before morning school. When the ten-minute bell rang, their books were closed with a bang almost before the bell had ceased, and they were dancing and leaping and running across the lawn and round the tennis courts, where they ran into Nancy.

"Just think!" she cried, "Margaret Leslie is going to be house mother for the Old Girls this year, and she says that there are about a hundred out-of-town girls coming to the Reunion, and of course there'll be heaps of town girls. Won't it be heavenly?"—and she hopped on one foot for joy. Then the three had a race to the schoolroom door. Middies and bloomers simply compel one to run and scamper. [221]

Judith thought about the Reunion as the form filed in silently to prayers. Nancy had talked about it all year; she thought it the happiest time of the year, and as she had been at York Hill all her school days she would know a number of the girls who were coming back.

"They are here for four days," Nancy had told her, "so we just pack those days full. There's the Reunion tea, and the grandchildren's party, and the suppers and the plays, and then Sunday and prize-giving. I get so happy I feel that I'll burst if I'm not careful."

Form Five were already hard at work on their songs for the supper party; Judith was to respond to a toast. The play was well under way by Easter-time, as Judith knew, for she was a hard-working member of the Properties Committee. What she did not know was that her name had been seriously considered for one of the parts and Catherine and Eleanor had strongly urged her fitness. But Miss Marlowe had cautioned them: "Judith has had a good first year, but I'm not sure that a prominent part in another play wouldn't spoil it for her. Remember she had an important part at Christmas-time. Don't turn her head." Eleanor saw the point and Judith was instead put on the committee where she was doing good work. [222]

This year there was the added delight of the wedding. Last night Miss Meredith had given the invitations, and the School, you may be sure, would "accept with pleasure."

Form Five A held a meeting at recess time. They must get Miss Ashwell a wedding present.

"Form Two and Form Four are going to give her a hankie shower," said Joyce Hewson, "and Patricia told me that the Sixth Form is going to give her a linen shower."

"And Domestic Science are having a kitchen shower," joined in Frances. "I don't see what there's left for us."

Books were suggested, but voted down. "Besides, we haven't enough money," said Nancy, "Miss Meredith said we mustn't spend much." [223]

Nancy wanted to put the money into a lump sum and buy one nice thing, a picture or a piece of

silver or something like that. But the majority of the girls favoured the shower idea. A tea-cup shower was discussed, and seemed to be the most popular of all the plans yet made, when Peggy said she believed the Staff were buying china. She and her mother had met three of the Staff in Smith's on Saturday morning, and she guessed from what they said that that was what they doing.

Judith had been thinking—what would Miss Ashwell like? What does she like to do? And a picture flashed into her mind of Miss Ashwell in garden hat and gloves snipping Miss Meredith's rosebushes and talking to Judith about Gloire de Dijons, and Frau Druschkis and Prince Ruperts and Lady Ursulas, as if they were intimate friends. Judith jumped up excitedly.

"Madam President," she said eagerly, "why shouldn't we have a flower shower? I mean plants, rosebushes and Canterbury bells and lilacs if they haven't got 'em, and maybe a cherry tree," she added as the plan grew before her eyes.

Pros and cons were discussed. Perhaps "White Cottage" already had a good garden. No, she had heard the Major say—here Judith blushed and stammered as she heard Jane observe, "Great friend of the Major's is Judy"—that the garden was no good; anyway, they could find out. Perhaps Miss Meredith would find out for them. [224]

"But it'll be too late to plant cherry trees and lilac bushes," objected Alicia Harris, who was a practical gardener and had been a steady worker in the War Garden Committee. That was so!

Besides, the bride and groom were going to France and what would the garden do in the meantime? Judith looked quite blank. Just when it had seemed such a lovely plan! She could see the climbing rose she meant to give and had already congratulated herself on asking for some extra pocket money for the last term. But Nancy came to the rescue.

"I know; let's give the money and the order for the flowers or bushes to a florist and ask him to set them out in the proper time in the fall, and we'll give Miss Ashwell a card with the name of the flowers we have chosen, and, oh, then we could have rhymes. We'd put 'Violets' on the card and then— [225]

"The rose is red, the violet's blue,
Honey is sweet and so are you'—

and then our own name so she'd know who gave her the violets. I'd like to give her violets myself," she added.

But Rosamond had a more practical suggestion still.

"Let's get the little wooden tags that the florists use and put on them the name of the flower, and the giver's name, and then we could tie another little paper tag to them with the rhyme on it."

This was received with applause and the resolution was put to the vote and carried enthusiastically. Judith looked admiringly at Nancy and Rosamond as the meeting broke up and wondered how they could think of such clever things, and was surprised and delighted after the meeting when Nancy slipped her arm through hers and whispered:

"Bully for you, Judy; I don't know how you think of such clever things."

Next day there was another Form meeting and a committee was appointed—Judy was glad that she was chosen—to get permission to go downtown and enquire prices at the florists. Five B and Five C, whose Presidents applied to Nancy for ideas, decided to further the scheme by buying fruit bushes, raspberries, strawberries, currants, gooseberries, and young fruit trees, and Miss Watson, who was Five C's Form Mistress, proved a very useful ally, for a distant relative was a partner in one of the biggest wholesale florist establishments and she offered to take the committee there and get the plants at the lowest possible rates. Her sudden popularity and the feeling of importance which pervaded her at each of the many consultations during the next few days (for it turned out that Miss Watson had been brought up in a beautiful old garden at home in Scotland) were to remain delectable memories for many a long day. [226]

A 'phone message brought wonderful catalogues from MacIver & Watson, and for a day or two the Fifth Form presented a very studious appearance. Groups of two or three might be seen in sitting-room or playroom and out-of-doors on the quadrangle poring over books, but the interested teachers who observed this phenomenon also noticed that the books they earnestly perused were richly and gaudily illustrated.

Judith had to give up her cherished notion of a climbing rose, because the rest of the "Jolly Susan" were determined to give Canterbury bells. The proposal had come from Jane. "They're blue and that's the sailor's colour and bells are nautical too." So Judith gave in gracefully and the five of them pooled their contributions and stipulated what they wanted, a row of Canterbury bells in the perennial border. Nancy was strong on perennials. "We don't want flowers that will die off," she said emphatically, "but something that will come up every year." [227]

"Won't it be nice!" said Judith. "One spring morning the Major will come in to breakfast with the cheerful news, 'Spring has come, my dear, the Peggy Forrest (her violets, you know) are coming up under the birch tree. Come and see them.'"

"And Mrs. Major," finished Nancy, laughing, "will say, 'Please sit down, the coffee will be cold

in another minute."

Saturday morning saw the delegation packed into the school motor off to town under the chaperonage of Miss Watson. No one noticed now, you may be sure, how many *r*'s the good lady rolled and her reminiscences of "Roses I have known" were received with the greatest respect. It took them a long time to decide, even with their lists culled from the catalogues and suggestions obtained from Jennings, but finally every one was satisfied, and they carried off a box full of the little wooden tags which Rosamond had wisely suggested. [228]

The business in hand being disposed of, their thoughts turned with amazing promptness to ice-cream. Now according to custom permission might be desired (probably) and received (possibly) for ice-cream after a special visit into town during the week, but on Saturday mornings the shopping party were under instructions to return home promptly when the necessary "shopping" was completed. This expedition seemed to come under neither heading; true, it was Saturday morning, but then it was not the regular shopping party. After some whispered coaxing, Nancy was prevailed upon to put the delicate question to Miss Watson. She summoned her sweetest and most guileless smile as she broached the subject, but Miss Watson was ready for her. "I was sure you'd ask, so I got permission from Miss Marlowe for you to have one dish at Huyler's or Page & Shaw's. We'll have to hurry." Miss Watson's popularity was complete! [229]

The committee worked hard for an hour after lunch, but finally the last of the tags was allotted and distributed, and those who were going out were exhorted not to come back without their rhymes, as they must be ready for Monday. Miss Meredith had issued orders that Miss Ashwell, who was relieved of all school duties for this last week, must be quite free after Tuesday, so the showers were to be held on Monday and Tuesday. The staff were having a supper-party on Saturday night when the china was to be presented, and altogether Miss Ashwell was to be a much-fêted person.

"Of course the Old Girls will do something nice," said Nancy—"trust them. I guess Susanne is waiting until the out-of-town girls come. Miss Ashwell has been secretary of the Old Girls for two years, so she specially belongs to them. I wonder what they will do."

The next week was packed full to overflowing with good times. First came the kitchen shower which the Domestic Science Form had planned as their share in the festivities.

Judith and Nancy were not invited to the party, but they coaxed Helen to let them see the big clothes-basket full of mysterious little parcels looking very bride-like in their white tissue and satin ribbons. [230]

"Miss Ashwell has got to guess what's in each one," explained Helen importantly as she cut cake, "and if she doesn't guess right, the parcel belongs to Major Phillips. Well, just a small piece, Nancy; here, Judy, you can have the plate to scrape."

The two were still busily scraping chocolate icing out of a bowl when the strains of the wedding march were heard in the next room, and, peeping through the crack of the kitchen door, they beheld a rather flustered-looking Miss Ashwell trying to guess the first parcel.

Helen shooed them off, declaring they had no manners at all, and that they had better see that they were ready for their own party.

Judith and Nancy were indignant at the implication that they were not well prepared for the morrow, but just before "Lights out" bell sounded, Judith asked Sally May to let her see the rhyme for the Canterbury bells tag.

"Why—I thought you and Nancy were doing it. I heard you trying to get a rhyme for 'Susan.'"

"Well, we couldn't," said Judith weakly; "I thought you had one written already." [231]

"We'll have to get up at six o'clock, every one of us," declared Nancy; "put a pencil and paper beside your bed; each of us has got to have a rhyme and then we'll choose the best."

There was much yawning and stifled groaning next morning, but Nancy was firm and refused to retire to her own cubicle until she had seen each member of the crew provided with pencil and paper.

The fires of poetic genius burned low at such an early morning hour, but they knew, as well as Nancy did, that there would be no time after breakfast. So after much frowning and biting of pencils, five verses were written, and handed to Catherine to choose the best.

It was an exciting afternoon. There was a Senior cricket match being played and the Fifth-Formers were loath to lose one minute of that. Judith and Nancy were especially keen to watch Catherine's play. They would dash over to the match for ten minutes, and then race off to squeeze lemons, or see if the cakes had come, and then back again to the match.

Josephine and Joyce had made a huge bouquet of tea-roses interspersed with samples of the trees and shrubs and flowers which were to be planted in the "White Cottage" garden. Day girls had been requested to bring samples of cherry trees and gooseberry bushes and such things as were not to be found at York Hill. It was a somewhat curious-looking bouquet, however, for to each spray was attached a little wooden tag bearing the donor's name, and a bit of paper with the accompanying rhyme. [232]

Miss Ashwell looked adorably pretty, they all agreed, when she and Miss Meredith joined them in the latter's garden after the cricket match. The guests were escorted to the wicker chairs under the trees and the girls seated themselves on rugs.

There was a moment's pause. Miss Ashwell confessed afterwards to a feeling of nervousness as to what was going to happen to her, for the day before, without a moment's notice, she had been literally showered with hankies by the little First-Formers. However, Sally May was discovered on her feet about to make a speech. Sally May, usually so glib of tongue, moistened her lips several times, and then, holding out the bouquet, she delivered at breakneck speed the little speech which she had composed—and fortunately memorized—for the occasion.

"Had the fright of my life, my dear," she whispered to Judith afterwards. "I felt like Alice in Wonderland growing taller and taller every moment—expected to be lost in the tree-tops. I'll never, never, never try to make a speech again." [233]

Miss Meredith, who had also been presented with a bunch of lovely roses, leaned forward to examine Miss Ashwell's.

"Yours seems to be an unusually interesting bouquet, my dear," she observed. "May I see one of those butterflies? He seems to be on an apple-tree bough." And unfolding the wings of the butterfly—the butterflies were Five B's idea—she read:

"Drifting from the apple boughs, foam of pink and white
Rippling through the branches in the green spring light;
All the elfin breezes in the world, you see,
Have come to play at snowflakes in your apple tree."

"*Your* apple tree! how charming!" said Miss Meredith; "who is the fairy godmother who is going to give you such a fascinating tree?" And taking up the little wooden tag she read, "St. Lawrence Apple, Frances Purdy."

"Miss Ashwell must read the next one," said Joyce after Frances's rhyme had been applauded, and she grinned rather wickedly as Miss Ashwell took the green branch held out to her and read the tag: [234]

"Black currants, you know,
In your garden which grow,
Have more uses than perhaps you would think;
When hubby's in bed, with a cold in his head,
You may give him a black-currant drink."

Miss Ashwell's cheeks were as pink as the lovely rose from whose stalk she hurriedly took the next verse:

"Roses pink and white and nodding,
Roses drenched with dew;
What would you have but roses
By a cottage built for two?"

Rosamond's effort was the signal for a burst of merriment:

"This bush will bring you wit and mirth,
You'll happy be and merry,
For in your house you'll never have
A goose, but nice goose-berry."

"I wanted to say gooseberry pies," said Rosamond, "but it wouldn't rhyme." And she couldn't understand why their laughter was redoubled.

The crew of the "Jolly Susan" were becoming uneasy. Would Miss Ashwell overlook the bluebells in Five A's bouquet? Nancy held up the flowers for Miss Ashwell to choose, and rather ostentatiously turned the bluebells towards her, but she perversely chose Olivia's pansies. Five o'clock had rung and the maids were crossing the lawn with trays of the inevitable cake and lemonade. The crew felt desperate. Perhaps it was a case of telepathy, for, with her hand hovering over Marjorie's hollyhocks, Miss Ashwell seemed to change her mind and took up instead the bluebells: [235]

"Bells from a crew of pirates bold
That sail the 'Jolly Susan,'
With bells the time is always told
When our good ship's a-cruisin,'
Heave-aho, my laddies, oh,
All the bells are swinging,
Flower-bells and ship bells, for your wedding ringing."

"They are to be Canterbury bells really," explained Josephine to Miss Ashwell as the lemonade was being served and the rest of the tags were being passed about so that they might all be read. "We hope you'll plant them in a long row: Canterbury was an awfully hard word to put into a poem, you know." [236]

"It's the nicest verse of all," declared Miss Ashwell. "They'll be lovely in a row. What a garden

I'm going to have!"

Nancy and Judith lingered after the party broke up. They made themselves very busy clearing away lemonade glasses and stray chairs just out of earshot of Miss Ashwell and Miss Meredith, who were talking busily. They hoped within themselves that Miss Meredith would depart, and Judith hoped that Nancy would go, and Nancy hoped that Judith would go.

But the five-thirty bell sounded and Nancy reluctantly went off to a music-lesson. Judith gathered up some bits of paper under a peony bush and with a sigh of relief saw Miss Meredith hurry away. Now was her chance. She waylaid Miss Ashwell at the door.

"Oh, Judy, it's been the loveliest party ever," said Miss Ashwell, putting her arm round Judith and giving her a happy little hug; "the nicest party I ever was at. However did you think of it all?"

And be it recorded in Judith's favour that she did not claim credit for the idea.

"We're awfully glad you liked it, for we wanted to give you something that wouldn't let you forget us." How ever was she to tell Miss Ashwell how she was going to miss her next year. "I'm glad to be one of the Canterbury bells, but I wanted a special flower of my own for you, something that would be sweet and rosy and—and—dear, so please don't let any one else give you a climbing rose because I want to give you one that will climb up and knock at your window in the early morning and say—" But she couldn't get any further. She had suddenly realized that in two weeks' time Miss Ashwell would be gone, that she loved her, and hated to think that next year some one else would be in the dear little room at the end of the corridor where she had so often found rest and comfort. A miserable lump swelled in her throat—she couldn't say another word.

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"I know," said Miss Ashwell; "the roses will tap at the window and say, 'Get up, lazy person, and come out and weed the garden and clip the roses before breakfast,' or, 'Hurry, hurry, Judith and Nancy and all the rest of them are coming down to-day for lunch, this is a gala day,' or perhaps they'll just be fragrant and lovely and bring sweet remembrances of York Hill and Judith."

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"Thank you," said Judith rather hoarsely, but she went away brimful of happiness because she knew that once more Miss Ashwell had understood.

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CHAPTER XVI

A TOAST TO THE SCHOOL

JUDITH woke early Friday morning with a feeling that something was going to happen. "What is it?" she asked herself sleepily. "An examination? No! Thank goodness, they are all over for this year." Now she remembered, this was the day of the Reunion—and the Wedding! No wonder that she felt that something was going to happen. What a day it was going to be!

She stretched lazily, and instantly Nancy, who heard her moving, whispered:

"You awake, Judy? I can't sleep. The Old Girls are coming to-day. Oh, Goody! Goody! If the bell doesn't ring soon I'll burst. I simply must shout a little bit."

Nancy's smiling face appeared over the wall of the cubicle.

"Let's get up and be all dressed when the bell does ring, and then we can slip out into the garden."

"We'll have to be awfully quiet going for our baths," objected Judith, who didn't feel as energetic as Nancy appeared to be; "you go first."

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Nancy agreed, but when she came back all rosy from her bath Judith was sound asleep. Nancy tiptoed over to the bed determined to wash the sleeper's face with a bath-sponge, when something in the utter relaxation of Judith's attitude struck her. Judith was tired, very tired. "And no wonder," thought Nancy, as she stole quietly and with infinite precautions back to her own room, "it makes me tired even to *think* of all we've done this week, and all there is to do yet, but it's awfully jolly. Poor Judy! What a good thing she's got her speech all ready for to-night. I am glad she isn't on the refreshment committee."

There was an air of excitement in the dining-room even at breakfast-time. Reminiscences of Old Girls were the order of the day, and Judith learned the names of some of the more famous graduates. She must look out for Kathryn Fleming, who had been singing in New York all season, but she couldn't miss her, she wasn't the sort who was easily overlooked; and Julia Weston, a judge of the Juvenile Court out West; and Penelope Adams, who had married a millionaire and was a great belle; and Martha Penrose, who was just "the sweetest little Virginian you ever saw"; and her chum, Winifred Freeman, who was matron of a big hospital; and Kitty Fiskien, the artist; and Isobel Grier, who married Professor Mitchell. Judith finally put her fingers in her ears.

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"Don't tell me about any more of them," she begged. "I'm beginning to get the same dazed feeling I had the first night I was here—I felt smothered in people."

Breakfast was usually a rather quiet time, but to-day there was such a clattering and chattering that Miss Langton rang the bell and asked for "Lower voices, please." Judith's neighbour, Marjory, grinned.

"This isn't anything to what it will be by to-morrow," she said.

Even the maids seemed infected by the spirit of gaiety, but if they moved more briskly than usual perhaps it was because they knew that there would be many extra tables for them to serve at luncheon-time.

By nine o'clock the noise in the corridor was deafening. Old Girls could evidently make a row when they chose. Such cries of joy on meeting their special pals! Such questionings and laughings! Such greetings with the Staff who forgot all about their waiting forms in their desire to welcome So-and-So and to hear the latest news of some one else! Miss Martin gave them ten minutes' grace before the bell rang for prayers, and then the Old Girls joined the Sixth and took their places in Big Hall once more. How happy Miss Meredith looked as the hymn was sung.

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Judith found it difficult to listen to the reading of the lesson; she wished she had eyes in the back of her head to see the Old Girls with the Sixth. Nancy had told her before prayers that Evelyn Coulson, last year's Captain, had arrived, and Penelope Adams, looking perfectly stunning, and Dr. Mary Burgess, who had been in command of a Woman's Hospital Unit in Serbia. Judith wanted to see her most of all, and she wondered if Aunt Nell were with the others.

Prayers over, they went back to their form rooms, the Old Girls crowding into the Sixth-Form room for a talk from Miss Meredith; but Miss Meredith was detained for a few moments and they had a chance for reminiscences.

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"Do you remember Miss Watson's plaid skirt? My dear, she has on the identical skirt now and her hair is just the same, only more so."

"Do you remember the time, Kathryn, you had to learn the 116th Psalm for Miss Meredith, and thought she said the 119th?" said a plump young matron with the contented look which belongs to mothers of happy little families. "I remember if you don't for you made our nights and days miserable hearing you, and then it was all a mistake."

"Do you remember the first debate we had on woman's rights? Gracious me, we thought we were advanced thinkers and no mistake."

"Do you remember the time Grace Wilton tried to trick the Infirmary nurse by pouring her dose of castor oil down a rubber tube attached to a bottle hid in her blouse, and how she poured it down the tube all right, but not into the bottle? She *was* in a mess."

"And do you remember Alice Roberts, when we had the measles epidemic, rubbing her chest with a stiff hairbrush and complaining of headache so that when nurse looked at her she sent her off to the Isolation House—to join her special pal?"

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The Sixth hung on the outskirts of the crowd drinking in stories of the good old days, and then there was a sudden quiet in the room; Miss Meredith had returned and was standing by the desk looking at them so tenderly, so understandingly, that every girl knew that the Head Mistress had come in to them with the prayer in her heart that she might be able to give a message of strength and inspiration.

Such prayers are answered.

After the lesson the Old Girls moved away in little groups down to the Big Hall where they were to have their annual business meeting. A great deal of business was despatched during the next hour; notices of motion were given for the next meeting, the reports of various committees were read and approved, the question of this year's administration of the scholarship fund discussed with much interest, and suggestions made as to the form which this year's gift to the School should take. The President got through the business on hand as quickly as possible, for, as she pointed out, they had a real York Hill wedding on their hands, and the meeting adjourned to decorate Big Hall for the ceremony. They left it a bower of beauty. Some of the Old Girls had motored out to the country and brought great masses of white and purple lilac, and sweet-scented syringa, and big jars held the roses that the bride loved.

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Judith and the rest of the "Jolly Susan" crew had begged to be allowed to help since they were Miss Ashwell's own cubicle girls, and they had a joyous time unpacking flowers which kept arriving, speculating as to the bride's gown, and wondering what they would feel like if they were going to be married that very afternoon.

"Next year won't be a bit the same," mourned Judith as she handed festoons of green to Nancy who was decorating the front of the platform. "Miss Ashwell will be gone and Catherine and Eleanor. I don't see whatever we'll do."

"Oh, it'll be up to us," laughed Nancy, stepping back to admire the handiwork.

"Us?" said Judith, aghast. "Why, I never thought of that before. I suppose we will be in the Sixth Form."

"Well, you're going to be," said Nancy with conviction. "I don't know whether I'll manage it or not. Oh, we'll have heaps to do next year, never fear. Let's go and dress now so we'll have plenty

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of time to arrange the last things for the supper."

Jane and Josephine were discussing the possibility of the bride appearing in a real wedding gown. To Judith's disappointment the popular vote seemed against it, since the wedding had been so hurriedly arranged. But when a little later Miss Ashwell looking her loveliest came down the aisle on Miss Meredith's arm, the most romantic of her romantic audience was satisfied with her truly bride-like appearance. Some of the girls afterwards could tell any number of details about the way the orange blossoms fastened her veil, and how the long train was lined, and whether her shoe buckles were of silver or of brilliants, but Judith had eyes only for the lovely face with its expression of serene and radiant happiness.

Judith had hoped that she would have a chance for a last word of good-bye, but outside on the lawn the Old Girls and Staff crowded around the bride and monopolized her, and the School gave itself up philosophically to an orgy of ice-cream and bride's cake. Then in some magical way the bride was spirited away to change for the journey, and all Judith could hope for was a word at the very end or at least a piece of the bride's bouquet which was tossed out of the carriage. But she seemed doomed to disappointment. Miss Ashwell was gone without a word and Judith turned and fled to her room. To her surprise she found Elise, Miss Meredith's maid, just leaving the "Jolly Susan."

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"I have put a note and parcel for you on your dressing-table, Miss Benson," said Elise. "Mrs. Phillips said I was to be most particular to bring it to you the minute she was gone."

"Mrs. Phillips"—Judith looked bewildered and then caught the smile on Elise's face—"Thank you, Elise," she said breathlessly, and rushed into her cubicle. There lay a letter and a tiny parcel. The letter first:

JUDY DEAR—

If I had had bridesmaids I would have asked you to "stand up with me." You have been a loving, loyal little friend, and David and I want you to wear this little pin as a token of our gratitude to our "messenger."

Remember I am still
Your friend,
ELIZABETH ASHWELL PHILLIPS.

For a moment a suspicious moisture blinded Judith's eyes; then curiosity urged her to open the little white box. "What a *darling* pin!" she breathed as the lid flew back and disclosed three beautiful pearls exquisitely set in a plain white gold bar. "And what a darling she is—and if it had to be some one I'm glad it's the Major."

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**THEN CURIOSITY URGED
HER TO OPEN THE LITTLE
WHITE BOX**

This ever-to-be-remembered day still held another great event—the Reunion supper. So Judith dried her eyes and went out to the lawn again where she found the Decorating Committee of the New Girls hard at work. It was such a warm evening that permission had been given to have the supper out on the board tennis court. Benches, which were to be used as tables, were being carried from Big Hall and placed in a square on the boards; rugs and sofa cushions were placed beside them, for Form Five intended to sit cross-legged at their feast in true Eastern fashion. The benches or tables were decorated with pretty paper napkins, and every new girl had brought down anything she possessed in the way of a flower vase, and these Marjorie and Frances were filling with flowers donated by the day girls. Judith found that she could help here; her special task was the pasting of a label bearing the owner's name on the bottom of each vase. Althea and Marian with three or four helpers were tying Chinese lanterns over the electric lights which Brodie had strung for them across the boards. Sally May and her committee were engaged in putting the last touches to the place cards, for true to her nature Sally May had refused to be hurried and the cards were still to be finished.

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Judith felt her heart beginning to thump uncomfortably as she thought of the toast she had to answer. Sally May was to be toastmistress and to Judith had been given the honour of replying to the last toast—the toast to "The School." Judith was glad that she had written out her little speech last week, for the last few days had been so packed full that she had not had a moment to herself.

The tables were finished to the satisfaction of every one, and then Judith found Nancy, and asked her if she would hear her speech. They found a secluded spot and Judith recited a little eulogy of York Hill.

"It's tremendously good, Judy," said Nancy admiringly. "I think that part about the experiences of the first week is awfully funny, and I like the ending too—'Ring out the old, ring in the new'—It makes us think of next year, doesn't it?"

"I'm afraid you're not a severe critic," said Judith, flushing with pleasure at Nancy's honest admiration, "but I want it to be my very best."

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"Come on, you two," cried Sally May at this juncture. "Do come and see the other tables."

They visited Nancy's table first.

"Oh, how sweet your flowers look!" said Judith, admiring the little old-fashioned posies in their stiff paper frills.

"Mrs. Hewson sent us in several boxes from her country place, and Joyce and Phyllis made the frills. They do look quaint, don't they?"

"What thrilling place cards!" cried Sally May. "Look, Judy—four snapshots on each one—are they all the same, Nancy?"

"Oh, no, Jane and Marjorie collected eight or ten snaps from the girls who had cameras and then they printed enough for every one to have four. Every one has some view or other of the School, and every one has a picture of one of the prefects."

"Here's a perfectly sweet one of Catherine," said Judith, pouncing on one on the other side of the table; "here's Miss Meredith's house—and what's this?" Squeals of delight from both of them.

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"Oh, it's Josephine and Jane in their carnival costumes, and here's Eleanor at the wicket. Oh, Nancy, what perfectly glorious place cards! Wouldn't I just love to have one!"

"Wait till next year," said Nancy; "but I'll try to get some of the snaps for you," she added in a lower tone as a dozen or more New Girls came in to admire.

"Come on over and see ours now," said Judith hospitably. "I'm dying myself to see our place cards. Sally May has kept them a great secret."

Nancy was appreciative and admired the lights and the paper napkins, and then the place cards came in for their share of praise. Sally May's cheeks grew pink with pleasure as Judith and Nancy became more and more enthusiastic. Sally May was really very clever with her pencil and on each card she had drawn a little sketch reminiscent of the New Girls' Play at Christmas. Scrooge was there, of course, "before and after," Judith said laughingly as she ran from one place to another—and Tiny Tim, and Bob Cratchit, and the boy with the turkey, and the ghost, and Martha. Sally May had looked up several illustrated editions of the "Christmas Carol" and Miss Carlton had given her and Florence permission to work on the cards during Studio hours. They had taken ever so long, but Florence had been a brick and they were finished at last. Edith and Helen had printed in the toast list.

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Judith shivered as she saw her name at the bottom of the list. How she wished she had spent more time on her speech—how *could* she put into words at all what she felt about the School?

She felt this more keenly than ever before as she stood arm in arm with Nancy and looked in through the windows of the dining-hall at the tables prepared for the Old Girls. She heard Nancy and Sally May exclaiming over the lovely irises which decked the long tables, but she was thinking of the girls who had gathered from all over the wide Dominion to visit again their old School. Judith had felt vaguely the same emotion as she saw the Old Girls marching into Big Hall in the morning, but she felt it now with a rush of warm feeling—School seemed infinitely more dear, more worth while, bigger. There must be something very big in York Hill, she thought, something very strong, to draw back every year these hundreds of Old Girls.

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Nancy was pointing out celebrities. "That must be Kathryn Fleming. Isn't she simply stunning?" she said, as a tall, fair-haired woman in gold-and-white brocade entered the Hall; "and there's Judge Weston and Miss Fiske—what a gorgeous gown!—looks Chinese. I wonder who that small, black-haired girl is! She looks as if she played the violin or wrote plays or something."

"She probably stays at home and dusts the drawing-room," said Judith, laughing.

"Don't be horrid," pouted Sally May. "Oh, there's Mrs. Dexter. Wouldn't it be thrilling to be President? You'd make a good President, Judy, you're so tall. Come on,^[1]

They found numbers of the New Girls already standing about under the Chinese lanterns admiring the work of the Decorating Committee, and some of them, we regret to add, casting hungry glances at the rolls and salad which were already on the table.

Judith found herself seated next to Sally May and opposite Frances, who was to reply to the toast to "Our first days at York Hill."

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How they enjoyed their supper! For once, to be able, while at School, to have exactly what you desired to eat, limited only, of course, by the amount of the tax levied on each member! Marjorie and Edith, who had been responsible for the ordering of the food, had many congratulations passed down to their end of the table, and Sally May felt amply repaid for the trouble she and her committee had taken with the place cards when she heard the exclamations of delight on all sides.

Judith, already excited and keyed up by the events of the day, and susceptible as always to beauty in any shape or form, could hardly eat at all. It was an exquisite June evening. The magic and charm of the coloured lanterns, the warm splashes of colour made by the sweater coats and cushions, the soft, rosy glow of the fading sunset, and the silver of a young moon, all made for Judith a veritable fairy-land. If only she hadn't to answer the toast she could be perfectly and absolutely happy.

But all too soon lemonade glasses were refilled for the toasts, and Joyce fidgeted and cleared her throat preparatory to giving "The King." "God save the King" was sung with a will, and then Frances proposed "Our Country" and this was followed by "O Canada," and "My Country, 'tis of Thee." Marjorie had brought her violin to accompany the songs, and the thin, silvery notes and the clear, fresh voices of the singers sent little shivery thrills of pleasure up and down Judith's spine.

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Judith's toast was coming now. Quite suddenly she knew that she hadn't been able to realize before what York Hill stood for—to herself, to all these New Girls, and to all the Old Girls who had come back to pay a tribute to the School they loved. Whatever could she do? She tried to think of something else to say, but Frances Purdy was speaking now and the bursts of laughter all about were too infectious to withstand. Frances was describing the woes of her first week. She had been told that she must say "ma'am" to all the Sixth-Form girls, and that new girls must get up before the others and have their baths before the bell rang, and she convulsed her audience by a description of her first ecstatic experience in the tuck shop. She had been informed that the School provided buns and milk at recess, and meeting a neighbour who was consuming a particularly luscious-looking Chelsea bun at recess-time, she enquired where they were to be found. She was directed to the tuck shop in the gymnasium, where she spent some happy moments choosing buns and cakes and sweets, all of which the presiding genius had asserted, in answer to her enquiries, she might have at recess. Her admiration for a School where this kind of thing was done was only equalled by her dismay when she discovered her mistake and was requested to hand over twenty-three cents!

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And now came the last and most important toast of all, and the School song was sung with a right good will. Judith stood up and found herself in the grip of an emotion stronger than herself. She looked out through the trees where she saw the lights streaming out from the dining-hall where the Old Girls were gathered; away off to the right was Miss Meredith's green-shaded lamp burning on her study table; in front she could see the lights in the common room and the library; here beside her was the gymnasium where most of her own particular friends were sitting at another table—and all these people were bound together by one thing—love and loyalty to York Hill.

The song was ended—they were waiting for her to speak; here and there in the semi-darkness she could distinguish a puzzled face; had they been waiting long? With an effort she opened her paper, no, it wouldn't do—she crushed it in her hand and waited for a minute till her heart should stop throbbing in her throat. Then she spoke, falteringly at first.

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"Some of us were conceited—and—selfish. We thought about ourselves mostly when we came here last September, but York Hill has made us despise our littleness and long to be bigger and broader; some of us didn't know how to use our bodies or our brains, but the School has taught us how to be true sports and how to think straight; some of us had mighty small ideals about what things really mattered; but York Hill has shown us how 'to play the game, and be true to the best we know.'" Judith faltered as she remembered how many times she had failed to live up to that best, her voice broke, and tears shone on her lashes. "Some of us are little fools—but we're going to see to it that we don't stay fools, we're going to be women that York Hill will be proud of when we come back to the Old Girls' Reunion."

And then she sat down feeling limp and tired and wishing that she could run upstairs to her room and hide her head under the pillows. But the girls were applauding whole-heartedly.

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"It's awfully kind of them," thought Judith; "they know how miserable I feel breaking down like that—in front of everybody."

"You made the speech of the evening, Judy," said Sally May as Judith joined her a little later in the Gymnasium for the Sixth-Form Dance.

"Don't be silly, Sally May. I failed, that's what I did, and just when I wanted badly to say 'thank you' to the School."

"Of course she made the best speech," said Nancy, putting her arm through Judith's, "Florence has been telling me about it." And Judith greatly comforted went off to have the first dance with Nancy.

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FOOTNOTE:

[1] Page 253, text ends in mid-sentence in original.

CHAPTER XVII

PRIZE-GIVING

AFTER the excitement of the previous day, Saturday morning felt a little flat and insipid. There was still plenty to do—desks to clean, trunks to pack, the last preparations to be made for to-night's play—a hundred and one things in fact.

The crew of the "Jolly Susan" were not particularly jolly; they were tired, and they hated to take down pictures and curtains, and dismantle their pretty rooms.

Next year wouldn't be the same, they assured each other; they'd never be all together again: Sally May wasn't even sure if she were returning to York Hill. Josephine expected to be back and Jane probably, and Nancy and Judith. Judith was glad that there wasn't any question as to whether Nancy would return. She was rapidly coming to the place where she felt that she simply couldn't live without Nancy. Indeed, the summer holidays, even with Daddy and Mother home again, had seemed long and blank until she had received permission to invite her special friend to spend a month at the Benson's camp in the North. [260]

"Of all the ships that sail on land,
There's none like 'Jolly Susan';
Her crew works well with heart and hand,
And sometimes they're amusin',"

sang Josephine in her deep voice. "It's the number of things I've got to remember that's weighing down MY young mind. Judy, do come in here and help me—you're so supernaturally tidy, perhaps *you* can tell me how to separate the sheep from the goats."

"Tidy, nothing," said Judith cheerfully, surveying Josephine's wardrobe and personal belongings spread over the entire room. "But why sheep?"

"Sheep-things I keep for prize-giving, and the play and the journey; goats—the rest, all of which must go into the big trunk and depart in two hours for the station. I know I'll pack my white slippers or my toothbrush or something equally important unless some kind soul will take me—and mine—in hand."

"Let's make a list of what you'll want for the journey," said Judith, setting to work with a will, "then you sort and I'll pack." [261]

"Jack and Tom are coming to-night," said Nancy, bursting into the "Jolly Susan" a little later, holding an open letter in her hands. "Isn't Miss Meredith a brick? She sent them special invitations when I told her Jack was still in town."

Nancy looked excited and beckoned Judith into her room where she pointed to two violet-coloured boxes.

"They've sent us the loveliest flowers," she said in a low tone; "it's a shame we can't have them at prize-giving, but only the Sixth carry flowers—let's put them in water and we'll wear them to-night at the play."

Judith took off the wrappings. "AREN'T they adorable? I never saw such darling little roses—how AWFULLY nice of them!"

Judith had never had flowers sent to her before and she felt that it was quite an occasion, and in some mysterious way marked the fact that she was growing up and next year would be in the Sixth. It WAS exciting.

"The play's to begin at seven sharp," called Jane. "Did you see the notice?—early lunch and an hour's quiet before prize-giving. What a bore!" [262]

"I'll be glad of it," said Sally May. "I'm not altogether sure of some of my speeches. I know I'm going to be fearfully nervous."

"I'll hear you after lunch," said Judith—"I have a high respect for your nerves, Mrs. Bennet. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these twenty years at least!"

"I believe you know at least half of 'Pride and Prejudice' by heart," said Nancy admiringly.

"Well, not half," Judith laughed, "but I love it. I'd rather play Elizabeth myself than any other part I know, and so I'm just crazy glad that Catherine's going to do it. Miss Marlowe didn't want to give Catherine another heavy part after being Viola and she tried Helen and Esther, but they simply couldn't do it. Catherine is too sweet for words. You should hear her say to Mr. Collins, 'Do not consider me now as an elegant female, intending to plague you!' Catherine an elegant female! Mr. Collins is simply killing. I do hope Eleanor will be careful of the coat—it's really too tight for her." [263]

"You're a brick, Judy," said Josephine appearing in the doorway. "The trunk is ready for Brodie. My word, what stunning roses! No, don't tell me who sent 'em. I'll have three guesses."

"Come on," cried Judith hurriedly, "we've got to see that everything is in place for to-night."

Patricia said we were to be in the gym by eleven sharp."

And she rushed off followed more slowly by Josephine who vowed that she wasn't going to escape a chaffing by such diplomatic exits.

Patricia and several of the Properties Committee were already at work. Brodie and Robert had put up the extension to the platform, the footlights and the big green curtains, and had brought over from Miss Meredith's house some charming pieces of old mahogany; the scenery painted by the Studio class was stacked against the wall; in fact all the materials out of which was to be evolved an eighteenth-century drawing-room were ready at hand.

"Josephine, you and Rosamond take this list and check it over please to make certain that everything's ready for Edith. Be SURE you don't forget a single thing—we'll be in a fearful rush after prize-giving. Seven is a perfectly awful hour to begin. Now keep your wits about you, Josephine—go over everything carefully."

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"Right-o," replied Josephine; "give a dog a bad name—and hang him. No one believes in me just because my hair is untidy. You'll live to see the day, Patricia, when—"

"Clear out," said Patricia, laughing at Josephine's solemn indignation. "I've got millions of things to do—now, please look after your share. Come on, Judy, let's tackle this parlour."

"Oh, how sweet!" cried Judith as they pulled out the big awkward screen. "Three cheers for the Studio girls! Wherever did you get such old-fashioned wall-paper, Peggy?"

"Miss Ashwell found it in one of the shops," said Peggy, "and we painted the border ourselves to match the chintz. Aren't those frilly little petticoats for the chairs the cunningest things?"

They worked hard for a couple of hours, and when curtains were hung at the windows which gave glimpses of an old-fashioned garden, and pictures and bric-à-brac, such as our grandmothers loved, in their appointed places, they felt that the result justified their labours.

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Judith produced a list and checked it over—yes, everything was ready but the candlesticks, and she'd get those now, and remind Patricia about the draperies which were to transform Mrs. Bennet's parlour into a ball-room or Lady de Burgh's drawing-room.

"It's charming," declared Miss Marlowe who had come in just before. "Congratulations, Patricia, you've certainly done your share towards making to-night a success. And you're ready in such good time—it's nice not to have a rush at the end."

"That's really owing to Judy, Miss Marlowe," said Patricia quickly; "she and the others, too, have been splendid."

"I'm glad you've had such good helpers," said Miss Marlowe, giving Judith a special smile of approval. "I shan't give a thought to the stage management, Patricia; I'll leave that and the properties to you—there are one or two who still need help with their parts and I want to give them every moment possible."

Judith fairly glowed with happiness as she watched Miss Marlowe disappearing down the hall. Miss Marlowe's words of praise were eagerly prized—they really meant something. Like most other people Judith loved to be approved of, and she had lived these last few days in an atmosphere of admiration. She was this afternoon to receive a special prize in English, and the second prize for General Proficiency in her Form. She had won the tennis trophy for her House, and in many little ways latterly the Senior girls and her own friends had shown her that they turned to her as to a leader; she knew that it was whispered about that next year she and Nancy would probably be prefects. It would be hard, of course, but it would be awfully nice—

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Patricia broke in upon her happy musings by calling to Josephine who was leaving the Hall.

"Is everything O.K. in the make-up room, Jo?"

"Molly Seaton's wig hasn't come yet, but Stewarts say they'll have it here by three o'clock," answered Josephine.

"And they promised faithfully to have it here last night," said Patricia disgustedly. "Now will you be certain sure to get it from the parcel room and see that Molly has it in plenty of time. I'll make the two of you responsible—Judy, you remind her—we go straight to the drawing-room for the reception after prize-giving and—"

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"Don't worry your fussy old self," said Josephine cheerfully; "nobody really believes in me, but Judy never forgets. We'll put the wig with our own fair hands on Molly Seaton's head. Come on, Judy, and see if Cathy's flowers have come yet."

Upstairs everything was in delightful confusion: trunks were being carried off, last packings attended to, every one was visiting every one else, and every one was doing her best to make her voice heard above the general confusion.

After luncheon white frocks were donned for prize-giving, and then the younger girls went about in groups visiting the graduating Sixth Form and admiring their flowers.

The crew of the "Jolly Susan" had clubbed together to buy roses for their Captain.

"We can't get blue roses," Nancy had said regretfully, "but let's get the palest pink we can find

and tie them with blue gauze. I'm afraid that's all we can do to suggest sailor boys. Whatever shall we do without her next year?"

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There were beautiful flowers everywhere they went, but the crew were quite convinced when they came back to the "Jolly Susan" that none were lovelier than theirs, and most certainly no one to compare with Catherine herself.

Prize-giving proved even more exciting than Judith had anticipated. "If only Daddy and Mother could have been here," she thought, as she took her place in the long line of white-frocked girls and looked a bit wistfully at the big audience which held the girls' fathers and mothers. But that must be Uncle Tom—yes, it was, and Aunt Nell—bless them. She wouldn't feel lonely now. And yes—there were Tom and Jack. Then Judith remembered that she mustn't look about the audience, but keep her mind on the programme. She looked down at the printed sheet in her hand, but she knew quite well where they were sitting, and Jack's friendly smile was the first she saw when she came down from the platform with her prizes in her hand.

Prize-giving was an especially important event for the Sixth, who were graduating. To them it was perhaps the greatest moment of the year, for the receiving of diploma or certificate, seeming to mark a parting of the ways, was bitter sweet—bright with hopes of the joys to come, but tinged with regret for "the great glad days" that were now left behind.

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The School gave them a great ovation. Judith, looking at the group of prefects and captains who received a special pin as a badge of honour, echoed Nancy's cry—how COULD they get along without them next year?

Miss Meredith held a reception afterwards on the lawn, for it was a perfect June day. Judith carried her prizes proudly for Aunt Nell and Uncle Tom to inspect.

"I didn't trip after all, Aunt Nell," she said laughingly; "if you only knew how relieved I was to think that I had made my curtsy and was down from the platform without mishap!"

Jack and Tom with Sally May and Nancy joined the group and congratulations were the order of the day. Sally May had a prize for sketching to exhibit, and Nancy one for fine sewing.

It was a gay, delightful party, and when messengers began to send round word that actors and committee members must go in for early tea in order to be ready in good time for the play, Judith could hardly believe that prize-giving was really over.

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Judith and Nancy had still so much to discuss concerning the day's happenings that they refused to be separated, and Judith, who was to help change the scenery, established Nancy in a corner beside her so that she could share in the fun behind the scenes.

Nancy was loud in her praises of the quaintness of the stage-setting, and Judith, feeling delightfully superior and important, enjoyed herself enormously showing Nancy how they had contrived this and that to better the effect.

Peeping around one corner of the curtain they could see the audience arriving, and behind in the make-up room there was a buzz of voices and a general feeling of excitement which was quite thrilling.

Presently the hall was full, the orchestra had finished their overture, and had begun all over again, but the actors did not appear. Something must have gone wrong.

"Miss Marlowe *will* be annoyed," whispered Judith to Nancy. "She simply hates being late." And curiosity tempted her to slip into the dressing-room to see what was happening.

The room was humming with repressed excitement; last touches of rouge were being added; Lady Catherine de Burgh was walking solemnly up and down before a mirror practising the art of making her plumes "nod majestically," Sally May was saying feverishly over and over again, "My dear Mr. Bennet, have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?"—"If I can just keep talking I won't be nervous," she confided to Jane—"My dear Mr. Bennet, have you heard that Netherfield Park—"; Althea (Bingley) was practising bows with Josephine in a secluded corner of the adjoining room, and Catherine was having the finishing touches put to her pretty curls. Everything seemed as it should be—no, Mr. Bennet (Molly Seaton) was protesting almost tearfully to Miss Marlowe, "It was never given to me: Patricia said it was late and she'd look after it." Judith's face flamed—Molly's wig! She had entirely forgotten it!

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"Where is Patricia?" said Miss Marlowe in a voice whose quality made the room suddenly become perfectly quiet. Judith tried to speak, but her lips and throat had suddenly become quite dry. How could she tell Miss Marlowe it was her fault!

Sally May was speaking—something about a telegram and Patricia—Judith didn't hear her—a furious argument was raging within her—with lightning-like speed Top Self and Deep-Down Self strove for mastery. "How can you tell Miss Marlowe it's your fault—after the way you've been trusted and looked up to?—It was Josephine's job, anyway—you did yours"—"But of course you can't let Patricia be blamed"—"Miss Marlowe will never forgive you"—"You can't let Patricia be blamed for it—you WERE to remind—"

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The silence had penetrated to the far corner and as Judith opened her lips to speak, Josephine's horrified tones were heard.

"It's my fault, Miss Marlowe, Patricia asked me to look after it."

"You, Josephine?" Miss Marlowe's tones were icy. "Well, you have been consistently careless all year: I wonder that you were given any responsibility."

Judith could not bear that.

"Miss Marlowe," she began in a voice which sounded curiously thin and weak.

But the words were drowned in Sally May's shout:

"Why, here's the box—it's been under this cloak all the time."

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The others bent forward to see the precious wig, and Top Self was quick to make one more effort.

"What a little thing to make such a tremendous fuss about! No one has seen you—just slip off again to your post, and when Josephine tells you about it you can take your share of the blame then—Miss Marlowe doesn't want to be bothered with any one else confessing to something that's all over with now—why, it will even look like pretending to be too honest if you interrupt her now—"

Top Self probably had any number of arguments besides; these flashed through her mind in a second, but Deep-Down Self answered them in a most wonderful way and just as quickly. Thinking about it afterwards, Judith couldn't understand how the most important thing that had happened to her during the whole year could have occurred in a second or two, and she found it very difficult to put into words, even for herself, just how Deep-Down Self had conquered. It seemed as if suddenly those who stood for the best and finest things in York Hill rose in her mind and confronted Top Self—Catherine, Nancy, Josephine, Eleanor, Miss Marlowe, Miss Ashwell, Miss Meredith—and when Judith had seen them she turned again to Top Self—but Top Self had gone!

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It had only taken a second of time, but even in that second fresh tragedy had been added. The wig was a beautiful golden blonde!

"Quick, give me the powder," Miss Marlowe was saying. "Somebody get the charcoal; we'll have to streak it a bit to make it grey."

Judith managed to get charcoal before any one else, and then said desperately,

"It's my fault as much as Josephine's, Miss Marlowe—more mine, for Patricia told me to be sure to remind Josephine."

"You, Judith?" said Miss Marlowe coldly. "I AM surprised,"—and she wasted no more time on Judith, who went away feeling that she could never be happy again.

Judith didn't go back to Nancy, she wanted to be alone. Her humiliation was very real—not because she had forgotten, though it HAD hurt her pride to think that she had been careless. But there was a deeper hurt than that—she had actually hesitated to take her share of the blame, in spite of precept and example in her home, and here this year at York Hill. She had almost done something quite dishonourable.

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"They'd despise me if they knew," thought Judith, crouching down behind some scenery and wishing that she could run away instead of waiting to help. "Why, oh, why do I make so many mistakes and fail so often? But I won't—I won't let that horrid little Top Self conquer"—and, interested in the working of her own mind, she paused a moment to consider how curious it was that all those faces should rise to aid her just when she needed them—"Seemed almost as if they WERE Deep-Down Self—but of course they couldn't be, because that's me—but it's queer—they seemed like a part of me too—"

Just then Catherine on her way to the stage caught sight of Judith, a crumpled little heap behind the screen. She hadn't a moment, but she took one, nevertheless, to stop and pat the back of Judith's neck—her face she couldn't see—and say affectionately, "Never mind, Judy, dear—we all forget sometimes—you're O.K. really."

Just a moment—but it brought Judith up out of her gloom.

"Dear old Cathy," she said to herself as she scrambled up to watch the heroine make her entrance, "she's a brick, a real brick—I'll NEVER do anything I'd be ashamed to tell her about."

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"Hullo!" whispered Nancy; "come on over here and you can see better—what's the matter?"

"Why?"

"Well, you look—as if you'd had a small fortune left you."

"I—think—I have," said Judith soberly but happily.

"Sh—sh—sh," commanded Nancy, "they're beginning. Here, you watch from this crack, and I'll take this one." And they were soon lost to all sense of surroundings as they followed Jane Austen's delightful story.

Sally May was a delicious Mrs. Bennet—her archness, her querulousness, and above all her

talkativeness. Was it Sally May or Mrs. Bennet? Molly Seaton, as Mr. Bennet, proved an excellent foil—reserved, quiet, full of a delightful sarcastic humour.

Miss Marlowe sat in the shadow of the green curtain holding the typewritten manuscript, ready to prompt any one who stumbled—the first scene was always the difficult one; but it went without a hitch and Judith was soon busily helping to transform the parlour into a ball-room, and listening with great excitement to the applause on the other side of the green curtains. [277]

Then the stage was filled with dainty, slim, ringletted ladies in high-waisted flowered frocks and gentlemen in tight breeches, long-tailed coats, and high stocks, and the curtains rolled back to disclose a prettier and statelier dance than a modern audience often sees.

As the story progressed, Catherine as Elizabeth, and Eleanor as Mr. Collins, divided the honours pretty equally. No one who had not seen Catherine as Viola could have guessed what a charming Elizabeth she would make, and Eleanor—well, Eleanor was Mr. Collins, a very triumph of imagination! Eleanor had not Catherine's gift, and to picture Elizabeth's delicate subtleties and humours would have been quite beyond her, but she had walked, and talked, and eaten with Mr. Collins until she was that worthy gentleman's double.

Who could ever forget the courtship scene, with Mr. Collins's ponderous declaration and dexterous withdrawal from Mrs. Bennet's clutches? Contrary to Judith's fears, Mr. Collins's coat withstood the pressure of his windy eloquence and all the seams held fast. [278]

Scene followed scene. Jane's love-story and Lydia's and Elizabeth's until the tangles, always tied in true lovers' garlands, were disentangled one by one and Mrs. Bennet was able to sing her hymn of joy. "Three daughters married! Ten thousand a year! What will become of me? I shall go distracted."

It was a great success, of course, the Reunion Play always was, and each one better than the last as every one said, but Judith and Nancy privately decided that nothing could ever be better—it was perfect.

The play over, benches and chairs were piled up at the sides, the orchestra played an entrancing tune, and every one danced; Mr. Collins with Lady Catherine de Burgh, and Elizabeth with Judith, Mrs. Bennet with Nancy, and Jane with Bingley.

Then by and by Miss Meredith gave a signal to the orchestra, and big girls and little, Old and New, formed a great triple hand-clasped circle and sang together as was the custom, "Should Auld Acquaintance be Forgot?" And if some of the Old Girls found they couldn't sing at all because their voices grew hoarse and husky, as they thought of what old acquaintance in York Hill had meant to them and was going to mean to their young sisters and daughters, what wonder! [279]

It was over. The guests were moving slowly down to the drawing-rooms for refreshments, and the School and the Old Girls crossed the quadrangle and had their lemonade and cake in Big Hall. In twos and threes the girls stood making plans for next year, or talking over the events of the day.

Some one at the piano began to play "Forty Years On," the last song always at York Hill on Prize Day.

Judith didn't want to sing—she slipped out through the open door. It was a glorious sight, the moon was nearly full, and the quadrangle was flooded with silvery light.

In front of her was the great main School building, its windows blazing with light, the silhouette of the bell-tower etched against the sky. She could hear the Old Girls behind her singing in the Gymnasium—

"Forty years on, when afar and asunder
Parted are those who are singing to-day,
When you look back and forgetfully wonder
What you were like in your work and your play."

Memories of the past year crowded into Judith's mind. The first days, and this splendid last week; she could not put into words even to herself what it had all meant to her, but deep within herself she realized that Aunt Nell's wish had come true—York Hill was helping her to be true to the best she knew. [280]

The insistent rhythm of the chorus caught her and held her:

"Follow up! Follow up!
Till the field ring again and again
With the tramp of twenty-two men—
Follow up! Follow up!"

Judith had sung "Forty Years On" many times. It was a favourite for the Saturday-night sing-songs, but never before had it gripped her like this. Out into the night floated the golden notes of Kathryn Fleming's glorious voice—

"Oh, the great days in the distance enchanted,
Days of fresh air in the rain and the sun

How we rejoiced as we struggled and panted,
Hardly believable forty years on.

"God give us bases to guard and beleaguer;
Games to play out whether earnest or fun;
Fights for the fearless and goals for the eager:
Twenty, and thirty, and forty years on."

"Follow up" sang the beautiful voice—and then came the answering refrain from hundreds of York Hill daughters—"Follow up! Follow up!"

[281]

A great wave of emotion shook Judith—the pent-up feeling of the last few days must find expression; with an unconscious dramatic gesture she turned to the School and held out her hands. "Oh, I WILL have big ideals and not little ones—I wanted to say a big 'Thank you' the other night, dear York Hill—and I couldn't—I hadn't the words—and I can't now—but I will, I WILL follow up."

THE END

Transcriber's Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors corrected.

The remaining corrections made are indicated by dotted lines under the corrections. Scroll the mouse over the word and the original text will appear.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK JUDY OF YORK HILL ***

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