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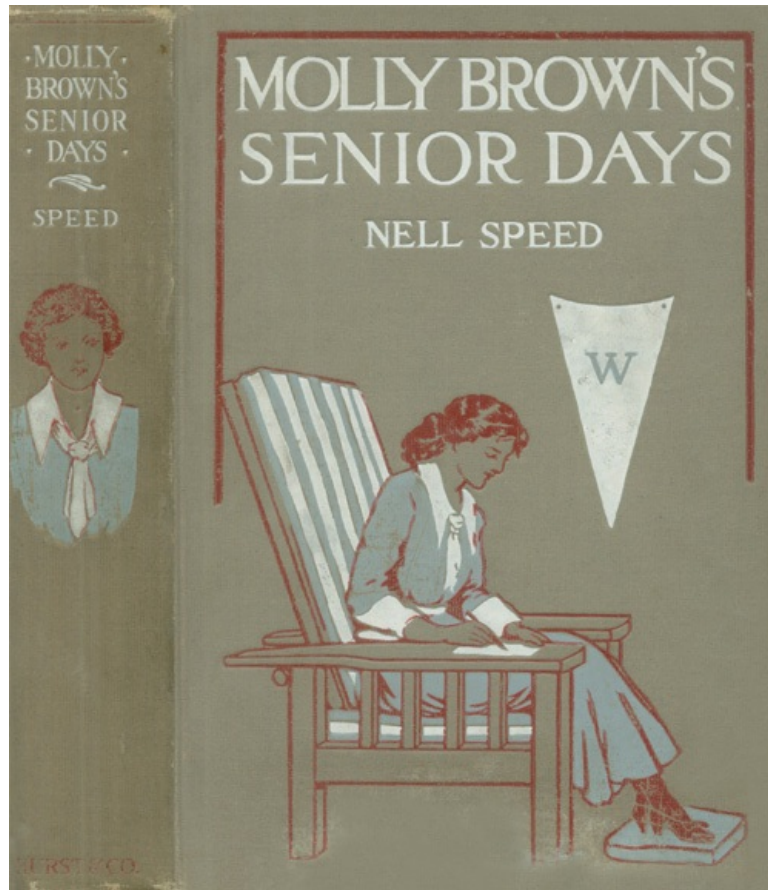
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MOLLY BROWN'S SENIOR DAYS ***

MOLLIE BROWN'S SENIOR DAYS





"You're right in the fashion, Miss Brown,"
observed Adele.—[Page 25](#).

MOLLY BROWN'S SENIOR DAYS

BY
NELL SPEED

AUTHOR OF "MOLLY BROWN'S FRESHMAN DAYS," "MOLLY BROWN'S SOPHOMORE DAYS,"
"MOLLY BROWN'S JUNIOR DAYS," ETC., ETC.

*WITH FOUR HALF-TONE ILLUSTRATIONS
BY CHARLES L. WRENN*

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Molly Brown's Senior Days

CHAPTER I.

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GOOD NEWS AND BAD.

Summer still lingered in the land when Wellington College opened her gates one morning in September. Frequent heavy rains had freshened the thirsty fields and meadows, and autumn had not yet touched the foliage with scarlet and gold. The breeze that fluttered the curtains at the windows of No. 5 Quadrangle was as soft and humid as a breath of May. It was as if spring was in the air and the note of things awakening, pushing up through the damp earth to catch the warm rays of the sun. It was Nature's last effort before she entered into her long sleep.

Molly Brown, standing by the open window, gazed thoughtfully across the campus. Snatches of song and laughter, fragments of conversation and the tinkle of the mandolin floated up to her from the darkness. It was like an oft-told but ever delightful story to her now.

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"Shall I ever be glad to leave it all?" she asked herself. "Wellington and the girls and the hard work and the play?"

How were they to bear parting, the old crowd, after four years of intimate association? Did Judy love it as she did, or would she not rather feel like a bird loosed from a cage when at last the gates were opened and she could fly away. But Molly felt sure that Nance would feel the pangs of homesickness for Wellington when the good old days were over.

All these half-melancholy thoughts crowded through Molly's mind while Judy thrummed the guitar and Nance, busy soul, arranged the books on the new white book shelves.

Presently the other girls would come trailing in, the "old guard," to talk over the events of that busy first day: Margaret Wakefield, bursting with opinions about politics and woman's suffrage; pretty Jessie Lynch, and the Williams sisters whose dark lustrous eyes seemed to see beyond the outer crust of things. Last of all, after a discreet interval, would come a soft, deprecating tap at the door, and Otoyō Sen, most charming of little Japanese ladies, with a beaming, apologetic smile, would glide into the room on her marshmallow soled slippers.

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"Everybody's late," exclaimed Judy, unexpectedly breaking in on her friend's preoccupation. "I do wish my trunk were unpacked. I can't bear to be unsettled. It's the most disagreeable thing about the first day of college."

"Why don't you go unpack it, then, lazybones?" asked Nance, a trifle sternly. As much as she loved her care-free Judy, she never quite approved of her.

"How little you understand my nature, Nance," answered Judy, reproachfully.

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"I know that people who pride themselves on having the artistic temperament never like to unpack trunks or do any kind of so-called menial work, for that matter. But there can be just as much art in unpacking a trunk as in a painting a picture——"

"Ho, ho!" interrupted Judy, who loved these discussions with her serious-minded friend. "How would you like to engage for all your life in the immortal work of unpacking trunks?"

"I never said anything about doing it always——" broke in Nance, when the argument was brought to a sudden end by the arrival of the other girls.

There was a great noise of talk and laughter while they draped themselves about the room.

College girls in kimonos never sit in straight-backed chairs. They usually curl themselves up on divans or in Morris chairs, or sit, Turkish fashion, on cushions on the floor.

"Well, and what's the news?" they asked. Most of them had caught only flying glimpses of each other during the day.

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"Wait until I make my annual inspection," ordered Judy, carefully examining the fourth finger of the left hand of every girl. "No rings or marks of rings," she said at each inspection until she came to Jessie, who was endeavoring to sit on her left hand while she pushed Judy away with her right. "Now, Jessica, no concealments," cried Judy, "and from your seven bosom friends! It's not fair. Are you actually wearing a solitaire?"

"I assure you it's my mother's engagement ring," Jessie protested, but Judy had extricated the pretty little hand on the fourth finger of which sparkled not one, but two, rings.

"Caught! Caught, the first of all!" they cried in a chorus.

"Honestly and truly I'm not."

"It looks to me as if you had been caught twice, Jessie," said Molly laughing.

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"No, no, one of them is really Mama's and the other—well, it was lent to me. It's not mine. I simply promised to wear it for a few months."

Jeers and incredulous laughter followed this statement.

"We only hope you'll hold out to the end, Jessie," remarked Katherine in tones of reproach.

"What, leave dear old Wellington and all of you for any ordinary, stupid man? I'd never think of it," cried Jessie.

"I'm not afraid," here put in Edith. "Fickle Jessica may change her mind and her ring half a dozen times before June. Who can tell?"

"I'm not fickle where all of you are concerned, anyhow," answered Jessie reproachfully.

"You're a dear, Jessie," broke in Molly. She never did quite enjoy seeing other

people teased.

"Will some one kindlee make for me explanation of the word 'jubilee'?" asked Otoyo Sen, seated cross-legged on a cushion in the very center of the group, like an Oriental story-teller.

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"Jubilee?" said Edith. By an unspoken arrangement, it was always left to her to answer such questions. "Why jubilee means a rejoicing, a celebration."

"There will be singing and dancing and feasting greatlee of many days enduring?" asked Otoyo.

"It depends on who's doing the enduring," Edith said, smiling.

"Wellington will be enduring of greatlee much rejoicing," went on the little Japanese. "For Wellington will give jubilee entertainment for fifty years of birthday, perhaps, maybe."

Here was news indeed for seven seniors at the very head and front of college affairs.

"And where did you get this interesting information, little one?" demanded Margaret.

Otoyo blushed and hesitated; then cocked her head on one side exactly like a little song sparrow and glancing timidly at Nance, replied:

"Mr. Andrew McLean, second, he told it to me."

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Nance smiled unconcernedly. She never dreamed of being jealous of the funny little Japanese.

"And why, pray, didn't Miss Walker announce it this morning at chapel when she made her opening address?" asked Margaret.

"Ah, that is for another veree sadlee reason," answered Otoyo, her voice taking on a mournful note. "You have not heard?"

"No, what?" they demanded, bursting with curiosity.

"Professor Edwin Green, the noble, honorable gentleman of English Literature, he is veree ill. You have not heard such badlee news? Miss Walker, she will announce nothing of jubilee while this poor gentleman lies in his bed so veree, greatlee ill."

"Why, Otoyo," cried Molly, her voice rising above the excited chorus, "is it really true? You mean dangerously ill? What is the matter with him?"

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"He has been two weeks in the infirmaree with a great fever."

"You mean typhoid?"

Otoyo nodded. It was a new name to her. She had not had much to do with illness during her two years in America, but she remembered the dread name of typhoid. It had a sad association to her, for she had been passing the infirmary at the very moment when a black, sinister looking ambulance had brought Professor Edwin Green from his rooms to the hospital.

Molly relapsed into silence. Somehow, the joy of reunion had been spoiled and she tasted the bitterness of dark forebodings. It came to her with unexpected vividness that Wellington would not be the same without the Professor of English Literature, whose kind assistance and advice had meant so much to her. Only a little while ago she had made a secret resolution to seek him in his office on the morrow for counsel on a very vital question. In plain words: how to avoid being a school teacher. And now this brilliant and learned man, by far the brightest star in the Wellington faculty, was dangerously ill. Molly felt suddenly the cold clutch of disappointment.

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The other girls were sorry but not really shaken or unnerved by the news.

"The jubilee must be to celebrate the fiftieth birthday of the new Wellington—" began Margaret, after an interval of silence. "Do you suppose—" she began again and then broke off.

"Suppose what?" asked the inquisitive Judy.

"Oh, nothing. It would seem rather unfeeling to put in words what I had in my mind. I think I'll leave it unsaid."

There was a silence and again came that cold clutch at Molly's heart. She felt pretty certain that Margaret had started to say:

"Do you suppose, if Professor Green dies, it will interfere with the jubilee?"

"If there is a jubilee," suddenly burst out Judy, who had been lying quite still with her eyes closed, "if they do give it, we shall be at the head and front of it being

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seniors, and I already have a wonderful suggestion to make. Would it not be splendid to have an old English pageant? The whole college could take part in it. Think of the beautiful costumes; the lovely colors; the rustic dances and open air plays on the campus."

Judy's eyes sparkled and her face was flushed with excitement. With her amazing faculty for visualizing, the spectacle of the pageant stretched before her imagination like a great colored print. She saw the capering jesters in cap and bells; ox carts filled with rustics; the pageant of knights and ladies and royal personages; the players; the dancers—

"It would be too glorious," she cried, beside herself from her inflamed imagination.

The other girls, unable to follow Judy's brilliant vision, watched her with amused curiosity.

"I should think you would remember that Professor Green was at his death's door before you began making plans for a jubilee," admonished Nance.

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But Judy, too intoxicated with her visions to notice Nance's reproof, continued:

"They would have it in May, of course, when the weather is warm and everything is in bloom. First would come the pageant; then the king and queen and court would gather as spectators in front of all the various side shows; morality plays and—"

The picture had now become so real to Judy that her galloping imagination had leaped over every difficulty, as the hunter leaps the intervening fence rail. In a flash she had decided on her own costume, of violet velvet and silk—a gentleman of the court, perhaps—when Molly, sitting pale and quiet beside the window, suddenly remarked:

"Miss Walker did look very serious this morning, I thought. Just before chapel I saw her in the court talking to Dr. McLean. She must have had bad news then."

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Judy's inflated enthusiasm collapsed like a pricked balloon. She flushed hotly and relapsed into silence. Presently, after the others had departed to their rooms, she crept over to Molly and sunk on her knees beside her at the open window.

"I didn't mean to be such a brute, Molly, darling," she said. "I forgot about your being such friends with the Greens and I really am awfully sorry about the Professor. Will you forgive me?"

"You foolish, fond old Judy," said Molly, slipping an arm around her friend's neck. "I only dimly heard your wanderings. I was so busy thinking of—of other things; sending out hope thoughts like Madeleine Petit. Poor Miss Green! I wonder if she knows. She has been in Europe all summer. I had post cards from her every now and then."

Molly looked wistfully through the darkness in the direction of the infirmary. "I wish I knew how he was to-night," she added.

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"I'll go and inquire," cried Judy, leaping to her feet, eager to make amends for past offenses. She glanced at the clock. "The gate isn't locked until a quarter past to-night on account of the late train. There'll be time if I sprint there and back."

"But, Judy," objected Molly.

"Don't interfere, and don't try to come, too. You can't run and I can," and before either of the other girls could say a word, Judy was out of the room and gone.

"I don't know what we are going to do about her, Molly," Nance observed, as soon as the door had slammed behind that impetuous young woman, "she's worse than ever."

Molly shook her head silently. Suddenly she felt quite old and apathetic, like a person who has lost all ambitions and given up the fight.

"I think I'll turn in, Nance. I'm tired to death."

With silent sympathy, Nance turned down the cover of Molly's little white bed and laid out her night-gown.

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It seemed an incredibly short time when Judy burst into the room again, too breathless to speak, her face scarlet with running.

"I just did make it," she gasped presently. "The night nurse said Professor Green was very ill, but that Dr. McLean was hopeful because of his strong constitution."

"I feel hopeful, too. Thank you, Judy, dearest," said Molly, drawing the covers up over her shoulders while Nance turned out the light.

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CHAPTER II.

A TROUBLED SUNDAY.

It was Sunday morning and Molly had been washing her head. She had spread a towel on the window-sill and now hung her hair out of the window that sun and wind might play upon her auburn locks.

"I always heard it was better to dry the hair by the sun than by a fire; hot air dries up the natural oils," she observed to Nance in a muffled voice.

Nance was engaged in the meditative occupation of manicuring her nails. As she rubbed them back and forth on a chamois buffer her thoughts were busy in far other fields.

"Yes," she replied absently to Molly's observation. "I suppose you learned that from Judy's new friend," she added, coming back to her present beautifying occupation. "She'll be introducing rouge to us next," Nance went on in a disgusted tone.

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Molly smiled and gave her hair a vigorous shake in the breeze. In the bright sunlight it sparkled with glints of gold as if a fairy wand had touched it.

"No, I didn't, really," she answered. "I read it on the beauty page of a Sunday paper, but I knew it anyhow instinctively before I read it."

"Do you think her hair is naturally red," asked Nance, punching the dull end of her orange stick into a sofa cushion with unusual force.

"I suppose lots of people ask the same question about mine," Molly answered evasively.

"Never," Nance asserted hotly. "I don't know much about the subject but I do know that no dyes have ever been invented that could imitate the color of your hair."

"How do you know it, Nance, dear?"

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"Well, because so many people would dye their hair that color. There would be no more drab browns like mine, or rusty blacks or faded tans."

"But, Nance, your hair is lovely. It's smooth and glossy and fine and thick. Has that girl been talking to you about your looks?"

"They both have," admitted Nance. "They've got me to thinking I'm plain but would be greatly improved if I wore a rat and waved my bang and did my hair in a bunch of curls in the back like Jessie."

"But Jessie's hair curls naturally," put in Molly.

"Yes, of course, and mine doesn't. It would be a fearful nuisance, but one can't help listening to such talk when it concerns oneself. You know how Judy does run away to things, and there is something convincing about Adele's arguments."

"She's very bright," admitted Molly. "What do you think she wants me to do, Nance? Something much worse than crimping?"

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"There is no telling. Probably lather your face with that horrible white-wash stuff called 'Youthful Bloom,' Judy was telling us about."

"No, worse still. She says my face is too thin and that I am getting lines from nose to mouth. She wants me to have it filled."

Nance gave a wild whoop of derision.

"Can't you see Judy Kean's head being stuffed with such nonsense until it bursts?" she cried, breaking off suddenly as the door opened and Judy herself appeared on the threshold.

"May I bring in a visitor?" she asked stiffly, feeling from the sudden stillness that her own name had been under discussion. "Nobody likes to have her name bandied back and forth even between intimate friends," she thought with some indignation. But Judy's little fly-ups never lasted long and when Molly called out hospitably: "Yes, indeed, delighted," and Nance said: "Certainly, Judy," her sensitive feelings immediately withdrew into the dark caverns of her mind.

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"I've brought a *friend* up to see our rooms," Judy went on, putting special emphasis on friend.

Judy had introduced a new member to the Old Queen's circle and while that body

was only exclusive in the matter of intelligence and good breeding, and the new member seemed to meet both requirements, still the circle as a whole was not entirely agreeable to Judy's latest find.

The new girl had a very grand sounding name, "Adele Windsor," and Judy was hurt when Edith Williams demanded if Adele was related to "The Widow of Windsor." Adele was certainly very handsome,—tall, with a beautiful figure, dark eyes and hair more red than brown.

"She dresses with artful simplicity," Margaret had remarked, but hardly a girl in college had handsomer clothes than Adele Windsor.

Nobody could cast aspersions against her intelligence, either. She had entered the junior class of Wellington as a special; which was pretty good work, in the opinions of our girls. If any name could be given to the objections they all secretly felt for Judy's new friend, it was that she was so excessively modern. She was a product of New York City; and so thoroughly up to date was this bewildering young person regarding topics of the day, from fashions and beauty remedies to international politics, that she fairly took the breath away even of such advanced persons as Margaret Wakefield.

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Adele now followed Judy into the room, and Molly, shaking back the hair from her face, bowed and smiled politely. Nance was not so cordial in her greeting. She had already prophesied what the history of Judy's friendship with this girl would be.

"Judy will get terribly intimate and then awfully bored. I know her of old."

"You're right in the fashion, Miss Brown," observed Adele, taking a seat near Molly and regarding her hair with admiration.

"That's the first time anybody ever said such a thing about me," exclaimed Molly with a laugh. "I'm usually three years behind. Now, you couldn't mean this gray kimono, could you? Or maybe it's my pumps," she added. "I know low heels are coming back again." Thrusting out one of her long, narrow feet, she looked at it quizzically.

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"No, no, it's your hair," replied Adele. "Red hair is the fashion now. You see it everywhere; at the theaters, in society, at the opera——"

"You mean everywhere in New York," corrected Nance.

Adele smiled, showing a row of even white teeth. She was really very handsome.

"Well, isn't New York the hub of the world?" put in Judy.

"No," answered Nance firmly. "Boston and San Francisco and Chicago and St. Louis are just as much hubs as New York—to say nothing of the smaller cities. Any place with telegraph wires and competent people at both ends can keep up with the times nowadays——"

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"Yes, but what about the theaters and operas," Judy began hotly.

"And clothes," added Adele softly, with a quick glance at Molly's old blue suit which had been well brushed and cleaned that morning and hung on the back of a chair to dry. Molly had not even noticed the glance. She was looking across the campus in the direction of the infirmary and at the same time forming a resolution to go over and inquire for Professor Green as soon as she could arrange her tumbled hair.

But Nance had caught the slightly contemptuous expression in Adele's eyes and resented it with warm loyalty.

"I don't see what clothes have to do with it," she asserted. "Because in New York people look at one's clothes before they look at one's face, it doesn't follow that they are more advanced than people in other places."

"New York only shows one how to improve one's clothes and one's face," put in Adele calmly.

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Nance felt somehow reproved by this elegant cold-blooded creature whom Judy had thrust upon them. And now Judy must needs take a flying leap into the discussion.

"Nance, you are behind the times," she cried. "There is no excuse now for women to be badly dressed or plain. Even poor people can dress in taste and there are ways for improving looks so that the most ordinary face can be beautified."

"Can you make little eyes big?" demanded Nance.

"Don't be silly," said Judy.

And it looked for a moment as if a quarrel were about to be precipitated between the friends, when Molly, glancing at Adele Windsor, began to laugh.

"And all this because somebody said red hair was the fashion," she said, but she had an uncomfortable feeling that Adele was fond of starting a fight in order to look on and see the fun, and she wished in her heart that her beloved Judy had not taken up with such a dangerous young woman. She now tactfully changed the subject to the theater.

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Adele had signed photographs of almost all the actors and actresses in the country and could give interesting bits of personal history about many of them. Having launched the company on this safe topic, Molly seized the old blue suit and departed into her bedroom. Judy and presently Nance also were soon absorbed in an account of Miss Windsor's visit at the home of a famous actress. Molly, indeed, was careful to leave her door open a crack in order not to miss a word. After all, it was fun to live at "the hub," as Judy called it, and know great people and see the best plays and hear all the best music. But this stunning metropolitan person did make one feel dreadfully provincial and shabby. She wondered if Adele had noticed the shabby dress. Molly sighed.

"I don't think clothes would interfere so much with my good times," she thought, "if only I didn't love them so."

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Then she resolutely pinned on the soft blue felt, which at least was new if not expensive, slipped on her jacket and returned to the next room.

"I'll see you at dinner, girls," she said. "Good-bye, Miss Windsor."

"I'm going to dinner with Adele at Beta Phi," announced Judy.

Adele occupied what the girls now called the "hoodoo suite" at Beta Phi. This was none other than Judith Blount's old apartment, afterwards sub-let to the unfortunate Millicent Porter.

"Shall Nance and I call by for you on the way to vespers, then?" asked Molly.

"I'm not going to vespers. You don't mind, do you, Molly?"

Ever since they had been at college the three girls had kept their engagement for vespers on Sunday afternoons. They had actually been known to refuse other invitations in order to keep this friendly compact. And Judy was breaking away from what had come to be an established custom. Of course, it was just this once and absurd to feel disappointed, only Molly, glancing over Judy's head at Adele standing by the window, had caught a glint of triumph in her eyes. What was she after, anyway? Did she wish to wean the tempestuous Judy from her old friends? The two girls exchanged a quick, meaningful look.

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"We'll miss you, Judy," said Molly, and went into the corridor, closing the door softly behind her. Hardly had she reached the head of the staircase, when Judy came tearing after her.

"You aren't angry with me, Molly, dearest?" she cried. "Adele and I have a wonderful scheme on hand. I'll tell you what it is some day. Don't you think she's perfectly fine? So handsome—so clever—"

"Yes, indeed," answered Molly, trying to be truthful. "I hope you'll have a beautiful time, Judy, but we'll miss you just the same, especially on the walk afterwards. Had you forgotten about the walk?"

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"Oh dear, Molly, you are hurt," ejaculated Judy, who couldn't bear to be in anybody's black books, yet, nevertheless, desired to have her own way.

"I'm not, indeed, Judy. We can't tie ourselves to Sunday afternoon engagements. Nance and I wouldn't have you feel that way for anything."

The stormy Judy, calmed by these assuring words, returned to her rooms, while Molly hurried downstairs and across the campus toward the infirmary.

A number of people had gathered at the door of the hospital. Dr. McLean's buggy and a doctor's motor car waited outside. There was an ominous look about the picture that filled Molly with dark forebodings. Most of the people in the group at the door were members of the faculty, Miss Pomeroy, Miss Bowles and the Professor of French literature. They were talking in low voices. Dodo Green and Andy McLean leaned against the wall of the house, their hands thrust deep in their pockets, their faces the very picture of dejection. Molly began to run.

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"He's dead!" a voice cried in her heart. "Oh, Dodo," she exclaimed to the Professor's young brother, who had run out to meet her, "please tell me quickly what has happened."

"The old boy's had a tough time, Miss Molly," said Dodo, struggling hard to keep his voice from breaking. "He had one of those infernal sinking spells about ten this morning. It was his heart, they say. It's been something awful, just a fight to keep him alive. But he's come through it. The doctor from Exmoor came over to help

Andy's father." Dodo paused and gulped back his tears and Molly did not dare trust herself to speak.

"Let's walk a little way down the avenue," he said presently. "I feel all bowled over from anxiety and waiting around so long."

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"I know, I know, poor Dodo," said Molly sympathetically. "But he'll get well, now. I'm sure of it. The doctor said his fine constitution would carry him along."

"The doctor was thinking of what Edwin used to be, say a year ago. The old boy has been overworking. The truth is," he added in a burst of confidence, "he got into debt somehow; borrowed money on prospects that didn't materialize, or something."

Instantly the thought of the comic opera came into Molly's head.

"And he worked all summer without taking any vacation, night and day. Grace was abroad or she never would have allowed it. He just weakened his constitution until he was ready to take any disease that happened to be floating around."

It was a great relief to Dodo's pent-up feelings to talk and he now poured out his troubles to listening, sympathetic Molly.

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"Grace and I don't know what he wanted to use the money for——"

"Maybe it was for the opera."

"No, I know for a fact it wasn't that infernal old opera, though writing it was one of the things, that pulled him down. But the debt's all paid now and the good old boy is lying at death's door as a result. By the way," he added, drawing a key from his pocket, "Sister wants me to get something out of Edwin's office on the cloisters. Will you come with me, Miss Molly? There are such a lot of girls always in the court on Sunday."

"I only wish I could do more for you, Dodo," answered Molly, as the two young people hastened across the campus.

"I guess you know as much about the old boy's office as I do, Miss Molly," said Dodo opening the study door. "I'm glad you came along to help me find what I am looking for."

"What are you looking for?"

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"Did you ever see a blue paper weight on his desk?"

"Oh, yes. Lots of times."

"Well, that's just what he wants. He's got a sort of delirious notion in his poor old head that he'd like that blue paper weight. It's enough to make a strong man shed tears, and he's so weak he couldn't pick up a straw. Alice Fern brought it to him from Italy."

"Oh," said Molly.

They found the blue paper weight in one of the drawers of the desk and Dodo thrust it into his pocket. There was a strong smell of over-ripe apples in the office and Molly presently discovered two disintegrated wine saps in the Japanese basket on the table.

"We'd better take these," she said, seizing one in each hand and following Dodo into the corridor.

The young people parted in the arcade and Molly went into the library and hid herself in one of the deep window embrasures with a book she only pretended to be reading. That afternoon the Reverend Gustavus Larsen repeated the prayers for the sick, and Molly in a far back pew hoped that Nance could not see the tears that trickled down her cheeks.

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CHAPTER III.

GOSSIP OVER THE TEACUPS.

The gloom that had been hanging over Wellington since Professor Green's illness gradually lifted as the young man steadily improved. Each morning Molly received the latest news from one of the nurses. Miss Grace was never visible. She was sitting

up at night with her brother and slept during the day. One morning Molly encountered not the day nurse but Miss Alice Fern in the hall of the infirmary. She was dressed in white linen and might have been taken for a post-graduate nurse except that she wore no cap. Miss Fern had a cold greeting for Molly, and for Judith Blount, also, who presently joined them.

"Edwin is much better," she informed them.

"He is seeing people now, isn't he?" asked Judith eagerly. [39]

Miss Fern stiffened.

"No," she answered, "only me—and his brother and sister, of course." She added this as an afterthought. "It will be many weeks before he is allowed to see any of the Wellington people. The doctor is particularly anxious for him not to be reminded of his work. Excitement would be very dangerous for him."

"Is that what the doctor says or is it your verdict, Alice?" put in Judith, who had small liking for the Professor's cousin on the other side of the family.

"I'm in entire authority here," answered Miss Fern in such a hostile tone that Molly felt as if they had been accused of forcing their way into the sick room. "I am nursing during the day in conjunction with the infirmary nurse."

"Why don't you wear a cap, Alice?" asked Judith tauntingly. "It would make you look more like the real thing."

With a hurried excuse, Molly hastened out of the hall. It went against her grain to be involved in the quarrels of Alice Fern and Judith Blount. She was walking rapidly toward the village when she heard Judith's voice behind her calling. [40]

"Wait, and I'll walk with you. I see you're going my way. I had to stay and give a last dig to that catty Alice Fern," she added breathlessly, catching up with Molly.

Molly smiled. She didn't know but that she agreed with Judith, but it was not her way to call people "cats."

"I'm so glad you arranged to take the post-grad., Judith," she began as they started down the avenue.

"Isn't it great?" answered Judith exultantly. "It's all Madeleine's doing, you know. We've had a wonderful summer, Molly. Almost the first summer I can remember when I wasn't bored."

"What have you two been up to?" Molly asked with some curiosity. The cloak of enthusiasm was a new one for Judith to wear and it was very becoming to her, Molly thought. [41]

"We've been making money," Judith announced with sparkling eyes. "I've made almost enough to carry me through another year here."

"Goodness," Molly thought, "how the world does change. Think of the proud Judith working and then telling me about it, me whom she used to detest!"

"It's been jolly fun, too, and I didn't mind the work a bit."

"I hope you made a great deal," remarked Molly, not liking to ask too many questions but burning to know how money had been made by a girl who had once stamped her foot and declared she would never work for a living.

"A friend of brother Richard's, an actor, lent him his bungalow on the coast for the summer, and Mama and Madeleine and I spent four months in it, with Richard down for the week-ends. It was a pretty bungalow with a big living-room and a broad piazza at the back looking right out to sea, and Madeleine conceived the notion of opening a tea-room there. Richard was willing and so was Mama and we started in right away. Madeleine had all sorts of schemes for advertising in the post office and at the general store, and at last we had a sign painted and hung out in front on a post. The coast road goes by the house and streams of automobiles are passing all day long, so that we began to have lots of customers immediately. I don't know how it happened, but it was a sort of fashionable meeting place for all the people in the neighborhood. Pretty soon we had to buy dozens of little blue teapots and crates of cup and saucers and plates. Even Mama helped with the sandwiches and Richard, too, when he could come down. But you should have seen Madeleine. Every afternoon she put on a cap and apron and turned waitress. She served everybody. She was the neatest, quickest, prettiest little waiting maid you ever saw. Mama and I worked in the kitchen filling orders. Sometimes the sandwiches would give out and then Mama and I and Bridget, our Irish maid who has stayed with us through everything, would slice bread like mad. Madeleine knew dozens of different ways of making sandwiches. We used to make up dishes of fillings ahead of time and keep them on ice. Sometimes at night we were so tired we'd simply fall into bed, but we succeeded beyond our wildest dreams and we had a splendid time in spite of the [42] [43]

hard work."

"I think you are wonderful," cried Molly. "I should never even have hoped to make anything like that go."

"It's Madeleine who is the wonder," broke in Judith loyally. "She has the brains and energy of a real genius."

"Are you down at O'Reilly's this winter? I haven't seen either one of you to speak to before."

"Oh, yes, we have the same old rooms. I'm working up in two or three different subjects and taking a course in physical culture with a view to teaching it. You know, we are going to open a school, Madeleine and I?" [44]

"Where?" demanded Molly, filled with interest in her old-time enemy's schemes.

"We don't know yet. It may be in the South. Madeleine has two more years here. I shall go to Paris next year for a course at the Sorbonne, so that I shall be up in French by the time we are ready to start."

Molly was almost too amazed over the change Madeleine had wrought in Judith to comment politely on the glowing future Judith mapped out for herself. She recalled how Judith had once insulted the little Southern girl at a Sophomore ball, and she remembered how Madeleine had said: "I shall make a friend of her, yet. You'll see."

"I wish I could make plans and stick to them," Molly thought. "How can I ever get anywhere when I don't even know where I want to get? If I am not to teach school, then what am I to do?" [45]

Many times a day Molly asked herself this question. There were times during the summer when she heard the call still infinitely far away to write, and on hot afternoons when the others were napping she would steal down to the big cool parlor with a pencil and pad. Here in the quiet of the darkened room, with strained mind and thoughts on tiptoe for inspiration, she would try to write, but the stories were crude and childish. Sometimes she would read over Professor Green's letter of advice about writing. "Be as simple and natural as if you were writing a letter," he had said, and her efforts to be natural and simple were invariably elaborately studied and self-conscious.

"I don't see why I want to do what I can't do," she would cry with despair in her heart, and then the next day perhaps she would try it again.

So it was that Molly had a feeling of unrest that was quite new to her. It was like entertaining a stranger within the gates to admit this unfamiliar spirit into her mind. And now, as she parted with Judith with a friendly handclasp, she felt the dissatisfaction more keenly than ever before. [46]

Her errand in the village that afternoon was really to call on Mrs. Murphy, who, you will recall, was once housekeeper for Queen's. For many months the good soul had been laid up with rheumatism and for the sake of old times the Queen's girls plied her with attentions. The Murphys now lived in a small cottage near the depot and they were exceedingly poor, since the office of baggage-master brought in only a small pay. But Mrs. Murphy, crippled as she was, her fingers knotted at the joints like the limbs of old apple trees, managed to keep her rooms shining with neatness.

"And it's glad I am to see you, Miss," exclaimed the good woman, much aged since the days at Queen's.

She led Molly through a little hallway into the kitchen opening upon a small garden now bright with rows of cosmos, graceful and delicate in color, and brilliant masses of vari-colored, ragged chrysanthemums. [47]

"It's the little Japanese lady that's tended my garden for me all summer, Miss. She may be a haythen, but she's as good as gold. Our Blessed Mother herself could not have been kinder."

Molly's heart was filled with admiration for Otoyoy, who instead of moping about by herself all summer had been making herself useful.

"I'm ashamed," she thought. "Madeleine and Judith and Otoyoy all make me feel awfully ashamed."

In the meantime, Mrs. Murphy had spread a cloth on the little kitchen table and laid out her best cups and saucers. It was her heart's delight to drink tea with the young ladies.

"And how is the poor gentleman, Mr. Edwin, I mean?"

"He's getting better every day, Mrs. Murphy." [48]

"And I'm that glad to hear the news. It would have been a sad day for the poor

young lady if she had lost him—though, may the Howly Mother forgive me for saying it, she's not good enough for the loikes of him, I'm thinkin'."

"Let me pour the tea for you, Mrs. Murphy," Molly interposed, taking the blue teapot out of Mrs. Murphy's crippled hands after it had been filled with boiling water. "What young lady did you say it was?" she asked presently, her eyes on a tea leaf swirling round and round in her cup.

"'Tis Miss Fern, the gintleman's cousin, and they do say they're to be married before spring. I'm not for sayin' she ain't pretty, Miss. She's prettier than most and she's kind to the gintleman. Oh, you may be sure but she's got a different set of manners for him! And the day she had tea here with little Miss Sen and the Professor, she was all graces, to be sure. But another day she was here to meet him and little Miss Sen brought the message he could not come. It was a regular spitfire she was that day, Miss, and no mistake."

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So that was why the Professor had wanted the blue paper weight. Perhaps there was some reason in his delirium after all.

"Have you seen her, Miss?" asked Mrs. Murphy.

"Oh, yes," answered Molly. "I think she is very pretty. May I look at your garden, Mrs. Murphy? Dear little Otoyoy, I can see her working out here in the flowers. Don't you just love her, Mrs. Murphy?"

But the Irish woman had gone into the next room to get an old pair of shears.

"I'll take it as a favor, Miss Molly, if you'll cut two bunches, one for yourself and one for the Professor, God bless him and the Saints preserve him for strength and happiness; though I ain't sayin' I wish him to be preserved for Miss Alice Fern, pretty though she be."

When Molly appeared at the hospital some half an hour later she made a picture the infirmiry nurse would not soon forget.

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"These are for Professor Green from Mrs. Murphy," Molly said, giving the nurse the largest half of the bunch.

The nurse gave her a long quizzical look. She was new at Wellington and not familiar with the girls.

"Are you Miss Molly Brown?" she asked suddenly.

"Why, yes," answered Molly, surprised.

"I thought so," said the nurse, and departed before the astonished Molly could say another word.

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CHAPTER IV

THE SENIOR RAMBLE.

"Ramblers, ramblers,
Ramblers all are we:
Life is gay,
Life is free,
Rambling all the day.

"When the sun sinks to his rest,
Our rambling days are gone,
Seniors, Seniors,
Sound the call!
Back to Wellington!"

"Did you put in the olives?" some one cried over the confusion of singing and talking.

"Do be careful of the stuffed eggs. It would be a shame to ruin an hour and a half of hard work."

"Tell the man to wait. I forgot my tea basket."

"Haste thee, nymph," called Edith Williams, after the fleeing Judy. "And bring your

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volume of Shelley along, there's a dear. I forgot mine."

"Bring my sweater," Nance called.

Already the van load of girls in front was moving down the avenue, while the crowd in the second van waited impatiently for Judy's return. The two big vehicles were decorated with lavender and primrose, the class colors, for this was the day of the Senior Ramble, and the whole class was off for the woods.

At last Judy appeared, laden with many things—a tea basket, a book, her camera and two sweaters; also a brass trumpet.

"Who says I'm not good-natured?" she exclaimed, handing up the articles and clambering into the vehicle. "I'm the kindest soul that ever lived."

"I'm glad you feel that way about it, Juliana. It must be a sweet personal satisfaction," remarked Edith, seizing the book and thrusting it into the pocket of her ulster.

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The seniors were to ramble in Fern Woods that year, so-called not because of the superabundance of ferns, but because they were a part of the estate of Major Fern, father of Alice Fern. The Major had no objections to the students of Wellington and Exmoor using his woods for picnics, but the Exmoor boys were not given to such excursions and it was a long drive from Wellington, six miles over a rough road. However, Fern Woods it was to be this time, and away went the two vans, Judy blowing her trumpet with a grand flourish as they passed out of the Wellington grounds.

The Ramble was always the occasion for the most childish behavior among the seniors; a last frenzied outburst, as it were, before putting away childish things for all time and settling down to the serious work of life.

And now the seniors in the first wagon stood up and began singing back to the girls in the second wagon:

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"Seniors, do you hear the call?
Great Pan has blest the day.
Heed the summons, one and
all,
Voulez vous danser?"

The seniors behind answered:

"We will make the welkin ring,
Voulez vous danser?
Sound the trumpet, shout and
sing,
Voulez vous danser?"

"I think this should be called the 'Senior Rumble,' and not ramble," some one said, as the wagon groaned and creaked on the hilly road.

"What's the matter with 'Grumble'?" asked Mabel Hinton.

But there was no real grumbling, although the six miles that lay between Fern Woods and Wellington included some rough roads. They were jolted and shaken and tumbled about and there were shrieks of laughter and cries of "Wait, wait! I'd rather walk!" But the stolid driver went calmly on without taking the slightest notice.

"One would think we were a lot of inmates in a crazy wagon," cried Molly, wiping the tears of laughter from her eyes.

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A box of salted nuts had come open and the contents were scattered all over the bed of the wagon, and some apples had tumbled out of a hamper and were rolling about under people's feet.

"If I had known—if I had only known that this was going to be the rocky road to Dublin, wild horses couldn't have dragged me," cried Jessie.

At last after a time of infinite confusion the wagons drew up at the edge of a forest and there was sudden quiet in the noisy company. It was as if they stood at the threshold of a great cathedral, so still and majestic were the woods. Through the dense greenness of the pines there was an occasional flash of a silver birch. The scarlets and yellows of oak and maple trees gleamed here and there, making a rich background for the somber company of pines.

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"It was worth it! It was worth it," exclaimed the seniors, now that the worst was over.

The class had divided itself into three "messes" for lunch. After lunch it was to assemble in a body, sing the class songs to be bequeathed to the juniors, and do the

class stunts which were familiar enough to all of them now. And first of all, by the unwritten law of custom, the seniors were to spend an hour communing with nature. This constituted the "Ramble." Judy had been delegated by the Ramble Committee to blow a blast on her trumpet when the time came to eat. In the meantime the drivers had taken themselves and their wagons down the road two miles to a small village where they were to rest and refresh themselves with food until half past four o'clock, when they were to return for the rambling seniors.

So it was that the three hampers of food were deposited in a safe and secluded spot under some bushes and left unguarded while everybody went off for the ramble. [57]

Of course all this had been planned weeks ahead of time by the committee and the destination kept a profound secret, according to the traditions of the school.

Scarcely had the last unsuspecting senior disappeared in the pine woods, when a motor car rounded the curve in the road and stopped at the signal of an individual in a long dark ulster and a slouch hat well down over the face, who had leaped out from behind a clump of bushes on the other side of the road. Two other persons similarly disguised now jumped out of the car, leaving the chauffeur quietly examining the speedometer and seeing nothing.

"Do you know where they put them?" whispered one.

The other did not reply, but led the way at a run to the clump of bushes where the hampers had been left. In five minutes the three thieves, for such they certainly were, had stored the hampers on the floor of the car. Then they jumped in themselves. [58]

"Go ahead!" cried the thief on the front seat, and presently the motor car was a mere speck in the distance.

In the meantime, the unconscious seniors rambled happily on. There were places to visit in the woods: a beautiful spring that bubbled out of the side of a rock and broadened into a basin below; an old log cabin, long since deserted and open to the weather, and last of all, "Charlie's Oak." Half a century ago, an Exmoor boy had hanged himself on this tree. Another Exmoor boy, many years later, had carved a cross on the tree and by that sign and others learned from Exmoor boys, they finally found the gruesome spot.

"Why did he do it?" asked Judy.

"It was never told," answered Nance, who had learned all there was to know concerning the tragedy from Andy McLean.

"Poor boy," cried Molly, seeing in her mind a picture of the body dangling from a lower limb of the old oak. "Let's make him a garland of leaves," she proposed, "just to signify that we are sorry for him." [59]

The whole class now assembled at Charlie's Oak and proceeded to gather branches of autumn leaves. With the aid of a handkerchief and a ribbon, these were arranged in the semblance of a large wreath. On the fly leaf, torn from the volume of Shelley, Judy wrote:

"In memory of poor Charlie. May his soul rest in peace. Class of 19—, Wellington."

The wreath was laid against the tree and the inscription secured with a pin stuck into the bark. Then the Class of 19—Wellington went on its way rejoicing, never dreaming of the reward the wreath of autumn leaves was to bring them. Perhaps the restless spirit of poor Charlie felt grateful for the sympathy and whispered into the ear of somebody—at any rate, luck came of the incident of the wreath.

Not long after this, seniors roaming about the woods heard the blast of Judy's trumpet. It was still too early for lunch and they felt instinctively that it was a call to arms. Presently wandering classmates came running up from every direction like a company of frightened nymphs. [60]

Just about this time an old gentleman, strolling down the wood path, paused at Charlie's Oak. He was a very youthful looking old man, his cheeks as ruddy as winter apples and his blue eyes as clear and bright as a boy's. He carried a cane which he used to toss twigs from his path. Two Irish setters followed at his heels sniffing the ground trodden down a little while before by the feet of numerous Wellington maids.

"Ahem! What's this?" remarked the old gentleman aloud, fitting his glasses on his nose and leaning over to examine the wreath. Then he released the inscription from the pin and carefully read it twice, replacing it afterward just over the wreath. Baring his head, he stood quite still under the limb for so long a time that the impatient dogs trotted off down the path, and then came back again to look for their master. [61]

"Poor Charlie," repeated the old man. "May his soul rest in peace." With a sigh he put on his hat and started slowly down the path. "Poor Charlie, poor old Charlie," he was still saying, when he found himself on the edge of a company of very indignant

and excited young women.

"This must be the Class of 19—Wellington," he was thinking as he turned to go the other way, when Margaret Wakefield in the very center of the crowd thundered out:

"It's an outrage! A miserable, cowardly trick!"

Some of the girls were actually crying; others looked grave, while still others conferred together in low indignant tones.

"I beg pardon, young ladies, has anything serious happened?" asked the old gentleman, lifting his hat politely.

There was a complete silence at this unexpected interruption, and then Margaret, ever the spokesman of her class, replied in a suspiciously tearful tone of voice:

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"We've been robbed, sir. Somebody has stolen our luncheon."

"Dear, dear!" murmured the old gentleman, looking from one face to another with real sympathy, "dear, dear! but that was an unkind trick—and quite a large meal, too, I imagine," he added, noting the size of the company.

"Three hampers full," cried one girl.

"And we had worked so hard over it," cried another.

"Is this the Class of 19—Wellington?" asked the old gentleman.

"Yes, sir. We were giving the Senior Ramble."

"And while you were rambling thieves came and robbed you, eh?"

"We are disgraced," ejaculated Margaret.

"Do you suppose tramps could have done it?" Jessie asked.

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"It would have been difficult to dispose of three hampers full," answered the old gentleman. "A tramp would have helped himself to what he could carry and nothing more."

"Could it have been Gypsies?" suggested Judy, fired with the romantic notion.

The old gentleman shook his head.

"I think the thieves rode in a motor car," he said. "As I crossed the road some little time ago I saw one waiting there for no apparent reason. I hardly noticed who was in it. Perhaps it was some of your own classmates. In my day the boys used to play tricks like that, worse ones, even. Exmoor was a lively place fifty years ago."

The old gentleman sighed.

"Wellington girls play tricks, too, sometimes, but not such mean ones," put in Margaret. "Once a girl cut the electric light wiring during an entertainment in the gym. But even that wasn't so low as this: making a crowd of people go hungry."

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"Ah, I see," answered the old gentleman. "Well, that is scarcely to be mentioned in the same breath with cutting wires." He paused a moment and dug into the ground with the end of his cane thoughtfully. "Young ladies," he said presently, "would you do an old Exmoor boy the honor of lunching with him to-day?"

"Oh, how kind!"

"So many of us?"

"It's too much," a dozen voices answered.

"Not at all. There could not be too many of you. I am Major Fern. I live down the road a bit. You can find the house by the big iron gates opening onto the avenue." Major Fern looked at his watch. "It's now a little past twelve. May I expect you at a quarter past one? Mrs. Fern will be delighted. There are—how many of you?"

Margaret told him promptly.

"That's as small as an Exmoor class," he observed. "An unusually small class. But—I've heard of you from Miss Walker—an unusually bright one, I understand. It will be a great pleasure to entertain so many charming young ladies at once."

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The girls were almost speechless with surprise and gratitude. Even Margaret was for once reduced to a state of shyness.

"We are very grateful to you, Major Fern," she said, after some hesitation, "and if you are sure it is not too much of an imposition, we accept with pleasure."

So it was that Charlie's Oak was the indirect means of bringing the Senior Ramble of that year to a successful termination.

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CHAPTER V.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

"Will somebody please inform me how they can get up a lunch for this crowd in an hour's time?" asked Nance, who, having spent her life in the narrow quarters of a boarding house, was not accustomed to avalanches of unexpected guests.

"Oh, I don't think it will be very difficult," Molly replied. "Major Fern is a farmer. He probably has lots of hams in the smoke house and plenty of eggs in the hen house and milk in the dairy and preserves and pickles in the pantry, and if there isn't enough bread the cook can make up some hot biscuits or corn bread."

"I know it couldn't embarrass you, Molly, dear. You'd be sure to find plenty of food for company," laughed Nance.

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But Molly was not far wrong in her suppositions of the lunch that Major Fern unexpectedly called upon his wife and daughters and servants to prepare. Alice was the only member of his family who was not entirely cordial when the senior class of Wellington at last descended upon the big old farmhouse at lunch time. She had buttered and sliced bread until her back ached, and she cast many angry glances at her ruddy-faced father tranquilly slicing ham in the pantry.

"There are times when Papa is a real nuisance," she thought angrily.

While Mrs. Fern pointed out piles of plates on the pantry shelf to a maid, her husband told her the history of the morning.

"So you see, my dear," he finished, "that this party is really Charlie's party. We are doing it for his sake. It would be just the sort of thing he would have done himself. I remember he brought his entire class home once to Sunday morning breakfast. He had invited them and forgotten to mention it to Mother."

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"And they made a wreath for him?" asked Mrs. Fern irrelevantly, as she wiped a tear from her eye.

The Major blinked and went on slicing ham industriously.

"It's as fresh in my mind as if it had happened yesterday," he said presently in a low voice.

"How handsome and gay he was," added his wife, sighing, as she counted out a pile of napkins.

And now there came the sound of singing in front of the house. The seniors had arrived and were serenading the Major and his family. "Wellington, my Wellington," they sang, and Mrs. Fern paused in her counting to listen to the song she herself had sung as a girl.

"Listen to the children, they are serenading us, Major. Do come out with me and meet them."

The Major laid down his carving knife and fork and followed his wife to the front door, and presently the girls found themselves in the comfortable, sunny parlor of the big old house that seemed to ramble off at each side into wings and meander back into other additions in the rear. They forgot their grievances in the fun of that lunch party. By the miracle which always provides for generosity to give, there was plenty of lunch, just as Molly had predicted.

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"It wasn't a very difficult guess," she observed to Nance. "If you had lived in the country and were subject to unexpected arrivals, you'd know just how to go about getting up an impromptu meal for a lot of people."

As for the good old Major, he was quite determined to enjoy himself. He wanted to hear all the college jokes and songs. He even told some Exmoor jokes, and after each joke he laughed until his face turned an apoplectic red and the tears rolled down his cheeks. Mrs. Fern laughed, too. She was an old Wellington girl and her eldest daughter, Natalie, had graduated from the college a year before Molly had entered. It had been a great disappointment to Mrs. Fern that Alice, the youngest daughter, was not inclined to college and had gone to a fashionable boarding school.

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After the senior stunts, when Judy had succeeded in throwing the Major into another apoplectic fit of laughing by playing "Birdie's Dead" on the piano, it was time

to go back to Fern Woods where they were to meet the wagons. While the girls were pinning on their hats the Major, in a voice husky from much laughing, asked Nance, as it happened to be, which girl had suggested the wreath he had seen at the foot of the oak tree. Nance pointed out Molly and the Major presently beckoned her to follow him into his library. Unlocking one of the desk drawers, he drew out a faded photograph. The picture showed a laughing, handsome boy not more than eighteen. His curly hair was ruffled all over his head as if he had just come in out of the wind, and his merry eyes looked straight into Molly's.

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"That is Charlie," said the Major, looking over Molly's shoulder at the picture. "My younger brother, Charlie. His death was the greatest sorrow I have ever known. Poor Charlie! Poor boy!"

The old man turned away to hide the tears in his eyes and Molly laid the photograph back in the drawer.

"Charlie would have enjoyed all this even more than I have," went on the Major. "It would have been just what he would have done under the circumstances. I saw the wreath, you see, and it touched me very deeply."

"The girls will appreciate your kindness all the more when I tell them," said Molly, not knowing how else to express the sympathy she felt.

"Ah, well, it all happened half a century ago," he said, shaking her hand and patting it gently at the same time.

"He is a dear," thought Molly, following him into the hall.

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She saw one other photograph in the Fern house that interested her. It was a picture of Professor Edwin Green, very elaborately framed, standing on a dressing table in one of the bedrooms.

Alice Fern kept well in the background while her mother and father and elder sister entertained the senior class of Wellington. She had done her duty by the lunch and she was not going to mingle in this crowd of unknowns.

"I never could bear a college romp," she had said to her mother who had remonstrated with her daughter.

"I trust you don't call your mother a college romp," answered the old lady indignantly.

"Not at all, Mama. You belonged to the early days of Wellington before romps came into existence," Alice replied sharply.

"I'm sure you may have to see a great deal of college, if—" began Mrs. Fern, and broke off abruptly.

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Alice shrugged her shoulders.

"If—if—" she thought. "How I detest that word."

On the way back that afternoon the old Queen's girls held a council of war.

"I think we ought to make it our business to find out who played this trick on us," cried Margaret, "if it takes detective work to do it. Our dignity as seniors has been attacked and the standards of Wellington lowered."

"I don't believe any juniors had a hand in it," put in Judy, "because we are so friendly with them."

Nance nudged Molly.

"She's afraid somebody's going to blame that charming Adele," she whispered.

"If it's any of the Wellington girls, it's more likely to be among the sophomores," announced Edith decisively. "They were rather a wild lot last year but we were too busy to notice them; a good deal like a gang of bad boys in their own set; always playing practical jokes—"

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"Yes, but would they dare play jokes on us?" interrupted Margaret.

"They'd dare do anything," answered Edith. "Anne White is the ringleader. I only know her by sight so I can't judge of her character, but I heard that Miss Walker had her on the grill several times last winter."

"What does she look like?" some one asked.

"Why, she's as demure as anything; a petite, brown-haired, inconspicuous little person. You'd never suspect her of being so daring, but I happen to know of one reckless performance of hers that Prexy hasn't heard of."

"Do tell," they demanded with breathless curiosity.

"You'll let it go no farther? Word of honor, now?"

"Word of honor," they repeated in a chorus.

"One night last spring she let herself down from the dormitory with a rope ladder and went—well, I don't know where she went, but she got back safely enough—"

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"Up the ladder?"

"No. That was the wonderful part. She simply waited till morning and when the gates were open slipped in in time for chapel."

The girls were rather horrified at this story.

"It's shocking," the chorus exclaimed.

"It does sound so," went on Edith impressively, "if I didn't happen to know that she spent the night with good old Mrs. Murphy, who told it to me herself one day in a burst of tea-cup confidence, and I never let it out to any one but Katherine until to-day. But it does seem the moment for telling it, if she did play that dastardly trick ___"

"But we aren't sure it was Anne White," put in Molly.

"No, but it's her style. She sent a girl a live mouse through the mail and she broke up one of the sophomore class meetings by putting ticktacks on the window."

"How silly," ejaculated Mabel Hinton.

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"But what was she doing down on the campus and what did Mrs. Murphy think of being waked up at midnight?" asked Judy.

"It wasn't midnight. It was only a little before eleven and Anne told Mrs. Murphy she had done it for a lark. She was awfully frightened and Mrs. Murphy began by being shocked and ended by being kind-hearted. The ladder had slipped down and she couldn't get up and she didn't know what to do."

So it happened, that without meaning to be unjust, the seniors secretly blamed Anne White for the pillaging of their lunch hampers. But there was no evidence and they could only wait and be watchful, as Margaret expressed it.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE RETORT COURTEOUS.

Because of the happy ending of the Ramble the seniors made no secret of the theft of the lunch hampers. If they had been obliged to go hungry, they would probably have kept the entire story to themselves. Such is human nature. When the story reached Miss Walker's ears, as most things about Wellington did sooner or later, she sent for Margaret Wakefield and got the history of the case from her in an exceedingly dramatic and well connected form.

"And we had gone to no end of trouble, Miss Walker, and a good deal of expense," Margaret finished. "Lots of us had had cakes and pickles and things sent on from home."

Miss Walker smiled. She could have named the contents of those hampers without any outside assistance.

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"What none of us understands is where they took the hampers afterward. They couldn't have brought them back to college without being found out."

"No," answered the Principal, "that would have been impossible, of course, and yet the hampers have managed to find their way back." Shifting her chair from the table desk, she pointed underneath. "So, you see," she continued, "that the sandwiches and pickles and stuffed eggs and fudge may have found their way into college after all. Major Fern discovered the hampers. They had been tossed into a ditch near his place." Miss Walker sighed and frowned. "If the Exmoor boys were given to this kind of thing, I might have suspected some of them. But the standards at Exmoor are above such things as this," she indicated the hampers with a gesture of mingled disgust and pain. "If only—only I could bring my Wellington to that point. But every year there is something."

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Margaret felt sorry for the Principal who had striven so hard for the honor of

Wellington in the face of so many discouragements.

"It was a thoroughly silly and undignified act," she remarked later to the Queen's crowd, telling them of the interview, "to break up a time-honored custom like the Senior Ramble by stealing all the food; and I'm sorry for the girl who did it if she ever gets caught."

An effort had been made to find out if there had been any sophomore spreads the night of the Ramble with the stolen banquet, but these young women were either very wily or very innocent, for nothing was found against them.

In the meantime, things went on happily enough at Wellington and there were no more escapades to wrinkle the President's brow or enrage the girls who happened to be the victims. Molly's life was so filled with work and interests that she had little leisure for reflection, and about this time there came to her an unsolicited and entirely unexpected honor. She was elected sub-editor of the Wellington *Commune*, the fortnightly review of college news and college writings. Edith Williams, beyond a doubt the most literary girl in college, was editor-in-chief, Caroline Brinton was business manager, and there was besides a staff of six girls from other classes who gathered news and ran their various departments.

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"I can't imagine why they chose me," Molly exclaimed one afternoon to Edith, when the two girls were closeted in the *Commune* office.

"For your literary discrimination," answered Edith.

"But I think my themes are dreadfully crude and forced. I can't help feeling self-conscious when I write."

"That's because you try too hard," answered Edith, who always spoke the brutal truth regarding the literary efforts of her friends. "Let your thoughts flow easily, lightly," she added, making a flowing gesture with her pencil to illustrate the gentle trickling of ideas from an overcharged brain.

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Molly laughed.

"You remind me of Professor Green. 'Be simple,' was his advice—as if an amateur can be simple."

Edith, in the act of writing an editorial, smiled enigmatically.

"It's about as hard as getting a cheap dressmaker to make simple clothes," she said. "Amateurs always want to put in ruffles and puffles."

The two girls were seated at the editorial desk. There was a pile of manuscript in front of Molly: themes recommended by Miss Pomeroy for publication and contributed book reviews. Presently only the ticking of the clock on the book shelves broke the stillness. Both girls had plunged into work with a will. Edith's soft pencil was already flying over the sheets.

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"Flowing easily and lightly," Molly thought, smiling as she turned a page.

For more than half an hour they worked in silence. At last Molly, having selected from the reviews the ones she considered best for publication, leaned her chin on her hand and closed her eyes. How peaceful it was in this little office, and how nice to be with Edith who went at her work—this kind of work—with force and swiftness.

Rap, rap, rap, came the sound of knuckles on the door, while some one shook the knob and the voice of Judy called:

"Let me in, let me in, girls, I've got something to show you that will make your blood boil."

"Run away, we're awfully busy," answered Edith, who kept the door to the private office locked.

"I tell you it will make your blood boil with rage and fury," went on the extravagant Judy. "As editors of the *Commune*, everybody calls on you to resent an insult to college. Please let me in," she pleaded.

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Molly opened the door and her impetuous friend rushed in, waving a newspaper.

"Be calm, child. Don't take on so. Sit down and tell us easily and lightly and flowingly what's the matter," she said.

"Look at this base, libelous article," Judy ejaculated, spreading the paper on the table.

With an expression of amused toleration as of one who must bear the whims of a spoiled child, Edith drew the paper in front of her while Molly and Judy seated themselves on the arms of her chair and read over her shoulders.

The first things that caught their eyes were the pictures: drawings of wildly

disheveled beings in gymnasium suits playing basket ball and hockey. One picture, also, represented a blousy looking young person in a sweater, carrying a bundle of linen under one arm and a bottle of milk under the other. In still another this same blousy model was yelling "Hello" to her twin sister across the page. They saw her again in the drug store dissipating in chocolate sundaes; and once more, chewing gum; hobnobbing with the grocery boy, too, or perhaps it was the baggage man or the postman. The article occupied a full page under flaring headlines:

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"THE PRESENT DAY COLLEGE GIRL, NO LONGER A PLEASING FEMININE TYPE. SHE IS VULGAR, AGGRESSIVE, SLANGY. COLLEGES FOR GIRLS THE RUIN OF AMERICAN HOMES—So says Miss Beatrice Slammer, the popular writer and well-known anti-suffragist."

"It's ironic, untrue and insulting," observed Edith, in a choking voice as her eyes traveled down the columns.

"She seems especially hard on poor girls who have to get their own meals," broke in Molly. "Is there anything unfeminine in getting a bottle of milk from the corner grocery, I wonder? Or saying good-morning to the postman or Mr. Murphy? What would Miss Slammer think of us if she knew how often we had tea with Mrs. Murphy and Mr. Murphy, too?"

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"She recommends colleges for women to pattern themselves after a Fifth Avenue school that teaches manners before it teaches classics," burst out Judy. "I wonder if she went to that school?"

"She is evidently opposed to higher education for women," remarked Edith. "The style of her writing shows that as much as her sentiments do."

"I know one thing," cried Judy, "this settles it. I'm going to join the Woman's Suffrage Society to-day. If this is the way an anti thinks, I'm for the other side."

Edith and Molly laughed.

"It's an excellent reason for changing your political views, Judy," said Molly.

And now the office of the *Commune* was besieged by numbers of students from the three upper classes. There were even one or two indignant freshmen present. Those who had received the article by the first mail had handed it to those who had not. Many of the girls had already written letters in reply and sent them to be published in New York papers. Would the editors of the *Commune* do anything about the base, libelous article? Were these stinging falsehoods about college girls to be allowed to be scattered over the country without a single protest?

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"You may add my name to the Suffrage Club, Miss Wakefield," called a junior.

"And mine."

"And mine."

So Margaret's list of converts swelled amazingly that afternoon.

Edith was enjoying herself immensely.

"What funny creatures girls are," she said to Molly, still sitting on the arm of the editorial chair.

The question was: how was the article to be answered? No doubt college girls everywhere were thinking the same thing; therefore, the Wellington girls would not like to be backward in coming forward.

"I suppose all the other colleges will be answering the article in about the same way," said Margaret. "I wish we could think of something original and different. Something more personal than a letter to a newspaper."

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"She speaks on anti-suffrage, doesn't she?" asked Edith.

"Oh, yes," cried Margaret. "She is evidently one of those women who believes she can stem the tide of human progress by taking a stand against higher education and universal suffrage. Do you think women like that are ever silent? They are always standing on the street corners trying to lift their little puny voices above the multitude—but who hears them?"

There was a burst of laughter at Margaret's eloquence.

"Why not ask her to speak here?" suggested Edith.

"What good would that do?"

"Besides, she wouldn't come."

"Oh, yes she would. Wait until all this blows over and then send her the invitation."

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People who write like that always want to talk."

"But how will we get any personal satisfaction out of it?" Margaret asked.

"Well, by showing her what perfect ladies we are, in the first place. We can be very attentive and still 'freeze' her. We can entertain her without talking to her any more than is necessary, and we can listen to her speech and make no comments."

After consideration of the suggestion, most of the girls began to see a good many possibilities in this courteous revenge. They were taken with the notion of inviting Miss Slammer into the enemy's camp and treating her as a guest too honored to be familiar with. It was agreed that the invitation should be dispatched in about two weeks, so that Miss Slammer would feel no suspicions.

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CHAPTER VII

A STOLEN VISIT.

One morning not long after the stormy meeting in the *Commune* room, Molly, racking her brain over "The Theory of Mathematics," heard Otoyoy's tap at the door. She knew it was the little Japanese. Nobody else could knock so faintly and still so distinctly.

"Come in," she called, and Otoyoy glided in as softly as a mouse.

"You are much busy, Mees Brown?" she asked, retreating toward the door when she saw Molly bending over her book.

"Oh, I can spare a few moments for a dear little friend any day," answered Molly. "What's happened? Nothing wrong, I hope?"

The Japanese girl appeared excited. Her eyes shone with more than their usual luster and she seemed hardly able to keep back the news she had to tell.

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"No, no, nothing wrong. Something very right. My honorable father is coming to Wellington to see his humble little daughter. O, I am so happy!" and Miss Sen executed a few steps of the "Boston," she had lately learned to dance. Molly watched the plump little figure gliding about the room and smiled. What a dear, funny little person Otoyoy was.

"I am so glad. How joyful you must be. When is he coming, Otoyoy?"

"He has arriving——" Otoyoy broke off quickly. Excitement always strangely affected her English. "He has arrived now in New York and he will come here tomorrow for the end-week."

"Week-end, you mean, child. Now, what shall we do to amuse him besides showing him the sights? Wouldn't you like us to give him a dance or a fudge party or something?"

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Otoyoy clasped her hands joyfully.

"It will be enough for my honorable father to see all the beautiful young American ladees and the buildeengs. He will not require of his humble daughter amusements. He is much grateful to young ladees for kindness to little Otoyoy. My honorable father will be thankful to you."

"Perhaps you would like us to go with you to the train to meet him?" Molly suggested, wondering why Otoyoy still lingered, now that she had unburdened herself of the good news and had seen plainly that Molly was very, very busy. But no, Otoyoy thought so many young ladees at once might embarrass her honorable parent. She would prefer to bring him to call at No. 5 Quadrangle on Sunday afternoon if entirely acceptable.

It would be acceptable. They would all be delighted and the crowd would be there to receive the honorable gentleman. And now, Molly was sure Otoyoy would go. But Otoyoy had something else on her mind, evidently. Molly sighed. Not for worlds would she hurt her small friend's feelings, but she did wish she had put a busy sign on the door. It had been such a perfect time to study, with Nance at a lecture and Judy practicing basket ball.

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"Will Mees Brown do me one great beeg favor?" began Otoyoy with some embarrassment.

"Yes, indeed. Anything."

It appeared that Otoyoy was very anxious to call on Professor Green and she wished Miss Brown to go with her.

"You have seen the honorable Professor?" she asked innocently.

"No, I have been to inquire every day, but Miss Fern told me he was not permitted to see visitors."

For the first time in their acquaintance Molly saw Otoyoy show signs of real displeasure.

"Mees Fern?" she repeated. "She cannot say no and yes. It is for the nurse to say." [93]

Molly admitted that she had not seen the nurse.

"Then you will come?" cried Otoyoy, with almost as much enthusiasm as she had shown over the coming visit of her honorable father.

"But——" began Molly.

"You will so kindlee go this afternoon?" broke in the voluble little Japanese. "Will four o'clock be an hour of convenience?"

"I really don't——" began Molly again.

"You said 'anything,'" interrupted Otoyoy. "You will not go back on poor little Japanese? You will come?" she finished, cocking her head on one side in her own peculiarly irresistible manner.

Molly glanced at the clock. She had already lost nearly twenty minutes of her precious study hour.

"Very well, little one, come for me at four," she said, and Otoyoy fairly flew from the room before Molly could change her mind. Out in the corridor Miss Sen danced the Boston again, just a *pas seul* to express her happiness. Of course Mees Brown should never know that she had just that moment come from seeing the great Professor. [94]

At four o'clock Otoyoy again appeared at the door of No. 5. It was pouring down rain, but she had no intention of releasing Molly from her promise. In her miniature rain coat and jaunty red felt hat, she looked like a plump little robin hopping into the room.

"You are readee?" asked Otoyoy.

"Why, I never dreamed you would go in the rain!" began Molly, looking up from her writing.

Otoyoy's face lengthened and the corners of her mouth drooped disconsolately.

"Why, bless the child! Molly, aren't you ashamed to disappoint her?" cried Judy from the divan where she was resting after her athletic labors.

"Why, Otoyoy, dear, I didn't know you were so keen about it. Of course I'll go," said Molly remorsefully, fumbling in the closet for her over-shoes, while Nance calmly appropriated Judy's rain coat from the back of a chair where that young woman had flung it and held it up for Molly to slip into. [95]

"Better take my umbrella," she said. Molly had never owned a rain coat and couldn't keep an umbrella.

"You know we may not be allowed to see him," Molly observed, when the two girls had started on their wet walk down the avenue. "Miss Fern distinctly told Judith Blount and me one day that he was not to see any one except the family. The doctor particularly did not wish him to see students who would remind him of his work and worry him."

"Mees Fern know too much," said Otoyoy, making what she called a "scare face" by wrinkling her nose and screwing up her mouth. "Mees Fern verree crosslee sometimes."

"Adverbs, adverbs, Otoyoy," admonished Molly. [96]

"Excusa-me," said Otoyoy. "It is when I become a little warm here in my brain that I grow adverbial."

Molly laughed. In her heart there was a secret, unacknowledged feeling of relief that she was going to try to see Professor Green in spite of Miss Fern. It was a relief, too, to find herself in the outdoors after her long vigil of study. The rain beat on her face and the fresh wind nipped her cheeks until they glowed with color.

"You are much too small and feeble to come out in all this weather, Otoyoy," she said, slipping her arm through her friend's. "You are so tiny you might easily fall into

a puddle and drown."

"Ah, thees is notheeng," cried Otoyō. "In Japan it rains—oceans! And for so long. Days and days without refraining from." She was very apt to use big words instead of smaller ones, her own language being exceedingly formal and grandiose. "Notheeng is dry. Not even within the edifices."

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"Houses, Otoyō."

"But a house is an edifice, is it not so?"

"Oh, yes, but we wouldn't use such a showy word."

Otoyō was still puzzling out why the longer word was not the better when they reached the infirmary. The regular nurse of the infirmary who usually sat in the waiting room was not visible to-day. A freshman was ill and she was probably busy, Otoyō explained.

"Who is looking after the Professor?" Molly asked.

Miss Fern, it appeared, assisted by the infirmary nurse, attended her cousin during the day, and his sister nursed him at night. Having imparted this information in a loud whisper, Otoyō started upstairs on tiptoe, Molly following. Somehow, she felt quite courageous and not at all afraid of Miss Fern, with the little Japanese to lead her on.

All the doors were closed in the corridor above and on the ward room door hung a sign, "No Admittance."

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"She must be quite ill," whispered Molly.

"She has a taking disease," answered Otoyō. "Like this." And she puffed out both jaws to the roundness of the full moon.

Molly stifled a laugh.

"Mumps, do you mean?"

Otoyō nodded.

"It was so called to me by the honorable nurse," she added gravely.

The two girls lingered a moment in the hall. Molly was opposed to rapping on the Professor's door, but Otoyō, amiably but unswervingly persistent in attaining her ends, gently tapped on the door.

"Come in," called Professor Green's voice, weak almost beyond recognition.

Otoyō peeped into the room.

"He is alone," she whispered, and with that she pushed Molly through the door with arm of steel. "I will keep watch for ten minutes without. Then I will call." She closed the door and Molly found herself looking fearfully through the dim shadows cast by half-drawn green blinds, at an emaciated face on the pillow. Her pulses throbbed and she wanted very much to cry. Indeed, it required almost superhuman effort to keep back the tears. Was this emaciated, wax-like face on the pillows her Professor's?

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"I'm afraid I ought not to be here," she began in a low voice.

"If you leave I shall cry," said the Professor. "Won't you come nearer?"

Molly crept over to the bedside and stood looking down into the changed face. Only the brown eyes seemed the same. She choked and tried to smile. One must be cheerful with sick people, and she hoped the Professor would think it was the rain that had wet her cheeks.

"Shake hands, Miss Molly," said the Professor, lifting one transparent hand and then dropping it weakly.

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With an impulse she could hardly explain she knelt beside the bed and put her hand over his.

"You are much better?" she whispered.

"I'll soon be well, now," he replied. "But I've been on a long journey. It seemed endless—so many mountains to climb and rivers to cross—such impenetrable forests—" he paused and shook his head. "I was beginning to get very tired and lonely, too—it's dismal taking the journey alone—but I've come to the end now—it's over—" again he paused and smiled. "I'm glad to find you at last. I've been looking for you a long time."

"I would have come sooner, but they—but she said no one was to see you."

"The nurse?"

Molly shook her head.

"My sister?"

"No, Miss Fern."

"I never was so bossed in my life——" a sudden strength came into his voice. "These women!" he added in a tone of disgust.

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The door opened and Otoyoy's voice was heard saying in a loud whisper.

"The ten minutes have passed away."

"Good-bye," whispered Molly.

"Will you come again?" he asked.

She nodded and tiptoed hurriedly out of the room. She had caught a glimpse of the blue paper weight on the table during that stolen interview.

"No wonder Miss Alice Fern is so bossy with him," she thought. "I suppose she has a right to be." Molly sighed. Somehow she wished she had not seen the blue paper weight. It had spoiled all the happiness in the visit, except of course her happiness over his recovery.

When the two girls reached the head of the stairs, the door to the ward opened and the nurse looked out. She exchanged a smiling nod with Otoyoy.

"Why, Miss Sen, you naughty little thing, I believe this visit was all arranged beforehand," exclaimed Molly.

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But Miss Sen only laughed and not one word of excuse or explanation would she give.

"Otoyoy, you are as deep as deep——" Molly began.

But Otoyoy pressing closely to her side, looked up into Molly's face and smiled so sweetly it was impossible to scold her.

"You are very kindlee to humble little Japanese girl," she said. "Better than all the young ladies of Wellington, I like you best, Mees Brown. There is no one so good and so beautiful——"

"You outrageous little flatterer, you are changing the subject," cried Molly.

"With all my honor, I give you assurance that I speak trulee."

"You make me very happee, then," laughed Molly, "but what has that got to do with Professor Green?"

"Did I say there was any connecting?" asked Otoyoy innocently.

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And so Miss Sen, unfathomable and still guileless, never explained about the stolen visit, and Molly Brown, baffled and still glad in her heart, had to think up any explanation she could.

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CHAPTER VIII.

BARBED ARROWS.

"I don't know which was the most highly polished, his manners or his shiny bronze face," ejaculated Judy when the door of No. 5 had closed upon Otoyoy and her honorable father.

The small grizzled Japanese gentleman had taken tea American fashion with his daughter's Quadrangle friends. With punctilious enjoyment he had eaten everything that was offered to him, cloudbursts, salmon sandwiches, stuffed olives and chocolate cake. The girls had heard that raw carp was a favorite Japanese dish, and salmon being the only fish convenient, they had bought several cans of it in the village in honor of the national taste.

"Wasn't his English wonderful?" put in Margaret. "He said to me, 'I entertain exceedingly hopes in my daughter's educational efforts.'"

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"He asked me if I were quadrangular," laughed Edith. "I said no, quadrilateral."

"The funny part of it was that he used all those big words and spoke with such a perfect accent and yet he didn't understand anything we said," observed Molly. "All the time I was telling him how much we loved Otoyoy and what a dear clever child she was, he blinked and smiled and said: 'Indeed. Is it truly? Exceedingly interestingly.'"

While they were laughing and discussing Otoyoy's father, Adele Windsor, Judy's new bosom friend, walked into the room. She had formed a habit of entering their room without announcing herself, an unpardonable breach of etiquette at Wellington, as well it might be anywhere. Lately she had made herself very much at home at No. 5, lounging on the divan with a novel between lectures, or occupying the most comfortable chair while she jotted down notes on a tablet. Nance called her "the intruder" to Molly, and once she had even ventured to remark to Judy:

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"I should think your friend would know that it's customary to knock on a door before opening it."

"It's because she's never had any privacy," explained Judy apologetically. "She was brought up in a New York flat and slept on a parlor sofa all her life until two years ago when her father began suddenly to make money."

"Being brought up in a parlor ought to give her parlor manners," Nance thought, but she had not voiced her thought to the sensitive Judy, who really had not intended to force Adele Windsor on her chums. It was only that Adele had a way of taking for granted she was *persona grata*, that Nance thought was rather too free.

Molly, always polite to guests whether welcome or not, greeted Adele cordially and made her a cup of tea.

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"We were just discussing Otoyoy Sen's funny little father," she explained, in order to draw Adele into the conversation. "He's been here to call—the queerest English!" And Molly repeated some of Mr. Sen's absurd speeches.

Adele listened with interest. She was always interested in everything, one might almost say inquisitive, and she had a peculiar way of making people say things they regretted. Judy, artless soul, had told her everything she knew long ago. And now, turning her intelligent dark eyes from one to another and occasionally putting out a pointed question, Adele succeeded in starting a new discussion on Otoyoy's father. With the most innocent intentions in the world, they imitated his voice and manner, his stiff formal bows and his funny squeaky laugh.

It was not until later when the friends had scattered to tidy up for supper that Molly felt any misgivings about having made fun of Otoyoy's father, and these she kept to herself, feeling, indeed, that they were unworthy of her. Adele had not left with the others. She was to remain for supper with Judy, and the two girls sat chatting together while Molly took a cat-nap and Nance began clearing away the tea things.

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"You shall not help," she had insisted, when Molly had offered to do her share. "You are dead tired and I'm not, so go and rest and don't bother."

Nance's manner was often brusque when she was tenderest, but Molly understood her perfectly. She was very tired. What with her new duties on the *Commune*, club meetings and the pressure of studies, the world was turning so fast she felt that she might fly off into space at any moment.

"Professor Green would have scolded me for trying to overdo things," she was thinking, half sadly. Gradually her body relaxed and her eyelids dropped. Through the mists of half consciousness she heard the musical rattle of the tea things, and presently there came the catchy, rather nasal tones of Adele's voice over the clatter of china and silver.

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"I like all your friends, Judy. They are remarkably bright."

"Aren't they a sparkling little coterie," answered Judy proudly.

"Now, Miss Wakefield is a born leader. Of course a leader must have the gift of gab. She's a great talker, isn't she? Takes the conversation right into her own hands and keeps it there, doesn't she?"

"Margaret does talk a lot," Judy admitted.

"Too much perhaps for any one not deeply interested, but then of course I always am. Now, Edith Williams is the brighter of the two, but she knows it, don't you think so?"

"Well, I suppose she does," replied Judy reluctantly.

"Katherine has more surface brightness, but of course she's superficial, that is, compared with her sister."

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"Edith is the brightest," said Judy.

"Mabel Hinton is all right, but she does dress so atrociously. And those glasses! Can you imagine how she can wear them?"

Molly felt suddenly hot. She flung the comfort off and sat up impatiently.

"I should think Judy would have sense enough to see she's being made to discuss every friend she has," she thought.

"The Intruder" had now commenced on pretty Jessie Lynch. "Awfully jolly to have so many beaux. Most men-crazy girls have none," she was saying, when Molly marched into the room. She had not decided what she was going to say, but she intended to say something.

"How red your face is, Molly, dear," observed Judy carelessly.

"And how fortunate that it's so seldom that way," went on the imperturbable Miss Windsor. "Red faces are not becoming to red heads, that is, generally speaking, but your skin is such an exquisite texture, Miss Brown, that it doesn't matter whether it's red or white. Did you see where a girl had written to a beauty editor and asked for a cure for blushing? The editor told her that age was the only cure. Sometimes, however, one gets very good suggestions off those pages, good hygienic suggestions, I mean." [111]

And so Adele carried the conversation along at such a swift pace that Molly did not have the chance to say what she had intended. She had always regarded that kind of talk with supreme contempt: praise that tapered into a sting. "It would have been more honest to have given the sting without the praise," she thought, "and less hypocritical and censorious."

It was Adele's trick to make you agree with her, and if you did, lead you on to further and more dangerous ground, until you suddenly felt yourself placed in the awkward position of saying something unkind without having intended it.

It was strange that Judy was so blind to this trait of Adele's. But then Adele was very attractive. There was a kind of abandon about her that suited Judy's style. They had a great many tastes in common. Adele was very talented and the two girls often went off on Saturday afternoon sketching expeditions together. [112]

"Nance, I'm ashamed of myself for thinking such things," whispered Molly, on the way down to supper, "but there is something almost Mephistophelean about Adele Windsor."

"She-devil, you mean," broke in Nance bluntly.

Molly laughed.

"Mephistophelean was more high sounding. Besides she's just like Mephistopheles in 'Faust.' She doesn't speak right out, only whispers and suggests. Innuendo is the word, isn't it? Sometimes I'm really frightened for Judy."

"She is awfully crushed, but she'll wake up soon enough. She always does," answered Nance carelessly.

But Molly had secret misgivings, in spite of Nance's assurances, and furthermore, she was convinced that the crafty Adele was well aware of these misgivings and that it gave her much private enjoyment to make Molly uncomfortable. [113]

"The trouble is I can't fight her with her own weapons," Molly thought. "I'm not clever enough, and besides I wouldn't if I could. After all, boys' methods of settling disputes by drawing a circle and fighting it out are somehow much more honest. It would be worth a black eye and a bloody nose to lay forever all that innuendo and sly insinuation."

"She's hypnotized Judy into putting her up for the Shakespearians and the Olla Podridas," said Nance. "And she'll get in. Nobody will dream of blackballing her, you'll see."

Molly compressed her lips into a firm red line and said nothing, but she was almost led to wish that school societies did not exist at all. [114]

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CHAPTER IX.

THE SUBSTITUTE.

Miss Walker had not failed to see the stinging article against women's colleges written by Miss Beatrice Slammer for a newspaper, and when she recalled that Miss Slammer had recently spent a day at Wellington as a guest of the college under plea of gathering material, she felt somewhat embittered. When, therefore, it came to her ears that the students intended to ask Miss Slammer to Wellington ostensibly for the purpose of hearing her views on anti-suffrage, she smiled and said nothing to anybody except Miss Pomeroy, who had raised some objections.

"Don't worry over it, my dear," said Miss Walker, "they won't do anything to make us ashamed. It's Miss Slammer who will be ashamed, I rather imagine."

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Perhaps Miss Slammer was surprised at receiving an invitation from Wellington University after her lampoon of college girls. Whatever qualms she may have felt in writing it had been hushed to sleep with the insidious thought that the views, if not true, were at least sensational enough to catch the public eye; and this was more important to Miss Slammer than anything else. It flattered her to be asked to speak at this small but distinguished college. Of course they had never seen the article or they would never have sent the invitation. Miss Slammer had her doubts as to whether any person outside New York ever read a newspaper, especially a lot of college girls who had no interests beyond amateur plays and basket ball. So she promptly dispatched a polite note of acceptance to "Miss Julia Kean." Then at the last moment, only a few hours before train time, her courage failed her.

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"I can't do it," she said. "I simply haven't the nerve."

"Do what?" asked Jimmy Lufton, glancing up from his typewriter to the somewhat battered and worn countenance of Miss Slammer.

"Face a lot of women and talk to them about anti-suffrage."

Jimmy grinned. He had the face of a mischievous schoolboy. In his eyes there lurked two little imps of adventure while his broad and sunny smile was completely disarming. "Sunny Jim" was the name given him by his friends in the office, a name that still clung to him after five tempestuous years of newspaper work.

"Would you like a substitute?" he asked. "I think I could give some pretty convincing arguments."

"What do you know about it?" demanded Miss Slammer doubtfully.

"Did you read the article that came out last Sunday—'Anti's to the front, by a Wife and Mother.' That was me. I thought I gave a pretty fair line of argument."

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"Jimmie, you are the limit," exclaimed Miss Slammer. Then she paused and began to think quickly. Suppose Jimmy did go up to Wellington with a letter of introduction from her, and take her place? Well, why not? She was too ill to come, and had sent the well-known young writer on this vital subject. She would be keeping her engagement in a way, and Jimmy would be getting a holiday and perhaps material for another story at the same time. The editor's consent was gained. "See if you can't get something about basket ball," he had ordered, and Jimmy dashed out of the office, the railroad ticket contributed by Wellington in one pocket and Miss Slammer's note in the other.

Miss Slammer's nature was a casual one. Life had been so hard with her that she had long since grown callous under the blows of fate and grimly indifferent to other people's feelings. Somewhere she had heard that Jimmy Lufton was a born orator. At any rate, she thought he could carry off the adventure and her conscience was easy.

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At eight o'clock the next morning when the night train from New York pulled into Wellington station, a crowd of well-dressed young women on the platform gazed at the door of the Pullman car with expectant eyes. Judy Kean in a black velvet suit and a big picture hat headed the delegation. Only two passengers descended from the sleeper: a middle-aged, worn-looking woman in shabby black and a young man whose alert brown eyes took in at once the crowd of college girls and Judy, resplendent in velvet and plumes.

"Miss Slammer?" began Judy, intercepting the woman passenger who was looking up and down the platform, somewhat bewildered.

"No, no, that is not my name. I am looking for Miss Windsor," answered the woman nervously.

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"Oh," said Judy, rather surprised. "You will find her at her rooms in the Beta Phi House. Take the 'bus up. It's quite a walk."

The woman bowed and hurried over to the 'bus just as the young man with the alert brown eyes came up, hat in hand. Judy noticed at once that his head was large and rather distinguished in outline and that his close-cropped black hair had a tendency to curl.

"You were looking for Miss Slammer?" he asked, speaking to Judy, whose face, as

the train receded, showed mingled feelings of disappointment and anger.

"Oh, yes," she replied, startled somewhat at being addressed by a strange young man.

"She couldn't come, and I came down as a substitute," he went on, handing her the note hastily dashed off by the intrepid Beatrice.

Judy's eyes only half took in the words of the note. She read it silently and passed it on to the rest of the delegation. [120]

"A man!" she thought. "Now, isn't that too much? Everything is ruined. We can't teach Miss Slammer a lesson in politeness through a proxy."

"I hope it's all right," Jimmy began, watching Judy's face with undisguised admiration.

"Oh, yes," she answered hastily. "We are very glad to see you, Mr. Slammer——"

Jimmy broke into his inimitable laugh.

"My name is Lufton," he said, and the mistake seemed so funny that Judy laughed, too, and everybody felt more at ease immediately.

"We were to have had you up to breakfast—I mean Miss Slammer," Judy stammered.

"I'll get something—er somewhere," said Jimmy in a reassuring tone.

"There's an inn in Wellington village," suggested one of the girls.

"Miss Slammer was scheduled to speak at three o'clock this afternoon," began Judy.

"And am I banished to the village all that time?" Jimmy broke in. "You don't bar men from the grounds, do you? I'd like to look around the place a little." [121]

"No, indeed. This isn't a convent. If you will come up to the Quadrangle after breakfast, we'll be delighted to show you the buildings and the cloisters—whatever would interest you."

"Thanks, awfully," said Jimmy, and presently they watched him stroll off up the road to the village, whistling as gaily as a schoolboy.

There were scores of faces at the windows of the Quadrangle when the special 'bus drew up at the archway.

"She didn't come," Judy called to a group of girls lingering in the tower room. "A man came."

"Young or old?" cried half a dozen voices.

"Young and passing fair," said Jessie.

"Passing dark, you mean. He had black hair."

"But where is old Miss Slammer?" demanded Edith Williams. [122]

"Old Miss Slammer was afraid to face the music, I suppose. Anyway, she sent Mr. James Lufton down to take her place and he is at present breakfasting in the village."

"Somehow, all the sweetness has gone out of revenge!" exclaimed Edith. "I foresee that nobody will be willing to practice the 'freeze-out' on an innocent man, passing fair, if he is a substitute."

"Well, he's coming up this morning to be shown around college. If any one wants to take the job of showing him, I'm willing to resign my place. Anybody who is willing to do the 'freeze-out' act, I mean. I don't think it will be easy. He has a way of laughing that makes other people laugh. You couldn't be mean to him if you tried."

Already, Judy had unconsciously set herself the task of protecting Mr. James Lufton from the fate planned for Miss Slammer.

"Aren't we to listen in cold silence when he makes his speech?" asked a girl. [123]

"Of course," put in Margaret, "you couldn't listen in any other way to a speech against suffrage. I shan't applaud him, I know. If he represents Miss Slammer, like as not he shares her views about college girls, too, and is just as deserving as she is to a polite 'freeze-out.'"

"It was a mad scheme from the first," put in Katherine Williams. "I never did approve of it. I don't imagine such a subtle revenge would have had the slightest effect on Miss Slammer."

"We intend to have our revenge," cried a dozen voices, followers of Margaret.

In the midst of the hot argument that followed this statement, Judy hurried off to Beta Phi House to eat her share of the fine breakfast some of the girls there had undertaken to give to the enemy of women's colleges. She felt that things looked pretty black for Mr. James Lufton. Running upstairs to Adele Windsor's rooms, she knocked on the door impatiently. It was quite two minutes before it was cautiously opened by Adele, whose face looked flushed and there were two white dents at the corners of her mouth.

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"I heard she didn't come," Adele began, without waiting for Judy to speak. "Let's go down to breakfast. We're late as it is." She closed the door with a slam and pushed Judy in front of her toward the stairs.

"By the way, did a visitor find you?" asked Judy. "She inquired where you lived at the station."

"Oh, yes. Just a woman—on business. About some clothes," she added carelessly. "Dressmakers are dreadful nuisances sometimes."

Judy said nothing, but it occurred to her that Adele must be a very good customer for a dressmaker to come all the way to Wellington to consult her.

While the Beta Phi girls and their guests were breakfasting in the paneled dining-room, the little woman in shabby black came softly out of Adele's rooms and tiptoed downstairs. Under cover of the noise of laughter and talk she opened the front door and went out. Jimmy Lufton saw her later at the inn in the village where she had coffee and toast and inquired the hour for the next train to New York. Jimmy himself was occupied in jotting down notes on an old envelope.

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"If it makes me laugh, I should think it would make them," he chuckled to himself.

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CHAPTER X.

THE POLITE FREEZE-OUT.

They had seen the cloisters and the library and the Hall of Science and all the show places at Wellington, and now Miss Julia Kean and Mr. James Lufton might be seen strolling across the campus in the direction of the lake.

It was one of those hazy, mid-autumnal days, neither cold nor hot; a blue mist clothed the fields and hung like a canopy between sun and earth.

Judy had changed her best velvet for a walking skirt and a red sweater and Jimmy Lufton glanced at her with admiration from time to time.

"It's a mighty becoming way of dressing you young ladies have here," he said. "Those sweaters and tam o' shanters are prettier to me than the fittest clothes on Fifth Avenue."

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"Then you don't agree with Miss Slammer?" asked Judy.

"I probably don't, but, as it happens, I never asked her opinion."

"You don't know what Miss Slammer thinks of college girls, the way they dress and talk?"

Jimmy hesitated. As a matter of fact he had never seen the libelous article by Miss Slammer. He had been absent in a remote village in the mountains writing a murder trial when the article had appeared. Therefore he was not suspicious of Judy's unexpected question.

"I can tell you what I think of college girls," he went on as they neared the edge of the lake. "I think they are the jolliest, most natural, interesting, wholesome, best looking, companionable——"

Judy began to blush. He was looking straight at her as he delivered himself of this stream of adjectives.

"Would you like to canoe a little?" she asked, changing the subject.

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"Would I," exclaimed Jimmy, with the sudden boyish expression that made his face so attractive. "I should rather think I would. I haven't had the chance to paddle a canoe since I left college."

It was just the day for canoeing. The surface of the lake was as smooth as glass

except where the paddles of other canoeists stirred its placid surface into little ripples and miniature waves.

Judy thought it would be nice, too. She was enjoying herself immensely with this lecturer who looked like a boy without any of a boy's diffidence.

"Do you lecture often?" she asked, when they had settled themselves in the canoe and he was paddling with a skill she recognized as far from being amateur.

"I don't mind making speeches," answered Jimmy. "I made a lot of them the last campaign. 'Cart-tail' speeches they are called, only our cart was an automobile. There were four or five of us who toured the East Side and took turns talking to the crowds."

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"I should think you'd be a politician instead of a writer on anti-suffrage," remarked Judy.

Jimmy grinned as he shot the canoe toward the center of the lake.

"Is that what I'm credited as being?" he asked.

"A well-known writer on the subject," quoted Judy.

"If I had read that note over I think I would have been tempted to scratch out the 'well-known,'" he said, "especially as the only article I ever wrote was signed 'A Wife and a Mother.'"

Judy's eyes darkened. Was Miss Slammer to libel them and then send down an impostor to make fun of them? Her impressionable mind was as subject to as many changes as an April day and her recent pleasure in Mr. Lufton's society changed to displeasure as the suspicion clouded her thoughts.

"You had a good deal of courage to come to Wellington, then," she observed after a pause. "At least we think you did after what Miss Slammer wrote about us."

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A hunting dog on the scent of quarry was not keener than Jimmy when it came to scenting out news, and it took about five minutes of careful and skillful questioning for Judy to explain the entire situation.

"By Jove, but that was like old 'Bee-trice' to send me down here into a hornet's nest," he thought. "I'll have to get square with them somehow before the lecture or it will never come off. I assure you I didn't know anything about the article," he said aloud to Judy. "I only came to accommodate Miss Slammer. She told me yesterday at the office she was ill."

"Then you aren't a lecturer or a writer?" broke in Judy.

"Miss Slammer and I work on the same paper. Didn't she say that in the letter?"

Judy shook her head.

"I'm afraid you'll think I'm an impostor, Miss Kean, but I had no intention of sailing under false colors. I think I'd better take the next train back to New York and give up the lecture. It would be better to run away before I'm frozen out, don't you think so?"

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Judy was silent for a moment. Her rage against Mr. James Lufton had entirely disappeared and she again had that feeling that she would like to protect him from the wrath to come.

"What is a 'polite freeze-out' exactly?" Jimmy asked.

"Well, while you lecture, you are to look into rows of stony faces and when you finish, there is not to be a word spoken, not a single handclap, nothing but stillness as the girls file out of the hall."

Jimmy laughed.

"A sort of glacial exit, I suppose. It makes me chilly to think of it. Miss Slammer had a lucky escape."

They were paddling now in the very center of the upper lake, but so absorbed were they in their conversation that they had scarcely noticed a canoe in front of them.

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Suddenly there came a cry, a splash and then a moment of perfect stillness followed by a confused sound of voices from the shore. The next instant Judy saw in front of them an upturned canoe and two heads just rising above the water. Before she had time to realize the danger, Jimmy Lufton had torn off his coat, flung his hat into the bottom of the canoe and, with a carefully planned leap, had cleared the side of the canoe, sending it spinning over the water, shaking and quivering like a frightened animal. And now Judy beheld him swimming with long strokes toward the place where the two heads had appeared, disappeared and once more reappeared. In that flash of a moment she had recognized the blonde plaits of Margaret Wakefield and the wet curls of Jessie Lynch. As she mechanically paddled toward the struggling

figures, she remembered that Jessie could not swim a stroke and that Margaret could only swim under the most favorable circumstances in a shallow tank.



Before she had time to realize the danger, Jimmy Lufton had torn off his coat.—[Page 132](#).

"He can't hold them both up at once," thought Judy, with a throb of fear as she frantically beat the water with her paddle in her effort to reach them. [133]

For a moment Jimmy himself was in a quandary. It looked as if he would have to let one girl go to save the other, when he saw one of the canoe paddles floating within reach. He gave it a swift push toward the struggling Margaret.

"Put that under your arms and go slow," he shouted, and made for Jessie. In two strokes he had caught her by her coat collar and was swimming swiftly toward the upturned canoe.

"Even in the water, Jessie's irresistible attraction had prevailed," the girls said afterward when they could discuss this almost tragic event with calmness.

"Hold on tight to the canoe, little girl," he said, and turned toward Margaret, who was all but exhausted now. He caught her just as she was sinking, and held her up until a row boat from shore reached them. Margaret was pulled in, with much difficulty owing to her large bulk, and at last Jimmy, feeling a trifle weary himself, returned to Jessie and helped her into another boat. She was still sufficiently herself to achieve a smile of thanks to the handsome young man who had saved her life. [134]

It was all over in a flash, and yet it seemed as if the entire college of Wellington could be seen running across the campus to the lakeside.

By the time the half-drowned trio reached land Miss Walker herself was there looking frightened and pale. The girls were to go straight to the Quadrangle, be rubbed down with alcohol and put to bed. As for the brave young man who had saved their lives, he was to be taken to the infirmary where he could be made comfortable while his clothes were being dried.

When Jimmy Lufton, dripping like a sea god, found himself in the center of a group of beautiful young ladies all eager to show him honor as they hurried him along to the infirmary, he gave a low, amused chuckle. [135]

"I hope I've squared myself with them now," he thought, "and there'll be no polite

freeze-out for me and no lecture, either, thank heavens."

While a delegation of three went to the village inn and ordered his suit case sent up to the infirmary, another delegation made him a hot lemonade in the infirmary pantry, and a third went to the flower store in the village and purchased a huge bunch of violets. This was laid on his lunch tray with a card, "From the Senior Class of 19—in grateful recognition of your brave deed."

And so the world goes. He who is down one day is up the next and Jimmy who was to have been the victim of a blighting freeze-out by the Wellington students was now an object of tender attention.

There came to Mr. Lufton that afternoon a note stating that if he were quite recovered—"Meaning my clothes," thought Jimmy)—the students of the Quadrangle would be glad to have him dine with them that evening at six-thirty. [136]

"I do feel like a blooming hypocrite," he exclaimed to himself remorsefully. "Here I came down to Wellington at their expense to give them a fake lecture and they are treating me like a king."

But he accepted the invitation, trusting to luck that his clothes would be dry and tipping the infirmary cook to press his trousers and black his shoes.

At half past six, then, Jimmy appeared at the Quadrangle archway. He wore some of the violets in his buttonhole and his keen, dark eyes shone with suppressed humor. A delegation of seniors met him and conducted him back to the dining-hall, where several hundreds of young persons all in their very best stood up to receive him. A seat of honor was given to him at the end of the long table and every girl in the room liked him immensely, not only for his broad jolly smile, but because at the end of dinner he arose and, without the slightest embarrassment, made the most deliciously funny speech ever heard. Then the walls resounded with the college yell, ending with "What's the matter with Mr. Lufton? He's all right. Who's all right? Lufton—Lufton—James Lufton." Never was one unknown and entirely unworthy individual more honored. [137] [138]

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CHAPTER XI.

THE WAYS OF PROVIDENCE.

Providence had not gone to such lengths to bring Jimmy Lufton to Wellington and set him in the good graces of the college without some purpose. It was not only that he had been sent in time to save two prominent seniors from drowning, but Jimmy's destiny was henceforth to weave itself like a brightly colored thread in and out of the destinies of some of Wellington's daughters.

Wherever Jimmy went he brought with him gaiety and good will. The sympathy and charm of his nature had made him so many friends that of himself did not know the number. And now he had come down to Wellington and made a host of new ones eager to show him how much Wellington thought of courage. [139]

On Sunday morning Jimmy not only met Dodo Green and Andy McLean, but he was led in and introduced to Professor Green, now sitting up against a back rest. There was an expression of ineffable happiness on the Professor's face because his bed had been moved near the window where he might catch a glimpse of the campus and of an occasional group of students strolling under the trees. Such are the simple pleasures of the convalescent.

Furthermore, Jimmy had met Miss Alice Fern, immaculate in white linen, and now he was carried off to the McLeans' to breakfast where he was to meet Molly Brown.

This was Molly's first glimpse of the famous hero. She had not gone down to dinner the evening before, having remained with Nance to minister to the wants of Margaret and Jessie.

Nance and Judy were at the breakfast, too, and Otoy Sen, and Lawrence Upton who had come over on the trolley from Exmoor. It was, indeed, a meeting of old friends and the genial doctor gave them a gruff and hearty welcome as they gathered in the drawing-room. [140]

"Gude morning to you," he said, rubbing his hands and beaming on them from under his shaggy eyebrows. "I'm verra glad to see the lads and lassies once more. The wife was only saying last week that in another year they'd be scattered to the

four ends of the earth. And is this the young lad who picked up the drowning lassies out of the lake? Shake hands, boy. It was a brave and bonny thing to do."

"Any man would have done it in my place, doctor," said Jimmy, grasping the big hand warmly.

"Not any man, but some would. Andy and Larry, I make no doubt, and that wild buffalo, Dodo."

Dodo didn't mind being called a wild buffalo by the doctor if only he was given the credit of courage at the same time, but Mrs. McLean objected.

"Now, doctor," she said, "you mustn't call your guests ugly names. You know I won't permit it at all." [141]

"Don't scold him, Mrs. McLean," said Dodo. "I think it's better to be called a wild buffalo than a wild boar."

"A bore is never wild, if that's the kind you mean," answered Mrs. McLean. "That's why they are bores, because they are so tame."

"Mither, mither," put in the doctor, laughing, "how you go on. As if you'd like 'em any way but tame. She's a great talker, Mr. Lufton, as you'll perceive before the morning's half over, but she doesn't mean the half she says, like every other woman under the sun."

Jimmy laughed. How delightful it was to him to be among these gay, simple-hearted people who found a good deal of enjoyment in life without the aid of things he had been accustomed to. Presently he heard Andy McLean's voice saying:

"Miss Brown, Mr. Lufton," and turning quickly, he confronted a tall slender girl with very blue eyes and red-gold hair. Miss Brown smiled a heavenly smile and gave him her hand. [142]

"I'm glad to meet you," she said. "I've been hearing a great deal about you in the last few hours."

The soft musical quality of her voice stirred Jimmy's soul.

"It's like the harp in the orchestra. When a hand sweeps over the harp strings, you can hear it above all the trumpets and drums, it's so—so ineffably sweet, only there's never enough of it."

All this Jimmy thought as he exchanged Molly's greetings.

"Are you from the South?" he asked later when he found himself beside her at the breakfast table.

"I'm from Kentucky," she answered promptly and proudly.

"So am I," he almost shouted, and then they exchanged new glances of deeper interest and presently were plunged in a conversation about home. [143]

Jimmy forgot that Judy, his sponsor at Wellington, sat at his right hand and Molly was oblivious to Lawrence Upton on her left.

"I suppose you never get any corn bread here?" Jimmy asked.

"Not our kind," replied Molly. "What they have here is made of fine meal with sugar in it."

Jimmy made a wry face.

"Wouldn't you like to have some fried chicken with cream gravy?" he whispered.

"And some candied sweet potatoes and corn pones and pear pickle," Molly broke in.

"And hot biscuits. But what shall we finish off with, Miss Brown?"

"Brandied peaches and ice cream and hickory-nut cake."

Jimmy gave a delighted laugh.

"That's a good old home dessert I used to get at Grandma's," he said. "At least the peaches and the ice cream were. She always had cup-cake with frosted icing." [144]

"Do you ever have kidney hash and waffles Sunday mornings, nowadays?" asked Molly.

"I haven't had any for years, Miss Brown. But at the restaurant where I get breakfast I do get 'batty' cakes and molasses."

"'Batty' cakes," repeated Molly. "How funny that is. Do you know I've always said that, too, just because I learned to say it that way as a child. And hook and 'laddy'

wagon. I can't seem to break myself of the habit."

"Don't try," said Jimmy. "I'd rather hear the good old talk than Bernhardt speaking French."

And so from food they came to discuss pronunciation, as most Southerners do sooner or later, and from that subject they drifted into mutual friendships and thence naturally into newspaper work.

"I'm a sub-editor," announced Molly proudly, and she told him about the *Commune* and her work. "Perhaps you'd like to see our office after a while?" she said. [145]

"I'd be only too glad," said Jimmy, delighted to be able to prolong his tête-à-tête with this gracefully angular young woman with blue eyes and red hair, who spoke with the "tongue of angels" and had the same yearnings he did for corn-bread and fried chicken with cream gravy.

And all this time something strange was taking place in Judy's mind that she could not understand. At first she thought she was catching the grippe. She felt cold and then hot and finally unreasonably irritated against everybody except Molly. At least, she put it that way to herself.

"She never looked more charming," thought Judy to herself.

Molly in her faded blue corduroy skirt and blue silk blouse was a picture to charm the eye. Judy herself looked unusually lovely in her pretty gray serge piped in scarlet with Irish lace collar and cuffs. There were glints of gold in her fluffy hair and her eyes shone with unusual brightness. But Mrs. McLean's good food tasted as sawdust on her palate and the conversation of the eager Dodo sounded trite and stupid to her. Once she had said a word or two to Jimmy Lufton and he had turned and answered her politely and agreeably, but as soon as he decently could he was back with Molly again deep in bluegrass reminiscences. [146]

There were other people who were disgruntled that morning at Mrs. McLean's breakfast. Not Nance and Andy, who seemed well pleased with themselves and the bright fall day; not the doctor nor the doctor's wife beaming at her guests behind the silver tea urn, but Otoyoy was strangely silent and averted her face from Molly's if by chance their glances met; looked carefully over Nance's head and avoided Judy's gaze as much as possible. Lawrence Upton, too, had little to say, except to Dr. McLean at his end of the table.

So it was that half the guests thought the breakfast had been a great success and the other half put it down as stupid and dull. [147]

"Would anybody like to go over to the *Commune* office with us?" Molly vouchsafed some three-quarters of an hour later when the company was breaking up. "I am going to show Mr. Lufton our offices."

But nobody seemed anxious to accept.

"You'll come, won't you, Judy?" Molly asked.

No, Judy had other things to do apparently.

"Won't you come, Otoyoy, dear?" asked Molly, slipping her arm around the little Japanese's waist and giving it a squeeze.

"It is not possible. I am exceedingly sorrowful," answered Otoyoy a little stiffly and drew away from Molly's embrace.

"Aren't you well, little one?" asked Molly. "Is anything the matter?"

"Oh, exceedingly, quite well, but I cannot go to-day, Mees Brown," Otoyoy answered, trying to infuse a little warmth into her tone.

So it ended by Molly's going off alone with the young man from New York to the *Commune* office, where she showed him their files and the proofs sent up by the printer in the village, which had to be corrected; then she introduced him into the little alcove office where Edith was wont to write her famous editorials. [148]

"How would you like to write an article for my paper, Miss Brown?" Jimmy asked suddenly. "We run a page of college news, you know."

He had no idea that Molly could write or that the paper would take anything from her if she did. He had merely talked at random and was a little taken back when Molly clasped her hands joyously and cried:

"Oh, and would they pay me?"

"Of course," he answered, hoping devoutly in his heart they would. "I'll tell you what you do. This is the Jubilee Year at Wellington, isn't it?"

"Yes; it's been officially announced at last."

"Well, you could use that as a starter, with a little of the history of Wellington and the big festival you're going to have, and then you could go on and give some talk about the girls,—what you do and all that. There could be pictures of the cloisters and the library, perhaps."

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"What a wonderful chance to answer Miss Slammer's article," Molly thought. "It's just what we would have wanted and never dreamed of getting. It's so kind of you," she said aloud. "I would be proud to do it for nothing if the paper doesn't want to pay —"

"Oh, it'll pay you all right if it takes the story. You may get anywhere from ten to thirty-five dollars for it."

"Why, that's enough to buy a dress," she exclaimed involuntarily, and Jimmy decided in his heart that he would sell that article if he had to wear the soles off his boots walking up and down Park Row.

"I suppose you'd like it simple," said Molly.

Jimmy laughed.

"Well, we don't like anything flowery," he said, "but you write it the way you like and I'll change it if necessary. Just tell about things as if you were writing a letter home."

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"There it is again," thought Molly. "First the Professor and now Mr. Lufton."

They finished the morning with a walk and Jimmy Lufton entertained Molly with a hundred stories about his life in New York, and then he listened to her while she talked about college and home and her hopes.

At last they parted at the Quadrangle gates, where Andy McLean was waiting to take Jimmy home with him to dinner, and Molly saw him no more, since he was to catch the three-thirty train back to New York; but she had his address carefully written on a scrap of paper and already the opening paragraph of the newspaper article was beginning to shape itself in her mind. She saw nothing of Judy until bedtime. Judy had been with her friend, Adele, she said. But when the two friends parted that night Judy flung her arms around Molly's neck and kissed her so tenderly that Molly could not help feeling a bit surprised, since only a few hours before Judy had seemed cold somehow.

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A few days after Jimmy Lufton had returned to New York he received six letters from the following persons: Margaret Wakefield, Senator and Mrs. Wakefield, Jessie Lynch, and Colonel and Mrs. Lynch. Any time James Lufton tired of his job he could get another from Senator Wakefield or Colonel Lynch. That was stated plainly in the letters of the two fathers.

"And all because of an anti-suffrage speech that was never made," thought Jimmy.

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CHAPTER XII.

FRIENDLY RIVALS.

It is not often that rivals for the same office are champions for each other, and yet that is what happened when the seniors elected their permanent president toward the end of October. It followed that Molly, as the most popular girl in the junior class, would be elected president the next year.

"Of course you'll get it," Nance assured her as the time approached.

"It's a great honor," replied Molly, "but, oh, Nance, I'm such a diffident, shy person with a shrinking nature——"

"You mean," interrupted Nance, "that Margaret wants it so badly, you can't bear to deprive her of it."

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"No, that isn't it. It's not sentiment, really, but I can't make speeches and I haven't got the organizing nature."

Nance shook her head.

"You ought not to throw away gifts from the gods. It's as bad as hiding your light under a bushel."

Nevertheless, Molly was sure she did not want the place and she hoped Margaret would get it. As for Margaret, the spirit of a politician and the spirit of a loyal friend were struggling for mastery within her soul. The girls knew by this time what sort of president *she* could make. They were well acquainted with her powers of oratory and organization. Nobody understood as well as she did the ins and outs of parliamentary law; how to appoint committees and chairmen and count yeas and nays; in other words, how to swing the class along in proper form. They knew all this, but hitherto it had been necessary to call it to their minds each year, when by the sheer force of oratory, Margaret won the election.

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But, as luck would have it, on the day set for the election Margaret, who had taken a deep cold from her upsetting in the lake, was too hoarse to say a word. It would have moved a heart of stone to see her, sitting in the president's chair sucking a lemon, as she called the class to order in a husky tone of voice that had not the faintest resemblance to the organ she had used with such force for three years.

There were only two nominations for the office of president, and it was difficult to judge toward which of the nominees the sentiment of the class leaned. Nance had nominated Molly, who had tried to drag her friend back on the bench.

"Don't you see they might think I had put you up to it?" Molly had exclaimed.

"They never would think that about you, Molly," whispered Nance, and promptly had announced her candidate and the nomination was immediately seconded. Then Molly shot up blushing and nominated Margaret Wakefield, almost taking the words out of Jessie's mouth. Margaret smiled at her rather shamefacedly, knowing full well that she would not have nominated Molly for that coveted office.

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Other nominations followed. Edith Williams and her sister were rival candidates for the office of vice president, and Caroline Brinton and Nance were put up for secretary.

"Has anybody anything to say?" asked Margaret, still sucking the lemon frantically as a last effort to clear her fogbound voice.

Molly stood up.

"I think I'd like to speak a few words, Madam President," she said. Then, blushing deeply and trembling in her knees she turned toward the familiar faces of her classmates and began:

"I'm not much of a speechmaker, girls, and I don't know that I ever really addressed you before, but I feel I must say something in favor of my candidate, Miss Margaret Wakefield, who has made us such an excellent president for three years."

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There were sounds of hand-clapping and calls of "Hear! Hear!"

Molly paused and cleared her throat. She did wish they wouldn't interrupt until she had finished.

"I think we ought to remember, girls, that when we elect a president for this last year, we are choosing some one to represent us for always; at class reunions and alumnæ meetings and all kinds of things. When there is a distinguished visitor, it's always the senior president who has to step up and do the talking. The kind of president we want is some one with presence and dignity. We want a handsome president who dresses in good taste and can talk. Girls,"—Molly raised her hand as if calling upon heaven to strengthen the force of her arguments,—"*we don't want a thin, lank president without any shape*" (sounds of tumultuous laughter and the beginning of applause)—"*one of those formless, backboneless people who can't talk and who dress in—well, ragtags. I tell you, girls, Margaret is the president for us. She's been a mighty fine president for three years and I don't think we ought to try experiments on a new one at this stage in the game.*"

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Then there came wild applause and Margaret presently arose and raised her hand for silence after the manner of the true speechmaker. She was much moved by what Molly had said. It was more than she herself would have been capable of doing, but she intended to speak now if it cracked her voice till doomsday.

"I can't talk much, girls, on account of hoarseness, but I do want to say that nobody could represent this class better than Molly Brown, the most beloved girl not only of the senior class, but of all Wellington. I hope you will cast your votes for her, girls, and I'm proud to write down her name as my choice for president."

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"Three cheers for Molly and Margaret," cried Judy, always the leader of the mobs.

Edith, funny and diffident, now rose and addressed the class. She said she sincerely hoped the class was not looking for handsome, plump vice-presidents, since the two candidates for that office were neither the one nor the other; but that if they placed any confidence in a "rag and a bone and a hank of hair," she felt sure she could fill the bill just as well as the opposing candidate.

Then Katherine shot up and said she could prove that she weighed a pound more than her sister, and instead of putting her allowance into books that autumn, she had laid in a stock of clothes.

It was all very funny and good natured: the most friendly close election that had ever taken place, some one said, and when the votes were counted it was found that Margaret had won by one vote and Katherine by two in excess of the other candidates. Edith and Molly locked arms and rushed over to congratulate the successful opponents. [159]

"You won it for me, Molly," announced Margaret in a voice husky as much from emotion as cold. "I doubt if I should have got half a dozen votes if it hadn't been for your speech and I shall never forget it. It was what father calls 'a nice thing.'"

"You are the president for me, Margaret," Molly laughed. "I can't see myself in that chair, not in a thousand years. I should be all wobbly like a puppet on a throne and I'd probably slide under the table from fright at the first class meeting."

"You would have adorned it far better than I would, Molly, and popularity will outweigh speechmaking any day; not but what you didn't make a fine speech."

But neither Edith nor Molly felt any regrets over the election. They had all they could do to attend to the *Commune*, go to society meetings and keep up their studies. [160]

That very day, too, there came a letter for Molly that added to her labors. Judy brought it up from the office below. She looked at her friend curiously, as Molly glanced at the address written in a rather large, scrawly masculine hand. In a corner of the envelope was printed the name of a New York newspaper.

"Corresponding already?" Judy asked. "You lose no time, Molly, darling."

Molly was so much occupied in tearing open the envelope that she did not notice the strained tone in Judy's voice.

"I'm so excited," she exclaimed, drawing out the letter. "This will decide my fate."

"Are you ready, Judy?" called Adele Windsor, opening the door and walking in, in her usual unceremonious fashion. Her quick glance took in the envelope Molly had flung on the table in her haste to read the note. "Oh, these southern girls," she remarked, raising her eyebrows and blinking at Judy. [161]

Molly looked up quickly. It was certainly no affair of Adele's and still she felt like making an explanation.

"This is a business letter," she said quickly, the blood rushing into her face.

"Do business letters make one blush?" Adele said teasingly.

Molly could not tell why Adele irritated her so profoundly. She was ashamed afterward of what she called her unreasonable behavior. Certainly she did not appear very well in the passage of arms that now followed.

"It's none of your business at any rate," she exclaimed hotly, "and I'm not blushing."

After this outburst, she turned and walked into her room. Her face was crimson and she knew she would have wept if she had stayed another minute, and so have been further disgraced.

"Really, Molly, don't you think you are rather hard on poor Adele?" she heard Judy's voice saying. But not a word of apology would she make to Adele Windsor, whose high nasal tones now came to her through the half closed door. [162]

"Never mind, I don't care, Judy. She can't help it. Didn't you ever hear about the temper that goes with red heads?"

Molly paid for her outburst of temper by having a headache all the afternoon and an achey lump in her chest—indigestion, no doubt.

She stretched herself on her little bed, her haven of refuge in time of trouble and the safe confidante unto whose soft bosom she poured her secrets and hopes. At last, calmed and remorseful for her hasty tongue, she opened the note again and reread it:

DEAR MISS BROWN:

"I have hypnotized the editor into accepting that article of yours; only you must hurry up with it. It will run probably for two and a half columns on the College Notes page and we can use three pictures. Just tell whatever you want about the college and the girls and what they do, starting off with the Jubilee, as I suggested. Send it to me here by Friday and I will appreciate it. Thank you for the wonderful time you gave me at Wellington. [163]

"Sincerely your friend,
"JAMES LUFTON."

Late that afternoon Molly rushed over to the *Commune* office, and, seizing a pencil and paper, began to write. At the top of the page she wrote, "Dearest Mother"—"just to make myself think it's a letter," she thought. But the words worked like a magic talisman, for the pencil traveled busily and by supertime she had almost finished.

On the way back from the village next morning, where she had been to buy the photographs, she stopped at the Beta Phi House and left a note on the hall table for Miss Windsor.

"I am sorry I was rude to you. I suppose red-headed people have got high tempers and henceforth I shall try to curb mine."

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE DROP OF POISON.

Molly was very proud of her first newspaper article and exultant at being able to answer the unjust libels of Miss Slammer. She could scarcely wait to tell Nance and Judy about it, but decided to drop in at the infirmary and relate her triumph to the Professor if it was possible to see him. Alice Fern was on guard that morning, however, and the Swiss Guards at the Vatican could not have been more formidable.

"I'm sure the Pope of Rome doesn't live a more secluded life," thought Molly as she departed.

Glancing at the tower clock, Molly saw that she still had three quarters of an hour before the lecture on early Victorian Poets by the Professor of English Literature from Exmoor, who came over several times a week to substitute for Professor Green.

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"I think I'll run in and see Ootoyo a few minutes," Molly said to herself. "The girls can wait. There's been something queer about Ootoyo lately. She keeps to herself like a little sick animal. I can't make her out at all."

There was no response to Molly's knock on Ootoyo's door a few minutes later, and, after a pause, she opened the door and peeped in.

The blinds had been drawn, an unwonted thing with the little Japanese, who usually let the sunlight flood her room through unshaded windows. But a shaft of light from the open door disclosed her seated cross-legged on the floor in front of a beautiful screen showing Fujiyama, the sacred Japanese mountain. At the foot of the screen she had placed two statues, one of Saint Anthony of Padua and one of Saint Francis of Assisi, presents from Mr. and Mrs. Murphy on two successive Christmases. And still another graven image caught Molly's eye as she tiptoed into the room: a small figure of Buddha seated cross-legged. He was placed at a little distance from the two saints and his antique, blurred countenance contrasted strangely with the delicately molded and tinted faces of the new statues.

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If Molly had come unannounced upon Nance on her knees or Judy at her devotions, she would have beat a hasty retreat, but it came to her that Ootoyo, sitting there cross-legged before the images of strange gods, needed help of some sort.

"You aren't angry with me for coming in, Ootoyo?" she began. "I knocked and you didn't hear. I'm afraid something is the matter. Won't you let me help you? I have not forgotten how you helped me once when I was unhappy. Don't you remember how you let me sit in your room and think over my troubles that Sunday afternoon at Queen's?"

Ootoyo rose quickly, flushing a little under her dark skin. She seemed very foreign to Molly at that moment, in her beautiful embroidered kimono of black and gold. Also she seemed very formal in her manner and distant, like an exiled princess who still clings to the dignity of her former position.

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First she made a low Japanese bow, quite different from the little smiling nods she had learned to give her friends at Wellington.

"I feel much honored, Mees Brown. Will you be seated and I will bring refreshments."

"Why, Ootoyo," exclaimed Molly, filled with wonder at this new phase in her friend,

"I don't want any refreshments. I thought I'd drop in for half an hour before English V. and find out what has happened to you. You never come to see me any more," she added reproachfully. "You haven't been since that Sunday afternoon with your father, and you always have a 'Busy' sign on your door. Are you really so busy or are you trying to avoid us?"

Otoyo drew up her one chair she used for visitors and sat down again on the floor.

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"I have been much engaged," she said, avoiding Molly's eye. Molly noticed that her English was perfect. She spoke with great precision and avoided adverbial mistakes with painful care.

She had had a great deal to think about lately, Otoyo continued, and she was reading a book of Charles Dickens, the English novelist. It was very difficult.

With an impetuous gesture, Molly rose and pushed the chair out of the way. Then she sat flat on the floor beside Otoyo, and took one of the little plump brown hands in hers.

"Otoyo, you're unhappy. Something has happened and you're praying to Catholic saints and Fuji and Buddha all at once. Isn't it so?"

"The saints are very honorable gentlemen," answered Otoyo quickly. "Mrs. Murphy has told me many things of their goodness. And Fuji is the mountain that brings comfort to all Japanese people. Holy men dwell on Fuji and pilgrims climb to the summit each year to worship. And Buddha, he is a great god," she added. "He is kind to lonely little Japanese girl."

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As she neared the end of her speech her voice was as faint and thin as a sick child's, but she steadily repressed all emotion, for no well-bred Japanese lady is ever seen to weep.

"Otoyo, my dear, my dear, what can have happened?" cried Molly, turning the averted face toward her so that she might look into the almond-shaped eyes. "I can't bear to see you so miserable. It makes me unhappy, too. Don't you know that you are one of the dearest friends I have in the world and that we all love you?"

"It is not easy to believe that is true," said Otoyo, looking at her with an expression of mingled reproach and incredulity. "I cannot believe it is so, Mees Brown."

A look of utter amazement came into Molly's face. It had never entered her head that Otoyo was angry with her.

"What is that? Say it again, Otoyo. I can't believe my own ears."

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"I say it is not easy to believe that is true," said Otoyo, repeating her words with the precision of a Japanese.

Molly rose to her feet, and grasping Otoyo's hands pulled her up.

"I can't talk sitting on the floor, Otoyo. Come over here and sit on the bed where I can look at you. Now, tell me exactly what you meant by that speech."

The two girls now sat face to face on the bed and there was a look of sternness in Molly's eyes that Otoyo had never seen there before. Otoyo's eyes dropped before her gaze and she began plucking at the Japanese crepe of her kimono.

"You must speak, Otoyo," Molly insisted.

There was a long silence and then Otoyo looked up again.

"It was my father, my honorable good father. I am too humble to care. But my noble father!"

She rose quickly and walked across to the window. If there were tears in her eyes Molly should not see them. Having drawn the blind, she drew a deep breath and came back to the bed. But Molly was doing some rapid thinking during that brief interval. Some one had been telling Otoyo that they had made game of her father—and that some one—

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But Molly was too angry to think coherently.

"Otoyo," she began, "you know how much all the Queen's girls think of you. You are really our property, child. If any of us felt that we had hurt or grieved you, we would really never forgive ourselves."

"But my father, he was mock-ed. Of me it was of not much matter."

"Child, what we did was in innocent fun. It was only that we repeated his funny English, even funnier than yours, and we have often teased you about your adverbs, haven't we?"

"Yes," admitted Otoyo, "but this was made to be so cruel. It cut me——" she

choked.

"Who repeated it to you, Otoyoy?" asked Molly with sudden calmness, afraid to give rein to her indignation for fear of doing rash things. "People who tell things like that are quite capable of inventing them or at least making them much worse."

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"I have given my word not to speak the name," answered Otoyoy.

It was almost time for the lecture now and Molly slipped down on her knees beside the bed and put her arms around Otoyoy's waist.

"Dear little Otoyoy, before I go, I want you to tell me that you have forgiven us. None of us meant to be cruel or unkind. We are too fond of you for that. I shall tell all the other girls what has happened and to-night they will come in and make you an apology themselves. We will all come. As for the girl who made the trouble, she is a wicked mischief maker and I wish she had never come to Wellington. And now, will you say 'Molly, I forgive you?'"

"I do, I do," cried Otoyoy, her face transformed with happiness. "I should not have listened to her ugly speeches, but it was the way she did it. She told me my father had been mock-ed and ridiculed. I was verree unhappee."

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"Never, never let her get her clutches on you again," said Molly, opening the door.

"Never, never, never," repeated the Japanese girl.

It was a real reconciliation surprise party that took place in Otoyoy's room that evening. All the Queen's girls were there except Judy, who had been absent for a whole day, having cut two lectures and taken supper with Adele Windsor at Beta Phi House. It had been agreed among them that Adele should never be welcomed in their circle again; for they were morally certain that it was Adele who had done the mischief, although Otoyoy loyally kept her word not to tell the name.

Otoyoy, bewildered and happy over this avalanche of company, toddled about the room in her soft house slippers looking for refreshments. From strange foreign looking packing boxes in the closet she produced tin cases of candied ginger and pineapple, boxes of rice cakes, nuts and American chocolate creams which Otoyoy liked better than the daintiest American dish that could be devised.

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Every guest had brought Otoyoy a gift of flowers. They made her sit in the armchair while they circled around her, singing:

"Old friends are the best
friends,
The friends that are tried and
true."

Then they made her dress up in her finest kimono and sit cross-legged at the foot of the bed while one by one they filed before her and each made an humble apology.

"Oh, it is too much," Otoyoy cried. "I implore you forgoe *me*. It was madlee of me to listen to so much weekedness. Humble little Japanese girl is bad to entertain such meanly thoughts."

At last when all the rites and ceremonies were over and they had settled down to refreshments in good earnest, Edith began the tale of "The Fall of the House of Usher," which she recited in thrilling fashion. The girls always huddled together in a frightened group at this performance. At the most dramatic moment, as if it had been timed purposely, the door was flung open and a tall lady in black stood on the threshold. She hesitated a moment and then sailed in, her black chiffon draperies floating about her like a dark cloud. Then she flung a lace mantilla from her head and stood before them revealed as Judy, in a black wig apparently.

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"Judy Kean, what have you been up to?" asked Nance suspiciously.

"Where did you get your black wig?" demanded Molly.

"Don't you think it becoming?" asked Judy. "Don't you think it enhances the whiteness of my skin and the brightness of my eye?"

"All very well for a fancy dress party, but you don't look yourself, Judy. Do take it off."

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"Now, don't say that," answered Judy, "because I can't take it off without cutting it. I've changed the color. That's where I've been all day. It's awfully exciting. You've no idea how many things you have to do to change your hair dark. Of course, it's perfectly ladylike to make it dark. It's only bad form to dye it light."

"Judy, you haven't?" they cried.

"I certainly have," she answered carelessly, and she proceeded to take out all the hair pins from her fluffy thick hair and let it down. "It's raven black."

It was, in fact, an unnatural blue-black, something the color of shoe blacking.

"Oh, Judy, Judy, what will you do next?" cried Molly in real distress.

"What will that girl make her do next?" put in Nance, in a disgusted tone.

"Now, Nance, I knew you'd say just that, but it's not true. I did it of my own free will. I always loved black and I've wanted black hair all my life."

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"What will Miss Walker say?" asked some one.

"She probably won't know anything about it. I doubt if she remembers the original color of my hair, anyhow. I'm sorry you don't think it's becoming to me. Adele thought it suited me perfectly. Much better than the original mousy-brown shade."

"I recognize Adele's fine touch in that expression, 'mousy-brown,'" put in Edith.

"Did Adele do anything to change her appearance?" asked Margaret.

"Oh, no, she is just right as she is. Her hair is a perfect shade, 'Titian Brown,' it's called. But, girls, I must tell you about the marvelous face cream, 'Cucumber Velvet'; it bleaches and heals at the same time."

"Oh, go to," cried Katherine. "Judy, you are so benighted, I don't know what's coming to you. Don't you know that Adele Windsor made Ootoyo, here——"

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"No, no," broke in Ootoyo. "I have never told the name. I gave my honorable promise not to. I beg you not to mention it."

"What's all this?" Judy began when the ten o'clock bell boomed and the girls scattered to their various rooms.

That night, undressing in the dark, Nance and Molly explained to Judy what had happened.

"But are you sure she did it?" Judy demanded. "Ootoyo never said so, did she?"

"No, but we are sure, anyway."

"I don't believe it," exclaimed Judy hotly. "Adele is the soul of honor. I shall never believe it unless Ootoyo really tells the name."

And so Judy went off to bed entirely unreasonable about this new and fascinating friend.

"All I can say for you, Judy," said Molly, standing in Judy's bedroom doorway, "is that I hate your black hair, but do you remember that old poem we used to sing as children? I'm sure you must have known it. Most children have."

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Then Molly recited in her musical clear voice:

"I once had a sweet little doll, dears,
The prettiest doll in the world,
Her cheeks were so red and so white,
dears,
And her hair was so charmingly curled.
But I lost my poor little doll, dears,
As I played on the heath one day;
And I cried for her more than a week,
dears,
But I never could find where she lay.

"I found my poor little doll, dears,
As I played in the heath one day:
Folks say she is terribly changed, dears,
For her paint is all washed away,
And her arm trodden off by the cows,
dears,
And her hair not the least bit curled:
Yet for old sake's sake, she is still, dears,
The prettiest doll in the world."

"Humph!" said Judy. "Is that the way you feel about it?"

"Yes."

"Thanks, awfully," and with a defiant fling of the covers, Judy turned her face to the wall.

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CHAPTER XIV.

JUDY DEFIANT.

When Judy Kean appeared at Chapel next morning she seemed serenely unconscious of the sensation she was creating. Her usual black dress and widow's bands had always made her conspicuous and those who only knew her by sight, yet carried with them a vivid impression of her face: the large gray eyes swimming with visions, the oval creamy face, the mouth rather large, the lips a little too full, perhaps, and framing all this, her fluffy bright hair.

The Quadrangle dining-room had already buzzed with the news of Judy's reckless act, and now, as the seniors marched two by two up the aisle after the faculty, a ripple of laughter swept over the chapel. Necks were craned all over the room to see Judy's mop of blue-black hair arranged in a loose knot on the back of her neck, drawn well down over the forehead in a heavy dark mantle, carefully concealing the ears. [181]

But Miss Walker was not pleased with the liberties Judy had taken with her appearance. She had heard the ripple of laughter, stifled almost as soon as it had commenced, and having reached her chair and faced the audience while the procession was still on its way up the aisle she noticed the amused glances directed toward Judy's head. It took only a second glance to assure herself of what Judy had done and she frowned and compressed her lips. When the service was over, she made a little impromptu address to the students. College, she said, was a place for serious work and not for frivolity. Of course there were no objections to innocent fun, but absurdities would not be tolerated. All the time she was speaking she was looking straight at Judy, who, with chin resting on her hand and eyelids drooped, apparently read a hymn book. That afternoon Miss Julia Kean received a summons to appear at Miss Walker's office immediately. From this interview Judy emerged in a stubborn, angry humor. Miss Walker was a wise woman in her generation, but she had never had a girl of Judy's temperament to deal with before. Judy's rather contemptuous indifference had inflamed the President into saying some rather harsh things. [182]

If one girl dyed her hair a great many others might. Such things often struck a college in waves and she was not going to tolerate it.

Therefore, Judy, unreasonably angry, as she always was under reproof, had no word to say to her anxious friends awaiting her at No. 5, Quadrangle.

"Was it very bad, Judy, dear?" Nance asked, when Judy walked into the room, white and silent.

"It was worse than that," replied Judy in a steady even voice. "If she had given me twenty lashes on my bare shoulders I should have liked it better. What business is it of hers what color I turn my hair? This is not a boarding school. I detest her!" Whereupon, she slammed her door and the girls did not see her again for several hours. [183]

When she did finally emerge, she was calm and smiling, but the girls felt instinctively that her dangerous mood had not passed, only deepened, and Molly felt she would give a great deal to win her friend away from the malign influence of Adele Windsor.

It seemed to her sometimes that Judy was cherishing a secret grievance against her as well as against Miss Walker. But Molly had little time for brooding over such things in the daytime and at night sleep overtook her as soon as her tired head dropped on the pillow.

A great many things were in the air at Wellington just now. A prize had been offered for the best suggestion for a jubilee entertainment. It was only ten dollars, but every girl in college competed except Judy. One morning Adele Windsor's name was posted on the bulletin board as winner of the prize, and not long afterward they learned that it was Judy's scheme, unfolded on the opening night of college, that Adele had appropriated, no doubt with Judy's full consent. [184]

Molly's exchange of brief notes with Jimmy Lufton had ripened into a correspondence, and she was prepared therefore for the enormous package containing at least a dozen Sunday newspapers that came to her one morning—also a check for fifteen dollars. With eager fingers she tore wrappers from the papers, and began to search through multitudinous columns for her article about Wellington.

At last, with Nance's and Judy's help, she found it, not tucked away in a corner as she had half expected, but spread out over the page. It is true the pictures were rather blurred, but there were the columns of writing, all hers, so she fondly believed, so skillfully had Mr. Lufton wrought the changes he had been obliged to make. [185]

The article was signed "M. W. C. B." and a framed copy of it hangs to this day on the crowded walls of the *Commune* office. There was not much doubt who "M. W. C. B." was and Molly was deluged with calls and congratulations all day. It was glorious to have been the means of refuting Miss Beatrice Slammer's criticisms, and she could not help feeling very proud as she hurried down the avenue to the infirmary, one of the papers tucked under her arm, devoutly hoping that Alice Fern had gone home by now. It was reported that the Professor was walking about and in a few days was to go to Bermuda to stay until after the Christmas holidays. The Professor himself, and not Miss Fern, opened the door for Molly before Miss Grace Green, reading aloud by the window, could remonstrate with him. He was a mere ghost of his former self, pale, emaciated. His clothes seemed three sizes too big for his wasted frame and he had grown quite bald around the temples. Molly thought him very old that afternoon.

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"I've brought something to show you," she said, after she had shaken hands with the brother and sister and the three had drawn up their chairs by the window. Then Miss Grace Green read the article aloud and Molly explained that it was Mr. Lufton, to whom they were already so deeply indebted, who had arranged to get it published.

"I took him over to the *Commune* office," said Molly, "and that started it."

Miss Green smiled and the Professor shifted uneasily in his chair. Presently Miss Green rose.

"It's time for your buttermilk, Edwin, and you and I shall have some tea, Miss Molly," she added as she slipped out of the room.

"Tell me a little about yourself, Miss Molly," observed the Professor, when they were left alone. "Did you have a pleasant summer and how is the old orchard?"

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"Oh, the orchard was most shamefully neglected," replied Molly. "Simply a mass of weeds and the apples left rotting on the ground all this fall, so mother writes. William, our colored man, cut down the worst of the weeds with a scythe last summer and I kept the ground cleared where the hammock hangs. It's been such a rainy summer, I suppose that's why things grew so rank, but I'm sorry the old gentleman is neglecting his property after making such a noble start."

The Professor laughed.

"You have made the acquaintance of the owner, then?" he asked.

"Oh no, we have never even learned his name, but I feel quite sure he is very old. Sometimes I seem to see him in the orchard, an old, old man leaning on a stick. I think he is old and eccentric because a young man would never have bought property he had never seen."

"Can't a young man be eccentric?"

"Oh, yes, but mother and my brothers and sisters, all of us believe this man is old from something the agent said. He told mother that the new owner of the orchard had bought it because he was looking for a retired spot in which to spend his old age."

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Again the Professor laughed and the color rose in his face and spread over his cheeks and forehead.

Presently Miss Green returned with the tea things and the buttermilk.

"Has Miss Fern gone?" asked Molly.

"Oh yes, we finally prevailed on her to go home," answered Miss Green. "She really need not have been here at all. The infirmary nurse would have looked after Edwin, but she seemed to think she was indispensable."

"Grace, my dear sister," remonstrated the Professor.

From Miss Fern the talk drifted to many things. Molly told them more of Jimmy Lufton: how he had charmed everybody and what a wonderful life he led in New York.

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"I should like to be on a newspaper," she said suddenly. "It would be lots more exciting than teaching school."

The Professor looked up quickly.

"I should be sorry to see you take that step, Miss Molly."

"Well, I haven't taken it yet, but I was only thinking that Mr. Lufton might be a great deal of help to me."

"You must not," said the Professor sternly. "Don't think of it for a moment. The *Commune* is putting ideas into your head, or this Mr. Lufton."

Molly felt uncomfortable for some reason and Miss Green changed the subject.

"By the way," she said, "I heard the other day what had become of some of the luncheon you seniors lost the day the Major took you in and fed you. The thieves probably took all they could carry with them and dumped the rest in a field between Exmoor and Round Head. Like as not they picnicked on top of Round Head. Some of the Exmoor boys found a pile of desiccated sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs and cake one day when they were out walking, and Dodo and Andy brought the story to me."

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"Think of the waste of it," exclaimed Molly. "They might at least have given what they didn't want to the poor."

"There aren't any poor people around there, child."

"Well, to Mrs. Murphy, then. She's poor and we wouldn't have minded having worked so hard to feed Mrs. Murphy."

"I wonder who did it," put in the Professor.

"None of the Exmoor boys, I'm sure," said his sister, who had a very soft spot for the boys of her younger brother's college.

"Some day it will come out," announced Molly. "Things always do sooner or later and we needn't bother about playing detective. It's a horrible rôle to act, anyway."

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"I remember when I was a boy at college," began the Professor, "some fellows played rather a nasty practical joke on some of us and they were caught by a trick of fate. On the night of the senior class elections, which always take place just before a banquet at the Exmoor Inn, some of the students broke into the inn kitchen, masked, overpowered the cook and the waiter and stole all the food they conveniently could carry away. One of the saucepans contained lobster, and the next morning there were six very ill young men at the infirmary with ptomaine poisoning and it was not hard to guess who were the thieves of our supper."

"Were they punished?" asked Molly.

"Oh, yes. Exmoor never permits escapades like that. They were suspended for six weeks, although they had saved the entire senior class from a pretty severe illness."

"At least, you might have felt some gratitude for that," observed Miss Green.

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"We did, but the President took only a one-sided view of the matter."

"I'm afraid it's too late for attacks of indigestion from our lunch," observed Molly. "The only thing out of common we had at the lunch were 'snakey-noodles.'"

"What in the world?" asked the brother and sister together.

"It doesn't sound very appetizing, does it? But they are awfully good. Our old cook makes them at home. They are coils of very rich pastry with raisins and cinnamon all through."

"Don't mention it," exclaimed the Professor, whose appetite was greater than his official allowance of food. "I would give anything for a hot snakey-noodle with a glass of milk."

"When you come back from Bermuda, I'll see that your wish is gratified," replied Molly, laughing, as she rose to go.

"Miss Molly," said the Professor, as he bade her good-bye at the door, "I wish you would promise me three things: don't overwork; don't make plans to work on a newspaper instead of teaching school, and—don't forget me."

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"I'm not likely to do that, Professor. I'm always wanting to go to your office and ask you questions and advice. The last time we were there, Dodo and I, I found two old rotten apples. I took the liberty of throwing them away."

"It's too bad for good apples to be left rotting on the ground or anywhere," said the Professor, and he closed the door softly. While this surely was a very simple statement, somehow he seemed to mean more than he said.

Just why Molly's thoughts were on the lost snakey-noodles as she walked up the campus, she could not say. She recalled that they had been carefully done up in a box marked on top in large print, "Snakey-noodles from Aunt Ma'y Morton." That was the Browns' cook.

"I wonder if they were left with the half of the lunch in Exmoor meadow," she thought with fond regret for this wasted gift of their old colored cook, who had taken unusual pains to make the snakey-noodles as crusty and delicious as possible.

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"So passeth snakey-noodles and all good things," she said to herself as she entered the Quadrangle.

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CHAPTER XV.

THE CAMPUS GHOST.

About this time Wellington was filled with strange rumors that were much discussed in small sitting rooms behind closed doors. It was said, and this part of the story could be credited as truth, that a woman had been seen wandering about the campus late at night wringing her hands and moaning. Some of the Blakely House girls had seen her from their window one night and had rushed to find the matron, but the strange woman had disappeared by the time the matron had been summoned. Another night she had been seen, or rather heard, under the Quadrangle windows. She had been seen at other places and some of the Irish maids had been filled with superstitious dread because, absurd as it might seem to sensible persons, it was reported that the weeping, moaning lady was the ghost of Miss Walker's sister who had died so many years ago.

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"It's an evil omen, Miss," a waitress said to Nance one evening. "In Ireland ghosts come to foretell bad news. It's no good to the college, shure, that she's wandering here the nights."

"Don't you worry, Nora. It's just some poor crazy woman," said Nance sensibly.

"Then where does she be after keeping herself hid in the daytime, Miss?"

"I can't say, but it will come out sooner or later. Ghosts don't exist."

"Shure an' you'll foind a-plenty of 'em in the old country, Miss."

"Well, maybe this is an imported ghost," laughed Molly.

Nevertheless, not a girl in college but felt slightly uneasy about being out after dark alone, and most trans-campus visitors were careful to come home early.

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One night Molly and Nance had been down to the village to supper with Judith Blount and Madeleine Petit. They had had a gay time and a jolly supper and it was quite half past nine before they hurried up the hilly road to Wellington. The two girls had locked arms and were walking briskly along talking in low voices. It was a wonderful night. There was no moon, but the stars were brilliant and Molly was inclined to be poetical.

"Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art," she began, waving her free arm with expressive gestures. "Not in lone splendor hung aloft the night——"

"Molly," hissed Nance, in a frightened whisper, "do be still, look!" They had turned in at the avenue now, and there, directly over where old Queen's once stood, was a tall figure draped in black. As the girls came up, she began to moan in a low voice and wring her hands.

"Oh, Molly, I'm so scared, my knees are giving away. What shall we do?"

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"Let's run," whispered Molly, admitting silently that the phantom was a bit unnerving. "Here, take my hand and let's fly. She's crazy, of course, and she might do anything to us."

With hands clasped, the two girls flew up the campus. Glancing over her shoulder, Nance gave a wild cry and pressed along faster.

"She's chasing us," she gasped. "Oh, heavens, she'll kill us!"

Molly glanced back. Sure enough, the phantom, keeping well within the shadow of the elms, was running behind them.

"Oh, Nance, can't you run a little faster?" she cried, now thoroughly frightened.

Not a soul was on the campus that night. The place was entirely deserted, and it looked for a few minutes as if they were going to have a very uncomfortable time, but as they neared the Quadrangle, the figure slipped away and was lost in the dense shadow of the trees that bordered the avenue.

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"Lay me on a stretcher," gasped Molly, as she dropped on a bench inside the gates while Nance went to inform the gate-keeper of the strange presence on the campus.

Immediately the gate-keeper, who was also night watchman, rushed out with a lantern to chase the phantom, which was a poor way to catch her, you will admit.

Once in the privacy of their own sitting room, Nance had a real case of hysterics, laughing and weeping alternately, and Molly felt quite faint and had to lie on the

sofa, while Judy, who had been moodily strumming her guitar most of the evening, gave them aromatic spirits of ammonia.

"I should think you would have been frightened," she said sympathetically, "but fancy old Nance's running! It's the first time on record."

Nance shuddered.

"I don't think you would have stood still under the circumstances," she answered.

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"I don't think I would, but I should like to have known who the ghost was just the same. Suppose you had stopped still and let her come up to you, do you think she would?"

"Heavens!" exclaimed the other two in one breath.

"She ran after you because you were running from her," observed the wise Judy.

"People always give advice about ghosts and robbers and mad dogs," said Molly. "And they are the ones that run the fastest when the ghosts and robbers and mad dogs appear."

"Do you think it was a ghost?" asked Judy, ignoring the irritation of her friends.

"If it had been a ghost it would have caught up with us," answered Molly, while Nance in the same breath said emphatically:

"I don't believe in ghosts."

Nance and Molly were heroines for several days after this, and during this time the "ghost" did not reappear on the campus, although a close watch was kept for her. The Williams sisters insisted on walking down the avenue every night at half past nine in hopes of seeing a real phantom, but she was careful to keep herself well out of sight during this vigilance.

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One night some ten days later, just as the town clock tolled midnight, Molly waked suddenly with a draught of cold air in her face. She sat up in bed and glanced sleepily through the open door into the sitting room.

"Where did the air come from?" she wondered, and then noticed that Judy's door was open and slipped softly out of bed. Why she did not simply close her own door she never could explain, but some hidden impulse moved her to look into Judy's room. A shaded night lamp turned quite low cast a soft luminous shadow right across Judy's bed, which was empty. Molly started violently. Once before they had come into Judy's room at midnight and found her bed empty. The startling recollection caused Molly to run to the open window. As she leaned out her hand touched something rough—a rope.

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"A rope ladder!" she whispered to herself, horrified. "Great heavens, Judy has done for herself now." Just then the rope scraped her knuckles and she felt a tug at it from below. "Some one is coming up." Molly looked out.

"Judy," she whispered in a tone filled with reproach. "How could you?"

The voice from above must have frightened the climber, for, with an excited little gasp, she missed her hold on the rope and fell backward, where she lay for a moment perfectly still. It was not a very great fall, but it must have hurt, and instantly Molly climbed to the window sill and began to make her way slowly down the ladder.

It was not so difficult as she had thought, but she was frightened when at last she bounded onto the ground, and she was freezing cold in spite of her knitted slippers and woolen dressing gown.

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"Have you hurt yourself badly?" she asked, leaning over Judy, who was endeavoring to sit up.

"No, only dazed from the fall," whispered Judy. "Go on up, will you, or we'll both get caught."

"You'd better go first," said Molly, "I'm afraid to leave you down here alone. Go on, instantly," she added, remembering that she must be stern since Judy richly deserved all the reproaches she could think of.

Judy began the ascent and pulled herself over the window sill. Then exhausted, she sat on the floor, holding her throbbing temples in both hands. That is why she did not see what was presently to happen. Just as Molly placed her foot on the first rung of the ladder, a firm hand grasped her arm. Why she did not shriek aloud with all the power of her lungs she never knew, but she remained perfectly silent while a voice—and it was Miss Walker's voice—said in her ear:

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"You will say nothing about this to-night. I wish you to come to my office to-morrow morning at ten. Do you understand?"

"Yes, ma'am," answered Molly, reverting to her childhood's method of answering older people. She climbed the ladder in a dazed sort of way. It was more difficult than climbing down, but at last she scaled the window sill and jumped into the room. Judy was still sitting on the floor, holding her temples. Perhaps it had been only five minutes, but it seemed like a thousand years. However, she felt little sympathy for Judy, bruised temple or not.

"Get up from there and get to your bed," she whispered. "And I want to hear from you exactly what you were doing down there and where you got that ladder."

"The rope ladder belonged to Anne White," Judy answered in a stifled voice. "I borrowed it to win a wager from Adele. Of course, I don't mean to blame her, but she teased me into it. It was silly, I know, looking back on it now."

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"What was the bet?"

"She bet that I would be afraid to climb down that ladder at midnight when the ghost is supposed to walk. I was simply to climb down, touch the ground and climb back again."

"Idiots, both of you," said Molly furiously.

"I know it, and I am sorry now," said the penitent Judy, "but fortunately no harm has been done except to my silly head, which needed a good whacking, anyhow."

"No harm," thought Molly angrily. "I wonder what's going to happen to me tomorrow. One of us will be expelled, I suppose. Miss Walker is already down on Judy."

"Thank you for coming down to me, Molly, dearest."

Molly closed the door.

"Judy, I want you to promise me something," she said. "If you get out of this scrape ___"

"But no one knows it but you."

"I have no idea of telling on you, Judy, but things leak out. How do you know you weren't observed?"

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Judy looked startled.

"I want you to promise me to give up this Adele Windsor and her crowd. She's never done you any good. She's a malicious, dangerous, wicked girl and if you haven't the sense to see it, I'll just tell you."

This was strong language coming from Molly.

"If you don't, mid-years will certainly see your finish, if you aren't dropped sooner. You're not studying at all and you are simply acting outrageously, dyeing your hair and borrowing rope ladders. I'm disgusted with you, Judy Kean, I am indeed."

"Miss Walker has a grudge against me," announced Judy, in a hot whisper.

"Nonsense," said Molly, and she swept out of the room and crawled into her bed, very weary and cold and frightened, wondering what the morrow would bring forth in the way of punishment for her—or was it to be for Judy?

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In the meantime, foolish Judy carefully coiled up the rope ladder and hid it in the bottom of her trunk.

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CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE GRILL.

Not a word did Molly say to Nance or the unsuspecting Judy next morning about her appointment with President Walker.

"Don't forget Latin versification at ten," Nance had cautioned her as she left the sitting room a quarter before ten.

Molly had forgotten it and everything else except the matter in hand, but the President's word was law and she prepared to obey and skip the lecture.

The President was waiting for her in the little study. No one was about and an

ominous quiet pervaded the whole place.

"Sit down," said Miss Walker, without replying to Molly's greeting of good morning. "So it's you, is it, who has been wandering about the grounds at night in a gray dressing gown, scaring the students? I need not tell you how disgusted and grieved I am, Miss Brown."

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Molly turned as white as a sheet. She had never dreamed that Miss Walker suspected her of being the campus ghost.

But she answered steadily:

"You are mistaken, Miss Walker. The ghost chased Nance and me the other night when we were coming back from the village. We were really frightened. I suppose it's some insane person."

"Then what were you doing on the campus at that hour, and where did you get that ladder?"

Molly turned her wide blue eyes on the President with reproachful protest, and Miss Walker suddenly looked down at the blotter on the desk.

"Answer my question, Miss Brown," she asked more gently.

How could Molly explain without telling on

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Judy, and yet did not that reckless, silly Judy deserve to be told on?

Suddenly two tears trickled down her cheeks. She let them roll unheeded and clasped her hands convulsively in her lap.

"I insist on an answer to my question, Miss Brown," repeated the President, without looking up. Molly pressed her lips together to keep back the sobs.

"I never saw the ladder until a few minutes before you did," she answered hoarsely. "I—oh, Miss Walker, you make it very hard," she burst out suddenly, leaning on the table and burying her face in her hands.

And then the most surprising thing happened. The President rose quickly from her chair, hurried over to where Molly was sitting with bowed head and drew the girl to her as tenderly as Molly's own mother might have done.

"There, there, my darling child," she said soothingly. "I haven't the heart to torture you any longer. I know, of course, that it was your friend, Miss Kean, who was at the bottom of last night's performance, and as usual you came down to help her when she fell. I only wanted you to tell me exactly what you knew."

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The truth is, the President had tried an experiment on Molly and the experiment had failed, and no one was more pleased than Miss Walker herself in the failure. She liked to see her girls loyal to each other. But things had not been going well at Wellington that autumn. There was an undercurrent of mischief in the air, a dangerous element, carefully hidden, and still slowly undermining the standards of Wellington. Miss Walker was very much enraged over the rumor that the ghost of her beloved sister had been seen wandering about the campus. This was too much. Her Irish maid had repeated the story to her and she had determined to lay that ghost without the assistance of the night watchman or any one else.

The surprise of first being stretched on the grill and then embraced by the President of Wellington College brought Molly to herself like a shock of cold water. She looked up into the older woman's face and smiled and the two sat down side by side on a little sofa, the President still holding Molly's hand. There might be some who could resist the piteous look in those blue eyes, but not President Walker.

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"I'm afraid I'm just a weak old person," she said to herself, giving the hand a little squeeze and then releasing it.

"Judy wasn't the ghost, either, Miss Walker," said Molly, glad to be able to defend her friend on safe grounds. "The night we were chased Judy was in our rooms all the time. Last night was the first time she had ever done anything so foolish. It was only because a girl she goes with bet she wouldn't. It was the same girl that made her dye her hair," Molly added, without any feeling of disloyalty.

"Ahem! And who is this young woman who has such a bad influence on Miss Kean?"

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Molly flushed. Was she to be placed on the grill again? But after all there was no harm in telling the name of the girl who had brought all Judy's trouble on her.

"Adele Windsor."

"And what do you know of her?"

"I don't know anything about her except that she has fascinated Judy."

"And Judy must be punished," mused the President. "Judy is a very difficult character and she must be brought to her senses if she expects to remain at Wellington."

"Judy loves Wellington, indeed she does, Miss Walker. It's only that she has got into a wrong way of thinking this year. I've heard her tell freshmen how splendid it was here and how they would grow to love it like all the rest of us."

"She has not been doing well at all. She never studies. You see I know all about my girls."

"You didn't know," went on Molly, "that the Jubilee entertainment was all Judy's idea. She gave it to Adele Windsor—I don't know why—just because she was in one of her obstinate moods, but I heard her plan out the whole thing the opening night of college—and it was all for the glory of Wellington."

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The President's face softened.

"Molly," she said, as if she had always called the young girl by her first name, "do you wish very much to save your friend?"

"Oh, I do, I do. I can't think of any sacrifice I wouldn't make to keep Judy from being—" she paused and lowered her eyes. Was Miss Walker thinking of expelling Judy? But Miss Walker was not that kind of a manager. She often treated her erring girls very much as a doctor treats his patients with a few doses of very nasty but efficacious medicine.

"What is your opinion of what had best be done, then? You know her better than I do. What do you advise?"

Molly was amazed.

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"Me? You ask my advice?" she asked.

The President nodded briskly.

"Well, the best way to bring Judy to her senses is to give her a good scare and let it come out all right in the end."

The President smiled.

"You're one of the wisest of my girls," she said, "now, run along. If I've made you miss a lecture I'm sorry."

"It *will* come out all right in the end, Miss Walker?" asked Molly, turning as she reached the door.

"I promise," answered the other, smiling again as if the question pleased her.

And so Molly escaped from the grill feeling really very happy, certainly much happier than when she entered the office.

Late that evening while Molly and Nance were preparing to take a walk before supper, Judy rushed into the room. There was not a ray of color in her face and her hair stood out all over her head as if it had been charged with electricity.

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"Oh, Molly, Molly," she cried, "did you know the President had overheard everything that was said last night? She was at the foot of the ladder all the time. You are not implicated, I saw to that, and I've not told where I got the ladder. I simply said some one had given it to me. No one is in it but me. But I'm in it deep. Girls, I've lost out. It's all over. I've got to go. Oh, heavens, what a fool I've been."

Judy flung herself on the divan and buried her face in the pillows.

For a moment Molly almost lost faith in the President's promise.

"What do you mean when you say you must go, Judy?" she asked.

"It can't be true," burst out Nance, whose love for Judy sometimes clothed that young woman's sins in a garment of light.

"Not expelled?" added Molly, in a whisper.

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"No, no, not that; but suspended. I can come back just before mid-years, but don't you see the trick? How can I pass my exams then? And Mama and Papa, what will they think? And, oh, the Jubilee and all of you and Wellington? Molly, I've been a wicked idiot and some of my sins have been against you. I was jealous about that Jimmy Lufton because he had seemed to be my property and you took him away. And, Nance, I was mad with you because you were always preaching. I didn't really like Adele Windsor. I think she is horrid. She's malicious and she makes trouble. I've found that out, but she got me in her toils somehow—"

And so poor Judy rambled on, confessing her sins and moaning like a person in mortal pain. She had worked herself into a fever, her face was hot and she looked at

the girls with burning, unseeing eyes.

"Papa will be so disappointed," she went on. "It will be harder on him than on Mama for me not to graduate with the class, and oh, I did love all of you—I really did."

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Tears, which Molly had never seen Judy shed but once before, now worked two tortuous little paths down her flushed cheeks.

Molly and Nance comforted and nursed her into quiet. They bathed her face and loosened her dyed locks which were now beginning to show a strange tawny yellow at the roots and a rusty brownish color at the ends. All the time Molly was thinking very hard.

"Judy," she said, at last, when they had got her quiet. "There's no reason why you shouldn't pass the mid-years and graduate with your class if you want to."

"But how? I'm so behind now I can hardly catch up, and if I miss six weeks I can never do it."

"Yes, you can," said Molly. "This is what you must do. Go down to the village and get board anywhere, with Mrs. Murphy or Mrs. O'Reilly. Take all your books and begin to study. Every day some of us will come down and coach you, Nance or I, or Edith—I know any of the crowd would be glad to, so as not to lose you."

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"But the Christmas holidays," put in Judy.

"I shall be here for all the holidays," said Molly. "It will be all right."

And so the matter was settled. The very next day Judy's exile began. She engaged a room at Mrs. O'Reilly's, her obstinate mood slipped away from her and she was happier and more like her old self than she had been in weeks. And Molly was happy, too. She felt that she had saved Judy and freed her at the same time from the clutches of Adele Windsor.

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CHAPTER XVII.

A CHRISTMAS EVE MISUNDERSTANDING.

The old Queen's crowd rallied around the exiled Judy, even as Molly had predicted, and Judy was prostrated with gratitude. Nothing could have stirred her so deeply as this devotion of her friends.

"I feel like Elijah being fed by the ravens in the wilderness, only you are bringing me crumbs of learning," she exclaimed to Molly who had taken her turn in coaching Judy. "I hope you don't mind being called 'ravens,'" she added apologetically.

"Not at all," laughed Molly. "I'd rather be called a raven than a catbird or a poll parrot or an English sparrow."

But Judy was already deep in her paper. Being a recluse from the world, her life consecrated to study, she was playing the part to perfection.

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If Adele Windsor knew that Judy was in the village, she gave no sign, and so the exile, in her old room at O'Reilly's overlooking the garden, had nothing to do but bury herself in her neglected text books. Indeed, very few of the girls knew where Judy was. When she went out for her walks after dusk she wore a heavy veil and thoroughly enjoyed the disguise. One night the old crowd gave her a surprise party which Edith had carefully planned. Dressed in absurd piratical costumes with skirts draped over one shoulder in the semblance of capes, brilliant sashes around their waists, many varieties of slouch hats and heavy black mustaches, they stormed Judy's room in a body.

"Hist!" said Edith, "the captive Maiden! We must release her ere sunrise!" Then they trooped in, danced a wild fandango which made Judy envious that she herself was not in it, and finally opened up refreshments.

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So it was that Judy's exile was happy enough, and when Christmas holidays approached she had made up most of her lost work and was ready for Molly's careful coaching.

Thus it is that heaven protects some of the foolish ones of this earth. Judy wrote to her mother and father that she was behind in her classes and would remain to study

with Molly Brown, and as Mr. and Mrs. Kean were at this time in Colorado, they thought it a wise decision on the part of their daughter.

Molly had grown to love the Christmas holidays at college. It was a perfect time of peace after the excitement and hurry of her life—a time when she could steal into the big library and read the hours away without being disturbed, or scribble things on paper that she would like to expand into something, some day, when her diffidence should leave her.

To-day, curled up in one of the big window seats, Molly was thinking of a curious thing that had happened that morning at O'Reilly's.

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She had gone in to say good-bye to Judith Blount and Madeleine Petit, who were leaving for New York by the noon train.

"I suppose you'll be visiting all the tea rooms in town for new ideas," Molly had said pleasantly.

"Yes, indeed," said Madeleine. "I never leave a stone unturned and everything's grist that comes to my mill. This fall I got six new ideas for sandwiches and the idea for a kind of bun that ought to be popular if only because of the name. I haven't the recipe, but I think I can experiment with it until I get it."

"What's the name?" Molly asked idly, never thinking of what a train of consequences that name involved.

"'Snakey-noodles.' Isn't it great? Can't you see it on a little menu and people ordering out of curiosity and then ordering more because they're so good?"

"Snakey-noodles," Molly repeated in surprise.

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"That's the name, isn't it, Judith?" asked Madeleine.

"Oh, yes, I remember it because the bun is formed of twisted dough like a snake coiled up."

"It's very strange," said Molly.

"What's strange?"

"Why, that name, snakey-noodle. You see it's a kind of family name with us. Our old cook has been making them for years. I really thought she had originated it, but I suppose other colored people know it, too. Where did you have one?"

"At a spread, oh, weeks and weeks ago."

"But where?" insisted Molly. "I have a real curiosity to know. Was it a Southern spread?"

"Far from it," said Madeleine. "Yankee as Yankee. One of the girls in Brentley House gave the spread."

"But she didn't provide the snakey-noodles," put in Judith. "What's that girl's name who talks through her nose?"

"Miss Windsor."

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"Oh!"

"Coming to think of it, I believe she said they had been sent to her from an aunt in the South," went on Madeleine. "So you see, Molly, nobody has been poaching on your preserves."

Molly only smiled rather vaguely. She would have liked to ask a dozen more questions, but kept silent and presently, after shaking hands with the two inseparable friends, she went up to the library to think. Somehow Molly was not surprised. Nothing that Adele Windsor could do surprised her. The surprising part was how she avoided being found out. It was just like her to have planned the theft of the Senior Ramble lunch. There was something really diabolical in her notions of amusement. And now, what was to be done?

Should she tell the other girls after the holidays, or should she wait? It was all weeks off and Molly decided to let the secret rest in her own mind safely. Even if she told, it would be hard to prove the accusation at this late day, but perhaps—and here Molly's thoughts broke off.

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"I detest all this meanness and trickery," she thought. "I don't blame Miss Walker for wanting to clean it out of the school. Anyway," she added, smiling, "if that girl bothers Judy any more, I intend to pronounce the mystic name of snakey-noodles over her head like a curse and see what happens."

That afternoon Molly packed a suitcase full of clothes and lugged it down to Mrs. O'Reilly's, where she had consented to spend Christmas with Judy instead of in her

own pretty Quadrangle apartment. Secretly Molly would much rather have stayed in No. 5, where she could have rested and read poetry as much as she liked. But she was rarely known to consult her own comfort when her friends asked her to do them a favor, and, after all, if she were going to put Judy through a course of study, she had better be on the spot to see that the irresponsible young person stuck to her books.

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So the two girls established themselves in the pleasant fire-lit room overlooking the garden. Judy had brought down two framed photographs of her favorite pictures and a big brass jar by way of ornament, and on Christmas Eve the girls went out to buy holly and red swamp berries.

They were walking along the crowded sidewalk arm in arm, recalling how last year they had done exactly the same thing, when they came unexpectedly face to face with Mr. James Lufton.

"Well, if this isn't good luck," he exclaimed. "Nobody at the Quadrangle seemed to know where you were."

He included both girls, but he really meant Molly.

"And what are you doing here?" asked Molly, giving him her hand after he had shaken Judy's hand.

"Andy McLean asked me down for Christmas," he said.

He failed to mention that he had pawned his watch, a set of Balzac and two silver trophies won at an athletic club, and, furthermore, had given out at the office that he was down with grippe, in order to accept the invitation.

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"Andy's up the street now looking for you. He thought perhaps Mrs. Murphy might know where you were."

"What did he want with us?" asked Judy, lifting her mourning veil.

Jimmy hesitated.

"He was thinking of getting up a Christmas dance, but——" He looked at Judy's black dress.

"She's not in mourning, Mr. Lufton," laughed Molly. "It's only that she prefers to look like a mourning widow-lady."

"Oh, excuse me, Miss Kean," said Jimmy. "I thought you had had a recent bereavement."

"Here, Judy, take off that thing," exclaimed Molly, unpinning the mourning veil in the back and snatching it off Judy's glowing face.

"Molly, how can you invade on the privacy of my grief," exclaimed Judy, laughing.

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"Why, it's Miss Judy Kean," exclaimed Dodo Green, coming up at that moment with Andy McLean. "Nothing has hap——"

"No," put in Molly, "it's only one of Judy's absurd notions. She's been wearing mourning for years off and on, but she's only lately gone into such heavy black."

"And you've no objection to a little fun, then?" asked Andy.

"Not a particle," answered Judy, the old bright look lighting her face. "My feelings aren't black, I assure you."

"On with the dance, then, let joy be unconfined," cried Andy. "We'll call for you at a quarter of eight, girls—at O'Reilly's, you say? I'll have to trot along now and tell the mater."

The three boys hurried off while Molly and Judy rushed home to look over their party clothes.

"Isn't life a pleasant thing, after all?" exclaimed Judy, and Molly readily agreed that it was.

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Such a jolly impromptu Christmas Eve party as it was that night at the McLeans! Mrs. McLean had a niece visiting her from Scotland, an interesting girl with snappy brown eyes and straight dark hair. She was rather strangely dressed, Molly thought, in a red merino with a high white linen collar and a black satin tie, and she looked at Molly and Judy in their pretty evening gowns with evident disapproval. Just as Jimmy Lufton and Molly had completed the glide waltz for the fifth time that evening and had sunk down on a sofa breathless, the parlor door opened and in walked Professor Edwin Green, looking as well as he had ever looked in his life, with a fine glow of color in his cheeks.

"My dear Professor!" cried Mrs. McLean.

"Ed, I thought you were going to spend Christmas in the south," exclaimed his brother.

"You are a disobedient young man," ejaculated the doctor,—all in one chorus.

"Don't scold the returned wanderer," said the Professor, glancing about the room swiftly until he caught Molly's eye, and then smiling and nodding. "It's dangerous for convalescents to be bored, and realizing that Christmas in the tropics might bring on a relapse, I decided to lose no time in getting back home."

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"And glad we are to see you, lad," said the doctor, seizing his hand and shaking it warmly. "You did quite right to come back before the *ennui* got in its work. It's worse than the fever."

Molly left Jimmy Lufton's side to shake hands with the Professor, and then the Professor remembered the young newspaper man and greeted him cordially, and after that all the company went back into the dining-room for hot chocolate and sandwiches. And here it was that all the mischief started which came very near to breaking up the great friendship that existed between Molly and the Professor.

It was simply that the Professor overheard scraps of information that Jimmy was pouring into Molly's ready ear while she listened with glowing cheeks and a gay smile to what he had to say.

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"Oh, you'll enjoy New York all right, Miss Brown, and the newspaper work won't be as hard as what you are doing now, I fancy. I'm sure they'd take you on if only for your—" he paused. "You have only to ask and I'll put in a good word, too," he added. "You can never understand what a good time you'll have until you get there—theaters until you have had enough and the opera, too. I often get tickets through our critic—"

"The grand opera," repeated Molly.

"Yes, anything you like. Lohengrin, Aïda, La Boheme. Sooner or later you will see them all. Then there are the restaurants—such jolly places to get little dinners, and you are so independent. You are too busy to be lonesome and you can come and go as you like, nobody to boss you except the editor, of course, and you'll soon catch on. You have a natural knack for writing. I could tell that by your letters—"

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Molly, listening to the voice of the tempter, saw a picture of New York as one might see a picture of a carnival, all lights and fun and good times.

"But I want to work, too, more than anything else," she said suddenly.

"Oh, you'll have plenty to do," laughed the careless Jimmy, who took life about as seriously as a humming-bird.

After supper the Professor drew Molly away from the crowd of young people and led her to a sofa in the hall.

"I want to talk to you," he said in a tone of authority that a teacher might use to a pupil. "I could not help overhearing what your newspaper friend was saying to you at supper, and I wish you would take my advice and not listen to a word he says. He's just a young fool!"

The Professor was quite red in the face and Molly also flushed and her eyes darkened with anger.

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"I don't agree with you about that," she said.

"Is it possible you are going to put all this hard studying you have been doing for the last three and a half years into writing news items for a yellow journal? I'm disgusted."

"But I only expected to start there—" began Molly.

"And is that young idiot trying to persuade you that the sort of life he described—a wild carnival life of dissipation and restaurant dinners is the right life for you? I tell you he's mistaken. I should like to—to—"

Molly's face was burning now.

"I—I—I don't think it's any of your business," she burst out. At this astonishing speech the Professor came to himself with a start.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Brown," he said. "I realize now that I entirely overstepped the mark. Good evening."

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"Miss Brown, shall we have the last dance together?" called Jimmy Lufton down the hall, and presently poor Molly, whirling in the waltz, wondered why her temples throbbled so and her throat ached.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

TWO CHRISTMAS BREAKFASTS.

Early Christmas morning a slender figure in faded blue corduroy could be seen hurrying up the road that led from the village to the college grounds. The frosty wind nipped two spots of red on her cheeks and under the drooping brim of her old blue felt hat her eyes shone like patches of sky in the sunlight. Where was Molly bound for at this early hour? The church bells were ringing out the glad Christmas tidings; the ground sparkled with hoar frost; but not a moment did she linger to listen to the cheerful clanging, or even to glance at the lonely vista of hill and dale stretched around her. Hurrying across the campus, she skirted the college buildings and presently gained the pebbled path that led to the old campus in the rear, flanked by a number of old red brick houses, formerly the homes of the professors. They were now used for various purposes: the college laundry; homes for the employees about the building and grounds and rooms for bachelor professors.

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Hastening along the path to the house where Professor Green was domiciled, Molly was thinking:

"Only a year ago I had to make the same apology to him. Oh, my wicked, wicked temper! I am ashamed of myself."

And now she had reached the old brick house and sounded the brass knocker with an eager rat-tat-tat. Presently she heard footsteps resound along the empty hall and the Irish housekeeper flung open the door.

"Is Professor Green up yet?" Molly demanded.

"And shure I've not an idea whether he be up or slapin'."

"But can't you see?"

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"I cannot. It wouldn't be an aisy thing to do, I'm thinkin'."

"And why not, pray? It must be his breakfast time. You have only to rap on his door. And it's very important."

"And if it's so important, you'd better be after sendin' him a cable to the Bahamas, where the Professor is sunnin' himself at prisint."

"Nonsense, Mrs. Brady, the Professor got back last night. I saw him myself. He must be up in his room now. Do go and see. You haven't cooked him a bit of breakfast, I suppose?"

Mrs. Brady turned without a word and tiptoed up the stairs. Molly heard her breathing heavily as she moved along the hall and tapped on the Professor's door. Then came a muffled voice through the closed door.

"I'll git ye some breakfast, sir," called Mrs. Brady, and down she came.

"Shure an' you wuz right an' I wuz wrong, an' I'm obliged to you for the information. But he'll not be ready for seein' people for an hour yet, maybe longer."

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"Mrs. Brady," said Molly, moved by a sudden inspiration. "Let me get his breakfast."

"But——" objected the Irish woman.

"I'm a splendid cook and I'll give you no trouble at all. Please." Molly put her hands on the Irish woman's shoulders and looked into her face appealingly.

"Shure, thim eyes is like the gals' in the old countree, Miss," remarked Mrs. Brady, visibly melting under that telling gaze. "Ye can do as you like, but if the Professor don't like his breakfast the blame be on you."

"He'll like it, I'm perfectly certain," said Molly, following Mrs. Brady back to the kitchen.

"It's a very, very funny world," said Mrs. Brady, displaying the contents of her larder to the volunteer cook.

Her resources were limited, to be sure, but Molly improvised a breakfast out of them that a king would not have scorned. There were pop-overs done to a golden brown, a perfect little omelet, bacon crisp enough to please the most fastidious palate and an old champagne glass, the spoils of some festive occasion, filled with iced orange juice. The coffee was strong and fragrant.

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"He's very particular about it, Miss, an' he buys his own brand."

Then Molly set the tray. Mrs. Brady's best white linen cover she snatched from the shelf without asking leave. In a twinkling she had polished and heated the blue china dishes, placed the breakfast on them and covered them tight with hot soup plates, since there were no other covers. Then she snipped off the top of a red geranium blooming in the window sill and dropped it into a finger bowl.

"Lord love ye, Miss, but that's a beautiful tray," exclaimed Mrs. Brady, hypnotized by Molly's swift movements and skillful workmanship. "If I did not know ye wuz a lady from your looks I should say ye wuz a born cook. But Mrs. Murphy be afther tellin' me how you used to make things in her kitchen. Ye must be the same one, since it's red hair and blue eyes ye have——"

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Molly had disappeared into the pantry to replace the flour sifter while Mrs. Brady was holding forth, and now through a crack in the pantry door she saw the kitchen door open and Professor Green, in a long dressing gown, stalk in.

"Don't bother about breakfast for me, Mrs. Brady," he said. "A cup of coffee quite strong—stronger than you usually make it, please—that's all I want."

Mrs. Brady, glancing at Molly hidden in the pantry, saw her shake her head and place a finger on her lips.

The Irish woman smiled broadly. It was a situation in which she saw many humorous possibilities and an amusing story to tell over the tea cups to Mrs. Murphy and Mrs. O'Reilly.

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"Shure an' ye needn't eat it, sir," she said, in an injured tone, "but it's all prepared an' of the very best."

The Professor glanced at the tray.

"Why," he exclaimed, in amazement, "this is something really fine, Mrs. Brady. I didn't know you were getting up a holiday breakfast."

Visions of slopped-over trays, weak coffee and hard toast passed before him, for Mrs. Brady was not a cook to boast of.

"I'll eat it down here, if you've no objection," he continued kindly, lifting the covers and glancing curiously underneath. "By Jove, this is something like. Omelet, and what are those luscious looking things?"

"They be pop-overs, sir, if I'm not misthaken."

"Pop-overs, ahem! I've heard the name before." He sniffed the small coffee pot. "Good and strong; you've anticipated my wants this morning, Mrs. Brady."

"Why doesn't he go on and eat?" thought the red-haired cook. "The omelet will be ruined."

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But the Professor had drawn up a chair to the kitchen table and was draining the orange juice at a gulp.

"You're getting very festive, Mrs. Brady. Have you been taking lessons in my absence? That orange juice was just the appetizer I needed this morning." Then he fell to on the breakfast and never stopped until he had eaten every crumb and drained the coffee pot to the dregs.

In the meantime Molly had taken a seat on the pantry floor. A weakness had invaded her knees and her head swam dizzily, since she had had no breakfast that morning.

"I suppose Judy will think I'm dead," she thought, "but it won't do her any harm to be guessing about me for once."

She hoped the Professor would leave in a moment and go to his rooms. He had filled a short briar wood pipe and was leaning back in his chair musing, but he couldn't stay forever in Mrs. Brady's kitchen.

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"Mrs. Brady, that was a very dainty and delicious little meal you prepared for me," she heard him say. "I was a bit low in my mind but I feel cheered up. A cup of coffee—if it's good—as this was—is often enough to restore a man's ambition." And now the kitchen was filled with the fragrance of tobacco smoke while the Professor mused in his chair, blowing out great clouds at intervals.

"A bachelor is a poor pitiful soul, sir," answered the woman; "now, if ye had a wife to look after ye, you'd be afther havin' the like breakfasts ivery mornin'."

The Professor blew out a ring of purple smoke and watched it float lazily in the air and gradually dissipate.

"Didn't you know I was a woman hater, Mrs. Brady?"

"Indade, I should think ye might be, seein' so many of them every day and all the time," answered the housekeeper sympathetically. "Too much of a good thing, sir. But, whin old age comes to ye, you'll miss 'em, sir. You'll miss a good wife to look after your comforts then."

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"I've got something better than that for my old age, Mrs. Brady. I've got a bit of land; it's an orchard on the side of a hill sloping down to a brook——"

Molly, sitting on the pantry floor, felt a sudden jolt as if some one had shaken her by the shoulder. Faintness came over her and her heart beat so fast and loud she wondered that the two in the kitchen did not hear its palpitations.

"The trees bear plenty of apples; I'll have lots of fruit in my old age. I've only to hobble out and knock them down with my cane when I get too old to climb up and shake the limbs, and where once swung a hammock in my orchard I may build a little hut."

"It's a pretty picture, sir, but lonely, I should say."

"Ah, well, Mrs. Brady, there'll be four walls to my hut and every inch of those walls will be covered with books," announced the Professor, as he strolled out of the kitchen, leaving the door ajar.

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Molly, now thoroughly exhausted, amazed, and quite faint from her emotions, was pulling herself to her knees when the Professor marched swiftly back into the room and walked into the pantry.

"I wanted to see how much coffee you had left——" he began. "I'll be writing for more——" His foot encountered something soft on the floor and glancing quickly down he caught a glimpse in the shadow of a figure huddled up in the corner. The face was hidden in the curve of the elbow, but he saw the red hair, and a beam through a crack in the door cast a slanting light across the blue silk blouse.

"Why, Molly Brown, my little friend," he exclaimed. And he lifted her to her feet and half carried her to a chair near the fire. "So it was you who cooked me that delicious Christmas breakfast, and now you're half dead from fatigue and hunger. You've had no breakfast, confess?"

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Molly lifted her eyes to his and shook her head. Then she lowered her gaze and blushed.

"I'm too ashamed to think of breakfast," she said.

"Mrs. Brady, put the kettle on," ordered the Professor. "Get out the eggs. Where's the bacon?"

"In the jar, sliced, sir."

"But," protested Molly.

"Don't say a word, child. Be perfectly quiet."

Then the Professor began to fly about the room, tearing into the pantry, rushing from the table to the stove and back again, rummaging in the refrigerator for oranges and butter, and upsetting two chairs that stood in his way.

All this time Mrs. Brady quietly toasted bread and broiled bacon while there hovered on her lips an enigmatic smile. Then she scrambled two eggs while the Professor tested the coffee and squeezed an orange alternately. Molly watched him in dazed silence.

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"He bought the apple orchard and that is how I happen to be at Wellington this minute," she kept thinking mechanically. "He worked all summer and got into debt and caught typhoid fever in order to furnish me"—she choked—"and I spoke to him like that. No wonder he's a woman hater—no wonder he wants books——"

"Ready," announced Mrs. Brady, and the next thing Molly knew she was sitting at the table drinking orange juice while the Professor buttered toast and poured out the coffee.

Presently it was all over. Two Christmas breakfasts had been prepared in Mrs. Brady's kitchen that morning where none had been expected.

"'Twas lucky I'd laid in supplies," exclaimed the genial Irish woman. "A body can never tell what starvin' crayture's comin' to the door beggin' for a crust."

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And now Molly Brown found herself, almost without realizing it, walking across the college grounds beside her Professor.

"I can never, never thank you," she was saying. "I couldn't even try."

"Don't try," he answered. "Indeed, I ought to thank you for introducing me to that lovely bit of orchard. As for the money, it was fairly crying out to be invested. I think

I made a great bargain."

"But Dodo said——"

"Dodo talks too much," said the Professor, frowning. "He knows nothing about me and my affairs."

"Anyhow, you'll let me apologize for the way I answered you last night," said Molly, giving him a heavenly smile.

The Professor looked away quickly.

"The apology is accepted," he said gravely. [250]

"And now we are friends once more, Miss Molly Brown of Kentucky, are we not?"

"Yes, indeed," cried Molly joyfully, feeling happy enough to dance at that moment. [251]

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CHAPTER XIX.

FACING THE ENEMY.

It was a joyous day when Judy returned to college just before mid-years, after her long exile in the back room of O'Reilly's. She was made welcome by all her particular friends who killed the "potted" calf, as Edith called it, in honor of the prodigal's return.

And Judy was well content with herself and all the world. A hair-dresser in Wellington had, by some mysterious process, restored her hair to very nearly its natural shade. Thanks to Molly, chiefly, and the others, she was well up in her lessons and quite prepared to breast the mid-year wave of examinations with the class. Never had the three friends at No. 5 been more gloriously, radiantly happy than now on the verge of final examinations. And then one day, in the midst of all this serenity and peace, Adele Windsor dropped in to call on Judy. At once Nance fled from the apartment. She could not bear the sight of this sinister young woman. Molly would have gone, too, but she remained, at an imploring glance from Judy, and slipped quietly into the next room, leaving the door ajar. [252]

"Judy knows she can call for help if she needs it," she thought rather complacently, for she was no longer afraid of that arch mischief-maker.

As for Judy, she was singularly polite, but cold in her manner, and Molly detected a certain tremulousness in her voice.

"She's scared, poor dear," thought Molly indignantly. "Now, I wonder why?"

"I haven't seen you for weeks," Adele began in her sharp, assured tone. "Where have you been? I heard you had gone home."

"I was away for some time," answered Judy evasively. [253]

"I hope and trust she thinks I have gone out with Nance," thought Molly in the next room, feeling a good deal like a conspirator. "She'll never come to the point if she knows I'm here, and I'd just like her to show her cards for once. It will be a glorious chance to get rid of her forever more, amen."

The light of battle came into Molly's eyes. "I feel like a knight pricking o'er the plain to slay a dragon," she thought, waving an imaginary sword in the air. "When it's all over I wish I had the nerve to say, 'Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell.'"

She gathered that Adele had moved more closely to Judy, for she heard her voice from a new quarter of the room saying:

"Is it true that you were dropped?"

There was a moment's pause.

"Whatever happened, Adele, it's over now and I am installed again and forgiven."

"I thought you were being rather reckless, Judy. The rope ladder business was bad enough, but those ghost walks were really dangerous; really you went too far——" [254]

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Judy stiffly. "You are on the wrong track. I wasn't the campus ghost."

"Now, really, Judy, my dearest friend," cried Adele, seizing both of Judy's hands and looking into her eyes with an expression of gentle toleration, "why can't you confide in me? After all our good times are you going to give me the cold shoulder? I know perfectly well that you were the ghost. Have I forgotten the night you planned the whole thing out? Anne White was there. I daresay she remembers it quite as well as I do. Of course, we thought you were enjoying yourself frightening the life out of people, but we wondered, both of us, how you dared. I remember you said how easy it would be to chase girls if they ran, and how easy to escape because you were the swiftest runner in college. Why are you trying to deceive your old partner? Especially as I happen to know that you had the rope ladder all that time. It would have been easy enough. Oh, I'm on to you, subtle, secretive Judy. You are a clever little girl, but I'm on to you."

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"What does she want?" Molly breathed to herself in the next room.

"But I won't tease you any longer, dearest. I only wanted to let you know that I'm at the very bottom of the secret. I came to talk about other things."

Molly breathed a long sigh.

"Here it comes," she thought.

Judy straightened up and prepared to hear the worst.

"Have the Shakespeareans and the Olla Podridas had their yearly conclave yet about new members?"

"So it's that," Molly almost cried aloud, waving her arms over her head.

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"We meet on Saturday," answered Judy doggedly.

"You have a good deal of influence in that crowd, haven't you? I mean you can command a lot of votes?"

"No, I can't command any," answered Judy.

"Blackmailer," thought Molly.

"I was thinking," went on Adele calmly, "that I would like to become a member of one or both those clubs. If I have to make a choice I would prefer the Shakespeareans, of course. Can't you fix it up?"

"I'm afraid not, Adele. I can't manage it. I doubt if I could command any votes for you. You are mistaken about my influence."

"Oh yes, you can. Now, Judy, think a minute, I'm asking you a very simple, ordinary favor. Think of what it means to me and—well, to you, too. I might as well tell you right now that I'm a good friend but a bad enemy. You promised me once to get me into one of those clubs. Do you remember?"

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"Yes," said Judy.

"Well, why this sudden change? I expect you to keep your word. I am wild to be a member of the Shakespeareans," here Adele changed her manner and her voice took on a soft, persuasive tone. "You won't regret it, Judy, dearest, you'll be proud of having put me up. I have a real talent for acting. I have, indeed, and I shall be able to get stunning costumes."

Judy twisted and squirmed and shrunk away like a bird being gradually hypnotized by a serpent—at least so it seemed to Molly peeping through a crack in the door.

"I tell you it will be impossible," Judy was saying, after a pause, when Adele burst out with:

"Those are unlucky words, Judy Kean. I'll make you sorry you ever spoke——" she stopped short off as Molly appeared in one door and Nance in the other, followed by Otoyó, Margaret and Jessie and the Williams sisters. Nance had evidently gone forth and gathered in the clan for Judy's protection. Molly was almost sorry they had come. It had been a good opportunity to say what had been seething in her mind for some time, and, on the whole, she decided she would say it anyhow.

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With a bold spirit and a scornful eye, she marched into the room and stood before the astonished Adele.

"Miss Windsor," she said, and she hardly recognized her own voice, so deep and vibrant were its tones, "did you ever hear of snakey-noodles? Snakey-noodles! snakey-noodles! snakey-noodles!" she repeated three times like a magic incantation.

Judy must have thought that she had suddenly lost her mind, for she glanced at her with a frightened look and the other girls with difficulty concealed their smiles. Edith, whose keen perceptions at once informed her that something was up, took a seat by the window where she could command a good view of the entire proceedings.

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Adele, looking into Molly's honest, stern eyes, shrank a little and started to rise.

"No, I shan't let you go until I have finished," said Molly. "Whenever the spirit moves you to ask a favor of Judy again, just say the word snakey-noodles over several times to yourself and then I think you'll leave Judy alone. Now, you may go, and remember that people who tell malicious, wicked stories, who impersonate ghosts, steal luncheons and get other girls into trouble are not welcome at Wellington. This is not that kind of a college."

It was, of course, a random shot about the campus ghost, but Molly put it in, feeling fairly certain that none but the daring Adele would have attempted that escapade.

"Remember, too," she added, as a parting shot, "that girls don't get into clubs here by blackmail. Even if Judy had put you up, you wouldn't have had the ghost of a chance."

Nobody was more interested than Edith in wondering what the strange Adele would do now. "Will she defend herself or will she fly?" Edith asked herself. But Adele did the most surprising thing yet. She burst into tears.

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"You have no right to speak to me as you did," she wept into a scented and hand-embroidered handkerchief.

"Haven't I?" said Molly, drawing her gently but firmly to the door. "Well, go to your room and think about it a while and see if you don't change your mind." And with that she quietly thrust Adele into the hall, closed the door and locked it.

Then, such a burst of subdued laughter rose within No. 5 as was never heard before. Molly collapsed on the sofa while the girls gathered around her. Judy sat on the floor, her head resting on Molly's shoulder.

"It was as good as a play," cried Edith. "I never saw anything finer. Molly, you're certainly full of surprises. But what did you mean by snakey-noodles? Wasn't it beautiful?"

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Then Molly explained to them about the snakey-noodle box.

"Of course, the rest was just wild guessing, but from the way she took it I'm pretty sure I'm right."

"It was better than jiu-jitsu," said Otoyoy. "It was, I think, the jiu-jitsu of language."

They all laughed at this quaint notion, and Molly relaxed on the couch like a very tired young warrior after the battle.

"Judy, you're foolish to be afraid of that girl," said Margaret sternly.

"I'm not exactly afraid of her," answered Judy, "but you see it would have gone particularly hard with me just now to have her go to Miss Walker with that story about the ghost. It was true that one evening, in a wicked humor, I planned the whole thing with her and that little Anne who is just as afraid of her as I suppose I am. I don't think Miss Walker would have given me another chance. Everything would have been against me, the rope ladder and all the things I had said."

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"But then you could have proved an alibi," said Nance. "You were up here the night the ghost chased Molly and me."

"So I could," Judy exclaimed. "I was so scared I forgot all about that night. There's something about Adele that makes you lose your senses. She leans over you and looks at you and talks to you in a hot, rapid sort of way. I just saw myself, after all the trouble everybody had taken with me, being sent away in disgrace. I didn't believe I could prove anything when she began talking. I just went under."

"Well, don't you ever do it again," put in Nance.

"Say 'snakey-noodles' the next time she comes at you," said Edith. "Oh, dear, that exquisite name," she continued, leaning back in her chair so as to indulge in a fit of silent laughter.

"I can tell you another interesting bit about this Miss Windsor," here put in pretty Jessie. "Do you remember that shabby little woman in black who came down on the same train with Molly's Mr. Lufton?"

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"Nonsense," broke in Molly.

"I remember her," said Judy. "Adele said she was a dressmaker, I believe."

"Well, she told the truth for once. She is a dressmaker, but she happens to be Adele's mother, too."

"Her mother," they gasped in chorus.

"Yes. When Mama and I were in New York for the Christmas holidays, we were recommended to go to a French place called 'Annette's' for some clothes. There was a French woman named Annette who came out and showed us things, but the head of the establishment was Mrs. Windsor. And we saw Adele hanging around several times. We also saw Adele's father, very dressy with a flower in his buttonhole and yellow gloves. He smiled sweetly at me in the hall. The fitter told us secretly that Mrs. Windsor spent everything she made on Adele and Mr. Windsor."

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"What a shame," cried Judy, "and Adele throws money around like water."

"No wonder she wears such fine clothes. I suppose Annette makes all of them."

"Thank heavens, we're rid of her forever," exclaimed Molly. "It's not difficult to find a spot of good in the worst of people. There were Minerva Higgins and Judith Blount and Frances Andrews. I never did feel hopeless about them, but this Adele, who doesn't recognize her own mother—well—"

"Ah, well," broke in Otoyō. "She is what we call in Japan 'evil spirit,' or 'black spirit.' She will not remain because there are so many good spirits. She will fly away."

"On a broomstick," put in Edith.

"But Minerva Higgins, there is some greatly big news about her. You have not heard?"

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"No," they cried. Otoyō had become quite a little news body among her friends.

"She will not finish the course. She will be married in June to learned gentleman, a professor of languages of death—"

"You mean dead languages," put in Molly, laughing.

"Ah, well, it is the same."

"That is why Minerva looks so gay and blushing," said Jessie. "I saw her this morning reading a letter on one of the corridor benches. I might have guessed it was a love letter from her expression of supreme joy."

"I wonder if it was written in Sanskrit."

"I suppose after they marry they will have Latin for breakfast, Greek for dinner and ancient Hebrew for supper," observed Katherine.

"But the gold medals, what of them?"

"They will be saved for Pallas Athene, and Socrates, and Alcibiades Plato, of course," said Edith.

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"Who are they?"

"Why, the children, goosie," and the party broke up with a laugh.

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CHAPTER XX.

THE JUBILEE.

Molly Brown, in a state of wild excitement, rushed into No. 5 one morning waving a slip of yellow paper in her hand.

"They're coming," she cried ecstatically but vaguely.

"Who?" demanded her two bosom friends from the floor where they were engaged in fitting a paper pattern to a strip of velvet much too narrow.

"My brother and sister, Minnie and Kent. Isn't it glorious? They get here to-morrow morning to stay for the Jubilee. Oh, I'm so happy, I am so happy," she sang.

"I'm so glad," said the two friends in one breath.

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"I'm getting rooms for them at O'Reilly's and they will arrive on the ten train. Isn't it lucky Mrs. O'Reilly is our bright, particular friend? We never could have got the rooms. Everything in the village is taken."

The crowds had indeed come pouring into Wellington for the great Jubilee celebration for which every student at the college had been working for months past.

And now, almost the first of May, everything was in readiness, the pageants, the costumes, the plays—all the splendid and complicated arrangements for an Old English May Day Festival. Judy, as she had planned on the opening night of college all those long months ago, was to be a gentleman of the court and was now engaged in constructing a velvet cape with Nance's assistance. Furthermore all the girls were to take part in the senior outdoor play to be given on the afternoon of the Jubilee celebration, and Molly, wonderful as it seemed to her afterward, had won for herself by excellent recitation the part of Rosalind. There had been many Rosalind competitors but Professor Green and the professional who had come down to coach chose Molly from them all.

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How they had practiced and rehearsed and worked over that play not one of the senior cast will ever forget. But now it was ready and the time was ripe for the grand performance. In two days it was to take place.

The next morning, in response to the telegram, the three friends met Molly's brother and sister at the station. They were a good looking pair, as Nance pronounced them, but not the least like Molly. Minnie or Mildred Brown was as pretty as Molly in her way. She had an aquiline nose that spoke of family, brown hair curling bewitchingly about her face and a beautifully modeled mouth and chin. Kent was different, too—tall with gravely humorous gray eyes, his mouth rather large and shapely, his nose a little small—but he was very handsome and his manners were perfection. He took to Judy at once. She amused and mystified him and she volunteered after lunch to show him all the sights of Wellington. Another visitor at Wellington was Jimmy Lufton, who had come down to see the celebration regardless of work and expenses, and ordered Molly a beautiful bouquet of narcissus to be handed to her when she appeared as Rosalind.

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Molly introduced him to Kent and Minnie and the three were soon good friends and looking for the best places along the campus to see the sights, while Molly rushed off to attire herself for the morning as a Maypole dancer. Old Wellington presented a strange and unusual aspect on that beautiful May morning. Far back under the trees gathered the people of the pageant waiting for the cue to start the march. Carts drawn by yokes of oxen rumbled along the avenue, filled with rustics from the country, mostly freshmen dressed in all manner of early English costumes. There were shepherds and shepherdesses, maids of low and high degree. Gentlemen of the court and plow boys in smock frocks elbowed each other on the green. Booths had been set up of a seventeenth century pattern, where anachronisms in the form of modern refreshments were sold.

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Bands of singers and rustic dancers trooped by, jesters in cap and bells, page boys and trumpeters. A more animated and brilliantly colored scene would be difficult to imagine.

Providence had smiled on Wellington's Jubilee and sent a glorious day for the May Day Festival. It was an early spring and everything that could do honor to the day had burst into blossom: daffodils that bordered the lawns of the campus houses nodded their delicate yellow heads in the morning sunlight; clumps of lilac bushes formed bouquets of purple and white and from an occasional old apple tree showers of pink petals fell softly on the grass.

"It's almost as beautiful as Kentucky, Kent," observed Mildred Brown, and Jimmy Lufton laughed joyfully.

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"Almost, but not quite," he said. "In Kentucky there would be twice as much of everything, and, besides the elms, there would be beech trees and maples with a good sprinkling of walnut and locust."

"Twice as many Mildreds, too," observed Kent. "But for my part I think the young ladies I have seen here are quite as pretty as the girls at home."

"I think you'd have a hard time finding two to match Miss Molly and Miss Mildred," put in Jimmy, looking with admiration at the charming Mildred, dressed in a cool white linen, a broad brimmed straw hat trimmed with pink roses shading her face.

"There's Miss Judy Kean," argued Kent.

What would this young man have thought if at that moment he could have had a glimpse of the fair Judy dressed as a court gentleman in lavender satin knickers, a long cape of purple velvet, an immense cavalier hat with a great plume and over her shapely mouth a flaring yellow mustachio?

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And all of our other friends, how strange and unnatural they seemed. Their most intimate friends would scarcely have recognized them. Margaret was a fat, jolly Falstaff, stuffed out to immense proportions. Edith was entirely disguised as a jester and enjoyed her own quips immensely when she tapped a visitor on the shoulder with her bauble and said, "Good morrow, fair maid, art looking for a swain?"

And now four little heralds advanced down the campus bearing long trumpets,

antique in shape, on which the sun sparkled brilliantly. At the center of the campus they paused and blew four long resonant blasts and then cried in one voice:

"Make way for their Majesties, the King and Queen, and all the Royal Court." And the pageant began to unwind its sinuous length along the campus lawn, and all the rustic players who formed the rabble fell in behind the royal personages and their brilliant train.

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It was really a wonderfully beautiful picture, one to be remembered always with pride by Wellingtonians and with pleasure by outsiders who had gathered by the hundreds on the lawn. After the pageant came the May pole dancers and the wandering musicians, the Morality Play and the rustic dances.

There were hundreds of things to see. Mildred Brown, rushing from one charming performance to another, felt almost as if it really was an old English May Day Festival. The spirit of the actor rustics pervaded her and she was full of excitement and wonder at the whole marvelous performance.

At last the entire company gathered in front of the now historic site of Queen's Cottage and there amid the shrubbery and the tall old forest trees the seniors gave their performance of "As You Like It."

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"I don't believe Marlowe and Sothern could do it a bit better," exclaimed Mildred proudly. "Aren't they wonderful?"

"Isn't Miss Molly wonderful?" said Jimmy Lufton.

"Yes, indeed, I am proud of my little sister to-day, prouder than ever of her."

A man in a gray suit fanning himself with a straw hat turned around and looked at Mildred curiously. His face was lined with fatigue, for nobody had worked harder than he over the Festival. But he was not too tired to be interested in Mildred Brown.

"So they are the brother and sister," he said to himself. "And a very good-looking pair they are. I must try and meet them to-morrow. Ask them to tea in the Quadrangle. Miss Molly would like that, I think. But not that young Lufton," he added half angrily. "Not that young buccaneering newspaper fellow."

"Professor Green," said Mrs. McLean, standing next to him, "I think we owe most of the success of this day to you. But how about that charming Rosalind? Did you train her to act so prettily?"

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"No," he replied, "I couldn't do that. It's in her already. One has only to bring it out."

Among the flowers which were handed over the row of potted cedars to Molly after that charming performance was a big bunch of yellow daffodils, and tied to the yellow ribbon was a large yellow apple.

"You've won your second golden apple to-day, Miss Molly, and I am proud of my pupil," read the card attached.

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CHAPTER XXI.

FAREWELLS.

The rest of the time until graduation was like a dream to Molly and her friends whose hearts were filled with a sort of two-pronged homesickness; homesickness for home and for Wellington, which now they were about to leave forever more.

A great many things happened in the space that intervened between the first of May and the eighteenth of June, when graduation occurred. There were dances at Exmoor and dances at Wellington and the senior reception to the juniors. Then there were long quiet evenings when the old crowd gathered in No. 5 and talked of the future.

It was on one of these warm summer nights that they were draped as usual about the couches in the mellow glimmer of one Japanese lantern. Judy, thrumming on the guitar, sang:

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"When all the world is young, lad,
And all the trees are green;
And every goose a swan, lad,

And every lass a queen;
Then hey for boot and horse, lad,
And round the world away;
Young blood must have its course,
lad,
And every dog his day.

"When all the world is old, lad,
And all the trees are brown;
And all the sport is stale, lad,
And all the wheels run down;
Creep home and take your place
there,
The spent and maimed among:
God grant you find one face there,
You loved when all was young."

"My, that makes me sad," said Jessie. "I feel that I've already lived my life and am coming back to old Wellington to die with a lot of other decrepit old persons who used to be young and beautiful."

"Thanks for the compliment about looks," said Edith. "But I don't feel that way. I'm going forth to conquer. I am going to write books and books before I come home to die." [279]

"I'm going to write books, too," announced Molly meekly, "but I feel that I'm not ready to begin yet—"

"You can't begin too young," interrupted Edith.

"I know, but I'm coming back for a post grad. course in"—Molly hesitated, she hardly knew why—"in English and—and a few other things. I've got no style—"

"What, are you really coming back?" they cried.

"Nance and I have decided to return," replied Molly. "We are not ready to join the ranks yet, are we, Nance? Dear Nance is going to polish up her French literature. I'll be busy enough. I expect to do a lot of tutoring and other profitable work."

"What shall I do?" groaned Judy. "I don't want to study any more, and, yet, how can I bear for you two to be at Wellington without me to bother you." [280]

Molly looked at her and smiled.

"Remember, you are to come home with me this summer, Judy, and maybe you'll like Kentucky so well you'll want to stay there."

Molly was well aware that her brother Kent had fallen in love with Judy at first sight, and it didn't occur to her that anybody could resist the charms of her favorite brother.

"Margaret, why don't you come back?" asked Nance.

"Not me," answered Margaret. "I hear the voice of suffrage calling!"

"We all of us hear voices calling," broke in Katherine. "And each is a different voice according to our natures. Now Margaret's voice is soprano, but Jessie hears a deep baritone—"

"Nothing of the sort," cried Jessie.

"Fess up, now, Jessie, when is it to be?" [281]

The girls all gathered around pretty Jessie and at last, hard pressed, she said:

"When it does come off you'll have to assemble from the four quarters of the globe to act as bridesmaids, but the day's not set yet."

"Have you decided on the man?" asked Edith.

"Edith, how can you?" answered Jessie, laughing.

"What are you going to do, Katherine?" asked Molly, when the excitement had quieted down.

"Teach," answered Katherine bluntly. "I loathe the thing, but a place awaits me, so I suppose next winter will find me sitting behind a little table, ringing a bell sharply, and saying, 'Now, girls, pay attention, please.'" She turned her large melancholy eyes on her sister. "Edith thinks she's the only writer in the family, but in the intervals of teaching I intend to surprise her. I've already had one short story accepted by an obscure but *bona fide* magazine which hasn't sent me a check yet." [282]

"Have you heard the joke on Katherine?" put in Edith.

"Do tell," they cried, while Katherine said fiercely: "Now, Edith, you promised to keep that a secret."

"It's too good to keep. She chose for the subject of her graduating essay 'The Juvenile Delinquent,' and got it all written and then it occurred to her that Miss Walker would announce 'The Juvenile Delinquent, Katherine Williams,' and she could not stand the implication."

"Poor Katherine," they cried, laughing joyously.

And now Molly was handing around nut cake and cloud bursts, it seemed almost for the last time, and after that these bright spirits in kimonos flitted away to their rooms.

A little later, after darkness and quiet had descended, an ecstatic little giggle broke from Judy, lying alone and staring at the dim outline of her window. It was too soft a sound to disturb the tired sleepers in the adjoining rooms, but it meant that Judy had an idea,—an idea that she could see already realized by the aid of her remarkable imagination.

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Her mind had been reviewing the talk of the evening and revolving about each of the girls in turn;—Edith and Katherine and Molly, literary and ambitious; Nance, serious and studious; Jessie, pretty, romantic and destined for marriage; and Margaret, the able and willing champion of suffrage. And Judy had smiled as she began to recall certain hours when Margaret's enthusiasm had waxed high, even so far back as Freshman year, and her first class presidency. That thought had started others, and as Judy remembered various amusing incidents of the four years, her "idea" had flashed upon her. It was then that Judy had hugged herself and laughed aloud, but it was several nights later that she shared with the other girls her inspiration.

They had gathered in Otoyó's little room that night,—just the eight close friends who now grasped every opportunity for one more good time together. They were a little inclined to sadness, for they had all been busy with those extra duties that point directly to the closing days of college life.

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Some had posed before the class photographer's camera, some had borne the weariness of having gowns fitted, and at least two had practiced their parts for the commencement exercises.

Margaret and Jessie were humming the chorus of one of the Senior class songs and Otoyó was just beginning to make the tea, when Judy slipped out of the room with a word of excuse and a promise to return.

Molly turned lazily to Nance who sat close beside her on the couch and whispered, "Judy is as nervous as a witch these days. She has probably thought of something to add to her list!"

"Oh, that list!" returned Nance. "She has everything on it now from white gloves to a trunk strap, and still it grows!"

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"Seniors, seniors, seniors," chanted Margaret and Jessie dreamily, watching Otoyó as she deftly arranged her dainty cups and saucers on beautiful lacquered trays.

Edith and Katherine were quietly disputing some point about the class program and absent-mindedly accepting lemon for their tea, when the door opened and a woman draped closely in black stepped into the room.

"Ah, ha, young ladies," she cried in a high, weird voice that startled them into instant silence, "so you would pierce the mysterious veil of the future and read in your teacups the fortune that awaits you? Could you but possess my occult vision, you would not need to employ such puerile methods."

Here the somber figure raised two black-gloved arms and held before her eyes a pair of plain black opera glasses. She had reversed their usual position and now gazed steadily about the room through the large end of the glasses.

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"Ah, ha," she began again, fixing her roving attention upon Margaret, who returned her gaze easily, "I see far, far away, through a vista of crowded seats, a huge platform adorned with distinguished figures. A pretty woman stunningly gowned is introducing to a breathlessly expectant audience a tall, striking person. The plaudits of the multitude drown the sound of her name as it is announced, but our keen sight enables us to recognize the famous Miss Wakefield! To those who have long known her, it will not be surprising to learn that her companion is none other than her college satellite, now Miss Jessie,—but I cannot quite pronounce the unfamiliar name."

As the voice stopped for a moment, Jessie started toward the strange figure, but Margaret pulled her back and drew her blushing face down upon her own shoulder.

At the same time Molly cried, "Where have I seen those shabby old glasses

And Nance added, "My old bird glasses, or I'm blind!"

Nothing daunted, the prophetess went on in the same weird key, "I see the gray towers of Wellington looming grandly against a wild autumnal sky. I see troops of girls crowding across the campus and into recitation rooms. I see a single figure walking beside the white-haired President as though discussing the schedule of lectures and the merits of students, and the figure is that of Miss Oldham,—dear old Nance!" And the voice of the soothsayer broke suddenly as she turned the glasses on Nance and Molly.

Then she hurried on, "By forcing my keen vision to its utmost capacity, I am able to read upon certain profound text books the names of their joint compilers, Edith and Katherine Williams, the world-famed writers!"

Again the voice paused as the glasses were leveled at the friendly disputants, long since quieted by the eloquence of the seer.

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All this time Otoyoy had stood spellbound beside her teapot. Now she started slightly as the glasses glimmered in her direction.

"Oh, no, no, no," she cried in real distress. "Don't tell me, please, Mees Kean!"

At that, Judy flung the draperies back from her hair, the glasses to Nance, and her arms about Otoyoy, exclaiming at the same moment:

"You precious child, I don't know any more than your little Buddha does about your future, but the gods will be good to you and we'll leave it to them."

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CHAPTER XXII.

THE FINAL DAYS.

Now as suddenly as she had tossed aside her head coverings, Judy dropped her long loose cloak upon the floor and stood revealed clad in motley raiment indeed. In an instant all that she had said was forgotten as the girls crowded around examining her curiously.

"Why, Judy Kean, where *did* you find that old necktie?" cried Molly, as she spied a long familiar article fastened at Judy's throat.

"And my Russian princess muff!" exclaimed Nance. "It was hidden with my treasures at the very bottom of my trunk!"

"And do I not behold my favorite Shelley?" chimed in Edith, seizing a book that dangled by a cord from Judy's waist.

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"And I—surelee it is my verree ancient kimono that hangs behind?" inquired Otoyoy curiously.

"I have it," announced judicial Margaret "Judy Kean is now a symbol. She represents *us*. Upon her noble person she carries the intimate souvenirs of our various stages of collegiate growth. Yea, verily, I recognize mine own."

With that, Margaret tried to claim a gorgeous yellow pennant that flaunted its aggressive motto in a panel-like arrangement on Judy's dress.

Judy dodged Margaret's attempt and lifting her hand dramatically exclaimed in oratorical tones:

"You have guessed. I am indeed the spirit of our college days. I represent History, and the tokens that I wear mark the incidents of humor, pathos, and tragedy that were the crises in our young careers. You will pardon me, I know, when I tell you that I have rummaged reverently among your personal 'estates,' as Otoyoy used to say, seeing, touching, disturbing none but the significant articles before you. Behold the history of these departing years!"

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As Judy swung slowly about before their interested eyes, something chinked and clinked gently, like glass meeting glass. Molly's long arm shot out and grasped the jingling articles. A not-to-be-suppressed shout broke forth as she displayed a china pig and a small bottle of blue-black fluid labeled "Hair-dye,—black."

"Oh, Judy, Judy," cried Molly, "if you haven't discovered *another* Martin Luther, the

ghost of the hero of my Junior days! Give him to me and I will feed him faithfully next year,—by the slow earnings of my pen, I will!"

Meanwhile, Jessie was laughing over the tell-tale bottle of hair-dye, and secretly every one was rejoicing that Judy, too, could look back upon that supremely foolish escapade and laugh as heartily as any of them at her own expense.

And now Nance claimed her muff,—the one survivor of the three cotton-batting masterpieces made for the skating carnival of Sophomore year,—and as she thrust her hands inside, they encountered a long, hard object. She drew it out and with a flourish waved above her head a clean, meatless but unmistakable ham bone!

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The laugh was directed toward Molly now, and to turn it again she exclaimed, "What do I see gleaming upon your finger, Judy Kean? Verily, upon the third finger of your left hand?"

Immediately the girls joined in the cry, chanted like a deep-toned school yell, "Tell us! Tell us! Tell us!"

"Well, it was lent to me. It's not mine. I simply promised to wear it for a few months," quoted Judy, imitating Jessie's own protesting explanation so cleverly that even Otoyó recognized the source. "But it is only a five-cent diamond!" added Judy, shaking her head solemnly. "I might lose it, you know, and it would take more than a steely inspector to locate it in a man's deep coat pocket!"

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The girls cast sly glances at Molly, but she was intent on another discovery. Hanging under Edith's shabby copy of Shelley was her own beloved Rossetti! Instantly she forgot the girls and their fun and saw for one fleeting moment a series of quickly moving mental pictures. First there flashed before her that Christmas when Professor Green had given her the little volume. Then she saw herself in the cloisters lost in the beauty of "The blessed damozel," when he had appeared so unexpectedly. And finally she realized suddenly how much she loved the little worn volume and how she should always keep it to comfort and inspire her.

"*Come—back—to me, Sweetheart,*" sang Judy teasingly, and Molly came back with a start, only just realizing that she had been day-dreaming.

"What is this spiky thing that pricks through the folds of my aged sweater?" asked Katherine, who had recognized an old blue sweater that Judy wore draped from her waist like a pannier.

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"This," replied Judy, "is a bud that grew on a twig that grew on a bush that grew from the ground that marks the resting place of the ashes of Queen's, and to you, Katherine, as true historian of our noble class, do I present it."

"In the name of futurity, I accept it," replied Katherine, not to be outdone in formality.

"And now to appease the cravings of the inner man, permit me to share with you the contents of this hamper," continued Judy, opening a small basket that she carried on her arm. "Although not the original, lost-but-not-forgotten snakey-noodles, these are the best imitations that Madeleine Petit could make. And Molly the cook has contributed once more some of her justly famed cloud bursts, an indispensable exhibit in this unequaled historical collection!"

Warm and breathless, Judy sat down and began to remove her borrowed plumes, while the girls, each holding aloft a snakey-noodle and a cloud burst, chanted appreciatively, "What's the matter with Julia Kean? *She's all right!*"

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Graduation at Wellington was old-fashioned and conventional. The girl graduates in white dresses filed onto the platform and took their seats in a semi-circle. Those who were so fortunate as to have relatives and friends in the large audience searched for their intimate features in the sea of upturned, interested faces. As glances met, smiles were fleetingly exchanged but quickly subdued on the part of the girls as the dignity of the day was borne in upon them anew.

President Walker, never more sweet and womanly than in the formal attire demanded by her position, unconsciously inspired them all to imitate her fine simplicity and grace of manner. Tears sprang to the eyes of many girls as they looked at her and realized as never before that she had been the real center of all that had been best and most lasting in their college life. The girls who were to read essays, resolved that for the President's sake they would do well in spite of trembly knees and shaky hands. And of course they did, because in their determination to please Miss Walker and to reflect credit upon her and dear old Wellington they quite lost their paralyzing self-consciousness. The little buzz of pleased conversation that followed each number of the program as the applause died down was gratifying without doubt, but the students cared more deeply for the President's brief nod and smile of satisfaction. After the exercises came the diplomas, those strips of sheepskin for which our girls had striven so long and valiantly. It was almost a shock to clasp at

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last that precious token that had seemed so difficult of achievement in the far-away Freshman days. If to Molly it meant among other things value received for "two perfectly good acres of orchard," to Nance it marked a milestone of happy progress; to Margaret, Edith and Katharine it represented an interesting bit of current history; and to Judy and Jessie it signified a safe haven after many narrow escapes from shipwreck.

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After the exciting day was over, came the class supper and then everybody did stunts. Edith read the class poem and Katherine was historian. Then the oldest girl and the prettiest girl and the class baby made speeches, and at the end came three cheers for Molly Brown, the most beloved in 19—; and Molly, trembling and blushing, rose and thanked them all and assured them that it was the greatest honor she had ever known; and they made her sit on the table while they danced in a circle around it, singing:

"Here's to Molly Brown,
Drink her down, drink her down, drink her
down."

Thus the four years at Wellington came to an end as all good things must, and the day for the parting arrived. The "Primavera" and the prayer rug were packed away in a box and shipped to Kentucky, because, after all, Molly might not return to Wellington. Who could tell what the fates had in store? Then came the good-byes. There were tears in their eyes and little choky sounds in their voices as they kissed and hugged and kissed again.

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Otoyo at that last meeting gave a present to each of the old crowd. She was smiling bravely, since it is not correct for a young Japanese lady to weep, and she kept reiterating:

"I shall mees you, greatlee, muchlee. It will not be the same at Wellington."

With Molly's gift, a little carved ivory box, Otoyo handed a letter.

"I promised to deliver it on the last day," she said.

"That sounds a good deal like the Judgment Day," said Molly, laughing, as she tore open the envelope. The letter read:

"The Campus Ghost and the Thief of Lunches has learned from you what nobody ever told her before: that honesty's the best policy. I suppose I always enjoyed the other way because I never was found out. But being found out is different. Honest people who have nothing to conceal are the happiest. I know that now, and henceforth the open and above-board for me.

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"Yours,
"ADELE WINDSOR."

Molly rolled the paper into a little ball and threw it away. Certainly the note of repentance did not sound very strong in Adele's letter. But perhaps it was only her way of putting it, and to be honest for any reason, no matter how remote from the right one, was something.

"Anyhow, I hope she will think it's best policy to be nice to her poor, hard-working mother," she thought indignantly.

But Adele had already passed out of the lives of the Wellington girls and none of them ever saw her again. She did not return to college to finish out the senior course, and the hoodoo suite was dismantled forever of her fine trappings and furniture.

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"I have one more good-bye to say, girls," said Molly to her friends a little while before train time. "I'll meet you at the archway."

"You'll miss the train," called Nance.

"And that would just spoil everything," cried Judy.

The three friends had planned to travel as far as Philadelphia together. There Nance would leave them to join her father, and Molly and Judy would continue their journey toward Kentucky.

But Molly was already running down the corridor, suitcase in one hand and jacket in the other.

Down the steps she flew and out into the court toward the little door which opened into the cloisters. Another dash and she was knocking on Professor Green's door.

"Come in," he called, and she flew into the room breathlessly.

"I came to say good-bye again," she said. "I've only five minutes."

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"Sit down," he said, drawing up a chair.

"I wanted to ask you," she went on, "if you wouldn't come to Kentucky to visit us this summer and—and see your property."

"How do you know it would be convenient for your mother to have me?"

"Because it is always convenient for mother to entertain friends, and this is really her very own suggestion. Our house is big and besides that we have an office outside with three bedrooms for overflow."

The Professor looked thoughtful. Perhaps he was already forming a picture in his mind of the hammock beside the brook and the shady orchard, his orchard.

"You will promise to come, won't you?" persisted Molly.

"Do you really want me?" he asked.

"Indeed, indeed I do."

"Perhaps," he answered.

"Good-bye, then," she said, "or rather *au revoir*," and they clasped hands while the Professor looked down into Molly's eyes and smiled.

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He moved to the door like a sleep-walker and held it open for her as she hurried out. Then he went back to his desk and sat down in a sort of trance. The next instant the door was flung open again, footsteps hurried across the room and two arms slipped over his shoulders.

"Do you remember what I said I was going to do some time to that old gentleman who bought the orchard?" said Molly's voice over his head. "I said I'd just give him a good hug."

For one instant the arms held him tightly, a cheek was laid lightly on his thin reddish hair and then she was gone, flying down the corridor.

"I suppose she regards me as an old gentleman," he said resignedly, laying his hand softly on the spot where her cheek had touched.

As for Molly, she had a sudden thought that almost stopped her headlong course:

"What *would* Miss Alice Fern think if she knew!"

The girls were calling impatiently when Molly reached the arch, and in three minutes the crowded bus moved down the avenue.

"Good-bye! Good-bye!" called many voices.

"Good-bye! Good-bye!" echoed the few students who were going to take a later train.



Good-bye to Wellington and the old happy days.—
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Good-bye to Wellington and the old happy days! Good-bye to the Quadrangle and the Cloisters! Good-bye to all the dear familiar haunts and faces.

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Every one of the girls felt the hour of parting keenly, but to two of Molly's friends at least there came an additional pang. They had known no happier home; no other place held for them such close associations. Nance, pale and silent, and Judy, feverish and excited, turned their eyes lingeringly toward the twin gray towers. But Molly, her face transfigured by some secret happy thought, looked southward down the avenue toward Kentucky and home!

The class prophecy which Judy had extemporized on the evening of her appearance as "History" may have had some promise of fulfillment, but it will be remembered that Otoy's timely interruption saved her from guessing at the most puzzling future of all. It remains, therefore, for "Molly Brown's Post-Graduate Days" to reveal what Dame Fortune had in store for the girl of many possibilities, Molly Brown of Wellington and Kentucky.

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THE END.

Transcriber's Note:

The illustration with the caption "Molly Glanced Back. Sure Enough, The Phantom ... was Running Behind Them—[Page 198.](#)" was not available for inclusion in this ebook.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MOLLY BROWN'S SENIOR DAYS

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