Title: The Wide Awake Girls in Winsted

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"'Here is a little souvenir for you, Judge Arthur.'"
FRONTISPIECE. *See page* 266.

THE WIDE AWAKE GIRLS SERIES

THE

WIDE AWAKE GIRLS

IN WINSTED

BY

KATHARINE RUTH ELLIS

Author of “The Wide Awake Girls”

Illustrated from drawings by

SEARS GALLAGHER

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To
GLADYS GODDARD

who has been the friend of many boys and girls
this book is affectionately inscribed.

PREFACE

The author wishes to acknowledge gratefully the kindness of Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin and Company in allowing her to use the poem *Vantage*, by Josephine Preston Peabody in this book. She also thanks Miss Margaret Sherwood for consenting to a similar use of her poem, *Indian Summer*.

Books for girls are frankly suggestive, their value lying in their kindling power. Among the girls of all sorts who may read this story, there will be, here and there, one who loves right words. It is for the sake of such an occasional reader that the poems mentioned have been included. The schools sometimes lead their pupils to believe that English literature, like Latin, belongs to the past. But there are, here and now, “musicians of the word” who, partly because they are living, can touch our hearts as none of the dead-and-gone ones can. If through these pages some girl finds her way to the little green volume of *Singing Leaves*, or the sweet stories of *Daphne* and *King Sylvaine and Queen Aimée*, Catherine Smith and her friends will have done the world of girls a service worth the doing.

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PART ONE

STARTING A LIBRARY

THE WIDE AWAKE GIRLS IN WINSTED

CHAPTER ONE
CATHERINE'S INSPIRATION

"Alma Mater, Dexter darling, do re mi–O dear! It's much harder to write than I supposed. I wonder why! When your heart is full of love, why should it be hard to express it?"

Catherine Smith, sitting on the top step of the porch of her home, Three Gables, bent her red-gold head over the pad of paper on her knee and wrote painfully, her forehead puckered earnestly. She had been a year at college and was just beginning her summer vacation. All through the busy year, full of delightful new experiences, she had looked forward to the leisure of summer, in which she might adequately declare her devotion to the college which had been her mother's and was now her own. From the day, the June before, when she had gone there to visit her friend, Hannah Eldred, she had felt a keen sense of "belonging," especially pleasant because her frail health had compelled her to lead a somewhat secluded life at home, and she had not felt really acquainted with the young people in the little town of Winsted, where she had always lived.

Now all that was changing. At college she had been forced to conquer her shyness, and, to her delight, she soon found that the boys and girls at home were more than glad to receive her into their circle upon equal terms. Her physician parents were everybody's friends, and Catherine, who adored her father and mother, was eager to show herself worthy to be their daughter. In order to do so, she reasoned, she must be of real service to the town and to her college. The only way she had thought of so far was to write an Alma Mater song, expressive not only of the rapturous loyalty of undergraduates, but of the graver love of alumnæ like her mother.

“It is very hard,” she sighed. “It must be stately and yet not heavy. O me! And here comes Algernon.”

With a resigned air she folded her scribbled papers and thrust her pencil into the coil of red braids encircling her head. Algernon Swinburne, ever since his foolish mother had christened him for the poet, had, by turns, amused and wearied his fellow-citizens. While Catherine had lived apart, she had been spared his lengthy visits, but with the pleasures of social life had come its penalties and she was now on Algernon’s list and obliged to spend frequent hours in his really trying society. He came up the long walk now with a curious springing gait, and Catherine tried to summon a hospitable smile to her lips.

Algernon refused a chair. He always appeared to be just going, “and yet,” as Polly Osgood said with a groan, “he almost never goes!” He perched uncomfortably upon the railing and opened fire at once.

“Have you seen the last *North American Review*?”

Catherine confessed that she had not.

“There was a corking article in it on municipal corruption, comparing San Francisco, New York and Pittsburg as to graft, police efficiency and so on. They say Pittsburg spends two million dollars a year–”

“My upper legs is going barefoot.”

Catherine lifted her eyes with a flash of pleasure. Elsmere Swinburne was the occasional relief from his big brother’s monotony. Catherine loved little folk, and though Elsmere was known to be a rascal who would have tried the patience of Job, she somehow always found forgiveness for his enormities, and a delighted appreciation for his funny sayings. Just now he stood proudly before her, his hands in his pockets, his eyes fixed upon his fashionably clad little legs, with bruised brown knees showing above new half-hose.

“My mamma buyed ’em for me. Her buys me everything.”

Catherine smiled, but shook her head a little. Mrs. Swinburne was a source of grief to all her neighbors, because of her persistent refusal to allow Algernon the chance at college that he desired, and even more because of her unwise indulgence of her younger son’s lightest wishes.

Algernon cleared his throat and took up the thread of his narrative. “Pittsburg, this fellow Chapman in the *Review* says, spends two million dollars a year on–”

“Talking, talking, all the time Algy talking,” Elsmere broke in. “*I* want to talk. Tell Caffrin ’bout my cat-pussy. Her awful sick. Her–”

Catherine sprang up. Elsmere’s conversation often needed to be suppressed.

“Let’s play tennis. Algernon, will you get the balls and rackets? You know where they are,–just inside the hall there. And Elsmere may run after balls for us. He can, so nicely!”

Algernon obeyed the unexpected request patiently, and when he was gone, Catherine averted her face for the space of a minute. What she had hoped for came to pass, and when Algernon returned, his small brother had quietly vanished. “The older one may be monotonous, but the younger one is positively dangerous,” Catherine thought to herself, as she took the balls from Algernon, saying:

“Let’s not play, after all. It’s so very warm and Elsmere thought he didn’t want to run after balls. You don’t mind, do you?”

“Why, no, I wasn’t keen about playing,” and Algernon, unconscious of the maneuver he had helped to execute, dropped back upon the railing and continued his *résumé* of the *North American* article.

Catherine, meanwhile, having slipped the balls one by one into the pocket of her steamer chair, rested her long white hands upon the chair arms and sat quietly, hearing nothing of Mr. Chapman’s statistics, her brown eyes dreamily fixed upon the sloping lawn, but seeing instead the Dexter campus, across which girls were moving, as she loved best to see them, in pretty light gowns on the way to evening chapel. Among them all her thought rested most lovingly upon a little girl with a plain face and big round glasses. “You dear old Alice!” she murmured, almost aloud, and roused herself guiltily to hear Algernon saying:

“There are a lot of wide-awake men in Pittsburg.”

“Wide-awake girls in Winsted!”

This time Catherine really did speak aloud, and Algernon looked up in surprised inquiry.

“I beg your pardon,” she said contritely. “It was very rude of me, but you set me off, yourself. The Wide Awake Girls are really going to be in Winsted this summer. Don’t you know about them?” as Algernon still looked puzzled.

“Why, no. All the Winsted girls seem wide-awake enough, I should say.”

“But I’m the only one who has a right to be called so in capital letters. I’ll tell you all about it, but it has been such an important part of my life for the last year and more, that I forget every one who knows me doesn’t know about it all.

“You see, about two years ago, when I was fifteen and Hannah Eldred, who lives in Massachusetts, was not quite fourteen, she wrote a letter to *Wide-Awake*, the magazine, you know, asking for correspondents. And I answered it. Several other girls did, too. One was Alice Prescott, who lives out in Washington, and another was Frieda Lange, of Berlin, whose mother had known Mrs. Eldred in Germany years ago. Hannah kept on writing to the three of us, and before the end of the year she had met us all and really lived with each of us in turn. It doesn’t sound probable, but it came about naturally enough. The Eldreds went to Berlin for a few months and boarded at the Langes’. Then Mrs. Eldred’s mother was taken ill, and they had to come back to this country. The grandmother lived over here at Delmar, and Father was called in consultation and brought Hannah back to stay with me a little while; and then, as her mother couldn’t leave, they sent Hannah to Dexter, to the preparatory department, and there she found Alice, whom she had lost sight of for a long time. Then when I went to Dexter, I learned to know Alice, and this year Frieda Lange is coming to America to school and she is going to Dexter, too. Hannah is coming out for a few weeks’ visit here before college opens, and I’m going to try to get Alice at the same time, for we’ve never all four been together. I am so eager about it that I can’t keep my mind on anything else very long, so that’s why I said ‘Wide Awake Girls in Winsted’ aloud. Isn’t it an interesting story?”

“Coincidences are always interesting,” said Algernon. “And I think a great many things that go by the name of telepathy are nothing more. I’m keeping a record of peculiar coincidences that come under my notice. I’ll put these down, about the two happening to go to the same college, and about the German and American girls finding their mothers were acquainted.” He produced a note-book to make an entry.

“You can’t include the last one,” Catherine protested. “It was because Mrs. Lange recognized Hannah from the letter that Frieda wrote. But the meeting between Alice and Hannah was mere chance.”

Algernon closed his note-book and went placidly on as if Catherine’s story had not interrupted him:

“As I was saying, those men in Pittsburg–”

The telephone bell rang and Catherine went into the house to answer it.

“I’ll have to be excused, Algernon,” she said, coming back a minute later. “Father wants something of me. You can tell me the rest another time.”

Then, as Algernon slowly got off the porch, she added impulsively:

“I marvel just to see you walk, Algernon. You know so very much! You seem to me to be a veritable walking library.”

Algernon twisted his body uncomfortably and flushed.

“I’d be more use to Winsted if I were a real one,” he said, with a wistful sound in his voice that made Catherine look at him sharply. She waved him a smiling good-by as he went down the walk, and then turned to her father’s desk to look up some papers he wanted. Her mind, however, still dwelt on that unexpected shade in Algernon’s tone.

“I’ve thought of him as a mere talking machine instead of a human being,” she said to herself reproachfully. “I must make a salmon scallop for Father’s supper. Inga doesn’t know how to do anything but scramble eggs and boil potatoes, and Father’s tired, I know by his voice. It sounded tired, but Algernon’s was lonely. I wonder–”

Dr. Harlow Smith and his wife, Dr. Helen, drove up to their pretty gabled house on the hill slope a few minutes later, their faces lighting with pleasure as the tall girl in a blue apron came out to meet them. The stable-boy came to take the horse, and Catherine escorted her parents to the house. While they made themselves ready for supper, she put the last orderly touches to the table in the panelled dining-room, and was ready for them with kisses when they arrived.

The silent grace over, Catherine spoke:

“Eat and be filled, dearly beloved, because I have a new project and I need you to be enthusiastic.”

“What is it this time?” asked Dr. Harlow, serving the golden scallop generously. “You have shown diplomacy in your choice of a dish, if I am the one you wish to wheedle.”

Dr. Helen, pouring yellow cream from a fat silver jug into thin hexagonal cups, sent an interested glance across the table at her daughter.

“Tell us,” she said.

“It’s quite new,” said Catherine, hesitating a little. “In fact it’s not a half-hour old, but I do believe it is a good plan. You know Algernon Swinburne?”

“We have met him,” agreed Dr. Harlow cautiously.

“So had I!” said Catherine with sudden spirit, “and this afternoon it came to me that I didn’t know him at all. All any of us ever do to Algernon is to avoid him,–those of us who don’t laugh at him. And he’s lonely, Father! Lonely!”

“Did he tell you so?”

“No. But I suddenly knew. I’ve seen homesick girls at college, and–and–well, there was a little while, just a little while, when I was getting strong enough to do things, and before Hannah came to visit, that I felt that way myself, so I know.”

Dr. Helen’s look was like a pressure of the hand, and she answered gently:

“I think you are very likely right, Catherine. And this plan of yours is to make Algernon less lonely?”

“Do you think he knows he’s lonely?” asked Dr. Harlow. “I’ve thought the boy had good stuff in him, and if he should ever wake up to the fact that he’s a bore, he might amount to something worth while. You don’t think he has, do you?”

“Not exactly,” Catherine confessed, remembering the note-book’s appearance at the end of her little story. “But I think he has an inkling that he might be of more use. I told him he was a walking library. He does know such an amazing amount, you know! And he said Winsted would be better off if it had a real library instead of his kind; and then it flashed into my mind how he would love living among books, and how fine it would be for the town if all that knowledge of his could be used–”

“Like wasted water power?” suggested her father.

“Yes. That’s just it. He has read more than any one in this town, except you, Father dear, and you are very old-fashioned in your reading. You never heard of some of the modern books that Algernon knows all about. Why couldn’t we start a library and have Algernon run it? It would make people appreciate him.”

“It would keep him occupied at certain hours, and assure you of freedom from his calls,” said Dr. Harlow, but Catherine was in earnest and refused to be teased.

“Wouldn’t it be practical, really, Mother? Algernon can’t go away to school. His mother isn’t willing, you know, and he needs to be here to look after Elsmere. But he could study there, and lots of towns as small as this do have libraries.”

The doorbell rang and Dr. Harlow went to answer it.

“Some one to see you, Catherine,” he said, returning.

Catherine found Algernon himself standing in the doorway, his big pale eyes full of distress.

“Excuse my coming just at supper time,” he said, “but I’ve lost Elsmere. No one seems to have seen him since we did this afternoon, and I thought perhaps you would remember which direction he went in. It was while I was in the house he disappeared, you know. He almost always comes home for meals!”

Catherine meditated. “I didn’t see him go. I was looking at some papers, and when I glanced up he wasn’t there. Let’s go out on the porch again, and think. You had been sitting on the railing and I was in the steamer chair–O Elsmere Swinburne, where have you been?”

Out from under the porch, rubbing eyes and yawning, came a rumpled little figure, bits of straw and dead leaves clinging to him, and a big red Irish setter following.

Algernon bent down and gathered the baby figure up with a tenderness that made Catherine’s heart beat more quickly, as she picked the straws from the stylish shoes and socks, and the barefoot upper legs.

“Where were you?” she repeated.

“Hotspur’s house, all cozy,” sighed Elsmere. “Warm house. Did go to sleep. Bosquitoes bite me. Bite my legs. I want my supper,” and drooping over his tall brother’s shoulders he fell asleep again.

“Come around to-morrow afternoon early, Algernon,” said Catherine, as he moved away with his burden. “I have a plan I want you to help me carry out. I know you’ll like it. It’s something nice for you and Winsted.”

CHAPTER TWO
GETTING STARTED

By fifteen minutes past three the next day, Algernon and Catherine had definitely decided that Winsted was to have a library, and that they were to devote their own energies to the cause and persuade as many as possible of their acquaintances to join them.

“The Boat Club will go in for it as a committee of the whole,” said Algernon.

“The Three R’s will be interested,” said Catherine, “though it is not Rest, Recreation or Refreshment!”

“And all the churches.”

“And the school teachers.”

“And there are Miss Ainsworth’s novels.”

“Algernon, how perfectly splendid! Do you suppose she would let us have them?”

“I don’t see why not. They simply stand there, never opened. She can’t any more than refuse. I’ll ask her.”

“And I’ll go with you. Let’s do it right this minute.”

As she spoke, Catherine sprang up, and Algernon, his usual inertia overcome, plunged down the walk beside her.

“We must find a good place for it, before we get many books collected. We could use Father’s twenty-five dollars for rent, of course, but it would be so much nicer if some one would give us a room.”

“Let me see. There’s that little frame shop where the red-haired milliner used to be. We might get that. It’s no good for business, away off up the street that way.”

“Be careful what you say about red hair,” warned Catherine. “Who owns the building?”

“Judge Arthur. He’s a public-spirited man. He’ll let us have it cheap anyway.”

“Good! O, I am so happy and excited about it I feel like one of Hannah Eldred’s squeals; I’m afraid if she were here I’d join her in one. Here we are at Miss Ainsworth’s. Are you sure we dare ask her?”

Before the prim white house set back from the street, Catherine’s buoyancy suffered a collapse. She had been inside that house, calling, with her mother, but to go there–or anywhere–on a begging errand! Here Algernon’s long familiarity with rebuffs proved of value.

“Of course, we dare. Come on, or I’ll go alone if you don’t want to.”

“‘We must find a good place for it.’”–*Page* 17.

“No, no, I’ll come,” Catherine answered hastily. She had counted, without conceit, on her own popularity to offset Algernon’s handicap. The daughter of the Doctors Smith could not be turned coldly away. And after all, Miss Ainsworth’s novels might better be read than standing idle. Two years ago, a young bicyclist had sprained an ankle at Miss Ainsworth’s door, and she had promptly taken him in and cared for him, scornfully refusing pay. Therefore the youth, upon returning to his home, had sent out to her a great box full of modern fiction, an article which he had deeply and vainly desired while under her roof. Miss Ainsworth had never been given to the reading of novels. Her life had been quite too busy for such frivolities, and now her eyes were making it impossible for her to read without using glasses, which, as a confession of frailty, she despised. So the books stood, new and unopened, in a fascinating row upon the “secretary” shelf. No one so far had ventured to ask for them. It had been reserved for these young adventurers to demand them in the name of public spirit.

“We will have your name put inside them, Miss Ainsworth, on a neat little card,–‘Gift of Miss Anna Ainsworth,’ you know. Just as they do in large libraries,” Catherine explained persuasively, when Algernon had stated the object of their call, and Miss Ainsworth was regarding them in a silence which they took to be ominous.

“And your name will go down in the records with Dr. Smith’s as one of the first contributors to the library. We intend to keep very full records and have them buried under the corner stone of the new building when we get it. We hope to get a Carnegie building, you know,” Algernon went on calmly while Catherine caught her breath. “He always insists that the townspeople do their share.”

“The young people will use the library if we have good novels,” Catherine put in helpfully, when Algernon’s imagination showed signs of exhaustion. “And then we can get them to reading more serious books by and by.”

Then Catherine too, subsided, and the clock behind its painted glass door ticked obtrusively. Presently Miss Ainsworth opened her thin lips.

“I’m perfectly willin’ ’t you should have the books,” she said grimly. “They ain’t no manner o’ use to me, and never was. I don’t care to have my name wrote inside ’em, though. And I ain’t perticular about havin’ it buried under any corner stones. But I’ll be much obliged if you’ll take ’em away soon, for I’ve just subscribed to a set of me-mores of missionaries an agent was sellin’ yesterday, and I’d like that top shelf to put ’em on.”

The enthusiasts, feeling a trifle quenched, but yet pleased at having accomplished their purpose, rose and withdrew with what grace they could summon, mingling thanks with promises to remove the undesired literature as soon as possible.

“Now for Judge Arthur and the building,” sighed Catherine, as they reached the street again. “He can’t be any more gloomy about it than she was, and maybe he’ll do what we want.”

The judge was not in his office, so they sat down to wait in the stuffy room where dusty books and papers sprawled and spilled over desk, table and the top of a big black safe. Algernon attached himself to a grimy magazine, having first jotted down Miss Ainsworth’s gift in his ever-present note-book. Catherine, looking about her, soon found herself unable to restrain her housewifely fingers. She was busily sweeping the dust off the big table with a dilapidated feather duster, and putting the papers into trim piles when the door opened and Judge Arthur, little and weazened and gray, slipped softly in.

“There!” said Catherine half aloud. “That is infinitely better. I wish I dared throw half of these papers away. I know they’re perfectly worthless.” She took a step toward the big wire basket, as though to bring it conveniently near.

“Not to-day, Miss Catherine,” and the judge took her hand and bowed over it. “Is this what they teach you at college?”

Catherine laughed. She had never been afraid of Judge Arthur.

“They teach us all the womanly graces, Your Honor,” she answered, “and not least among them is tidiness. I should have had you looking beautifully neat in another five minutes.”

Judge Arthur shivered. “And you would doubtless have made a bonfire of this,” picking up one dog’s-eared document, “old Mr. Witherton’s will; and this, a deed to an estate; and this, a bit of important evidence in a criminal case.”

“Well,” Catherine argued, “they shouldn’t be left about so carelessly, under paper-weights and ash-trays. I do want to do some housecleaning for you, Judge Arthur. That’s why I’m here this afternoon. Not just an office, either, but a whole building.”

The judge placed a chair for her, dusting it elaborately with Mr. Witherton’s will as he did so.

“Tell me all about it,” he invited.

Catherine took the chair, her fresh white gown contrasting as sharply with its shabby leather as her warm youth did with the judge’s withered look. He watched her with keen, appreciating eyes. Algernon in his corner read on, and Catherine thought best not to disturb him. Men found it harder to meet Algernon on fair ground than women did.

The judge asked a pertinent question or two as Catherine unfolded the great scheme; then he drew a check-book from under a broken-backed dictionary.

“There is another twenty-five for your project,” he said, as he signed his name with a flourish surprisingly big for so cramped a little man; “and the room is at your disposal for six months, rent free. I would have it cleaned, but you seem to delight in doing such work yourself. I can assure you that the Three R’s will back you up. The next meeting is called for a week from to-day.”

Catherine’s face wore its blithest smile. “You are a dear to do so much,” she declared. “I was sure you’d be interested. If you ever want any cleaning done, *anywhere*, please let me do it!”

Algernon had to be aroused almost forcibly, and Catherine carried him away, still so lost in the article on the jury system he had been reading that he could not quite take in the wonderful success of the call. He followed Catherine’s eager steps to the little square frame building a few blocks up Main Street, and turned the key she gave him. It was a dingy little room, all dirt and cobwebs. A few old straw hats and wire frames piled among some big green boxes indicated the last occupant’s business, and a scurrying of tiny feet, only too clearly, the present occupants’ nature. Catherine lifted her nose in dainty scorn, and her skirts in private apprehension.

“We shall have to get a lot of girls and come down here to-morrow and clean up; but let’s get

out for now," she said, and Algernon consented.

They strolled along the street till they came to the little park, and there, sitting on its one green bench, talked over their list of assets.

"I keep having ideas all the time," cried Catherine. "Listen! We must go over to Hampton and visit the library there, and find out how they do things. When can you?"

"Any time. I was just thinking I must ask Mr. Morse to give us a good write-up."

"Of course. He'll be interested. Let's go over now. Or perhaps you'd better go alone. I don't know him, and I never was in a newspaper office."

"Afraid of the devil?" jested Algernon, getting up and leaving her. Catherine watched him disappear into the office across the street.

"He walks better already," she thought with pride. "And he never made such a frivolous remark as that before. I do think this library will be the making of Algernon."

Back he came in a minute or two, with a promise of plenty of space in the *Courier*, and a free atlas.

"One they had in the office, of course; but we ought to have one, and every little helps. He was awfully interested and said it would be a fine thing for the town, and he'd boost every way he could."

"Aren't people lovely?" sighed Catherine rapturously. "I believe even Miss Ainsworth was more enthusiastic than she appeared to be. And we haven't even mentioned it to the Boat Club yet."

"Or the Three R's. They are chiefly Boat Club fathers and mothers."

"We must see the school superintendent."

"The ministers will announce it in the churches."

"Yes, we must see them to-morrow. O dear, I am so tired! What time is it anyway?"

Algernon drew a big watch from his pocket.

"Six-fifteen."

Catherine started up in horror.

"O! And I forgot all about helping with supper. What will mother think?"

Algernon watched her hasten away up the hill, and turned toward his own home with some anxiety. He had to coax his mother to take an interest in the new undertaking, and wished the operation over, but he squared his shoulders and determined to do his best and do it that very evening.

Catherine, for her part, spent the evening discussing the plan with her already sympathetic mother.

"It almost takes my breath away, Mother dear," she confided as they sat on the porch in the dusk, watching the fireflies, "the way people fall in with suggestions. It didn't occur to me before that *I* could start things going. But at college I had only to see that something should be done, and then to say so; and it almost always was done. And I was more surprised than anybody!"

Dr. Helen smiled, and put out her hand to stroke Catherine's head, which rested on her knee.

"They were pretty good ideas, I judge."

"They were perfectly simple ones. Just little things like having the mail-boxes assigned alphabetically, instead of by the numbers of the rooms. It saved the mail girls a lot of work, and Miss Watkins was glad of the suggestion. I helped Alice sort mail, you know,–she does it to help pay her way. And then the little notices on the bulletin board were always getting lost under the big ones, and I was on a Students' committee and often had notices to post, and I got them to make a rule that all notices should be written on a certain size sheet, and the board looks much neater now. And then there weren't any door-blocks. Aunt Clara told me that they had them at Vassar, little pads hanging outside your door, with a pencil attached, and if you are out, your callers leave their messages, you know. It seemed as though we needed something like that, for some of us don't like walking into people's rooms, and hunting around for paper. So I started that, and they all took it up in no time. They were only little things, but it was remembering a lot of little things like that that made me dare try to get the library. It's what we need, and I do believe it's going to come easily."

"Mr. Kittredge asked me to-day if I thought you would take the infant class in the Sunday-school for the summer. Mrs. Henley is to be away. I told him I'd ask you." Dr. Helen waited.

Catherine was silent a moment.

"Do you know, Mother, it seems as though you just get started doing one thing and you see another one ahead of you. If I am going around asking every one to help the library, I don't see how I can refuse to help when I'm asked! But I never did teach anybody. Who is in the class?"

"I asked him that. He says some of the children are rather old for it, but the school is too

small, or rather the teachers are too few, to make another class. So the ages run from the Osgood twins–”

“O, Peter and Perdita! I do love them. They are such a droll little pair. I beg your pardon, dear. I didn’t mean to interrupt. From Peter and Perdita to–to Elsmere, possibly?”

Dr. Helen laughed. “Exactly! Could you undertake Elsmere?”

Catherine sat up straight. “Yes, I could. Elsmere is unlucky, just as Algernon is. Everybody expects to be bored by Algernon and bothered or shocked by Elsmere. I know he is a little ‘limb o’ Satan,’ but if I’m going to take one brother on my shoulders, I might as well take them both. When does Mr. Kittredge want me to begin?”

“Not this week. You can go and see Mrs. Henley and talk it over with her. You’re showing a fine public spirit, Daughter mine, but let me suggest that you really can’t do much work for the town this summer, especially if you expect to entertain guests! I don’t approve of vacations that are busier than the school year!”

“O, the library won’t take long to start, if it starts at all. And Algernon will run it and his being busy will give me several extra hours weekly! And the children will only be Sundays. I promised Alice I’d do some Bible study this summer, anyway, and it might as well be done for that. She thought I was something of a heathen because I knew Shakespeare better than the Bible.”

“That only means you know Shakespeare very well, however. By the way, would you like that little old set in the guest-room for your library? I put it there, because there wasn’t a shelf free anywhere else, and we are rather overstocked with the gentleman’s writings in the rest of the house. Clara Lyndesay laughed at finding them there. She says she is going to write an essay some day on guest-room literature, and its implications.”

Catherine laughed, too. “It would be delicious if she did. I wish she would write things, Mother, and not just paint pictures. Do you suppose there’s any hope of her coming back to this country this summer?”

“I shouldn’t be greatly surprised. She plans to spend some weeks on the Isle of Wight, and that is so near this side that perhaps we can lure her over. An aunt left her a place in New England, you know, which she means to fit up for a studio sometime. Father should be coming home now. Let’s go down to the corner and see if we can see him. O, my daughter!” as Catherine sprang up and took her mother’s arm, “how you have grown beyond me!”

“It’s just my head that’s above you,” said Catherine, tucking her mother’s arm into her own. “It’s the fashion nowadays for girls to be taller than their mothers, but they don’t begin to come up to them in mind and manners. Miss Eliot told us so in History!”

“How about their hearts?” asked Dr. Helen.

“I don’t know about the other girls’, but my heart is just as high as my mother’s!” And Catherine bent her head the least little bit, and kissed her mother’s cheek, as Dr. Harlow, turning the corner, met them.

CHAPTER THREE
ORGANIZATION

The “stub” train on the Central was due to leave Winsted at 7:30. Catherine, having reluctantly left the washing of the breakfast dishes to the reckless Inga, to whom their quaint blue pattern was as naught, hurried down the hill and reached the dingy little station as the train shambled in. Algernon, full of good cheer, because his mother had taken it into her head to approve his undertaking, gallantly helped her aboard, and began at once to show a list of questions he had ready to ask the Hampton librarian.

The train stood still a little longer while a few milk cans were put on, then whistled, puffed and pulled slowly out. Hampton was only a short distance from Winsted, and Catherine and Algernon soon got off the train, and made their way to the library where they were welcomed by the kindly librarian and her young assistant, who proved to be a Dexter graduate.

The “stub” train meanwhile jogged and jolted on its way, carrying with it, fast asleep, the little “limb o’ Satan” known as Elsmere Swinburne. Elsmere could sleep anywhere on the slightest provocation. Deeming it unwise to make his presence known to his brother until the train was started beyond recall, he had curled up on a seat behind a large family, and while waiting his opportunity had fallen asleep. The conductor, taking him to be one of the overflow from the family in front, paid no attention to him until after they had left. Then he tried to rouse the child.

“Wake up, kid! Here, you’ve gone past your station. Wake up, I say! Gee! We’re running a sleeper on this train to-day, all right,” as Elsmere, lifted by the collar, only sank heavily back on the seat when released.

The conductor, goaded by the jests of the passengers, yelled in the boy’s ear, to no avail. Just

as he was abandoning the task in wrath, the child suddenly popped up, wide awake and interested.

“I want zwieback,” he announced.

Mrs. Swinburne, having read in a child-study book that dry food was bone-building, had brought her youngest up on long crumbly strips of zwieback, and he was seldom seen without one.

“What you givin’ us?” asked the conductor.

“I want zwieback,” answered Elsmere cheerfully, in the persistent tone he had learned to value for its efficacy.

“Where was your ma goin’?” asked the conductor.

“I want zwieback,” replied Elsmere.

“Let me try,” suggested a soft-voiced little lady. “I talked with his mother quite a bit while she was on. Want to find your mamma, little boy, and go to Grandma’s and play with all the pigs and chickies?”

“I want zwieback.”

“You talked with the woman, did you?” said the conductor. “Did you find out what her name was?”

“Let me see. Yes. It’s Peters. She was talking about going to his folks’, two miles out of Edgewater. She’ll be worried to death about this one.”

“I should think she might be,” remarked the conductor grimly, “for fear he’d come back. Here, you young Sweebock, you get off here.”

Elsmere obligingly followed to the platform and suffered himself to be given into the custody of the station agent, to whom he presented his petition for food.

“A little weak in the upper story,” explained the conductor. “His ma had about as many as she could manage and gettin’ off at Edgewater she forgot this one. Name’s Peters, stayin’ with old Mis’ Peters, two miles from Edgewater. You wire ’em to meet the express, and then you pass him back. Tell McWhire not to let him get to sleepin’. He ain’t an easy proposition, when he’s gone to Bylow, now I tell you,” and the conductor of No. 5 swung himself aboard.

Elsmere had the time of his life in the two hours before the arrival of the noon express. The station agent was a sociable soul. He had a guinea-pig in a box, so delightful to observe that Elsmere forgot his desire for zwieback and became conversational. He told the agent the history of the polly-wogs he had raised “till they was all froggies, only one was deaded.” He showed the place where he had cut his finger in the mower-lawn. He explained how fond he was of back-horse-saddle-riding, and declared his intention of some day having “frickers,” caressing the agent’s own sandy growth with great admiration. He tried to perform on the telegraph instrument and cried “Boo” with all his strength at a lady, peering in at the ticket window. Altogether, Elsmere found traveling very much to his taste. The noon express stopped for a minute, he was thrust aboard the last car, and a few minutes later, according to instructions, the newsboy put him off at Edgewater, with a cheery:

“Here y’are, Bub, and there’s Ma and Gramma.”

Elsmere had taken a fancy to the newsboy and did not at all wish to stop at Edgewater. He ran down the track after the retreating train, howling miserably.

As for “Ma and Gramma,” they had been overtaken by the dispatch just as they were starting to drive out to the farm, and had come in great perplexity to the station. The wailing baby running down the track suggested nothing to them, and the agent could give them no satisfaction. He was locking up his office. There was not another train to stop till No. 5 should return toward evening. So, still bewildered, Mrs. Peters and her mother-in-law gave up their fruitless errand and drove away, taking with them a problem for a lifetime’s pondering.

Elsmere, as the train vanished around a curve, sat down on the track for a while and listened to his own howls. Tiring of that amusement presently, he strolled back to the station. Outwardly it looked much like that hospitable one where he had enjoyed life earlier in the day. This one, however, offered no entertainment beyond wandering about the platform and the unoccupied waiting-room. Across the street was a little restaurant. There were pies in the window.

Elsmere obeyed the summons.

“Pie,” he said, presenting his nose to the edge of the lunch counter.

“Don’t you monkey with anything,” snapped a girl from behind the counter.

“I’m aren’t a monkey. I’m are a boy. Want pie,” Elsmere answered sweetly.

“You can’t get pie without money,” said the girl.

Elsmere felt in his pocket and produced a quarter. Whatever his failings, Elsmere had a redeeming trait of forehandedness, and had always on hand a hoard of articles which might be useful in an hour of need. The quarter bought respect at once and plenty of pie, also a

sandwich, a tall glass of milk and a big “rubber doughnut.”

When he had satisfied his hunger, the traveller returned to the depot, and, lying comfortably in the shade of a baggage truck, indulged in a siesta, a sleep so light this time, however, that the rolling back of the baggage-room door shattered it.

Sitting up, Elsmere watched the baggage-man get a tin trunk and a canvas telescope ready for shipping. Presently the stub train arrived, stopped, and while the conductor and the agent were exchanging gossip, Elsmere got inconspicuously aboard, and stowed himself away in a corner, so successfully that it was not till the brakeman called “Hampton” that the conductor discovered him.

Swearing softly and scratching his head in mystification, the conductor stood in the aisle staring at the ubiquitous babe, when a double cry arose:

“Elsmere, where in thunder?”

“Hullo, Algy!”

The young assistant, who had accompanied Catherine to the station for the sake of talking over mutual friends at Dexter, looked up in surprise as the dignified youth who had impressed her greatly by his intelligence and earnestness suddenly stooped and lifted a dirty, tear-and-pie-stained little boy in his arms. Catherine laughed. Elsmere could not greatly surprise her.

“Miss Adams,” she said, “you have shown your interest in the new Winsted library. Let me introduce you to its mascot.”

The morning after the Hampton expedition, Catherine struggled awake from dreams of book-lined trains, with Miss Adams and Elsmere as engineer and fireman, to open her eyes gratefully upon the substantial reality of her own great room in its fresh bareness. At the foot of her big carved bed, the broad window open to its utmost seemed to bring all out-of-doors within the room. A squirrel whisked his tail across the sill as he scurried in and out of the branches of the window-oak where a grosbeak and a wren chatted sociably. The sunshine through the leafy boughs lighted the bare floor and rested on the great writing table in the center of the room and on the high dark dresser. Catherine’s gaze, following the light, rested at last upon the low bookcases filling the chimney corners.

“I can spare one *Child’s Garden of Verses*,” she mused, “and that second *Little Women*. I wish they could have the Walter Crane and Kate Greenaway picture-books, but I couldn’t possibly let them go. I loved those little urchins in the children’s room,–especially that curly-headed little boy reading a bound *Wide-Awake*–O!” She sat up in bed and tossed her thick braids back. “I wonder if I ought? Or even if I could?” Out of bed she slipped, and crossed the room to the bookcases. Opening one, she ran her finger-tips tenderly along the stout backs of a row of dark red volumes. “My very own *Wide-Awakes*! What a storehouse they would be for the little folk! They needn’t be allowed to circulate, so they’d not wear out badly. They could just come in and read them there. I was going to give them my little rocking-chair, anyhow. O, dear! I’m afraid I’m really going to let them have you, you dear, dear books. It would be selfish to keep you up here all the time, when I almost never open you. Nobody shall have this one, though, with Hannah’s letter in it.”

She turned the pages of one of the latest volumes and paused at a neat little paragraph:

> “*Dear Wide-Awake:*
>
> “I have been taking you ever since I was a child. I will be fourteen my next birthday. I like you very much. I would like to correspond with any one who is about my age. I have no brothers and sisters, and get very lonely. I have read all Miss Alcott, but I wish she had let Jo marry Laurie. I like the *Wide-Awake* stories. Please have a good long one about boarding-school in the next number. I like Dickens, but I can’t bear Scott. I know John Gilpin and Baby Bell by heart, and I am in the eighth grade. I like skating and rowing. There is a fine pond near us.
>
> “Your loving reader,
>
> “Violet Ethelyn Eldred.
>
> “P. S. Nobody knows that I am writing this letter, so please print it soon to surprise them.”

Catherine kissed the page and closed the book. “Isn’t it too unbelievable that that queer little letter with that ridiculous fancy name at the end should have done so much? Violet Ethelyn Eldred! It hasn’t nearly so pleasant a sound to me now as Hannah. And the child thought no one would write to her if she signed her own name,–it was so ‘homely’! Ah me! I suppose I should be getting dressed instead of sitting about in the sunshine, mooning. I wonder if Inga will remember the muffins for breakfast.”

“Polly Osgood wants to see you, Catherine.”

Catherine, busily sorting linen in the up-stairs linen room a little later in the morning, leaned over the railing in answer to her mother’s announcement from the hall below.

“O, Polly, do come on up. I’ve a little more to do and we might just as well talk while I’m at it.

Have you called the Boat Club meeting?”

Polly Osgood came running up the stairs. She was a slender little girl with big blue eyes and yellow hair.

“Yes,” she answered brightly. “I’ve called it at ten. It’s almost that now. Tom can’t come, of course; he’s always so busy daytimes, but I think all the others will be there.”

“Hasn’t Bert something to keep him?”

“Not just now,” Polly laughed. “He substituted in the post-office last week, and the week before that in a hardware store, but just now he says nobody seems to need him, and he’s reading law in private.”

“He’s such a goose,” and Catherine put two mated pillow-cases together with a little pat. “Inga never knows enough to put things in pairs, and Mother wouldn’t dare begin to look them over. If she should do anything so domestic, half Winsted would break out with mumps or chickenpox. Where did you say we’d have the meeting?”

“At the boat house. We might as well use it, now we have it. But I didn’t know you broke out with mumps.”

“That’s only figurative. Polly, why have you gone back to braids and bows? You look very infantile for a real Wellesley sophomore.”

“I got tired of the bird-cages and puffs, and decided I’d go back to nature. Besides, playing around with Peter and Perdita you need something stationary. They work dreadful havoc with a stylish coiffure.”

“I wonder if I’d have to put my hair down just to teach them on Sundays? Mrs. Henley is going away, you know, and I’ve been asked to take her class.”

“O, I do hope you will,” cried Polly. “You would have a civilising influence on Perdita, and she needs it. Peter keeps her in order so well she never *does* anything very bad, but she is potentially a little terror.”

“She always seems very mild when I see her,” commented Catherine, patting her piles into straight lines. “But you can’t always tell about people by looking at them. I, for instance, have all my life been expected to be lady-like, just because when I was little I hadn’t strength enough to be naughty. And many and many a time I have felt like doing something wild and shocking!”

“Why, Catherine Smith!” exclaimed Polly in amazement. “You always seemed to me a sort of beautiful princess up here on the hill, and, good as any of the rest of us might try to be, we never could hope to be as good as you. Have you honestly ever wanted to be bad?”

Catherine laughed, a funny little gurgling laugh. “I honestly have–not wicked you know, but–well, reckless! And I never had the courage to do anything very startling till last year at college.”

She stopped and laughed again.

“Tell me,” Polly insisted. “I’ll never tell. What did you do? Was it fun? Tell me!”

Catherine’s eyes twinkled. “I made up my mind that it was my one chance, for no one there belonged to me, and my tiresome reputation for propriety hadn’t had time to get started. So one day I got up late, and was late to breakfast, and cut a class, and–” She laughed so hard that Polly wanted to shake her. “O, Polly it was such a ridiculous thing to do! I talked slang and chewed gum!”

Polly gasped. “Did you like it? What made you stop?”

“People. They were so astonished. And, besides, I hated the gum. Inez Dolliver used to chew it with such gusto that I thought it must be rather good. And the slang sounded so easy and,–O! lighthearted, you know, and friendly. When you and Hannah Eldred use it, it never seems offensive, just pleasant and gay. But everyone looked so worried and puzzled all day at me, that I decided to stop. And next day they seemed so relieved. I told Dy-the Allen later about it (she’s the dearest thing!) and she was very philosophical. She told me it wasn’t becoming to my general character, just as pink wasn’t becoming to my hair. I told her I had always loved pink, and wanted to wear it, and she suggested that I wear it at night. It wouldn’t show in the dark and it was an innocent desire; and perhaps if I did that, I’d not want to use slang or chew gum. I didn’t, after I had tried once, anyhow! Polly Osgood, here we are sitting around and I’m telling you foolish stories about myself, when we ought to be discussing library matters.”

“The other was more interesting,” sighed Polly. “I’m going to give up slang myself soon. I never did chew gum! But I’ve been terribly bored lately by some rather flip young creatures I’ve had to see more or less, and I decided to cut it out and talk plain English. What are you smiling at?”

Then, as her own earnest sentences came back to her, she reddened a little, and joined Catherine in smiling. “Isn’t that a fright? I mean, isn’t that startling? I didn’t know I used it so much. Do you suppose I can cure myself and still have time and attention to give to starting the library? It’s time we were down there now.”

“All right. I’m ready, as soon as I get my hat. Do you ever wear them at college?”

“Never. Now while we go along, tell me just what your idea is. What did the Hampton ladies say?”

Catherine thrust her hatpins in, as she hurried down the steps.

“They advised having some club take it up, for a time at least, and they thought it would be nice to have it be the Boat Club instead of a literary one, because the literary ones often have a spirit of competition, and if one of them started the library the others might not feel inclined to use it.”

“I see, and the Boat Club, besides being unsectarian and interdenominational and non-partisan, has a lot of waste enthusiasm and energy that might just as well be put to work. Father says he is sure that when the thing is really running, the council will vote a tax and take it off our hands. You are sure Algernon can run it? I thought it took years of special training.”

“It does,” Catherine answered gravely, “but we could not afford a trained librarian, and Algernon is intelligent and will study. Miss Adams gave him hints as to books to get, and she will help him. He can go over there when he gets into difficulties. She seemed to like him. They talked about all sorts of technical things,–Algernon had a lot of information stowed away in his head, of course,–and she didn’t seem bored at all.”

“I’ve often thought I shouldn’t be, if I knew anything about the subjects he talks about,” confessed Polly. “There are Bertha and Agnes.” She trilled to the two girls ahead, who turned and waited.

On the flat roof of the boat house half a dozen members of the club were assembled. Polly hastened to take her seat and call the meeting to order.

“Max Penfield will act as secretary, and we shall expect the minutes done in the most approved University style. Archie Bradly, will you please state the object of the meeting?”

“Fo’ de lan’s sake, no!” ejaculated Archie, sitting up and shutting his knife. “That’s the very thing I came to find out!”

“Very well,” said Polly, twinkling. “Then, of course, you will pay close attention. It will do you more good than carving Andover on the benches. There’s not much space left on them, now, and it’s still early in the season. Catherine, will you tell us the object of the meeting? Ouch!” for Archie had reached lazily behind her and given one of her yellow braids a gentle yank.

“You all know, already,” began Catherine, “except perhaps Archie! We’ve talked it over with the older people, and they think it’s perfectly practical, only some one or some organization has to take it in charge.”

“What’s ‘it’?” asked Archie innocently.

“Why, the library. The Boat Club is going to see that Winsted has a public library.”

“Turn into Carnegies?” inquired Max, doing a sketch of Geraldine Winthrop on the margin of the secretary’s book.

“Not exactly. We haven’t got our own dock built yet, and I don’t think we are in a position to endow libraries. But I mean we can work and talk–”

“Talking’s work,” complained Archie. “That’s redundancy.”

“It is, when you keep interrupting,” cried Bertha Davis. “Go on, Catherine. Don’t mind him. Just how can we work?”

“Well, the room will have to be cleaned thoroughly, and we girls can do most of that if the boys will help a little. And there will have to be some plain shelves put up for the books.”

“Me for the carpenter job!” cried a long-legged youth who had lain thus far in the shade of his own hat, in entire silence and apparent unconsciousness. “It’s just what I want to cure my brain fever.”

“Overstudy? Or overwork reading postals last week?” asked Agnes, smiling into Bert’s half-shut eyes.

“It’s more likely fatty degeneration of the brain, if it’s Bert Wyman that has it,” said an emphatic voice, and a spruce energetic maiden joined the group. “I just got in on the 10:10, and Mother said you were all over here. What’s before the house?”

“Nothing. We’re all on the house,” explained Archie dryly, but Polly answered the question with careful courtesy. Dorcas listened.

“Very well,” she said, when Polly finished. “If it is in order, I move you, Madam President, that we proceed to clean the library at once.”

“O, Dorcas, not to-day!” groaned two or three, while Max remarked in an aside to no one that if it was in order it shouldn’t need cleaning.

“Why not to-day?” asked Dorcas briskly. “How you-all can loaf around the way you do is more than I can comprehend. Dot, your hair is coming down.”

Dot, who was called Dot, because she was a dot, though her parents had intended her to go through life as Geraldine, lifted her eyebrows slightly, and removing her four hairpins, shook down her hair and did it up again. The process took four seconds.

“I’d rather have Dot’s curls than Dorcas’ brains,” growled Bert to Agnes, who reproached him with a look.

While Dorcas’ motion was waiting for a second, there came down the road two pretty girls, in fluffy gowns, their white sunshades tilted charmingly. Max slammed the secretary’s book shut.

“Hurry up and let’s adjourn,” he said, and Archie, suddenly energetic, seconded the motion and carried it, so far as it concerned himself, by going out to meet the newcomers and invite them to go canoeing at once. Max followed suit, and the meeting broke up unceremoniously, but with a sense of valuable achievement.

Dorcas, uttering harsh judgments upon the parliamentary methods of Polly Osgood, and, by inference, of all Wellesley College, attached herself to Bertha and Agnes for the homeward walk.

“See here, Dorcas Morehouse,” said Bertha so suddenly that her sister and Dorcas jumped. “If you think that just because you have been to Chicago University for a quarter, you are going to run us all, this summer, you are mightily mistaken. Agnes and Dot and I never went away to school, and neither did Bess nor Winifred, but we aren’t stupid, and we won’t have you patronizing us. Catherine Smith is intellectual enough for any one, and she never snubs or patronizes; and as for Polly Osgood, you wouldn’t dare *hint* a criticism of Wellesley if she were within hearing, and you know it. So there! If this library scheme is good enough for them, it is for the rest of us, and if you don’t like it, you can just stay out of it!”

Whereupon, Bertha, having delivered herself, even more to her own astonishment than to any one else’s, turned at the first corner and walked rapidly away, leaving her embarrassed sister to placate the wrathful Dorcas in any way her gentle heart suggested.

CHAPTER FOUR
WITH PAIL AND BROOM

“Please forscuse me. Here’s the key,” and Elsmere held out to Catherine the aforesaid article, his honeyed voice and polite words matched by a cherubic smile.

“The key?” asked Catherine. “O, the key to the library. How did you get it?”

“Algy give it to me. I Algy’s little help-boy,” smiled the cherub.

Catherine tried to take the key, but it refused to come.

“What’s the matter?” she asked. “It seems to be caught.”

Elsmere squirmed a little. “Tieded,” he murmured, and Catherine, bending closer to investigate, discovered that the key was so secured to the child’s apparel that sharp steel was necessary to sever the connection.

“Algy hasn’t too much confidence in his little help-boy, after all,” she thought. “Thank you, Elsmere. Now run along home like a good boy.”

“No, Elsmere go, too, like a good boy. I help.”

Catherine sighed. The library was to be cleaned that morning as soon as the girls could be spared by their respective mothers. She had been waiting for Algernon to bring the key, and had counted on his muscular assistance in the labor before her. Now, instead, she had only the key, and that almost as hopelessly affixed to Elsmere as it had been before she cut it loose. She took up her bundle of rags, scrubbing-brush and soap resignedly, and calling “Good-by” to Dr. Helen started off down the hill. On the way she stopped for Agnes, who came out with a broom. Polly, bearing a pail, met them at the corner. At the library they found Bertha, mop-laden, pressing her nose against the pane to see inside.

“Hello!” she called to them. “How can we get hot water?”

“Let’s go over to Henderson’s and borrow a little oil stove for a few hours, and we’ll heat the water in this pail. One of you might go to the pump in the park and get it full now. Whose broom?” touching one, leaning by the window.

“Dot’s. She came and went off again. Bert passed, driving a ten-cent express and she hailed him and they’ve gone over to Mr. Kittredge’s to get the books he promised.”

“The crazy children! Where will we ever put books to-day, with the room in such a state?”

Catherine fitted the key to the lock, and the band of cleaners entered, unrolled their big aprons and began, with much energy and good nature, to sweep down the walls and ceiling and gather the milliner’s rubbish into two big baskets found in the shed. Elsmere picked over the pile, making rapturous discoveries.

“Aren’t these very small bushel baskets?” asked Agnes. “They fill up so fast.”

“They’re just about the average size, I think,” remarked Catherine. “They don’t vary much more than yardsticks do in length! But I do wish some of those lazy boys were here to carry

them out and empty them for us."

"What's that?" asked Max's voice in the doorway. Immaculate in white flannels, with Bess by his side, bewilderingly beruffled, he viewed the scene before him dispassionately.

Catherine and Agnes, red and warm and somewhat dishevelled, returned the gaze for a moment silently. In that moment an entirely natural resentment was forced into outward pleasantness.

"We were just wishing some one was here to make a bonfire of this *débris* for us," said Catherine cheerfully, "but never mind. There comes Polly with a man from Henderson's, and he'll take it out."

"All right. Wish you luck. We'd stop and help, only we've got to meet Arch and Win, and we're late already. So long!" and Max lifted his cap, Bess waved her sunshade, and the two went around the corner out of sight.

The man from Henderson's did some lifting very willingly, rescued what was left of the water Bertha was tugging from the park, lighted the stove and even stayed to poke the bonfire he made for them in the street, and keep it from spreading.

"It's a good thing," he said, as he went away amid a chorus of "Thank you." "Everybody'd ought to help all they can."

"I'd like to make him a member of the club," growled Polly, "and turn one or two people I could mention out."

"Dorcas doesn't seem so zealous as she did yesterday," remarked Catherine. "I hope she isn't angry, because we didn't fall in with her suggestions."

Bertha looked conscious, and stole a glance at Agnes, but said nothing. Catherine, catching the look, laughed.

"Father says Dorcas does us all a lot of good, as a counter-irritant. Whenever we begin to feel a little cross with each other, we all turn in and feel very cross with Dorcas. I was simply raging when Max and Bess sailed by in their purple and fine linen, but at least they hadn't pretended to be interested, and Dorcas–"

"She may be busy," said Agnes. "There's a lot of work at their house, and Dorcas usually does her share. I'll say that much for her, though she does make me awfully angry sometimes. Where is Elsmere? He might go over to the store and get something to polish this window-glass with."

"I don't know. Elsmere! Elsmere! Where are you? Come here, dear." No response.

"O, never mind," sighed Catherine wearily. "I'm not responsible for him. It is a relief to have him out of the way for a while. I wanted to send him home before, but he had such a sweet lady-like way with him this morning, I couldn't bring myself to. Girls! Hark!"

The four laborers had dropped upon a long box to rest a few minutes from their toil. Their low voices had been the only sound. Now distinctly, in a remote corner of the room, could be heard a little scratch, scratch. Then across the floor, serene and fearless, "right where I had been sweeping," Catherine said later with a shiver, ran a small gray mouse.

With one accord the four tucked their skirts about them and sat closer. No one spoke, but each measured the distance to the door with an accurate eye. And then, silently, but with haste, they beat a swift retreat.

The fair wide street before them, the door shut behind them, they drew deep breaths of relief, though each avoided the others' eyes.

"Some girls wouldn't mind going right up and killing it," said Polly, "but I simply could not."

"Nor I," said Catherine firmly. "I could go to battle or the stake like Joan of Arc, but I draw the line at mice."

"What's the matter? What are you all out here for? I thought you came to clean."

It was Dorcas, of course. The girls hung their heads with shame, and Bertha, who had defied her so boldly when last they met, answered with meekness.

"We did. But there's a mouse."

Dorcas looked them all over with an expression of deep scorn.

"Give me the key," she said, and it was given to her.

Then the fearful ones flattened their faces against the unwashed window-pane to see what would happen. The little gray creature placidly nibbled a tidbit in a corner. Dorcas approached him. He lifted his head and regarded her. She faltered a little and glanced behind her. She even felt hastily of her skirts. The respect in the watching faces lightened a little. Every woman is born knowing how mice delight to hide in skirts.

After a moment Dorcas opened the door and came out, passed the group of watchers without a word and crossed the street to Henderson's. Coming back a minute later with a trap, she re-entered the room, set the trap and waited. So did the others, breathless, clinging to each other. Bert and Dot, driving up on their ten-cent express, saw that something unusual was going on, and drove quietly around into the alley. Peeping in at the back window, they took

in the situation quickly: Dorcas on one side of the room, the little gray mouse on the other, the trap between. The silence lasted for several seconds. Then came a sharp crack! And Dorcas, throwing her arm across her eyes, ran out of the room with a shriek and fell upon Agnes, who was nearest.

“He’s killed,” she sobbed. “I–I saw him!”

“So he is,” soothed Agnes. “None of the rest of us would have dared set the trap, if we had been bright enough to think of it. There! It was harrowing, but it’s all over now.”

“No, no,” shuddered Dorcas. “He’s in there yet, and he’s *dead*!”

Catherine spied Bert’s two mischievous eyes looking around the corner of the building. In an instant she had despatched him to clear the room of its horror, and was bringing Dot, a protesting prisoner, to join the group.

“Where did you come from?” asked every one, while Dorcas collected herself.

“O, our chariot’s just outside,” answered Dot. “We saw you all peeping in, so we drove around behind to have a look ourselves. Got there in time to see the final fatality. Dorcas was heroic until she won. Are you girls honestly afraid of mice?”

“I am of live ones,” confessed Catherine.

“I am of dead ones,” said Dorcas.

“Dead or alive, they, ‘turn my blood to ice within me, and make the breath of my heart wax pale,’ as the lecturer said last night,” said Polly. “But now that you dare-devil people have cleared the field for action, we may as well go in and scrub. We’d only just finished sweeping. Dot, you may take the death-bed boards. And, O, there comes Bert, back from the funeral. As President of the Winsted Boat Club and Library Association, I hereby appoint you and Geraldine Winthrop a Standing Mouse Committee with full power to act.”

“Dorcas to be official executioner, I trust,” and Bert held the door open for Dorcas, bowing low as she passed.

That afternoon the B. C. & L. A. gathered in force. Even Tom Davis, brother of Bertha and Agnes, asked for a half-day’s vacation and helped Algernon whitewash. Bert had impressed Max into carpentering, and the work of bookcase-building went on noisily inside the shed. The girls sat on the weedy patch of ground outside, sewing sash curtains.

“It would be quicker to make them on the machine at home, but not nearly so much fun,” said Agnes. “How many books did you and Bert gather up this morning, Dot?”

“Fifty-three volumes besides Miss Ainsworth’s. Those were already over here in the shed. Where is Archie?”

“He and Winifred are coming. They were going to bring a rug Win’s mother said we could have, and two lamps.”

“They will enjoy carrying them over this hot afternoon!” said Bess, deftly hemming a curtain. “But it can’t be so bad as this morning. Girls, we had a perfectly dreadful time. It was all on account of that terrible little Swinburne boy. You see, we thought we’d take the big Penfield boat, instead of the canoes, and just as we were pushing off, that child stepped into the boat from the dock and announced serenely that he was going boating-ride. He did look dear, and quite clean, and we all knew that it was hard to make him change his mind, so we let him come. He sat very still and was as good as gold till we had got a long way from home, and then he began.”

Catherine sighed appreciatively. “I can imagine, Bess dear. But do tell us.”

“You can’t imagine. Nobody could. He talked a blue streak. And the things he said! He asked what he was made of, and how God got the eyes in. He told about somebody’s having a tooth out and went into dreadful details. And then he got off on a worse tack, and asked Archie where his wife was, and when Archie said he wasn’t married, he sighed and looked so sorry, and said: ‘Wasn’t you *ever* marwied, Archie? Not even once?’ He simply spoiled our morning. It wasn’t so much what he did say, as what we thought he might be going to. We had to turn around and come home long before we wanted to, just on account of that child.”

“If you had only thought to have Win sing to him,” said Catherine. “He will drop off to sleep with the least assistance, even when he seems widest awake, and Win’s lullabies are irresistible. There! that’s the last curtain. And there come Archie and Win with a donkey-cart, and–why, what do you think they have? It can’t be just a rug and two lamps.”

Every one broke off work to go to meet the donkey-cart, a low, long, box affair, with Winifred and Archie on the seat, and a quantity of furniture and boxes in the back.

Algernon, still holding a brush, took the donkey by the bridle and backed him up.

“There, unload everything. It’s all right. I sent these folks after them. Didn’t have time to go myself. Yes, yes, they belong here. The Three R’s sent the table.”

With eager exclamations, the boys and girls unloaded six chairs, an oak table, a rocker, a box spilling over with stationery and colored cards, a miscellaneous lot of books, two neat rugs and half a dozen lamps of a variety of styles and shapes.

“The Three R’s gave the table and chairs,” explained Algernon, “and Mrs. Kittredge said to

call at her house for the rocker and some of those lamps. And these other things I bought. Miss Crockett over at Hampton told me what to order and they came to-day, and I opened them up at the house."

Catherine came up beside Algernon and watched him unpack the boxes of cards, pens, paper clips, mending tissue, paste, shears and other new and shining articles. She was distinctly surprised. A large share of their little capital must have gone into these purchases. And Algernon had told no one, not even herself, that he was buying them.

Dorcas caught up a sheet of the paper.

"It seems to me it's rather fresh of you to spend the association's money for paper with your name on it, without knowing whether the permanent organization will want you or not."

The glow faded from Algernon's eyes. The consideration with which he had been treated these last few days had taught him to estimate properly the tolerance which had been all he had received before. Catherine, even, looked puzzled and not quite pleased.

"O, I say," he protested sadly. "You don't think I'd go and spend the public money, do you? I thought it would be fun to have these things all ready. I didn't know you'd rather have had me give the money and let the rest of you send in the order. I just did it for my share,–I'm awfully sorry."

Catherine lifted her head brightly.

"Indeed, you did exactly right. None of us would have known half so wisely how to use it. What did I tell you people? How many towns have librarians who work without pay, and furnish all their materials besides?"

Bert suddenly mounted the seat of the donkey-cart.

"What's the matter with the Boat Club?" he inquired hoarsely.

"We're all right," modestly replied the Boat Club, boys and girls together.

"What's the matter with the Three R's?"

"They're all right."

"What's the matter with the library?"

"It's all right."

"And now three cheers and a tiger for A. Swinburne, librarian. Hip, hip, hooray!"

CHAPTER FIVE
A DAY OFF

"Not going over to the library to work to-day?"

"Not this morning. Mother Nature says I'd better not."

Dr. Helen put her hand on her daughter's forehead. "Too tired?" she queried, with a note of anxiety in her voice. It had been only in the last year or so that Catherine had been well enough to do the things other girls did, and she was always on the lookout for indications of over-exertion.

"No," answered Catherine, pulling her mother's firm strong hand down to her lips and kissing it. "And I don't intend to become so. Things can wait for a day, or the others can go on without me. I'm going to be a private citizen and stay at home and mend. Can't you sit and sew too, Mother?"

"Perhaps I can for half an hour," said Dr. Helen, "and you certainly need to give your clothes some attention. When you go up stairs to get your things, bring down that brown silk waist, and I'll make the collar over for you."

In a few minutes the two were cozily settled in the little alcove off the big book-lined living-room, a pleasant breeze bringing morning freshness in by way of an open window.

"Mother," said Catherine suddenly, "you and Father have brought me up very differently from most girls."

"How?"

"Why, about taking care of myself. Some of the really nice girls seem to think it's perfectly all right to be sick, even when it could have been avoided. And some of them think it's rather fine to be ailing."

"Do you mean they want to be petted? That's natural enough."

"Not just that. I don't mind that. But Dy-the Allen–"

"Stop a minute, Catherine. Once for all, what is her ridiculous name? I have wanted to know for nearly a year and never think to ask."

Catherine laughed. “She was christened Edith, but when she was in High School she had a silly streak and wrote it with a ‘y’ for the ‘i’ and an ‘e’ on the end, so her brother called her E-dy-the, the way it looks, you know, just to tease her, and it turned into Dy-the and stayed that, though she signs herself Edith. She is one of the very dearest girls I ever knew, and how we shall get along without her next year at Dexter is more than I can guess. All the little preps adore her. But that was the very thing that made me crossest about her carelessness. She would go out in the snow with little thin dancing slippers on and lace stockings, and then take a horrible cold and be ill for days, and shut herself up in her room and have everybody bringing her flowers and meals and writing her notes. And then all her little satellites did similar things and it made a lot of bother for everybody. Little Hilda went to see a measles child because she thought it was fine to be reckless the way Dy-the is, and then she gave it to her roommate and two other girls. I got quite angry once and let Dy-the know just how it looked to me. I told her she ought to be ashamed to disobey Nature and be sent to bed for it, and she only laughed and quoted things from Stevenson about people who live on tepid milk and wear tin shoes. I told her Stevenson certainly tried to look out for his own health, for all that, but I couldn’t make her think it a serious matter at all. She just laughed. She’s such a dear, she doesn’t know how to be angry, Dy-the doesn’t,” and Catherine smiled, in spite of her own earnestness, at the visions the name brought to her mind.

“Here comes somebody else of the dear variety,” said Dr. Helen. “Go and let Polly in.”

“She doesn’t need to be let in,” said that young person, appearing with the words. “She let her own self in. I’m on an errand, Catriona darling. I want your mother’s advice and yours. What do you think of a regular library opening, with refreshments and all that? And have people bring books for admission fees?”

“Do sit down, Polly, and rest for a minute. You look as though you expected to be called to the telephone.”

Polly dropped, sighing, into a comfortable chair.

“It does feel good to let down for a minute,” she admitted. “I get so into the habit of tearing through space at college that I can’t stop rushing for a month after I get home, and this library business has kept me jumping. I suppose the public could get on a day or two longer without it, seeing they have so many years. I worked all day yesterday with Algernon, and then in the evening it was too hot to stay in the house, and the mosquitoes were so thick outside that it was harder work trying to keep comfortable than anything I had done all day.”

“They are worse than ever this year,” sighed Dr. Helen, “and, really, I think they are harder to bear when we all know that a little public-spirited co-operation would rid us of them. Can’t you get the people who draw books at the new library to agree to sprinkle the breeding-places with oil?”

Polly suddenly chuckled. “I beg your pardon, Dr. Helen, for being rude, but I just remembered a woman who addressed an open air meeting on the campus this spring. She was a missionary returned from somewhere and she appeared at one of the houses and wanted to talk, so we got a few girls together on the lawn to hear her. The mosquitoes were simply unbearable. We all sat there slapping ourselves and making grabs at the air, and trying to look interested, and then she opened her Bible and read about being encompassed about with a cloud of witnesses: That was bad enough, when you could see them settling all about us like a great dotted veil, but nobody cracked a smile until she gave out the hymn. And that, if you please, was ‘My soul be on thy guard, ten thousand foes arise!’ You know how it goes.” And Polly sang:

> “‘Ne’er think the vict’ry won,
> Nor once at ease sit down,
> Thy arduous work will not be done
> Till thou obtain thy crown.’”

“She might have asked for ‘Christian, up and smite them,’” said Dr. Helen. “Now, children, I should like nothing better than to sit and hear college yarns all the morning, but I have an office hour to keep. Catherine, did you tell Inga to order peas for dinner?”

“That reminds me,” said Polly, springing up. “Mamma wanted me to do some marketing before I came home, and I was forgetting it entirely. And I haven’t found out yet what you think of the opening!”

“I should think it would be a good way to advertise it and get people interested. We ought to get a lot of books, too, though they wouldn’t all be worth much. Are you going to work to-day? I decided I’d have to take a day off.”

“I don’t believe any one will go down. Win won’t, because Max has gone up to Madison to take a re in Trig and she won’t bother about anything when he’s not around. Dorcas said she’d see to the card-pockets at home–her Sunday-school class will do it, poor infants! And Bertha and Agnes have to help their mother because she’s going to have the Ladies’ Aid this afternoon. They are the best pair of workers I ever saw.”

“Aren’t they? Bess was fine about the curtains, too. She is so changeable, though, that I don’t know what to think of her.”

“Only a question of whether there’s a man body about, my dear,” said Polly oracularly. “Many a girl is all right and sensible when there are just girls around, but let a lad heave in

sight, and the whole situation is altered. I've known Bess since she came to Winsted in a ruffled white apron, and no one can teach me anything about her. Now, having dissected all my friends, I think I really must do my marketing."

"We haven't said anything about Dot, the dear," said Catherine, following Polly to the door.

"Dot, the dear," echoed Polly. "That's all there is to say about her. Good-by, honey. To-morrow we'll go at it for a grand finale. That was the name of the last piece in my first music book, and I always like to say it. It sounds so complete, someway. You don't know, Catherine," and Polly stopped on the last step to look up at her tall friend, "how pleasant it makes things to have you in them. I'm just loving this library work, and so are the rest of us. Playing with you is like having one's Sunday doll all the week, or as if the princess in the fairy stories had turned into a real mortal. Good-by this time for truly true!"

Humming a Wellesley song, Polly was off down the walk at a brisk pace, and Catherine, who had answered her last words with a look more expressive than speech, stood watching her a minute, and then went happily back to her mending.

The grocer's boy, who arrived with the peas a little later, also brought the mail. He was devoted to Inga and enjoyed doing gratuitous favors for the doctor's family for her sake. Inga brought in two letters to Catherine, who joyfully dropped her darning and tore them open.

"*Belovedest Goldilocks;*" the first began, in Hannah Eldred's writing, not much improved in the two years she and Catherine had been corresponding.

"We are here at the shore for the summer, or that part of it which must pass before I come flying out to you with Frieda. Mamma and I are here all the time and Dad and Herr Karl come out for Sundays.

"People are so puzzled about Karl. I say over and over: 'No, not my tutor. No, not a cousin. Not even a ward of my father's. Just a German boy we learned to know in Berlin, and now a student at Harvard. Yes, we met him quite simply. He lived in the apartment under us, and he had hurt his leg and couldn't walk, and we used to entertain him. Frieda Lange and I did. It was at her house we were staying. His father is Herr Director Von Arndtheim, and they are very respectable!' People at a summer resort, even a little one, are the curiousest in the world, *I* think!

"Who do you think is coming to spend a few days with us next week? Nice old Inez! I'm awfully glad she is coming, but honestly I do hope she has learned to put her clothes on straight and to keep her room tidy. She's so good, and so faithful that I love her anyhow, but Mother does like neat guests dreadfully well! She would love you for a guest, Catherine. But there! You always are just ex-actly right, without the tiniest drawback,–unless Dexter has changed you. Has it?

"I feel as though I were having my second childhood. It was so nice to be at college that term with the grown-up girls, and now I have to go with infants like little Hilda and Gertrude, only not so nice. I had first year Math in High School, you know, last year, and my German Prof regarded me as a babe and wouldn't let me read things because I wasn't old enough–things that weren't suitable for children. Frieda's mother has never let her read a love story, you know, and this man has the same idea! He talked to me, the stiffest conversation lessons you ever heard. It was like the dialogues in Ruskin. I wonder what he would think if he should hear Karl and me sometimes. We jabber it all the time, he and Mamma and I. Dad won't let us when he's around, so we talk English then, and that instructs Karl. He's good except for his pronunciation. You should hear him do the Harvard yell! He rolls the 'r's' so far he almost loses them. They are even worse than you-ers, my western de-ar.

"We are going to have a hop to-night, a really hop, and I am going. They can't put me off with the children because I haven't any nurse or governess, and there aren't any other girls between infants and real young ladies. The hop won't be very big, because there are only a few families (it's not a fashionable place, you know), but we'll have a perfectly good time all the same. I am so pleased to be going as a *Herrschaft*, and I have a darling new frock for this and everything. It's a soft rosy silk with tiny tight rosebuds all over it. And I have a little wreath of buds to wear in my hair. There are two or three awfully nice people coming over. One of Karl's classmates at Harvard, and two boys from the Tech and a nice curly-haired freshman from Dartmouth. And there is a Smith girl, perfectly charming, and a rather frumpy one from Wellesley who knows your Polly Osgood, or rather knows who she is. This girl's name is Violet, and I saw a letter addressed to her and her middle initial was E, and I asked if her name was Ethelyn, but she said it was Emma!

"I *wish* you could see my little hop-gown. And the dear wreath. It makes me think of Ivy-Planting Day at Dexter and the way the seniors sang 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may.' Wasn't Lilian the sweetest thing? She is studying in Boston this year, you know, and I saw her once. And weren't the little pig-tailed preps dear with their pink doves, I mean pink-ribboned doves? That was your pretty idea, my beautiful Catherine. I never could have thought of anything so lovely.

"I'm almost at the bottom of the inkstand, and I haven't told you yet what I started to write about. But Mamma has written your mother, so it's all right. Frieda is to land the last of July, and I'm going to take her out to you as soon after that as your mother and mine think best. I think she will need a long time to get acquainted, don't you? I know you will love each other, but she must know you thoroughly before college opens. It is tantalizing to think of you and

her and Alice all being together. I do think I ought to be there, too, since I was the one who introduced you to each other. I'd like to keep Frieda with me next year, but every one seems to think the best place for her is right in the dormitory with the other girls,–and of course, it will be easier for her out there than in any of the big colleges nearer us. She is so obstinate she wouldn't learn English if she were near any one who could talk anything she would recognize for German. What most of the girls at college talk for that, she wouldn't know from Choctaw.

"Lots of love to the dear doctors, and for yourself bushels and quarts and pecks. I had a card from Miss Lyndesay from the Isle of Wight yesterday.

"Now I must shut, as Frieda said in her last letter!

"Your loving HANNAH."

Catherine gathered up the scattered pages of this voluminous letter and then opened the slender one which had accompanied it. This bore a far western postmark, and its neat little pages resembled copperplate.

"*My Dear Roommate:*

"I'm waiting for a youth to whom I am to give a toot lesson. He is very stupid. I have him in Greek and English literature. In Greek he translates the word for Lord, 'Cyrus.' We have been reading the New Testament, and you can think how very oddly that would come in, in some passages! And in an English test he assured me that Milton wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the author of Bacon's *Essays* was Charles Lamb. He makes me wonder whether I shall have courage enough to tackle teaching as a profession, if tutoring is so difficult. But I like his money very well, and Mother is going away for a real vacation and will take Cora, and that couldn't happen if I hadn't found work this summer.

"I have a Sunday-school class, too, and that is entertaining, at least. It is at a mission, and such queer dirty little chaps as are in it!

"I started in to teach them an alphabet of Christian graces, or desirable qualities. The first week we had A for Attention, and the second, B for Bravery, and the third week I thought they all had the idea, and asked them to guess what C would be. They thought very hard, and then one piped out: 'Cabbages!' The same little boy told me that the priests burned *insects* in the temple!

"My whole letter seems to be nothing but my pupils' absurdities. But really I have very little else to write about that would interest any one. I'm busy all day, and too tired at night to read or write. I take more pleasure getting acquainted with my darling little brother Jack again, than in anything else I do. He has been Ariel now for a week, and it's very convenient, for there are many errands to be done. He sleeps at night in a cow-slip bell, very romantically, but I have no hope the spell will last. He will be a robber chief or a street-car conductor next week. The poetry in his system is in streaks, not continuous. O! that reminds me–and it's the last 'bright saying' I shall quote in this letter, I promise you! He asked me rather shyly the other day what poetry was, and after I had attempted to explain, he said: 'It's queer, Allie. I thought it was chickens!'

"Here comes my pupil, looking very sad. I wish he didn't regard me as an old, old woman. I suppose I seem so to him, but I do hate to feel for two hours a day that I have lost all my youth.

"When does Hannah come? And Frieda? I am all eagerness to see her. Did you carry my embroidered waist home with you by any chance? I can't find it, and I really need it.

"My love to your mother, always.

"Faithfully yours,

"ALICE BARBARA."

CHAPTER SIX
THE OPENING

The opening of the library had been vigorously advertised. Bert and Dot had wheeled the country roads over within a radius of three miles from town, posting bills of announcement. The ministers urged it upon their congregations as a civic duty to attend. At social gatherings the week before nothing else was talked of. And everybody was going to bring books.

"Such a lot of trash as we'll get!" groaned Dorcas.

"I know it," assented Polly, "but they will all take an interest, and that is what we are after now. Once properly established, we can buy good books, and these old ones will just stand idle or wear out or get lost or something."

"I don't think it's very appropriate to serve refreshments," objected Dorcas once more. "And

Algernon doesn't think it is a dignified way to do."

"O, well," put in Catherine, appeasingly. "Mrs. Graham says, you know, that we'll 'have to get people pretty well educated readin' our encyclopedias and dictionaries before they'll think anything's worth goin' to that there ain't somethin' to eat at!' And Mrs. Graham is going to take charge of all that part, anyhow, so I don't feel like finding fault. There won't be any expense, with everything contributed."

"They might have given the money instead of ice-cream and cakes."

"O, Dorcas, Dorcas, you would expect people to be all made over. Did you ever read Stevenson's fable of the reformer who thought the first step in reforming the world was to abolish mankind? Let's not worry about it. I know it's going to be a success. Isn't this room the cleanest spot you ever saw?" And Catherine threw back her arms with a gesture to rest her tired shoulders, and looked about her with affection and pride. Bare white walls, with one good engraving, loaned by Judge Arthur, for ornament; plain shelves with rows of neat books, their orderly labels smiling like sets of teeth; the reading-table in the exact center of the room, with three chairs in military array on each side of it, and a few contributed magazines in mathematical piles between two student lamps; and last, Algernon's small charging desk, with its mysterious cards and rubber stamps under one of the bracket lamps, shining from the polishing Agnes had just given it.

"Isn't it spick and span?" repeated Catherine, sitting down with precision in the arm-chair, discovered in somebody's attic.

"Ye-es," answered Dot slowly, dropping upon one of the arms. "But for all its cleanness it's about as bare and as inviting as the contagious ward of a hospital, or the dining-room of a state's prison."

"Don't say discouraging things like that, Dot dear," pleaded Agnes, taking the other arm and snuggling her head against Catherine's cheek. "A library isn't supposed to be a parlor, and that engraving is really valuable."

"I'd rather have a chromo that comes with soap, myself," said Bert. "Its cold steely look only adds to that hygienic and sanitary aspect Dot detected. It makes me homesick for sunflowers and red flannel."

"I have an idea," and Dorcas rose and departed with her usual abruptness.

As she went out of the door, Bess came in.

"O dear!" she said. "Are you all here? I hoped nobody would be."

"Shall we withdraw?" asked Bert. "We were just commenting on the barrenness of this place, but your presence causes it to blossom as the rainbow. We bask in the refulgence."

Bess laughed. "That's really what I came for, to prettify it a little. It seemed such a pity not to have anything bright and attractive on the walls, so I made this at odd minutes. Do you all like it? I was going to put it up and surprise you."

She unrolled a big parcel she carried and the others, crowding around to see, looked upon a beautifully illuminated motto:

"God be thanked for books."

"Bess, you are an inspired angel," cried Polly, while Catherine gave her a squeeze which was meant to express pleasure and also compunction for more than one reflection that Bess was not doing her share for the library.

"And here comes another," exclaimed Agnes, running to open the door for Dorcas, staggering under the weight of a great armful of golden glow.

"Dorcas, you must have taken every stalk you had!"

"Well, and whose business is it, I'd like to know?" asked Dorcas briskly and justly. Polly shrugged her shoulders, but helped Bertha to find receptacles for the bright flowers, continuing to exclaim over their beauty, in spite of Dorcas' apparent indifference. It had not been Algernon alone who had been misunderstood at the beginning of the library campaign in Winsted. The flowers arranged effectively, and the motto given a place where it could be read from all parts of the room, the workers trudged off to their respective homes to make elaborate toilets before the "party" should begin.

Seven o'clock found the lamps lighted inside the little building, and Japanese lanterns making the freshly-mown weed patch a festive place, with little tables set for the ice-cream and cake which were to be served from the shed, leaving the library proper, clean and crumbless. Bess and Winifred, with their attendant squires, were to act as Mrs. Graham's lieutenants outside, and the other members of the club were variously on duty within. Dr. Helen assisted Algernon and the school superintendent in receiving–an unsectarian combination warranted to disturb no prejudice. Bertha, with a book and pen, was ready at the reading-table to receive and register gifts. Catherine sat at Algernon's desk to issue cards, and take in the annual fee of fifty cents. The other girls and boys were "floating," ready to entertain the guests, to explain the whole scheme, and see to it that every one was invited to the lawn for "light refreshments and ice-cream" as the *Courier* had announced.

The fathers and mothers of the Boat Club were early arrivals, looking with proud amused

eyes upon their spotless sons and daughters in their disinterested public zeal. First of all came Mrs. Swinburne in a long black net gown elaborately spangled, her hair coquettishly arranged in a Janice Meredith curl, several years out of date, a slender ivory-sticked fan, somewhat broken, swaying from her belt by a long ribbon. She plainly felt that her entrance should excite attention and was by no means disappointed. Dot and Polly took her in charge and stood by with grave courteous faces while she gave Bertha her contribution, wrapped up in tissue paper and white ribbon.

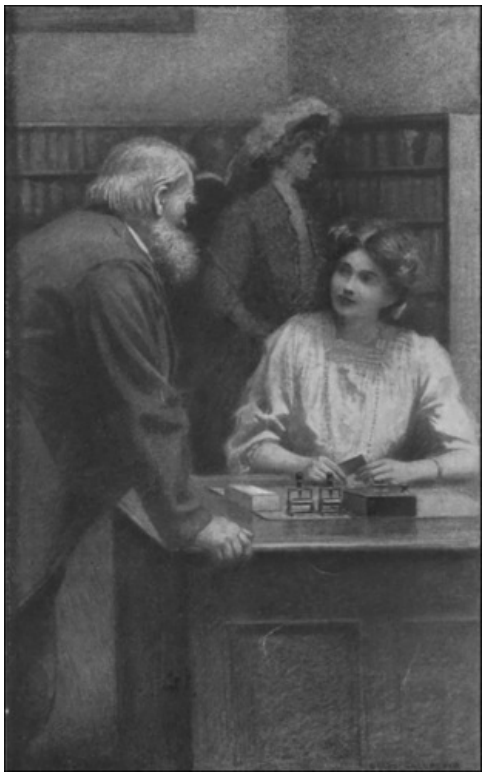
“It’s a copy of *The Ring and The Book* I got for Elsmere’s Christmas last year. I wanted so to read it. I am devoted to Byron. But Algernon gave me the *Complete Works*, so that I felt I could give this away to advantage. It is a little damaged. The dear child uses his books to build stables with, but I knew that the public would not mind.”

She arched her eyebrows in surprise when Catherine asked fifty cents for the card she made out for her. “As Algernon’s mother, really, Miss Catherine, I did not expect–” and Catherine, catching Algernon’s imploring glance from his position between the doctor and the superintendent, murmured an apology and gave the card.

Then Mrs. Swinburne sank delicately into the arm-chair, and rested her eyes upon the scene before her.

It was soon sufficiently animated. A whole family arrived at once, climbing out of a big farm wagon. Dot beckoned to Bert.

“It’s that man we talked to out on the Ridge Road.”



“‘How much for your tickets?’”–*Page* 77.

“Is this your liberry?” asked a mighty voice from the doorway. “Where’s the young fellow that invited us to come in this evening? O, it’s you, is it? I didn’t recognize you with those clothes on. Men folks didn’t wear white pants in my day. Well, Mother, come along in. I guess they won’t nobody bite you.”

With this encouragement, a little washed-out looking woman slipped uncomfortably in, six children of various degrees of awkwardness stumbling after her, studiously avoiding the outstretched hands of the receiving committee. Dr. Helen stepped forward and took the woman’s hand. The wan face under the dusty black straw hat lighted with the smile that Catherine loved to see her mother call forth.

“Clary,” said the little woman proudly, “here’s the doctor. Let her see how fat and well you be. Not much like she was that winter!”

Clary’s father, meanwhile, was walking about the room with a tread that rattled the lamp-shades. He looked the books over with an air of wisdom, listened to Bert’s talk in silence, and presently drew up at the desk where Catherine sat waiting for customers.

“How much for your tickets?”

“Fifty cents.”

“Family rates?”

Catherine met the unforeseen question promptly.

“Where there are more than three in a family, the tickets are only thirty-five cents apiece.”

“So. Well, give me one,” and he drew a handful of small change from his pocket. “Holcomb’s the name. Chester G. Holcomb.”

Catherine inscribed the name in her pretty even hand upon a blue card, numbered it 2, and handed it to her patron. He laid down thirty-five cents and turned away.

“O,” said Catherine, flushing softly. “You didn’t understand. It is only when you get three cards that they are cheap like that.”

Chester Holcomb, known as the biggest miser in the county, grunted.

“You said if they was more than three in the family, and they’s six children besides ma and me. I knowed there was some skin game about this thing, somewheres. Here’s your ticket and you give me back my money.”

Catherine, almost as near tears as she had ever been in her singularly well-controlled existence, obeyed him.

“Good evening, Chester.” Dr. Harlow had been standing near, and now decided to take a hand. “Let me introduce my daughter. Catherine, this is Mr. Holcomb, of whom you’ve heard us speak.”

“The father of the dear twin babies?” asked Catherine, with a grateful throb for her father’s help.

“That’s them yonder,” answered Chester Holcomb, swelling proudly. “Mate, bring the twins here, so’t the doctor’s gal can see ’em. Weighed five pounds when they was born, and look at ’em now! Best fatted live stock on the farm, I say, Doctor.” And Mr. Holcomb’s great laugh at his own witticism filled the room. Catherine, meanwhile, with the sincerity of a girl who really loves all babies, admired the plump twins to such a degree that their father felt himself melting with benevolence.

“Mate,” he said suddenly, “think you’d like to read any of these here books? Doc, make you acquainted with my daughter Sadie. Graduated from the district school this spring and goin’ to town High School this fall. Guess the’ ain’t any of the readin’-matter here that’s beyond Sadie! Here, Miss, give us three of them tickets,–that one I had and two more. Mrs. Chester Holcomb and Miss Sadie Ditto. There! Keep the change,” and gathering up the three cards, he threw a silver dollar heavily upon the table and turned away. Catherine and her father looked at each other and laughed outright.

“No man has ever got the best of Chester in a bargain,” said Dr. Harlow, “and I judge no woman ever will! Allow me to make up the deficit. It has been worth more than that as entertainment!”

By this time the room was full. It was a motley crowd, as all classes of Winsted were represented. The would-be Smart Set in rather elaborate hats and gowns, mingled with the quieter Three R’s, and their own maid servants and the “gentlemen friends” of the latter. All the standbys, who are always on hand at church doings and the County Fair, were out in force. There was the oldest inhabitant, bestowing his presence with the “nunc dimittis” air which had characterized him since old age had given him the distinction vainly sought in other fields. There was old Mis’ Tuttle in her best black and orange bonnet, and Emeline Winslow with her wig over one ear and a bouquet of artificial flowers under glass as her contribution. With her came Grandma Hopkins, whose name was the only nimble thing about her;–ponderous and elephantine, she had once, in calling upon a fragile little old lady, stumbled in the doorway and fallen upon her hostess, whose brittle bones had snapped under the strain. Polly and Dorcas constituted themselves a committee to look out for the elderly ones, taking great pains to keep Grandma Hopkins in open spaces where a fall would do little damage. There was a very bony woman with a smile which was surprising, it was so soft and radiant. She brought a fat story of the Bible for the children, and offered Algernon flowers from her garden for all summer. “Flowers are good for the soul and the mind as well as books,” she explained, “and if so be some one comes in and can’t find the book they want, ’twon’t hurt ’em to see a posy.”

There was the Sloan family, decked out in the leavings of a milliner’s shop and bringing as offering a worn copy of one of Mary J. Holmes’ novels. There was a good-hearted lady, so disastrously given to expressing enthusiasm by embracing anyone within her reach that the heroes and heroines of the evening fought shy of her, and Tom made her well-known tendency an excuse for withdrawing altogether and going out to the fence behind the building where he could overlook the festive scene and smoke a cigar surreptitiously. Not least “among those present” was the ubiquitous reporter for the *Courier*, biting his pencil and using abbreviations in his notes with such freedom that the list of gifts, when finally published, contained such startling entries as: *Eliza and her Germ Garden*, and *The Victorious Anthropology*.

“I felt as though I were in a dream half the time,” sighed Polly, when the crowd had dwindled to “the immediate mourners” as Max put it, and these were sitting wearily at the messy little tables, dipping idle spoons into the melted cream that had been with difficulty saved for them. “I kept on smiling and explaining and telling people to go to Catherine for cards and to Bertha to leave their gifts, and half the time I didn’t know what I was saying or who was talking to me. Bert came up once and asked me to tell him which door he came in at, and I tried to find out for him, before I tumbled–before I saw the point, I mean. I never was so

exhausted in all my life."

"Poor Algernon," said Tom. "You're just beginning your work. Every one of those hundred and sixty-seven cards will be in to-morrow to draw out a book. You ought to keep open for a week every day."

"Three times a week, with evenings, will be enough," replied A. Swinburne, librarian. "There's a big job on those books that came in to-night. How many were there finally, Bertha?"

"Ninety-six. About twenty are worth putting labels on," answered Bertha cheerfully. "I'm a little inclined to think that that part of our plan was a mistake."

"I don't believe it," said Dot. "There was one old duck who brought a German primer, and he strutted around as though he owned the place. I'm sure he'll use it constantly."

"He seemed to think he ought to have a card free, because he gave it," put in Catherine. "I remember him! He wasn't the only one, though. They all–or a lot of them–seemed to think they ought to be able to draw any number of books on one card, and they don't like the idea of fines at all. I don't envy you, Algernon!"

"We ought to have called ourselves the Looking For Trouble Club," groaned Archie. "We haven't had a decent Boat Club picnic since we got into this mess. And look at all this place to clean up to-morrow! I'm about dead with work, already. I don't know about the rest of you."

The rest had strength enough for a chorus of hoots and jeers at "His Laziness," who had adorned the scene of their labor for a few minutes now and then, but for the most part had stayed strictly away.

"I've saved your lives, anyway," declared Archie cheerfully, when their derision had spent itself. "And I'm going to again. I hired a lovely scrub-lady to come to-morrow and make this spot look shipshape–"

"O, Archie!" cried the girls, "you beautiful boy!"

"Don't interrupt," said the beautiful boy sternly. "I am going to vindicate myself. Polly Osgood, didn't that tennis game Friday morning save you from collapse? How about that little canoe jaunt on the quiet yesterday, Catherine? Bess needed a drive Thursday, and Winifred did more good to the public by singing to me all that hot evening than the rest of you did slaving away over some gooey job or other. Dorcas let me reward her Sunday-school kids by a hay-rack ride, and she went along to take care of us. Agnes and Bertha got interrupted on their way down here one morning, and let themselves be persuaded to take a country walk instead, to show me birds' nests for a course I'm not ever going to take next year. And as for Dot,–O, Dot was shamelessly ready to go off any old time with any old body. But you all would have been nervous wrecks by now without me. And you call me names, like an ungrateful populace!"

It was a mirth-provoking series of revelations. "Archie has shown himself a most artistic sly-boots," said Catherine. "I never had more delicious conscience pangs than I did on that canoe-ride."

"So it was with me," declared Polly. "And I never dared say anything sarcastic about the other girls not turning up every time, because I felt so guilty myself."

"So did I!" cried Bertha and Agnes together.

"Well, so didn't I!" exclaimed Dot. "I was perfectly free to say all the time that I didn't intend to spend my whole summer or even ten days of it working harder than I do winters. I move that Archie be given a vote of thanks for introducing the Rest Cure into the Boat Club, and also a vote of admiration for the beauty of his dissimulation."

"I second the motion," said Archie himself, "and amend it to include going home. Want any help in locking up, Al?"

"No, thanks," said Algernon, hearing for the first time a nickname that any fellow might have had applied to himself. "Good night, all of you. I'll take good care of things, you can count on that."

As the rest drifted in pairs and threes toward their homes, a well-content young man set the reading-chairs in their places, put out the low-burning lamps, turned the key in the lock, and walked briskly away, happier than he had ever been.

Even so early, Catherine's inspiration had shown itself a true one.

CHAPTER SEVEN
A PARTY AT POLLY'S

"Where you goin', Algy?"

Algernon, half-way down the walk, turned at these words, high and clear, floating down from upper regions.

In the balcony on the second floor Elsmere, clad airily in white night-drawers, leaned pensively over the railing.

“To the party, you know. Go back to bed, Sonny.”

“But the party is to Peter and Perdita’s, over there,–” with a gesture across the street. “Why do you be goin’ that way?” The fat little arm waved in an opposite direction.

“I’m going to get Catherine. Do go in, now, Elsmere. I’ll tell you all about the party in the morning,” and Algernon hastened down the street, bouncing more than usual in his effort to get out of reach of that penetrating little voice.

“Why,” it called after him, “why? Doesn’t Caffrine know the way to Peter and Perdita’s house? What you goin’ to get her *for*?”

The neighbors on their porches smiled, and Algernon reddened as he rushed along.

Elsmere, abandoned, still draped himself over the railing and watched his brother’s rapid walk.

“Springs!” he murmured at last, as though he had solved a knotty problem. “Algy walks like a spring seat!”

Then with a lighted candle Elsmere proceeded to make some preparations for an evening of festivity. The party at the Osgoods’ was so near that Peter had assured him the music for the porch dancing would reach him even more clearly in his balcony chamber than if he were a really invited guest and on the spot. Peter had further coached him in the method of preparing porches for dancing, and Elsmere had secreted a candle and matches early in the evening, waiting only till Algernon was safely away to apply them. His floor nicely waxed, he curled down in a corner of the balcony to watch the arriving guests, and unexpectedly fell asleep.

“Walk on your heels, why don’t you?”

Algernon, escorting Catherine, made this suggestion as she picked her way across a narrow muddy crossing, her white party skirts gathered in one hand. Catherine, poising with difficulty on the toe of one foot, turned and looked at him.

“It just muddies my heels, and then my heels muddy my skirts. Of course, you boys with trousers–” then, toppling, she righted herself and leaped across the last puddle.

“Trousers,” said Algernon, getting to her side again, “were worn in Abyssinia as early as–”

Catherine heaved a mighty sigh.

“It’s like going out for a stroll with the *Century Book of Facts* to walk with you, Algernon Swinburne,” she declared suddenly. “Do you think in statistics party-nights, even? Haven’t you any uninstructive thoughts for warm evenings?”

Algernon regarded her silently.

“Am I such a bore?” he asked quietly.

Catherine caught her breath. She recalled swiftly her father’s having said: “If Algernon should once find out that he was a bore, it would probably cure him. He has a lot of sense.” And here he was finding it out, on her hands, just because she had, for once, made her groaning comment on his conversation audibly instead of to herself!

It was a serious moment.

“Listen, Algernon,” she said, feeling for words. “I wasn’t very polite to say what I did, but I’m not going to take it back now. It’s really wonderful how you know so much, and people who use the library are appreciating it. But you see, you’ve lived by yourself all these years, accumulating information, and when you get among people you do have a little way of handing it out to them whether they want it or not. It’s as though Mr. Graham should take potatoes and onions to church and pass them around to the congregation! They might be very nice potatoes and onions! I know how it is, because until Hannah Eldred came and woke me up, I used to do nothing but read poetry and cook, and I know I quoted Shakespeare to the girls when they came to see me, and it made them nervous, so they didn’t come often. Have you ever noticed how Polly does? She’s always interested in what every one says, and she always ‘catches on.’ She doesn’t try to run the conversation, while Dorcas–”

“Dorcas hits you over the head with a club, and then when you’re stunned she sits down on you and talks to the others! Am I like her?”

Catherine laughed outright.

“That’s very ‘wink-ed’ of you, Algernon, as Elsmere would say, but it truly does just about describe it. You never do that way yourself, but you do open up and read aloud, so to speak, in company sometimes, in a way that is disconcerting. Now, what could one say to a statement about Abyssinian trousers, for instance, when one is just peacefully walking along, going to a party?”

Algernon straightened his shoulders.

“Much obliged,” he said briefly. “I’ve been doing a little observing on my own account lately, since I’ve been around with the rest of you so much, and what you tell me fits, all right. I guess I can cut out the information! I say, doesn’t the Osgood place look fine?”

The great porch at the Osgoods’ “palatial residence,” as the Winsted *Courier* always faithfully referred to the house, was alight with square pink lanterns. A long strip of carpet ran out to the sidewalk, and as she stepped upon it, Catherine put her hair back with a quick gesture and smiled up at her tall companion.

“I tell you, I’m proud to make my entrance by the side of the real Librarian of the Winsted City Library.”

“Leave your scarf here, Catriona darling,” said Polly, greeting her guests in the doorway. “You don’t need to prink. Mother, Father, here are Catherine and Algernon.”

Mrs. Osgood came forward and took Catherine’s hand with ceremony. Then she turned to Algernon.

“This is really an occasion. I am delighted, in my new capacity as Trustee, to salute the Founder and the Mainstay of our Library.”

“O!” protested Catherine. “But isn’t it perfectly lovely the way the council did take up with the idea? Was there any hitch at all about it?”

“Not the least,” said Mr. Osgood. “You never saw anything smoother. You young folks certainly struck this town with this library scheme of yours at the psychological moment. The council was all for it. The tax was voted, and directors appointed as though it had been talked up for years.”

“And Bertha is a trustee,” cried Catherine, seeing Bertha in the group beyond. “O, Bertha dear, do use your influence to keep Algernon in office!”

Everybody laughed at that, and Mrs. Osgood threw up her hands.

“We can’t help ourselves! No one can ever underbid him, except by paying for the privilege. Algernon won’t take a salary.”

Algernon flushed uneasily. “I haven’t earned one yet,” he muttered. “And besides, salaries for public positions–”

Some choice fact was refused utterance there, for Algernon, seeing Catherine’s eye upon him, swallowed his harmless ‘statistic’ and lapsed into silence.

“Where are Bess and Archie?” fussed Polly. “Every one else is here, and we do want to begin dancing. I wonder what can have kept them.”

“Here they are,” called some one. “Hurry up, you two. You’re the latest.”

“We’ve brought our excuse with us,” and Archie set down before Mrs. Osgood a bulky newspaper parcel. Bess, smiling mysteriously, refused to answer inquiries, and when the greetings were over Archie produced a knife and started to cut the string.

“Tell them the story first, Archie,” suggested Bess.

“You think it would be more dramatic? Well, maybe so, maybe so. Ladies and Gentlemen: I have here a gift for the Winsted Public Library. It comes most appropriately on this evening, when the original supporters of that institution are celebrating their release from its responsibility! Miss Symonds,” indicating Bess with a graceful curve of his thumb, “and myself were proceeding hither to join you. Our way led us past the spacious edifice dedicated now to the Cause of Learning and Recreation, having once been given over to hats, and later still, as many now present remember, to rats! The library is, as some of you are aware, not open on Wednesday evenings. Therefore we were surprised to see standing before the door in an attitude of patient expectancy, a rustic gentleman, bearing in his arm this identical parcel. We hesitated and then remarked courteously to the gentleman that there was small hope of his obtaining satisfaction at that particular portal before to-morrow afternoon. His face fell. Seeing which phenomenon, Miss Symonds,” again the thumb curve, “being of a kindly nature, offered sympathy to the disappointed reader. He opened his heart to us–and also his bundle. It seems he was not there to borrow books, but to bestow blessings. The article herein contained was destined by his wife, its maker, to adorn the library’s walls.”

“He said,” interrupted Bess, “that he was sure we didn’t have anything like it, because his wife invented it, and he didn’t know as there was another in the world, even. He seemed to think the library was a kind of museum and every one was sending things, and he and ‘wife’ wanted to, too. He was a dear old man. So clean, and he wore a red shawl around his neck this hot night–” Bess tossed her own bare head at the thought, and fanned her pretty white shoulders. “Do show it to them, Archie, and don’t make fun. He really thought we would think it was lovely, and it certainly is unusual.”

“Open it, open it!”

Archie dropped to one knee, cut the string, and, removing one paper after another, lifted slowly a hoop bound in red wool, from which depended twenty fat little birds made of scraps of velvet.

Silence and bewilderment. Then, “What’s it for?” faltered some one.

“We must explain it,” said Bess laughing. “They don’t understand. Neither did we, at first. It’s not for anything. It’s just an ornament, a beautiful parlor ornament. And you hang it from the chandelier and set it swinging. So!” She illustrated and the gay little birds bobbed merrily up and down.

“They are hung on spiral wires of different lengths, you see, to make them more lifelike and natural.”

Every one was full of delight and amusement now, and one hand after another poked the poor little birds till they bobbed to a degree dangerous to their shoe-button eyes.

“It’s a variation of the Japanese wind-bell motif,” said Mrs. Osgood. “But I shall wish I were not a trustee, if I must act on such problems as that.”

Algernon took the hoop and put it back into its wrappings.

“I’ll write and thank him,” he said, “and I don’t see any objection to it. The children will love it. I know Elsmere would.”

“We can keep it up for a while and not hurt his feelings,” said Bertha, and as Polly at the piano began to play a waltz, the boys chose partners and the porch filled with dancing couples.

It proved, however, rather warm for dancing. Polly and Winifred took turns at the piano, but before long every one was willing to sit and rest.

“Play that pretty last one again, Polly, and let us listen,” begged Bess. “It’s too warm to stir, but you play that so beautifully.”

Polly obligingly seated herself at the piano once more in the broad open window. The light tripping music, unmarred by the sound of sliding feet, floated over the lawn and across the street and up into the Swinburne balcony. Suddenly the lazy group on the Osgood veranda caught sight of a flickering flame high in the neighboring house. Algernon started up, but Bertha restrained him.

“Watch!” she said. “It’s Elsmere. I saw him.”

The candle was stuck upon the railing of the balcony. Then capering about, in little white night-drawers, to the sound of the music, Elsmere danced, bare-toed, upon his well-waxed floor, the unconscious observed of all observers. Applause long and hearty rewarded his efforts, and also brought Maggie to the rescue. As she pounced upon him and knocked the sputtering candle to the ground, Peter and Perdita, splendid in starched white linen, appeared in the doorway behind “the party” and invited every one to come and draw bows and arrows.

Peter held a quiver of arrows, tied with bright ribbons “for the ladies.” His sister at his side offered “the gentlemen” a fine assortment of bows, with varicolored bow-strings. Bows and arrows mated, the hunters marched in pairs to the screened-in breakfast room, looking out over the river.

At each end of the table was a chafing-dish, and in the center was a huge cabbage surmounted by two natural-looking bunnies.

Each marksman tried his luck, and the cabbage was soon riddled, but it was reserved for Bert, with Dorcas’ arrow, to knock one rabbit over backward. Thereupon Bert and Dorcas were immediately swathed in great aprons and installed behind the chafing-dishes to show their skill as cooks. Fortunately both were competent, and though much hampered by advice and witticisms, by the time Peter and Perdita had passed the rabbit salad, radishes and olives interspersed with artichokes and little china bunnies, the critical moment had passed, and creamy messes were ready to be ladled forth upon wafers, and consumed in eloquent silence.

When, at last, there was nothing left but a few leathery strings, and even Archie declared his spirit alone was willing, Polly rapped on the table with the handle of a big spoon and called the meeting to order.

“Miss Smith has an announcement to make.”

Everybody looked at Catherine. Her eyes were shining and her face was all aglow with pleasure.

“I’m going to have company and I want you all to know it, and come and get acquainted.”

“Who is it?” asked some one.

“The rest of the Wide Awake girls.”

“What?” “All of them?” “All of you together?” “Not the German one?” “Is Hannah Eldred coming?”

The girls all talked together, and the boys looked mystified.

“I wish some one would enlighten me,” said Max helplessly. “Who are the Wide Awake girls?”

“Why, Max! Didn’t you ever take *Wide-Awake*?”

“The magazine? Sure thing. What of it? Does Catherine want us to subscribe? After an ivory

manicure set or a lawn-mower premium?”

“No, no. Listen, Max, and any of the rest of you who are so ignorant as not to know about the Wide Awake girls. Hannah Eldred advertised for friends once, and Catherine and a little girl in Germany and one out West answered. And the German one proved to be the daughter of a long-lost friend of Hannah’s mother, and the one out West turned up at Dexter, rooming next door, when she went there, and now she rooms with Catherine. Did you ever hear such a tale in your life? If you were to read such a string of facts in a book, you wouldn’t believe it.”

“No more you would,” commented Max. “I’m not at all sure I believe it, as it is. Are they all coming at once, Catherine?”

“Not quite. Hannah and Frieda will be here in a week or two, and Alice as soon after as she can. They are all of them the *dearest* girls!”

“Pretty?” asked Archie.

“Wait and see,” laughed Catherine. “They’ll make their own impression, but I want you all to be friends as we are.”

“We’ll do our best to entertain them,” said Bert. “Distinguished foreigners don’t come our way every day. I move you, Madam President, that we make these Wide Awake young ladies honorary members of the Club.”

The motion was put and carried with a round of applause, and a few minutes later the Boat Club meeting was informally adjourned.

Algernon, reaching home at midnight, stole into his brother’s room and hung the bird-hoop near his bedside. With characteristic perverseness Elsmere, a sound sleeper by day, was easily wakened at night, and, as Algernon slipped out of the room, he sat up and watched the birds bobbing in the moonlight. Presently he dropped back on his pillow, sleepily content.

“Springs!” he said, “like Algy walks.”

PART TWO

THE COMING OF FRIEDA

CHAPTER EIGHT
A FORTUNATE MEETING

On the day of Polly’s party, far away in the village of Ventnor on the Isle of Wight, some one was thinking of the young people of Winsted and their library undertaking.

A tall woman walked swiftly along the road toward Freshwater, enjoying its charming variety, the sudden glimpses of sea beyond the chalk cliffs, the quaint cottages and lanes, and at a certain bend the trees she loved better than all the rest, with ivy running over the ground and up the mighty trunks. There was a radiance about Clara Lyndesay which seemed to make whatever she looked upon more beautiful than it had been before. No one had ever been able to analyze it, to decide how much was due to the sunny hair, how much to the blue eyes, and the smile that suggested sweet wistful things that never could be told, and how much to her own deep inner peace. “The beauty of you certainly helps the goodness make its impression,” Dr. Helen said to her once, “and yet I am half inclined to believe that it is the goodness that makes the beauty!”

Just now there was no analyst at hand, no one, in fact, but a stout small boy, driving a butcher’s cart. He felt the force of the charm, however uncritically, and grabbed his cap from his head as he drew up beside the lady.

“The landlady down there asked me to give you these here, thank you!” He handed out two letters, and then clucked to his horse in an embarrassed fashion as Miss Lyndesay thanked him.

“They came after you left, and she said you’d be wanting them, thank you!” And he drove on, leaving the source of his emotion quite unconscious of him or it, intent upon opening the first of the letters.

“They are too long to read as I walk,” she said, and chose a comfortable secluded spot to sit. “Let me think. It was a year ago in March that I saw Hannah first, there at Three Gables, when she had just come back from Germany, and was homesick and missed her mother so. She did Catherine as much good as Catherine did her. They are a pair of charming children, as different as April and October. I think I will save Hannah’s letter for the last. It’s sure to be exciting, and Catherine’s should be read in a calm spirit.” Accordingly she opened Catherine’s and glancing with a smile over the tabulated statement of the health of the various members of the family, regularly included since her complaint that no such

information was ever granted her, began to read the letter proper:

"*Dearest Aunt Clara:*

"Algernon is away at a district meeting. I believe that is what he calls it. He is quite elated over the opportunity and Polly and I are taking charge of the library while he is gone. I hardly see Algernon any more. He is so busy all the time, and he is simply sought after. People seem to think he is an infallible authority, now that he is librarian, and he does seem to know everything. He reads everything and has an intelligent way of telling what you want to know. I'm quite impressed by him, myself. Of course, he talks technicalities a lot, and he acts grieved sometimes because the rest of us don't take the library quite so seriously as he does. The others are rather tired of it by now, except Polly and Bertha and Agnes. I really enjoy it, and I come in often nowadays, because I know when Hannah and Frieda get here, I won't have so much time for it. The children are fond of Algernon and he remembers the funny things they say and tells them–(it's the first time he ever had anything amusing to say on any subject!)–Peter Osgood wanted *The Wail of the Sandal Swag*, and a little girl asked for *Timothy Squst*. (If that's how you spell it. It rhymed with 'crust.') The children aren't the only funny ones. A man came in this afternoon and asked for *Edith Breed*, and it proved he wanted *He That Eateth Bread With Me*, and one forlorn-looking creature handed me a slip of paper with *Doan the Dark* written on it, and she meant *Joan of Arc!*

"*Later.* I had to stop there to wait on a whole group. I don't understand why they always come in hordes. They don't seem to be connected at all, but there are always times when there is no one here and then suddenly an influx.

"Just now the room is empty again. I wish you could see it. It is a dear little room and now that it is being really used, doesn't have that bare look it had at first. We fixed up a darling Children's Corner, with some child pictures cut from a magazine and framed, and a little round table Polly used to have, and my own little rocker. The window is a sunny one, and the little curtains look so fresh and dainty. Almost always there is some child or other sitting there looking at pictures or reading.

"*Later again.* Dearest, dearest Aunt Clara! My eyes are all full of happy tears. I can't write clearly. I came home from the library a little tired and quite willing to let Polly take it for the evening. And here on the porch was the box, the blessed box, addressed to me. Of course, I wasn't too tired to open it! O, you dear darling! We have needed color in that bare little place so much, and here is this beautiful glowing picture just full of story suggestions. There never was a child born who could look at that, and not go dreaming off into all sorts of fairy tales. It makes me so happy to think you care enough about our little library to give your own beautiful work. I wanted to go right down and hang it, but I called Polly up on the 'phone and she came over, and said I should keep it this evening to look at, and we'd hang it when Algernon comes back to-morrow. She is delighted, too, and Algernon will be, and he will send you a formal letter of thanks, but nobody can be so pleased as I am, because you are my almost-truly aunt, you know.

"I do hope you can feel the thanks I'm sending you across all that big salt water!"

Clara Lyndesay's own eyes misted a little.

"That little study isn't deserving of such glowing words," she said to herself. "Now I must see what my other childie has to say. Their letters are growing more similar. Catherine's association with other girls is giving her a more open manner, and Hannah is growing a bit more mature. Still,–" her eyes fell upon the wild slant of the writing before her, "I suspect she never will be quite grown up, and this particular time she doesn't show the maturity alarmingly! This letter looks as excited as the one she wrote from Dexter when she was upset about sororities last year."

"*Darling Lady Love of Mine:*

"Are you in Ventnor still? Shall you be there the 23d? I don't know what I shall do, if you leave the Isle of Wight before the 27th. I wanted to cable, but father thought it was unnecessary and of course I couldn't afford to do it on my own account. They charge terribly for cabling. And this letter may not reach you till you are gone, or *they* are. O *dear!* It just worries me to death to think about it. And there you are so near and I have wanted you and Frieda to meet so long. You may even be passing each other on the street or somewhere and not recognizing each other. *Have* you seen her? You'd surely know her, if you stopped to think, for Mother always said she looks like Mona Lisa and you'd notice Mona Lisa if you saw her. Even if she did have on a sailor suit too big for her, and a funny soup-bowl hat. Only perhaps she doesn't wear such things now. It's two years since I saw her, almost, that is, and I don't know how she dresses.

"Aunt Clara! I was just going to sign my name and read this over and I haven't told you what I was writing for at all. You will think me a dreadful rattlebrain! It's just that we got a post card to-day from the Langes saying that they were on the Isle of Wight for several days, and I thought right away that you simply must meet them. It's such a little island! They wrote from Ryde. O, I'll enclose the postal. It will tell you all about where they are to be, and you will try your very hardest to see them, won't you? You couldn't help loving them, every one, dear Frau Marie and the funny Herr Professor. And nothing is far in England.

"Your loving loving HANNAH."

"P. S. I wrote Frieda to look for you."

The blue eyes were full of laughter this time.

"Rattlebrain! I should say so. And of course,–yes, she did forget to enclose the postal. It's a wonder she didn't cable. Now here am I, exhorted to meet three German people of whom I know these facts: Professor Lange of Berlin, the Frau Professor and their daughter Frieda, who looks like Mona Lisa and–perhaps–wears sailor suits too large for her and a funny soup-bowl hat. Were in Ryde some time ago, and, I judge, expected to be on the Isle until the 27th. To-day is the 26th. Well, I'm afraid, Hannah dear, you'll have to learn to keep your head a little better, when you wish to carry out your pleasant ideas. I wonder what she wrote to Frieda."

She rose from her seat on the ivy-covered grass, and strolled leisurely back toward her hotel. The afternoon light was low and the little church she passed on her way seemed more than usually quaint and inviting. Half-way by, she turned irresolutely, then entered the churchyard.

A local guide was showing a party of tourists about.

Miss Lyndesay was turning away to avoid them, when a deep *"Ach, so!"* followed by a feminine *"Wunderhübsch! Ganz malerisch!"* fell on her ear. She looked more closely at the little group. A gentleman in a long linen duster, with a loosely rolled umbrella under his arm, was gazing at the church most earnestly. He stepped back to get a better view, and colliding with a mossy headstone, turned and bowed to it politely with an apology. The little woman at his side paid no attention to him or to the guide, but followed with her eyes a plump young girl in a sailor-suit, who was stooping to gather flowers.

"Frieda," she called, "pluck not those blossoms!"

Miss Lyndesay approached the young girl. Mona Lisa's inscrutable eyes and elusive smile looked up from below an impossible hat.

"I was looking for you, Frieda," said Miss Lyndesay. "But Hannah said you were in Ryde."

"Yesterday, gracious lady," said Frieda, ducking in a courtesy, "but to-day, no. We have sought you, too, and vainly. *Vater*, *Mütterchen*, behold Hannah's beloved lady. We have found ourselves at last!"

CHAPTER NINE
LANDING

"O Dear! It seems as though I couldn't wait a minute longer. It takes such an eternity for them to get in. Do you think you can see her, Karl? Take the glasses and look. See if you don't think that little red speck in the bow is her?"

"After the verb 'to be'–"

"O, bother, Karl! You are fussier about my English than my German."

The tall fair young man smiled, but answered stubbornly: "It's a fact, Hannah, you are more careless about English than about German. Not in grammar only, but in pronunciation. How is a poor foreigner to guess that 'sumpn' for instance means 'something'?"

"If it didn't mean anything, I wouldn't say it," retorted Hannah saucily. "Is there any other criticism you have to make upon my use of my native tongue, Mr. Germany?"

"You drop your final 'g' occasionally, and always your final 'r'," went on the accuser.

Hannah laughed. "You can't hear an 'r' unless it's rolled over the tongue like macaroni, Karl Von Arndtheim! Just wait till you hear the western girls talk, and you'll be satisfied. Look! Look! It's as much as an inch nearer. Give me the glasses again. I do believe that's Frieda. No, not the red one, but the blue one with the veil floating. Can you see?"

Karl pushed his way through the crowd, drawing Hannah safely along into a little open space at one side. Stationing himself against a pile of boxes, he helped her climb to the top and support herself by clinging to his shoulder.

"There, child, you can sit and watch, and she'll see you better than if you were mixed up in the crowd. Put up that sunshade and wave it. She will think you are a great blue bird ready to fly out and meet her."

"I wish I were a gull. I'd fly right to her dear shoulder and peck her cheek. But are you sure I'm not too heavy, Karl? This thing is wobbly and I lean on you awfully for such a fat lady as I am."

"I can endure it! I say, Hannah, now she is so nearly here, I'm beginning to get excited myself. *Die niedliche Kleine!* It doesn't seem two years ago that you youngsters used to send cakes and things down to my window from yours. You were a pair of ministering angels."

“Wasn’t it fun? Poor Karl! I did pity you so, cooped up in the house that way. And you played the violin like an angel yourself, like a grieving one.”

“Well, we’ve all given up the angel hypothesis by this time, though it was useful in getting us interested in each other. There! This time I see her, not in red nor in blue, but in brown. See! She is jumping up and down and waving to us.”

The moments that followed while the great vessel swung heavily into place alongside the pier, and the ropes were made fast, and the gangplank was flung across, seemed interminable to impatient Hannah. Frieda was almost the first to land, and as she stepped on shore, she found herself lifted in a mighty hug, which she returned with all the strength of two muscular arms, gasping little cries of “*Ach, meine Hannah!*” as she did so.

When the embracing stopped for a moment, Karl stepped forward, hat in hand, to greet Frieda in his turn. She seized his hand and wrung it, repeating: “*Ach*, my heart could burst for gladness. My dears! My dears! But where is Miss Lyndesay?”

“Miss Lyndesay?” cried Hannah, looking wildly about. “Not my Miss Lyndesay?” But as she spoke, some one bent down and kissed her mouth, rounded with amazement.

“Yes, your Miss Lyndesay, and Frieda’s guardian for the present. We must get out of the crowd a little, Hannah, and then we can tell you all about it. Is this Mr. Von Arndtheim? I think I shall have to introduce myself. Will you find the way to our trunks, please? I had the hand luggage taken off at once. It’s fortunate we both belong in L.”

Somehow the little group made its way inside the great roofed-over place where the customs inspectors were doing their disagreeable duty to trunks and suitcases. Under a great black “L” Karl soon had Miss Lyndesay’s and Frieda’s trunks opened and passed upon, while Hannah struggled to collect her wits, and control her unspeakable rapture. Frieda was intent upon seeing that no harm was done her belongings, which were piled up about her, umbrella, hand-bags, a carryall, a shawl-strap, a brown linen roll with *Gute Reise* embroidered on it, and a long trunk with rounded edges. She resented the inspector’s opening anything, but Miss Lyndesay and Karl ignored her protest and at last the ordeal was over, and all four were seated in a carriage, driving to the club where they were to lunch with Miss Lyndesay.

“Frieda! Frieda! Put your head back in here!” said the harassed guardian of that head, in a tone of mingled amusement and weariness. “If you get her safely to Mrs. Eldred to-night, Mr. Von Arndtheim, you will do well. Frieda has escaped various sorts of peril on the voyage, rather by miraculous intervention than by any skill of mine as chaperon. Tell me, Hannah dear, how are your family?”

“‘Sure I am not too heavy, Karl?’”–*Page* 112.

Hannah had been sitting very quietly beside her beloved lady, too dazed yet to realize her unexpected good fortune. She squeezed the gloved hand hard now and answered mechanically, her eyes telling the feelings that were surging within her.

“That is good. We left Frieda’s parents well, too, and quite content after some excitement. You see, they had made plans for Frieda to come with an English friend of theirs, who was obliged only a few days before sailing-time to change her plans. Then the Professor thought he might send Frieda in the captain’s care, but that distressed Frau Lange, and they were on the point of giving it up altogether when they happened to tell me about it. I had been

intending to come over soon, anyhow, and could easily arrange to take their friend's place, and did so gladly. It was a much more interesting passage than I have usually known!"

Miss Lyndesay smiled at Frieda and Frieda smiled in return, but had almost immediately to be drawn forcibly into the carriage by Karl.

"You can see enough of America without putting your head out," he suggested. "It is an interesting country, but not worth so much effort, I assure you."

They were driving down Commonwealth Avenue by this time, and even Frieda's Berlin had never shown her a pleasanter and more decorous street. Karl thought, as she leaned forward, that she was trying to get a better view of the trumpeting angels on the spire of the church they were passing, but he was destined to be undeceived.

"I care nothing for America," said Frieda scornfully. "But I do not trust that man. I cannot see all my *Handgepäck*, only the ends of two bags. Let us stop him and count them!"

"Americans don't steal!" said Hannah hotly.

"Neither do Germans!" cried Frieda, and Karl looked at the two with consternation.

"See here, *Kinder*," he put in. "This is a little too much like old times. You are two years older now, and shouldn't be so belligerent."

"Bell-i-gerent?" Frieda fumbled in her coat pocket and brought out a little red book. "I do not know that word. I will seek him."

"O, dear," moaned Hannah. "Are you going around seeking words in a dictionary all the time, Frieda? I'll put a stop to that, you'd better believe."

Miss Lyndesay watched the little scene in silence. On the way across the ocean she had wondered more than once what effect Frieda's decidedly young and aggressive nature would have on Hannah, whom she knew to be easily affected by her companions.

"Catherine will have her hands full, keeping them soothed," she thought now, and was glad when the carriage stopped before the familiar house with the mail-box between the posts, and Karl helped her out.

"B-e-l-l-i-g-e-r-e-n-t!" spelled Frieda triumphantly, stumbling out of the carriage, "'Inclined to fight; war-like; pug-na-cious–' Ah!"

Her eyes fell upon the *Handgepäck*. "*Eins, zwei, drei, vier, fünf,–wo denn? So! fünf, sechs. Es sind alle hier!*"

"There!" said Hannah. "I told you the man wouldn't steal!"

Frieda opened her lips to answer, but Karl caught up all the luggage he could carry and led the way to the steps where Miss Lyndesay was waiting, and the two girls followed him, forgetting national disputes in common interest in their surroundings, as they had done more than once before.

At luncheon in the pretty club dining-room, Frieda ate industriously and silently, as Hannah remembered seeing her do of old. Hannah herself did justice to the good dishes, though she could hardly take her eyes from Miss Lyndesay's beautiful face, and could think of nothing whatever to say on any subject. Karl and his hostess chatted pleasantly and liked each other warmly. After luncheon, Karl went out to send cablegrams, and Miss Lyndesay took the girls up to the attractive white and green room which had been assigned to her.

"Can't you come out home with us?" asked Hannah wistfully. "I know Mamma would love to have you. She couldn't come in to meet the boat, because we've been at the shore until two days ago, and she was getting the house open; and Dad was too busy, so they sent me down with Karl. But I know if they were here, they would beg you to come. Can't you, please?"

Miss Lyndesay took Hannah into her arms and kissed the warm red cheeks. As she did so, she saw a queer little look of annoyance cross Frieda's face, and she put out her arm and drew Frieda close, too.

"I'd like nothing better than to be with both of you for days and days. Think how I shall miss my little roommate! But I must stay in town a day or two to do some necessary shopping. You know, I am going to spend the rest of the summer in Brookmeadow, a beautiful little village, not far from your home, Hannah. I'm going to fit up a studio there, out of an old house I own. And listen, both of you! Before Frieda goes out West, you two are to come over and spend a day and night with me in my home there. Shall you like that?"

The sunshine on their faces answered her, but Hannah's grew wistful again.

"You are going to be so near my home all summer, and I'm going away, myself."

"But you are going to Winsted and Catherine. Don't forget that. And I shall be at Brookmeadow still when you come home. Hannah, Hannah, haven't you learned yet that one can't have everything that is delightful all at once?"

"I suppose you mean about sorrows making you appreciate blessings and so on," pouted Hannah. "But I don't believe it. I know I could be happy all the time, if I could have all the things I want just when I want them!"

Miss Lyndesay did not smile. "Perhaps you could!" she said slowly. "You will never have a

chance to prove it. It's not within the limits of possibility. But I had an idea, Hannah, that you were one of the people who could manage pretty well to be happy with things as they came."

Hannah flushed and buried her face on Miss Lyndesay's shoulder. Frieda looked restless.

"*Bitte, sprechen Sie mal Deutsch*," she said suddenly. "*Es tut mir furchtbar weh, immer Englisch zu hören!*"

Quick as a flash Hannah's head came up, and she laughed a delicious laugh. "Poor Frieda," she said in German, "does it hurt you awfully to hear English all the time? There! There! I know how you feel. Did you talk German to her coming over, Miss Lyndesay?"

Miss Lyndesay looked guilty. "I'm afraid I did. You see, it was such a fine opportunity for me to practise, and I didn't want her to be homesick, as well as–"

"I was not seasick," declared Frieda stoutly, and both the others laughed.

"I have crossed the seas full many times," said Clara Lyndesay smiling, "but never have I known any one who was seasick! But to change the subject, it's almost time for Karl to be back to take you to the train, children; and Frieda has a spot on her coat which I can remove if you will open my suitcase, Hannah, and bring me the little bottle of benzine in the left-hand corner. Mrs. Eldred must not think I have brought her an untidy little *Mädchen*!"

They spent a cozy half hour chatting in German or English, as the spirit or their respective inabilities moved them, and when Karl arrived to escort them to the station, they were in a blithe mood, which even the ordeal of parting from Miss Lyndesay did not shake.

"You are coming very soon to visit me," she said, as she kissed them good-by, "and you are both to be good until then, and not belligerent. Remember you are children no longer."

"Aren't you a child any longer, Frieda?" asked Hannah with interest, as they entered the carriage.

"Indeed, I am not. Did you not see that I make no more *Knixes*?"

"That's so. Isn't it fun not to? Don't you ever forget?"

"Only once. When I met Miss Lyndesay in the churchyard," said Frieda, dwelling on the memory.

"No wonder!" said Karl. "I would salaam before her, myself."

"So would I!" agreed Hannah. "But Frieda, then, if you are no longer a child, at last you have a will?"

Frieda nodded her head emphatically.

"Now," she said, "I have a will."

And Karl, looking into her sturdy face, into the eyes which he had sometimes seen dancing with mischief, sometimes flashing anger, and sometimes brimming with sorrow, murmured a prayer under his breath, for gracious guidance for that new-claimed "will."

CHAPTER TEN
THE MAKING OF A COMPACT

At the end of the short railway journey, Mr. Eldred met the girls and conducted them to the house where Mrs. Eldred waited with a heart-warming welcome for her little guest.

It was a pretty home and Frieda felt the charm of it instantly as she went up stairs with Hannah to the little square room which she was to occupy. At the same time, however, she felt strange and out of place. She was conscious of a contrast between her own hat and Hannah's, between her heavy wool dress and Hannah's blue linen suit, between her strong, serviceable–and ugly–shoes, and Hannah's pumps, also strong and serviceable, but far from ugly. The six pieces of hand luggage and the queer steamer trunk, when deposited in the center of the little room, with its crisp ruffled curtains, and its plain mahogany furniture, disturbed the harmony that had reigned before from the etching over the bed to the bowl of ferns on the table. Hannah was friendly and beaming, and not at all belligerent. Mrs. Eldred was all sweet, cheery thoughtfulness, but Frieda looking at herself in the oval mirror of the dressing-table, felt a sudden throb of pity for the girl she saw there.

Hannah helped her remove her thick jacket, tucked it and her hat away in the closet, piled up the bags and asked for the trunk key.

"*Mutter hat uns immer gesagt, alles an seinen Ort zu legen*," she said in a kind of chant. Frieda looked up, her eyes brightening with fun.

"Mother always told us to gargle every morning and use plenty of tooth-powder," she said, and Hannah shrieked with glee.

"O, have you been learning English out of that ridiculous Edith and Mary book, too? I hoped you would have it, and we can do beautiful dialogues in German and English. I've always

wanted to, but I never knew any one who could do the responses. I'll be Edith and you can be Mary."

Mrs. Eldred came in as Hannah flung the lid of the trunk back. Frieda's fun died away as she reached into a little pocket and took out a letter.

"It's for you, Tante Edith," she said, holding it as though she loved it. "It's from my mother–" and the tears came into her eyes as she said the word. Mrs. Eldred and Hannah exchanged glances of understanding, and Hannah caught up the water pitcher.

"I'll get this full of warm water for you," she said briskly, "and you must hurry and get ready to come down stairs, for we are going to have *Kaffee* just as you do in Berlin. Won't that be fun?"

"Mamma can comfort her," she thought to herself, as she emptied the pitcher which Sarah had filled a few minutes before, and refilled it with water a shade cooler. "I'll leave them alone a few minutes and go down and see about the coffee. I know she will like those little currant cakes of Sarah's."

Frieda, however, seemed little inclined to ask consolation from Mrs. Eldred. She stood helplessly looking into her trunk, and Mrs. Eldred, feeling suddenly shy, looked helplessly at her. The clouded, silent face was so different from Hannah's.

"Aren't you rather warm, dear, with that heavy gown on? Let's find something thinner to slip on before we go down stairs."

Frieda stooped, rummaged a minute, and then produced a dress of pink cotton, fussily trimmed with lace and ribbons. "This is thinner," she said, stonily.

"That will do though it is rather fine for home dinner," said Mrs. Eldred gently. "But put it on, if you will, dear. I'll tell that forgetful Hannah to bring your water at once. O, I see, she left it outside the door. There! If you want any help, just call me. I'll go into my own room across the hall and read your mother's letter." She wanted to kiss the child, but Frieda's manner forbade it.

The pink frock had alarmed Mrs. Eldred. "Clothes make such a difference to girls," she thought in distress. "How can I help her? She will be proud and shy, and sure to think I am criticising her mother's taste. Dear Marie!" Whereupon she wisely suspended her puzzling and read the letter.

"I am sending Frieda with as few new clothes as possible, my dear Edith, relying upon your taste and kindness to fit her out with what she needs. I remember how differently you dressed when you came to Heidelberg, and how odd Hannah's clothes looked to Frieda's friends, and I want Frieda to start without a handicap. American girls are less accustomed to seeing foreigners than German girls are, and a little difference in the way of dressing might make a great difference in happiness. I am afraid my Frieda will be peculiar in many ways that cannot be remedied, so once more I ask you, will you choose for her a simple outfit such as Hannah herself would approve, and make me more than ever your grateful debtor?"

Mrs. Eldred sighed with relief. The solution of one difficulty in sight, she felt braver about all others. It was a theory of hers that food and clothes were more important to happiness than most of the subtleties poets and philosophers write about. "Homesickness is very often hunger, and *Weltschmerz* can frequently be cured by a becoming frock, or brought on by an ill-fitting one," she meditated, as she fastened the pink and lace for Frieda.

Downstairs Hannah was busily setting forth upon a round table an appetizing array of cakes and cookies with a copper pot of coffee. Mr. Eldred had arranged to be present at this unwonted function, and Hannah chattered to him as she worked.

"Be sure you shake hands with her often, Daddy dear," she admonished him. "She is used to so very many hand-shakings a day, you know, and we mustn't cut her down to none at all, the very first thing. It's little matters like that that make you homesick. And homesickness is agony, Father. I know, for I've been through it."

Mr. Eldred pinched the plump cheek which showed no trace of past anguish, and Hannah seated herself upon his knee, being watchful of the pleats of her skirt as she did so!

"There's one good thing," she philosophized. "She can't miss her father as I should miss you, for he is so absent-minded that he really doesn't know her from the furniture. For all she is such a mischief inside, she acts so quiet-like and well-behaved around the house that she might almost as well be a sofa and done with it. And they have plenty of sofas, so he won't miss her and she won't miss him so very much, either."

"You imply that if you were better behaved, you would not miss me so much when we are separated! It's sufficiently complicated. I suppose you pine for my fearful reprimands?"

That was such a delightful joke that they both laughed aloud and Mrs. Eldred and Frieda were quite in the room before they realized it, and sprang up to greet them with cordiality, if not with the ceremony Hannah had planned for.

Those first days Frieda lived in a busy whirl. Hannah, once at home, and recovered from the excitement of the day in Boston, was ashamed of her conduct on that occasion, and tried to make up for it by all sorts of thoughtful attentions to Frieda, which, with the shade of formality they involved, added a little to the loneliness they were meant to combat. Mrs.

Eldred, giving up, or suspending for a time, the apparently hopeless task of winning Frieda's confidence, attended to her wardrobe with a rapidity and fervor which astonished Frieda, accustomed to long deliberations on such matters, and no reckless buying. Even the pretty frocks and hats and shoes did not please her. She felt loyalty demanded that she should wear the things she had brought from home, and it was not till Mrs. Eldred had given her her mother's letter to read that she consented to lay aside the German garments. Mr. Eldred took her about the city, and thoroughly enjoyed her comments on things American, a scorn thinly veiled by polite phrases, or by an expressive silence.

She was silent most of the time, for the language was her greatest obstacle. She remembered vividly the superior feeling she had had in Berlin, when she had watched Mr. Eldred wrestle with a conditional or had heard Mrs. Eldred struggle to pronounce "ch." It was not nearly so pleasant to be struggling one's self, with a quite senseless "th," for instance. Her heart filled with rage when she caught Hannah listening intently to her carefully enunciated words, and then saying suddenly with relief, "O!" as their meaning dawned upon her. Frieda had been at the head of her class in English.

"It's really because you pronounce so very well," Hannah explained apologetically, on one of these occasions. "You are so much more exact than we ever think of being, that it gives an unfamiliar sound to words. And besides, yours is English English and ours is United States."

"But English English must be best," protested Frieda, and Hannah forgot Miss Lyndesay's warning and "flared up" for a minute, but immediately recollected herself, and ordered an ice-cream soda as a peace-offering, notwithstanding the fact that Frieda found the taste disagreeable.

"You'll like it, when you are used to it," she said comfortingly. "You don't have them at home, you know."

"No," growled Frieda, choking on a spoonful. "And I'm glad we don't. Sundaes aren't so bad, but the name is foolish! I do not wonder Miss Lyndesay lives most of the time in Europe!"

The fifth day matters came to a climax. Karl had come over from Cambridge to spend Sunday. Hannah and he seemed to be on the best of terms. They talked English faster than Frieda could understand, and they seemed to have an endless stock of jokes that had no meaning for her. Suddenly, after sitting with a brow like a thunder-cloud for a while, listening to them and declining to join in the fun, she started up and ran up stairs with a swift pounding gait that recalled to Hannah the way she used to tear madly off to school in the morning, fearful of being late.

Karl and Hannah, left behind, looked solemnly at each other. Karl whistled.

"*Die Kleine* is irritated about something," he remarked.

"I don't wonder," said Hannah sympathizingly. "I always remember when it's too late to do any differently. She felt left out, I suppose, and you know you do use a terrible amount of slang, nowadays. I'm awfully ashamed of us, Karl!"

Karl pondered a moment. Then he said: "I'll fix it up all right. Here, you take this note up to Frieda. Just shove it under the door, if she won't let you in."

He wrote a few lines on a card and gave it to Hannah, who promptly ran away up stairs with it. Then Karl went into the study and telephoned a garage.

In a few minutes, Frieda, shy and somewhat red-eyed, came down stairs. Hannah was nowhere to be seen, and Mrs. Eldred was out for the afternoon. At the door was a snorting automobile, with seats for just two.

"I knew Hannah would forgive us if we ran away by our two selves," said Karl in German, meeting Frieda in the hall, and conducting her out to the machine. "She knows enough about being in a foreign country to understand that sometimes you want to be with your very own people. There! I'll have this thing running like a charm in about a minute. Sure you're not afraid to go out alone with me? I've learned a good deal about this kind of thing lately. It's one of the courses I'm taking at Harvard. Here we go!" And there they went, speeding down the street at a rate that made a policeman, half asleep on the corner, look about him with a start. Frieda's eyes shone, and she began to feel better.

Karl had evidently acquitted himself well in his course in motoring. He drove skilfully and easily, and they were soon outside the city in a pleasant country road. Almost any place would have seemed pleasant to Frieda just then, though, for Karl was talking cheerily, merrily, talking in German, talking of topics she knew about, and talking exclusively to her. She discovered that the day was much more of a day than she had thought. There was a quality in the air she had not noticed earlier in the afternoon. Presently she even became confidential. Karl, with eyes and hands busy, guiding the machine, bent an attentive ear as Frieda poured out her suppressed irritation of days.

"They think it is such a fine country, Karl. I cannot understand them. If they had never travelled–but they have been over Europe! They have been in Berlin! And still they find matter for admiration in this dirty little city with its buildings all heights, and its no trees anywhere except in the parks. Where are their beautiful statues? Where is their Victory Avenue? Where are their bridges? *Ach!* It is a poor cheap country. Tante Edith and Mr. Eldred are heavenly kind, and Hannah I have loved with a great love, but they have very

little taste, and no sense at all."

Karl puckered up his lips in a low whistle, and Frieda blushed.

"I did not mean to say that, Karl," she said penitently. "I am their guest. They are heavenly kind, yes. *But* I do not like the country."

It was a beautiful shady road they had come into then, and the hills at the end of it showed gracious curves.

"This reminds me," said Karl meditatively, "of a place I went through near the Rhine one summer vacation. It's really quite as charming, I believe. Look here, Frieda. I'm interested in the impression you make in this country. You're going to spend this year with a lot of girls who don't know much about Germany or Germans, and I don't mind telling you that I'm rather anxious to have you do us credit."

"I shall do Germany credit, everywhere," answered Frieda stoutly, but somewhat perturbed.

"I'd like to think that," answered Karl, "and on the whole I guess it's true, but if you keep on this way, I'm not so sure of it. You are sitting here this afternoon making general statements about America when you have seen only one of the less important cities. That doesn't strike me as the way one should judge. It doesn't seem like the kind of thing Professor Lange would do. He is very accurate and careful in his judgments. And next, you haven't shown much enthusiasm over the things the Eldreds have done for you the last day or two. Now, I never knew any one who was so unfailingly appreciative as Frau Professor Lange."

Frieda pouted. "But Hannah shows off."

"Shows off? Frieda, I'm afraid your sense of humor is rather one-sided. Hannah may take advantage of your not understanding perfectly, but who taught her that that sort of thing was funny? Who told her the brass plate over the barber's door meant that cakes were for sale there, so that she almost went in to buy one?"

Frieda chuckled. "It was not long I could fool her. She soon learned too much. Besides, my mother would not let me."

"You still think it was justifiable and humorous, I notice. But what would you have said if Hannah had told you to say: 'So am I' when strangers said: 'I am glad to meet you'? That was what some one told me, when I first began talking English."

"If Hannah should tell me wrong, I would tell her what I think of her!" blazed Frieda. "But you need not lecture any more, Karl. I understand, and I will be good. I will be better than Hannah. I will be better than yourself, than the saints, even. I will admire all things. Behold the ravishing country! The wonder of that sky! Not Italy, not Spain has such a dull gray color! The beauty of the dirty streets! The charm of the crowded street-cars! Only five cents a ride, sitting upon the laps of others! I will no longer sew on Sunday. I will never ask for beer. I will eat every morning little dry cushions of curled grain. I will rock madly. I will–"

"Hold on, Frieda!" shouted Karl. "Don't reform so fast. I can't keep within speaking distance of you. You know, the reason I scolded you so hard was because I sometimes feel just as you do about the whole country!"

Frieda put out her hand. "Let us make a compact. For the honor of Germany, we will be scrupulously careful of what we say about America, but sometimes, all by ourselves, we can say just what we feel like saying." Karl took her hand solemnly. "It's a bargain, and you are a Cor-r-rker-r-r!"

CHAPTER ELEVEN
BROOKMEADOW

Clara Lyndesay stood in the doorway of her Brookmeadow house, listening for the coming trolley. As she waited, she looked about her with satisfaction.

The big square house, freshly painted white, with green blinds at the windows, stood just at the edge of the broad elm-shaded road, known as the Albany Road because it had been, in stage-coach days, the main line between Albany and Boston. Just opposite the house was a broad meadow with a single elm in the center, and a clear line of hills for background. Boulder walls enclosed the meadow, and vines ran riot over them. The artist, looking, drew a deep breath.

"'The lot is fallen unto me in a fair ground. Yea, I have a goodly heritage,'" she thought to herself. "I think I shall call my wander-years over, and settle down here as Aunt Abigail hoped I would, and care for her old mahogany as she did, painting a picture now and then from my own doorway. The doorway itself is the most beautiful thing about the house," she added, stepping down the flagged path, to view it for the hundredth time that week. Brookmeadow houses were famous for their wonderful old doorways, with carved lintels, and this was not surpassed by any of them.

Its owner's contemplation was cut short by the far-off whir of the trolley, sounding clearly

through the still morning. Miss Lyndesay walked quickly along the curving road to the Common where she was to receive her guests. Reaching the long narrow green, where a few cows nibbled placidly as in the days when a green in the center of the village was a necessary defensive measure, she walked idly up and down. The straggling road under the great elms passed the plain white meeting-house, dating from 1813, the Academy with its belfry, the little general store and post-office combined, and wound out of sight between dignified old houses, “like Aunt Abigail’s–mine now,” she corrected her thought happily. No one was in sight. Up the road came the trolley, jogging comfortably along. It stopped at the Common and its two passengers almost fell into the arms that waited to receive them.

“O-eeeeee!” sighed Hannah, getting as close to Miss Lyndesay as she could on one side, while Frieda did the same on the other with a similar ejaculation.

“Two blue girls this time!” exclaimed Miss Lyndesay. “That is a very becoming suit, Frieda,” and then forestalling any answer, for she had known of Frau Lange’s letter to Mrs. Eldred and had guessed that Frieda would not take altogether kindly to the new clothes, she inquired of Hannah as to the health of her father and mother.

“They’re all right,” answered Hannah briefly. “And I am so glad to be here! Isn’t it just the dearest, sleepiest place you ever saw in all your life?”

“Is it your first visit here?” asked Miss Lyndesay. “I supposed you knew these villages by heart.”

“I don’t,” confessed Hannah. “I go to school all winter, and in the summer we go to the shore, and we haven’t any aunts or grandmothers or things like that living around here, so I don’t see places like this except in passing through them.”

“Well, you have a sort of aunt and grandmother combined living in Brookmeadow now, and I shall expect you to visit her often. How does it seem to you, Frieda?”

“It’s bigger than I thought it would be,” answered Frieda. “Hannah said it was a *Dorf*. I thought there would be only two or three houses, and many little huts all close together, but we passed many houses.”

“It is a good thing for you to see a New England village,” said Miss Lyndesay, “as part of the education you came for. And when you get out to Wisconsin, you will think you are in a different country altogether.”

“I did,” laughed Hannah. “Why, it looked as though it had been laid out with a ruler, and the trees were so little I felt as though they ought to be in flower-pots.”

“Not the beech woods, surely?”

“Dear me, no. But in the town itself. The beech woods are real forest. Is this the house? O, Aunt Clara, wouldn’t Catherine *love* it?”

Miss Lyndesay was so unused to the house, herself, that she took a keen delight in showing the girls all over it, taking them from one big room into another, and telling them how to appreciate the fine old furniture.

“The hangings are all new,” she explained. “Aunt Abigail’s taste was not like her heart! She kept the old furniture, but she had gaudy wall-papers and thick lace curtains, and I have had them all replaced. They aren’t done yet, everywhere, but these main rooms are. And she had the fireplace bricked up and a stove in the living-room. I found these andirons in the garret.”

“O, let’s see the garret,” begged Hannah. “We haven’t any, with old things in it, I mean. You know our house is only a little older than I am, and mother came from the West and she didn’t have heirlooms, and father had nothing whatever when they started. I should think this house would have been full of treasures.”

“It was. I found several good chairs and a desk in the garret. I shall have them refinished as soon as I can get around to it. There is a trunk that I have only peeped into. I saved it for you girls to open. But you must come out into the garden now, while the sun is there.”

Frieda had taken only a moderate interest in the house, but when they entered the tangled garden, German exclamations poured from her lips in a rapturous stream.

“*Himmlisch! Reizend! Famos! Ach, wie wunderhübsch! Was nennt man dies? Und dies?*” She flew from one blossom to another, sniffing, admiring, and asking questions about those that were unknown to her, naming the others in German, and altogether showing a degree of enthusiasm which nothing American had hitherto been able to arouse in her. It was not because of Karl’s compact, but because of her mighty love of flowers. She seemed to forget the others as she knelt before a little white tea-rose, kissing it and calling it pretty names.

Miss Lyndesay and Hannah watched her.

“Now she seems more like herself,” said Hannah frowning, “the way she was in Berlin. I wish she would stay that way!”

Miss Lyndesay looked at Hannah searchingly.

“Frieda,” she called, “will you gather flowers for the luncheon table, please? Hannah is going to pick raspberries with me. I have a most beautiful old glass bowl to put them in.”

Frieda undertook the task assigned her joyfully, and Hannah followed Miss Lyndesay to the

kitchen, where Aunt Abigail's old servant, inherited with the house, supplied them with pails for the berry-picking. The bushes were at the other end of the garden, where they could speak without being overheard.

Miss Lyndesay said nothing at first, but she had not long to wait. Hannah had poured out her puzzles and worries in letters to this friend often, since the evening at Three Gables, long ago, when she had poured them out in words and tears, and found comfort.

It was a torrent of words this time, but Miss Lyndesay, listening, distinguished between essentials and non-essentials by a divine gift which had always been hers.

"She doesn't seem the same Frieda," declared Hannah, at last. "I don't feel acquainted with her. Mamma says it is just because everything is new and strange to her. She hasn't criticised things since she and Karl went off together for a little trip the other day, but she looks bored or unhappy and I don't know what to do. I was a stranger when we were together before, but I'm sure I didn't act so, and I don't see why she should now. So there!"

"Did you go to Germany alone?" Miss Lyndesay put the question casually, and Hannah looked up, surprised.

"Why, no. Dad and Mamma were there all the time, of course. I couldn't have lived without them–O! I see what you mean," and the berries dropped slowly into the half-full pail while Hannah meditated.

Clara Lyndesay, observing her bent face, felt satisfied. It was not the first time she had seen Hannah Eldred come out of a quandary with very little help.

"She doesn't do things by halves, either," she thought. "Frieda won't have such a lonely time from now on." Aloud she said:

"I wondered, when I heard you speak to Frieda in that careful explanatory way, as you might to a child who had been left in your care rather against your will, if you seemed just natural to Frieda! Frau Lange realized that there was some risk in sending Frieda over here. She told me that she knew young girls changed rapidly in tastes and ideals, and it might be that you two would not care so much for each other now. But she hoped, for the sake of the friendship between your mother and herself, that the two years would prove not to have separated you greatly. I assured her that, while there might be some little difficulty at first, you would probably come out better friends than ever. There! I think we have quite enough berries. If you will just take them in to Evangeline, I'll see about Frieda's flowers. You'll find a pitcher of shrub on the ice, and goblets on the tray all ready to bring out. We'll arrange the flowers on the back stoop, I think, and you might bring us some refreshment there."

Frieda had gathered flowers eagerly, but without much discrimination. Miss Lyndesay helped her sort them and make several bouquets instead of one variegated one, talking with her the while of incidents of their journey, till Frieda was entirely at her ease. By the time Hannah came out with the cool drink, the slight constraint that had existed for days between Frieda and herself seemed to have vanished. Joyfully, Hannah entered into the new spirit, and when Miss Lyndesay went in to answer Evangeline's questions about luncheon, her guests were bubbling with mirth over some reminiscence of their Berlin days.

Immediately after luncheon, a caller arrived, with the obvious intention of spending some time. Miss Lyndesay gave the girls a trunk key and sent them off to do their garret exploring by themselves, giving them permission to do whatever they liked with anything they might find. They climbed the polished stairs, with arms interlaced, chattering in German and English mixed, and reached the big shadowy garret out of breath. The trunks were piled in a cobwebby corner, and their key proved to belong to the lowest one in the pile. That meant much mighty tugging, but at last the encumbering ones were removed and they turned the key in the lock and lifted the heavy lid.

"O!" They spoke softly and leaned over, clinging to each other with excitement. In the top tray lay a doll dressed as if for a wedding. She wore a white satin gown, short-waisted, with a long panel down the front, embroidered with tiny pearls and gold thread. Her little feet were adorned with high-heeled slippers of white silk, also embroidered in the tiny pearls. A necklace of shining stones, and two little earrings made them gasp with delight. In the soft wavy hair was a high shell comb. The little lady held a book in her clasped hands, and her eyes, half closed, looked sleepily out from under long eyelashes.

"See! Here is a card," said Frieda, touching the soft folds of yellowed tissue paper that lay around the little figure in the tray.

Hannah lifted the card with awe, and read: "The doll of Millicent Wadsworth, as she dressed it on her own Wedding Day, to be put aside and never played with more. The Bishop said it was a sinful Waste to dress her so, but my Husband said he did not care!"

"What a reckless man My Husband was!" said Hannah, looking back at the doll once more. "Think of playing with dolls up to your wedding day! I wonder how old she was."

"Let's look in the other trays," suggested Frieda. They removed the top one carefully, to find almost as delightful treasures in the next. Quite as delightful, perhaps, for here was the little Millicent's wedding-gown, with her slippers and necklace and high shell comb, all like those the doll wore. Here, too, was a card, but written in an older hand:

"The Wedding Clothes of Millicent Wadsworth Berryfield, married on the 16th anniversary of

her birth to John Berryfield, Esq., a Devoted Lover and Husband. She died three months and two days after of an Unknown Malady. John Berryfield returned to England, leaving these, Her Possessions, to be kept sacredly till he should come after them."

"It's dated almost a hundred years ago. Of course, he is dead too, now. I wonder if she pined for her doll to play with."

Frieda, leaving speculation to Hannah, was taking the pretty garments out, one by one.

"Here is another dress!" she exclaimed. "A pink one. O, Hannah, you would look so pretty in this!" She held it up, quaint in style as the other, with a little train, flowered silk over a straight front panel of plain pink, tight sleeves with a little puff at the shoulder.

"I wonder–Do you suppose we dare try them on? They look almost big enough."

"Of course, we dare. Miss Lyndesay told us to do what we liked and she had peeped into this trunk, so she knew what was in it. We will be as careful as careful can be."

They piled their arms with the delicate old fabrics and carried them down to their own room where they proceeded to dress up. It was not an easy process, for they dared not tug too hard, and Millicent had been slenderer than they, though quite as tall. The little slippers defied them, and the necklace of pearls they did not touch. "I think her husband gave her that, and no one else should ever wear it," said Hannah, and Frieda agreed.

By the time they had finished dressing, they were flushed and rosy. They stole out into the hall and peered over the banisters to see if the caller showed signs of departure. Miss Lyndesay was just closing the door upon her. As she turned back, she heard steps on the stairs and, looking up, saw a sight she loved always afterward to remember. Two little Old World ladies, one in white and brocade, the other in flowered pink satin, came down the winding stairs, their eyes bright with excitement, their hair rough, and the big blue hair-ribbons, which they had quite forgotten to remove, showing incongruously above their minuet gowns.

"O you pretty children!" cried Miss Lyndesay. "Millicent herself wasn't sweeter, I'm sure, when the Bishop married her off to John. Why didn't you bring the doll?"

"We were afraid we'd drop her," said Hannah, stepping to the floor. "There! I'm glad I'm safely down. You can't think what awkward skirts these are to walk in. O!"

For as she turned, Frieda stepped on her train, and with shrieks both fell to the floor, splitting their hundred-year-old seams.

Miss Lyndesay helped them up, laughing at their rueful faces, and kissing away the tears that would come at the sight of the havoc they had wrought.

"Cheer up, dear hearts! It was purest accident. And Millicent's pretty gowns have served their purposes long ago. I've no doubt they can be put together again well enough, and in any case you must not care! I forbid it. Come, let's get back into our own century, and take a walk before the sun goes down. I have no end of pretty by-paths to show you."

That evening, there was enough chill in the air for a small fire in the living-room fireplace, and Miss Lyndesay seated herself before it on a high-backed settle, with a girl on either side of her.

"If I didn't remember that one of the things Hannah liked me for first was my habit of sitting quietly without work," she said, "I should be tempted to improve these minutes by finishing the carving design I am making to go over the fireplace."

"What is it? Let us see it, and maybe we'll let you. You have such a peaceful way of working you don't make me nervous as some people do."

"It is there on the desk."

Hannah brought the brown paper, and she and Frieda bent over it together.

"L-a-e," spelled Hannah, but Frieda looked up, delighted.

"I know. *Laetus sorte mea!* It means 'Happy in my lot!' It is in the book Tante Edith sent me for my birthday, about the little cripple."

"O, yes, *The Story of a Short Life*. I've read that, too," said Hannah, "but I didn't recognize it just at first. I should think, if it is to be your motto, you'd have to change the gender and make it '*laeta*,' Aunt Clara."

Miss Lyndesay laughed. "I'm glad you both know the story. I expected Hannah to, but hardly Frieda. Did you read it all by yourself, dear?"

"Yes," answered Frieda proudly. "I have read seven English books, and I like that best. Mother and I made a list of Poor Things the way Leonard did."

"O, how nice!" cried Hannah. "Did you put Bertha's lame sister on it?"

"Yes, and Onkel Heinrich's brother who can not see and is always cheerful, and the little woman who sells string and roses in the shop under us, and Edna Helm who had to stop school and go to work because her father couldn't afford to take care of her."

"Poor Edna!" said Hannah. "I liked her best of all your friends. I'm going to start a Poor Things book myself, when I get home."

“Have you ever heard of the Guild of Brave Poor Things in England?” asked Miss Lyndesay, and as the girls showed their interest she went on to tell them of the organization which took its name and its motive from Mrs. Ewing’s little story, and has grown into a large organization with industrial schools and shops.

“So all these people, boys and men and women and girls who cannot work in factories, because of some infirmity, are enabled to make beautiful things and to sell them. I bought some of their doll furniture when I was last in London. Let me see. Yes, it was in the box I unpacked yesterday.”

“Let me get it,” begged Frieda, and as soon as she had been told where to look she was off. She came quickly back again bringing a doll’s white-wood bed, strong and well-made as the fine old furniture which had outlived Aunt Abigail and her parents.

“It is just right for Millicent’s doll,” cried Frieda, as she brought it in. “Couldn’t we put her in it, Tante Clara, to make up for having torn the pretty dresses?”

“Indeed you may. I had no one in mind to give it to, but bought it because I had enjoyed visiting the school at Chailey.”

“Can all the cripples make pretty things like this?” asked Hannah, wondering, as Frieda placed the bed in her hands.

“O, no, only a very few. But the Guild of Brave Poor Things does many other things, besides establishing the schools. All maimed persons may belong, and the guild makes investigations, finds out if they can be helped by surgery, and, if not, tries to make their lives happier in every possible way. Of course, those of them who can use their hands are happier doing so than they could be in any other way. Every Friday afternoon, from three to six, they meet in the settlement rooms and have music and games and reading, and hear talks on interesting subjects by ladies and gentlemen who are glad to tell them of their particular lines of work. Then they have a short service of prayer–”

“Do they sing the tug-of-war hymn?” asked Hannah eagerly. “I remember about that better than anything else in the book.”

“Yes, they almost always sing that. I heard them, myself,” and Miss Lyndesay’s eyes grew sweeter at the thought. “I have never heard anything more affecting than that singing:

> “‘Who best can drink His cup of woe,
> Triumphant over pain,
> Who patient bears His cross below,
> He follows in His train.’”

Frieda and Hannah were still as she finished speaking, and all three sat looking at the fire for a few moments in silence. Presently Hannah said softly:

“And *they* have *‘Laetus sorte mea’* for a motto? I can see how you could take it, Aunt Clara, for of course you have everything anybody could want. You are well and beautiful and good, and have money and talent and friends.”

Miss Lyndesay was silent and Hannah, who had been studying the flames reflectively, looked up presently to see why she made no reply. There was a grave expression on her face, and Hannah’s grew startled.

Miss Lyndesay, seeing the look of alarm in the child’s eyes, smiled and took her hand.

“Would you give up your father and mother for any or all of those things, Hannah dear?” she said.

“O!” cried Hannah in a hurt frightened tone, and Frieda suddenly choked back a sob.

Miss Lyndesay lifted her head quickly.

“Girls, do you realize the absurdity of us? Here we started out discussing: ‘Happy in my lot’ and in a few minutes we have grown sad with the burden of sorrow of half the world and our own individual troubles besides! That is anything but wise, isn’t it? I didn’t intend to preach to you when I invited you to Brookmeadow. But since we are on the subject, let’s say a little more and then drop it. I do want you to remember that while the people who seem fortunate often have something to bear that offsets most of the pleasant circumstances of their lives, at the same time, many people who seem to have nothing to be glad about are persistently and genuinely joyful. The sad folk meet sadness everywhere, and the glad folk find gladness. Let me read you something, written by Sister Grace, who founded the order of Brave Poor Things about the time you girls were born, and then I refuse to say or hear another solemn word this evening!”

She took up a little pamphlet and read aloud:

“To bear pain cheerfully, to take defeat nobly, to be constant and loyal, to be brave and happy with the odds dead against us, to be full of sympathy and tenderness–these are gifts which mark out the truly great.”

“Now let’s put Millicent’s doll to bed,” suggested Frieda, who disliked solemnity and saw that Hannah was still staring into the fire. Miss Lyndesay seconded the motion, and, taking candles, the three mounted into the garret, sought out the old trunk and brought the beautiful doll down stairs. There, by the fire, they laid her gently down on a soft blanket in

the pretty bed which was exactly the right size.

Then Evangeline appeared with a corn-popper and a sack of corn, and the half-hour before bedtime passed quickly and merrily away.

When Aunt Clara had tucked her guests into the big four-poster, they cuddled close to each other, forgetting the friction of the last few days in present comfort, sleepily grateful for the glimpse they had had that day of difficulties and griefs much greater than any of their own, and each resolving to be happy in her lot.

CHAPTER TWELVE
ARRIVAL AT WINSTED

Mr. and Mrs. Eldred turned away from the station, from which the through Chicago train had just pulled out, carrying with it two passengers for Winsted, Wisconsin.

“Well, I’m glad that’s over,” said Mrs. Eldred aloud. “I always feel sorry for Hannah when she has to say good-by. She does suffer so over it, but she recovers quickly.”

“She seems to be acquiring a comfortable philosophy,” remarked Mr. Eldred, as he looked at his watch and then up the street where his car was not in sight. “She told me that the world was fixed wrong, because it ought to be possible to be with all of one’s beloveds at the same time. ‘But,’ she added sagely, ‘that’s probably Heaven.’”

“‘Earth being so good, would Heaven seem best?’” quoted Hannah’s mother, smiling. “We have all had to stay our hearts with that thought, I suppose. I am much more content about both girls, since Karl and Miss Lyndesay took them in hand. For a few days I really feared that the adjustment might be too much for them. But Karl worked some magic spell over Frieda, and Miss Lyndesay charmed Hannah. I must go over to Brookmeadow this very week, and pay my respects to that remarkable woman.”

“Some mothers would be jealous of such an outside influence,” suggested Mr. Eldred, glancing fondly at his pretty little wife.

“Then they are very unwise,” declared that lady decisively. “I remember my own girlhood well enough to know that there were certain crises through which my mother could not help me as well as an outsider, simply because she was my mother. I’m not in the least afraid that any one could be dearer to Hannah than I am, and she is such a bundle of contradictions, of sweet impulses and rebelliousness, that I’m heartily glad of all the help I can get in bringing her up. There’s my car. Do try to come home to luncheon. I’ll be missing my lively children and their German-English patois!”

The two girls on the train had settled themselves cosily with the aid of a porter rendered over-zealous by Mr. Eldred’s generosity, and were watching the flying scenery and the other passengers with interest. Frieda was not eager to arrive at her journey’s end. She already missed Karl and the friendly Eldreds, who had seemed nearer her own parents than any one else in this strange country could. The prospect before her was not wholly pleasant. Hannah had spent so much energy in singing the praises of Dexter College, Alice Prescott and Catherine Smith, that Frieda’s desire to see them was distinctly modified by a jealous feeling that such perfections must be somewhat tiresome. She was much more interested in watching a bride and groom across the aisle, and in making comments on American trains, some of which, according to her compact with Karl, she kept to herself, meaning to unburden her mind in the first letter she should write him. Others of a favorable sort she made aloud to Hannah, who received them graciously, on behalf of the nation. The day wore away not unpleasantly, but when the gas was lighted and the bride frankly rested her head upon the bridegroom’s shoulder, a mighty homesickness swept over Frieda. She could barely choke down her food in the dining-car, and hated a waiter for watching her with a white-toothed smile. The porter was making up berths when they returned and the proceeding scandalized her, accustomed as she was to the decency of compartment trains.

Forgetting her promise, she spoke her disgust:

“Ladies and gentlemen like pots of marmalade on shelves in a cupboard!”

Hannah only laughed and scrambled up to the top shelf with the agility of a squirrel, leaving Frieda to solitude and unsuspected misery.

The porter and the grinning waiter would not be forgotten. Their blackness combined with the close warm atmosphere to alarm her. She dared not undress, and when she tried to lie down, she felt as though she should choke. The darkness seemed to her sleepy but resisting mind to be taking on human shape. With her eyes closed she saw it develop pink fingernails and gleaming teeth and eyeballs. Her real distrust of anything foreign was made keener by her homesickness. At last she fell into an uneasy sleep, clutching her purse and her gold beads tightly. At each station she woke with a jerk and a horrible conviction that the train had been wrecked and she was the sole survivor. Sometimes she put her hand up and felt of the wooden wall over her head for assurance that the upper berth to which Hannah had blithely committed herself had not treacherously closed. There were subdued rustlings in the

aisle now and then, and quick brushings past her curtains which made her sit up, gasping, her eyes staring into the dark and her heart thumping. Frieda Lange crawled out of her tumbled berth next morning, certain that life could have in store for her nothing more hideous than her first night in an American sleeping-car.

Hannah, on the other hand, having “slept like a top, the way you ought to in an upper berth,” as she said with a gleeful laugh, and having made her toilet with the lucky ease which seemed one of her characteristics, was full of good spirits, and joyous anticipations. Winsted seemed very near, and her bubbling joy over the prospect of seeing Catherine added to Frieda’s gloom. They went into the dining-car to breakfast, where Frieda was so unfortunate as to be shot from her seat as the train dashed around a curve, a glass of milk following her, anointing her hair and face in a manner calculated to ruffle the serenest temper. Hannah and the too friendly waiter helped her up with an effort at self-control, but Frieda had mislaid her sense of humor.

The change of cars in Chicago was accomplished simply, Hannah thoroughly enjoying leading the way and Frieda sulkily following. It would have taken more than a fit of sulks on Frieda’s part to have quenched Hannah’s joy in life that day, however, and she rattled on of the pleasures coming, scarcely noticing Frieda’s failure to respond.

“Winsted!”

Hannah was out of the car almost before it stopped. Frieda, delayed by other passengers who pushed in ahead of her, saw the rapturous meeting between her own Hannah and a tall sweet-faced girl with red-gold hair, whose beauty she was obliged to admit, though she did so gloomily. “I hoped she would be homely,” she growled to herself as she stepped down to the platform, and suffered Catherine to kiss her cheek.

“Let’s walk,” suggested Catherine. “It’s much too beautiful a day to be cooped in a bus. I’ll have your bags sent up. O, Hannah, my darling, I’ve been waiting ages for you! And for you, too, Frieda,” she added shyly.

But Frieda was regarding the wrinkled pleats in her dress, and was conscious that her hair was still wet with milk; therefore she only mumbled something and stalked along beside the others who, in their delight at seeing each other, quickly forgot her, and chattered away in English, with many little bursts of laughter.

Dr. Helen was out when they reached the pretty house on the hillside. Catherine led Frieda to the big rose guest-chamber, and then carried Hannah off across the wide hall to her own room and the little dressing-room opening from it, which Hannah had occupied on her first visit a year and a half before. The trunks arrived at once, and Hannah immediately began to unpack, Catherine sitting on the edge of the bed and exclaiming over every new frock as it came out. Frieda, left alone, because she had only partly understood the invitation the others gave her to join them, and had wilfully refused the part she had understood, was wretched indeed. She sat stiffly on a straight mahogany chair, and wished with all her might that she had never been born, or at least, if that mistake had been inevitable, that she had never left her native land.

Suddenly there came a quick tap at the door and Hannah, not waiting for a “Come,” ran in and tossed a parcel into her lap.

“What? Aren’t you dressed yet? Do hurry. Karl asked me to give you this as soon as we got here. Did Catherine show you your bath-room? You have one all to yourself; isn’t that lovely? It’s the most beautiful house, anyway. O, what dear roses on the dressing-table! Wasn’t it just like Catherine to put them there? Hurry up. Dr. Helen will be here pretty soon, and Polly Osgood and Dot Winthrop are coming over to see us. I’d put on that white poplin skirt and the waist with the blue butterfly bow at your throat. You look awfully fetching in that. Yes, Catherine, I’m coming,” and she flew out, tossing a kiss to Frieda.

In her excitement she had spoken in English, and the compliment was quite lost on Frieda who had not yet learned the meaning of “fetching.” That young person’s sulks were not dissipated by the call, accordingly, and there is no telling what depths of obstinate misery she might have reached, had not Karl’s parcel fallen to the floor and called attention to itself. With a manner which suggested to her mirror that life was distinctly not worth while, Frieda lifted the object and drearily removed the wrappings.

From a small carved frame Karl’s clear honest face looked out at her, and a card in the corner read–in German–“Remember the compact, Comrade!”

Like a flash brightness came back to Frieda’s face. Good cheer was much more natural to her than moroseness. From the face in the picture she turned her gaze to the tousled reflection in the mirror. “The Fatherland is not much honored by such a representative!” she said, and began taking down her hair with a fine energy.

In the living-room downstairs teacups were clinking, and girls’ voices, subdued and sweet, mingled with laughter. Hannah, her back to the door, was talking merrily to Dot, to whom she had taken an instantaneous liking; Catherine bent anxiously over the tea-tray on the wicker table in the window when Polly, from the comfortable depths of a low chair, looked up and saw on the landing of the stairs a picture that made her catch her breath.

Frieda, in a pale pink mull gown, with roses in her long soft sash, her yellow braids wound into a garland around her head, her cheeks burning with shyness, and her big eyes looking

wistful and sweet, stood waiting. Polly sprang up with a soft little “O!” Catherine, looking up, smiled a welcome, but Polly went forward and taking Frieda’s hands in both of hers, said eagerly: “We’ve been waiting and waiting for you, Frieda.”

Dot was introduced, but her usual self-possession promptly deserted her. “I always feel as though I ought to shout to a foreigner,” she had confessed to Hannah, “and in order not to do that, I just have to keep still.” Catherine, who had felt a little rebuffed by Frieda’s chilly manner at the station, and Hannah, not quite sure what the present mood might indicate, were both willing to leave to Polly the rôle she had undertaken. Frieda sat quite near her, and watched her pretty bright movements with gentle interest, maintaining a silence meanwhile only surpassed in completeness by Dot’s. Hannah rattled on, but there was a hollowness in the rattle that made Catherine’s hostess heart falter. She was never fluent, herself. Her gentle art consisted in making her guests entertain themselves and each other.

Then Dr. Helen came in, big, strong and competent, socially and in every other way.

Her welcome to Frieda would have warmed an iceberg’s heart. She hugged Hannah, and gave her right hand to Polly and the left to Dot. “Give me a taste of your tea, Daughter,” she said, as she took off her gloves and her hat and seated herself. “It will take something as strong as tea to heal my weary spirit this afternoon. I’ve just had an emergency call.”

Dr. Helen’s eyes smiled reminiscently, and Dot awoke.

“Do tell us, do, do, Dr. Helen,” she pleaded. “I know it’s something funny, by the twinkle in your eye. And we’ll never, never tell.”

Dr. Helen tasted her tea leisurely, and added a slice of lemon.

“I don’t tell tales about my patients, but there is no sense in a rule that isn’t transgressed once in a while. You wouldn’t know it was a rule! And I do believe you girls will enjoy this and never tell.”

“You ‘give us credit for more discretion than you have, yourself?’” quoted Catherine.

“If you like to put it that way! I was overtaken on my way home to greet these visitors by a messenger from Mrs. Swinburne, saying that Elsmere was very ill. It is a wonder that he has lived as long as he has, with his reckless tendencies and such erratic care. So I hastened over to the house. Mrs. Swinburne was in a mild state of hysterics, and it was some time before I could quiet her enough to learn the difficulty. Then my alarm vanished, changed to wrath, would perhaps be more accurate. Elsmere had eaten all her pills! They were pills that would not have hurt a cat. Mrs. Swinburne’s ailments are of a nature to require very weak remedies.”

“Bread and butter?” asked Dot, with a twinkle as merry as the doctor’s own.

“Something of that sort! But Elsmere did not know that. They might have been morphia or arsenic for all he knew. The principle in his case was the same. His mother said ‘no symptoms had set in as yet,’ but she wanted me to administer an antidote at once. I couldn’t refuse her!”

“Mother! What did you do?”

“First I caused the patient to be removed to his own room and the doors to be closed. Then I gave him a sound scolding and a good smart spanking.”

“O dear Doctor Helen!” sighed Polly softly, while Dot clapped her hands with glee, and even Catherine showed signs of satisfaction.

“Did his mother hear you?”

“If she had, I was prepared to tell her it was necessary to restore the circulation. I was afraid the child might howl, but it was a new experience to him and he took it so very pleasantly that I am now worried for fear he liked it!” Dr Helen set down her teacup and turned to Frieda. “You will think me a barbarous physician, Frieda, but really this boy has needed discipline for a long time, and there is no one to give it to him. His pranks are often dangerous.”

“Like the building of a fire under the barn to keep his cat warm.”

“Yes, and making a ladder of kindling wood and climbing up to the second story on it.”

“He is a pretty naughty boy,” finished Dr. Helen, “and a very sweet attractive one withal. I hope I made it clear to-day, that he is not to go about eating medicine. Now I must hear how Mrs. Eldred is, and what sort of a journey you had. Did Catherine make you properly comfortable?”

Hannah drew close to Dr. Helen and cuddled her hand as she answered. Then she suddenly said: “O, you know, Frieda and I saw Miss Lyndesay just before we came away. Do tell about it, Frieda.”

Frieda’s face lighted at the name. “She is very wonderful,” she said shyly. “She said: ‘Let me greet myself to them.’ She finds herself well, and her house is beautiful.”

“I am so glad. Thank you very much for bringing us direct word from her. See! this is the portrait she painted of Catherine some time ago.” And Dr. Helen took Frieda a little apart to get a good light on the painting of Catherine and Hotspur, almost the only picture the big

room with its walls of books contained. It developed that Frieda was very fond of dogs and her rapture over the picture made it necessary to call in the original, who instantly recognized in her a discriminating soul. Frieda dropped down on the leather window-seat and fondled his tawny sides with the deepest feeling of rest she had had in two days. “He understands me,” she thought, with almost passionate gratitude.

Polly and Dot bade her good-by in a few minutes. “I’m going to ask you to go out on the river with me and talk German to me all alone. I’ve studied it in college,” said Polly, “and I do want to see whether I can understand a real German. We won’t let Catherine or Hannah go. I should be afraid to try before them, but I don’t believe I should be at all afraid of you.”

Frieda caught Polly’s hand in hers, and suddenly carried it to her lips and kissed it. Polly reddened a little, while Dot turned abruptly away and made her adieux to Catherine and Hannah.

“Isn’t she a dear?” sighed Polly, as she and Dot went down the walk. “I do think she’s as charming as a picture in a sweet old-fashioned book, and I want to learn to read the printing that describes the picture.”

“Well, you may for all of me,” replied Dot. “But I don’t believe I’d ever feel safe with her. I felt all hands and feet, and if she should ever kiss my hand!”

“She won’t!” laughed Polly. “You needn’t fear! I wonder how the boys will like her. She is unusually good-looking, and her clothes are delightful. And I like her eyes. There is fun in her somewhere. You mark my words, Dot Winthrop. Once she learns English, there’ll be something doing. There’s nothing colorless or monotonous about Frieda Lange.”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
CAUGHT IN A SHOWER

The three girls, “just the right number, one for each gable,” as Dr. Harlow said, had been very busy that morning. Their beds made, Catherine had gone down to market, while Frieda dusted the living-room, and Hannah swept the porches.

“I like doing things like this,” said Frieda suddenly, as she came to the doorway, and shook her duster energetically. “Do you remember the time we got our own supper in Berlin, Hannah?”

“Indeed I do,” said Hannah heartily, leaning on her broom. “You look awfully pretty this morning, Frieda, in that plaid gingham. Are you going off with Polly, as usual? I don’t see you at all, it seems to me.”

“You have Catherine,” answered Frieda. “Polly is learning German.”

“And you are learning English. I can see that you have improved a lot this week. But you are getting pretty slangy. It would be better for you to learn from Catherine than from Polly.”

Frieda shook her head firmly. “I am in awe of Catherine,” she announced, “and with you I feel weary talking English, for I know you can talk German. But Polly cannot do any other, and I must talk with her. She is delightsome.”

“So is Catherine,” said Hannah, looking at Frieda wistfully. It was a worry to her that these two who were to be together all the next year should be so slow in getting acquainted. “One is obstinate and the other is shy, and I don’t know when they will get over it,” she sighed to herself, as Frieda, seeing Catherine come up the walk, disappeared into the house.

Catherine was breathless with her quick climb and her many parcels. She dropped into a chair on the porch, and took off her hat to fan herself.

“There is the funniest woman on the street,” she said. “I know she is an agent, and I suppose she’ll be here soon; but I’ve got to shell these peas and I want to do it out here, so I shan’t run from her. Won’t you bring out some pans for the peas when you take your broom in, Hannah? I’m too weary to move.”

Hannah, on her way after pans, persuaded Frieda to come out and help shell peas, and all three were soon busily at work.

Suddenly Catherine snapped a pea at Hannah to attract her attention.

“My agent!” she whispered, as a woman in a loose flowing gown marched toward them.

She mounted the steps and, stooping over Catherine, snapped something around her neck.

“There!” she said, straightening herself. “That will never come off.”

All three girls gasped. Catherine clutched at the offending article and the peas rolled in all directions.

“It’s a collar,” said the woman triumphantly. “You can wear it forever. Just put a fresh ribbon over it now and then, and you’re always dressed. Only fifteen cents. I’ll try one on you, Miss–” and before Hannah could utter a protest she was caught in the celluloid trap as

Catherine had been. Speechless they faced each other. With a little gasp Frieda slipped over the porch railing and disappeared around the corner of the house. Hotspur came bounding after her and she patted him, and hugged him and laughed and laughed.

“A collar just like yours, Hotspur dear,” she told him in German. “And it will never come off! Catherine, the Saint, the Perfect, the Inviolate, sitting there looking like a–in English, like an idiom! O, Hotspur, dear, it has done me good. I have wished I could want to laugh at her. Now I shan’t be so afraid of her ever again. Come! we must go. It’s time for our row.” And Frieda danced off across a little wood path which was a short-cut to the boat-house.

Polly was waiting, and in a very few minutes the “Minnehaha” was launched. It was a beautiful day, the river rippling with waves and twinkling with reflections of trees, but the ardent oarswomen saw neither the beauty surrounding them nor the black clouds threatening. They were practising for a race. Neither spoke. They pulled with long steady strokes in perfect time. Suddenly Frieda’s oar flopped and “caught a crab.” The bow at the same moment struck the bank, and a great scrambling tearing sound followed. In a fright the girls huddled together in the bottom of the boat, not daring to look up.

“O, pshaw! It’s only a cow, more afraid than we were. She made all that noise just tearing up the bank.”

“I thought it was an earthshake,” sighed Frieda, leaning back and resting. “That was one hundred strokes without missing. I didn’t know the bank was so near.”

“Neither did I. That’s the trouble with us, Frieda. We get so interested in rowing that we forget to steer.”

“We steered into a steer that time.”

“O, Frieda! You ought not to be allowed to make jokes in English, you make such bad ones.”

Frieda smiled cheerfully. “Ten days ago I thought I should never make a joke in any language, or laugh at one again. I was very sorrowful when I came here, Polly.”

“I didn’t dream it,” answered Polly. “You looked very sweet when I first saw you, and I thought you kept still because you didn’t care to talk! But we have had a lot of fun these days, haven’t we? I feel as though I had known you a long time. Wish you were going to Wellesley.”

“So do I. It would be delightful, with you there and Karl and Hannah so near. But my parents decided for me. Karl will go to see you, though.”

“That’s nice. Really, Frieda, you will find it’s lots easier at a small college than a large one at first. And you can come on East afterward. Dexter is fine, and you’ll have such a start, going in as Catherine’s friend.”

Frieda grimaced.

“If every one there is as beautiful and–*apart* as Catherine is, I shan’t get on very well. Catherine is like a saint. She could never understand wickedness as you and Hannah do.”

“Thanks very much!” Polly answered dryly. “But you take my word for it, Catherine isn’t just a saint. There is fun in her, too, though not on the surface. You may always feel as though she were a beautiful picture or poem but you won’t like her the less for that. She’s not stand-offish. She’s just different. My dear, I felt a drop.”

“So did I. And there’s another.” Straightway the heavens opened and a deluge descended, most of it, it seemed, aiming for the small rowboat at the pasture’s edge.

The thin roof of boughs which had hidden from their view the swiftly gathering clouds was wholly inadequate to the task of sheltering them from the contents of the clouds. Great cracks of lightning showed in the dark sky, and thunder rattled and roared and rumbled and burst.

Polly looked grave.

“We’ll drown if we stay here, and we could never row home. Look at the waves! And if we stay here, we’re also liable to be struck by lightning. Let’s leave the boat and make for that farmhouse across the pasture.”

“I’m afraider of the cow,” said Frieda. “But I’ll go. We can hide the oars and oar-locks in the bushes.”

Progress across the pasture was difficult, but when the road beyond was reached, both looked aghast at the muddy stream of it.

Frieda rolled under the fence and stepped boldly in. Polly, gasping with laughter, started to climb over.

“You might as well roll,” advised Frieda. “You can’t wetten yourself more than you are already, and it is pleasant to roll.”

“That’s a matter of taste!” panted Polly, balancing herself on the top of the fence.

Suddenly Frieda gave a little shriek. Polly instantly fell forward into the mud, her skirt catching on all the barbs in the fence and rending itself horribly. Frieda, full of wild exclamations of pity and remorse, helped her up and wiped the thickest of the mud from her

once piquant face.

“It was the cow,” she confessed. “I saw him coming from afar and I squealed. I did not know it would make you tumble, but I had to squeal. I fear cows. I have great alarm before them.”

“I forgive you,” Polly was weak with mirth. “But we’ve got to get into that house and telephone for some one to come out from town and take us home. We could never walk in these roads, and I should tie myself all up in knots if I walked in this shredded skirt. One more little spurt, Frieda, and we’re at the kitchen door!”

It looked for a minute as though they would never get beyond the door. The respectable lady who met them there was scarcely to blame if she judged a little by outward appearance. Polly’s efforts to be suave were discounted by the muddy look of her eye, and the fact that water was dripping from her hair into her face.

“Won’t you please let us come in and telephone for a carriage, and then wait for it?” she pleaded. “I will gladly pay for the use of the ’phone.” Then it came over her sickeningly that she had no money with her.

“I’m Polly Osgood,” she said. “My father is the Osgood of Osgood and Brown, Lawyers.”

“You don’t say! Come right in. I’m Amanda B. Mills, and Lawyer Osgood has been my counsel for twenty-one years and more. I’d never a-kept you waitin’ out there a minute, if I’d known ’twas you. Is this your sister? Don’t wipe your shoes. Come right in. There’s other folks been caught in this rain, too.”

She stepped back, still speaking, and invited them into the kitchen. Polly and Frieda, stumbling a little, blinded as they were by the water dripping from their hair, followed her. As they entered the room, there was a moment’s silence, then a burst of laughter and exclamations.

“For the love of Mike!”

“Where did you rain down from?”

“O dear, O dear! You ridiculous boys!”

“What a guy you do look, Polly!”

And slowly out of the babel of voices came a deep solemn: “*Donnerwetter!*” It was not a lady-like expression for a nice little German girl to use, but she knew that to American ears it sounded more harmless than her usual expletives, and, besides, she felt that if ever an occasion had warranted emphasis this was it. She and Polly, dripping, draggled, ragged, confronted with Algernon, Max, Bert and Archie, almost as wet, grouped about Amanda B. Mills’ kitchen stove!

Mrs. Mills’ astonishment at the boisterous greeting given her latest guests by the earlier ones was so manifest that Polly hastened to make all clear with introductions.

“How do you happen to be here?” she asked, as she finished, and Archie had made a Chesterfieldian bow, though the blue from his Andover cap had run into his fair hair.

“Fishing,” answered Bert. “We drove out from town with our old nag, hitched her to a tree and fished. Thunder and lightning always rile the beast, and she just broke her tie-strap and oozed off home, and left us in her wake. We got this far, walking, but the road was such a juicy mess we decided to stop and telephone for some one to come out after us.”

“That’s what I am going to do. Where is the telephone, Mrs. Mills?”

“O, do allow us to have the pleasure,” begged Max. “They said they’d send out the ‘light bearers’ wagon,’ and it’s warranted to hold six. Besides it will be here in twenty minutes, and a private equipage would take longer.”

“Well–it’s awfully kind of you, I’m sure! Aren’t you afraid we’ll make you wetter, though, if we ride in the same carriage? I am flooding the floor at this moment. It’s terrible, Mrs. Mills. Isn’t there a shed we could go into, and not make such a lot of work for you?”

“Deary me, Miss Osgood, it’s a pleasure to me to have you here. But I wisht you’d come into the parlor, all of you, you and your friends. I’ll lay papers down on the carpet, and you can just walk in.”

They all protested, but as it soon became clear that it was as much a desire to display the beauties of her room as hospitality that prompted the invitation, they yielded and filed damply along the newspaper path into the gaudy parlor. The rain had stopped as suddenly as it had come up, and the sun was shining through the flowers in the lace curtains at the windows, and striking the bright pink morning-glory of the graphophone, which was the most conspicuous object in the room. Mrs. Mills, preceding her wet guests, turned the track a little past the telephone, resplendent in oak and nickel, so that the whole procession could be inside the room at once. Then she called their respectful attention to her framed marriage certificate, and a similar document declaring the late Jacob Quincy Mills a Grand Something or Other in some lodge. Beneath these, on a shelf, were two tall lava jars filled with pampas grass, a pink china vase and a wreath of Easter lilies made of spangled paper.

“I’d like to show you the pictures in the family album,” said Mrs. Mills hospitably, resting her hand upon the fat plush volume on the center table, “but I don’t see how more’n two or three of you can look at it at a time.” She frowned a moment, puzzled. Then her face lighted. “I’ll

just set the graphophone goin' for the rest of you to entertain yourselves with," she said eagerly, and in a moment the room was filled with the wheezing and strident strains of "You Look Good to Father," against which Mrs. Mills raised her own voice in explanatory remarks to Archie and Frieda, who happened to be within the album's range:

"This is Mr. Mills' sister's first husband. That was their baby that died. This here is Miss Evelyn Mills of Chicago. She's a singer there at the Orpheum. She was my husband's own cousin, once removed. This was my father's aunt,–" and so on.

"Look at Algernon," whispered Max to Polly. "He's as contented as a lamb. He's learning all there is to know about poultry, and doesn't even know that infernal machine is going or that Mr. Mills had any relatives." And sure enough Algernon, standing beside the bookcase, on a portion of the newspaper track, was reading, even devouring, the pages of a scientific farming journal, with an expression of perfect satisfaction on his face.

The long half hour came at last to an end. Mrs. Mills conducted the procession back to the kitchen, helped tuck the girls into the robes, and disclaiming all right to their earnest thanks, watched the wagon out of sight.

"Which is worse, a soaking or a fourth-class phonograph?" queried Archie from his corner.

Bert, humming "Waltz me Around Again, Willie," paused to remark:

"Why, I rather liked that. Didn't the rest of you?"

Polly shivered, not with cold alone.

"There is one song we all like, Bert," she suggested. "Let's sing it now to keep our lungs from freezing. There's water enough all about to make it appropriate!"

And in a minute four big male voices were shouting out the Boat Club song, Polly's soprano sweet and clear over the rest, while Frieda smiled encouragement over the edge of the robe in which she was wrapped to her chin.

"We are the Winsted Boat Club,
  Dip the oar, dip the oar!
We are the Winsted Boat Club,
  Push out from shore!

"We are the Winsted Boat Club,
  Paddle light, paddle light!
A-drifting, a-drifting beneath
  The sunset bright!"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN
AN INTERLUDE

Algernon suffered more serious consequences from his wetting than the others did from theirs. His cold the next day prevented him from even attempting to go to the library. He wrote a note to Bertha, asking her to take his place, and then, groaning over his inability to get to the telephone, coaxed Elsmere to his side and sewed the note and the key to his blouse.

"You cross your heart and hope to die you'll go straight to Bertha's and give her the key?"

"Cross my heart. Hope die. And you'll give me six candies and a rocking-horse, and a 'lectric light and a house for my pigeons, and–"

"I'll give you something nice when you've done the errand, not before. Now hurry. The library can't open till you get there. Think of it! All those people who want books waiting for you!" Coughing, Algernon fell back upon his hated pillows, and watched his messenger set out, more in hope than in confidence.

It was Fate that prevented Elsmere's fulfilling the trust, or rather, realizing the hope, for though he did go straight to Bertha's house, he did not find her there. The maid who opened the door proved uncommunicative on the subject of Bertha's whereabouts, and Elsmere sauntered away, undecided what to do next. Ten feet from the gate, he stumbled upon a cat. At once a beautiful thought came to him. His own cat-pussy had gone away, tired of abuse and starvation irregularly combined with affection in the form of embraces and sugar, and Elsmere's heart had grieved for her. Here was another, and he could find out by actual experiment whether the velvet birds in the library would deceive her. Clutching the spitting, clawing creature to his bosom, he trotted off to the library.

The door, of course, was locked. At first this fact discouraged Elsmere. Then he suddenly remembered that he alone possessed means of entrance. Putting the cat down on the pavement and stepping firmly on her tail to retain her, he fitted the key and triumphantly turned it in the lock.

Once inside, he carried kitty to the closet where the birds at present hung, but his

experiment was unsatisfactory, for she dug into his cheek with a fury which rendered it necessary to abandon the attempt. When the outraged animal had fled down the street, Elsmere looked about for fresh interests. He was in a mood to recognize opportunities, and the unprotected condition of Algernon's desk was suggestive. Never was a librarian more hostile to little prying fingers than A. Swinburne of the Winsted City Library. Elsmere felt a certain constraint, even alone with opportunity.

The door opened and a very small person came in and walked over to the desk.

"What you want?" asked Elsmere gravely.

"Want a book."

"All right." Elsmere walked to the shelves, took down a large volume of Sheridan's Memoirs, and handed it to the child. Plainly much impressed by the size of her booty, she wrapped her arms about it and walked out, with admiring glances at Elsmere over her shoulder. Elsmere was pleased. That was easy. He climbed into Algernon's chair. There were plenty of things to amuse one. Rubber stamps hold infinite possibilities of entertainment. So do colored cards arranged in trays. Elsmere shifted them all about, and stamped the date on everything in sight.

Then came more Public, Mrs. Kittredge's maid this time, returning a book and not wishing more. In fact, she laid down the book and departed with such would-be inconspicuous swiftness that if Elsmere had been more experienced, he would have known at once that the book was overdue.

Then there was a lull. Even forbidden pleasure palls in time, if no one comes to remonstrate, and Elsmere was beginning to consider going home, when three boys, strolling that way, pressed their noses against the window-pane. Then they wandered in.

"What's the kid doin' in the liberrian's chair?" asked one. Elsmere maintained a dignified silence, stamping the date rapidly and inkily on a pile of fresh catalog cards.

"Say, kid, where's the liberrian?"

"I'm liberrian."

"O, come off. Where's the real one? The feller that knows it all, and walks like a seesaw."

"That's Algy," said Elsmere, with fraternal recognition. "Algy's sick. I'm liberrian."

His questioner looked at him keenly.

"I say, kids, let's us be liberrians. You put the little feller out."

The obedient henchmen put the howling Elsmere down from his seat, and exalted their chief.

"I'm it," said that worthy. "You pick out books you want, and I'll fix 'em up."

The others, nothing loath, picked out certain extra-illustrated volumes which Algernon did not allow to circulate, and presented them at the desk, where they helped the presiding official to "fix 'em up" according to methods suggested by intuition combined with a little observation.

"Say, now it's my turn," said one of the subordinates. "You git down and let me. Does that chair screw 'round?"

It did, and in the ensuing scuffle, it not only screwed around but the top fell off, carrying three boys and an assortment of inks with it.

At the same moment, Max and Archie entered to while away an idle half-hour with the daily paper.

The big boys were prompt, but the little boys were prompter. The back door swung on its hinges and Max and Archie, puffing, ejaculating and wrathful, gave over attempts at capture for efforts at repair, Max going off to hunt up Algernon, while Archie gathered up scattered cards and mopped up the ink with dust-cloths.

Seeking Algernon, Max ran across Mrs. Osgood making calls. Hearing his tale, she went back with him to the scene of disaster, and her capable fingers soon brought about some appearance of order, though the intricacies of card systems were beyond her.

"I'd like to know who the rascals are that did it," she said with emphasis; "and I can't see how they got in. Where do you suppose Algernon is?"

"He caught cold yesterday," Archie told her, "but it doesn't seem possible that he would send down anybody who would go off and leave the place open. I saw the little Weed boy, but I didn't know the other two. They lit out like lightning, and I didn't care to chase them all up Main Street. I was going to the Smiths' to have a cup of tea!" Archie looked ruefully at his soiled garments and dark blue hands. "I wonder if we couldn't get Bertha to come in here. She knows the ins and outs of all these fancy arrangements."

"Berfa isn't to home," remarked a clear sweet voice from the closet. "Fat's why I had to be liberrian!"

Max threw open the door. Elsmere, on the wood-box, was contentedly jiggling the velvet birds, which had been the first cause of all the excitement.

At the sight of Max's angry face, he jumped up. "I got to go," he said hastily. "I'm awful busy. Must find my cat-pussy. I losted her when she scratched me."

"Sensible cat," growled Archie, taking Elsmere by the collar. "I wish she had losted you. Here, Mrs. Osgood, this seems to be the key to the mystery. At least it's the key to something." He lifted the key dangling from Elsmere's blouse.

"Algy sewed it on me," explained the child.

Mrs. Osgood sighed. "So Algernon is sick, and he sent you after Bertha, and she wasn't at home. I see. Max, you and Archie needn't wait. I'll take the responsibility of closing the library for to-day, and I'd like a private talk with this young gentleman, if you are willing."

Elsmere's eyes brightened.

"Will you pank me?" he asked hopefully. "Dr. Helen pank me when I eat pills. *So!*" In his effort to illustrate, he bent so nearly double that he fell over on his nose, and set it bleeding. Max and Archie caught up their hats and fled, leaving Mrs. Osgood to act upon inspiration.

Half an hour later, having by strenuous effort regained something of their former freshness of appearance, the two boys dropped in upon the group on the Three Gables lawn. They stopped a minute to take in the details of the pretty picture. Under a great apple tree, Catherine had set her tea-table with its pretty accessories. In comfortable chairs about it, sat the Boat Club girls, embroidering soft colored things or simply "visiting." Frieda was telling a story, and the others were listening attentively as she stumbled a little now and then in her desire to express herself rapidly.

"And he was there in the water, all the above part of him, and I held his waist. I pulled greatly and in he came lickety split, and what do you think he said? 'I big fish, Frieda. Pull me in and fy me.'"

"That was Elsmere, I'll wager," cried Max, approaching with Archie and giving Catherine his hand. "I'm glad you were talking about him, Miss Frieda, for we're full of the subject. He never said the expected thing in his life. Drowning and spanking are what he needs; the only trouble is that he likes nothing better. But he's beaten his record to-day," and while Archie dropped upon a rug near Hotspur, and incidentally near Bess, who was prettier than ever, and working on an Andover pillow, Max received a cup of tea from Catherine's hands and told his story of the afternoon's episode to a deeply interested audience.

"Poor Algernon!" sighed Polly. "That will make him so much extra work, and he must have his patience tried by that dreadful baby all the time."

"Does no one punish Elsmere except the neighbors?" asked Frieda, whose opinion of the lawlessness of American children was being strengthened daily by Elsmere's performances. Winifred answered, laughing.

"His mother made up her mind to, once. She told me about it. She told him she would not be his mother that day for he had been so bad she was ashamed to own him. Some one had told her that was a sure way to crush a child. But Elsmere was only interested. He called her 'Mamma' and 'Mummy dear' to catch her napping, but she wouldn't answer. By and by a caller came in, and Elsmere walked up to her and pointed at his mother and said: 'This isn't my mother. She is just Mrs. Swinburne, but I love her!' And Mrs. Swinburne picked him up and kissed him and cried, and I don't believe she ever tried again to make him mind."

"I'm glad Perdita and Peter are such a biddable sort," said Polly. "I don't know what we'd do with two little imps around. They are quite good, almost always. Perdita is mischievous, but Peter keeps her straight. He seems to feel the whole burden of her. If she starts to do anything naughty, he says: 'Perdita, you mustn't,' and Perdita doesn't."

"It's lucky Perdita hasn't Elsmere for a brother," suggested Dot. "There'd be no living in Winsted if she had, for even Peter can't keep a wicked look out of her eye at times."

"Room for a tired man in your party, children?" Dr. Harlow joined the group. Max vacated the long chair he was occupying, and every one welcomed the doctor with a word or smile. They all loved him, and nothing pleased them better than to have him spend an hour with them. To-day, he was plainly tired, and while Catherine prepared tea for him, Frieda whispered to Hannah.

"I wonder if he would," said Hannah. "Winifred, will you sing, if I bring out my fiddle?"

"Frieda was telling a story and the others were listening attentively."–*Page* 184.

Winifred never refused to sing, and Hannah slipped into the house, tuned her dear Geige and brought it out. Then she played very softly, while Winifred's sweet voice sang one quiet song after another. Dr. Harlow's tired face relaxed and, leaning back in the chair, he presently dropped off to sleep. The young people were very still, and Winifred smiled softly as she sang. Dr. Helen, coming out from the office after an interview with a wearying patient, stood in her turn watching. The blues and pinks and greens of the girls' frocks, the boys' white flannels and the great tree spreading above them, made a pretty background and setting for the central group of Hannah bending her brown head earnestly over her violin, and Winifred lifting her delicate little face while she sang.

"Bravo!" shouted a big voice behind Dr. Helen. Bert, on his way home from one of his spasmodic "jobs," dropped in to say "Hello!" and incidentally break the spell. Dr. Harlow woke and looked guiltily about him. His wife joined him, and Max and Archie shook the kinks out of their long legs, as the girls began to gather up their sewing and flutter about Catherine with good-bys.

"I say, Miss Hannah," said Bert, making his way to her. "I didn't know you played. That's a jolly little fiddle you've got there. Do you know the Merry Widow waltzes?"

Hannah laughed. "I don't," she confessed, "but perhaps I could learn them. Bring them up some time and I'll try."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN
SUNDAY SCHOOL

"Hannah, are you awake?"

Hannah turned over, and opened an eye uncertainly.

"No, I guess so."

"Well, do wake up and look at me. Isn't it awful?"

Hannah unscrewed the other eye, and blinked blindly for a minute.

"What is it?" she asked, yawning.

"My cheek. Can't you see? Toothache. It's all swollen up, and it hurts."

Hannah roused herself a little more, then shut her eyes quickly. She didn't want to laugh at Catherine.

"Can't you do anything for it?"

"I suppose so, but it won't go down in time for Sunday-school, and who will take my class?"

Hannah groaned. "Who would ever get up in the middle of the night and worry about a Sunday-school class, when they had a toothache? It's unnormal! Go back to bed, unless there is something I can do for you. Can't I call your mother?"

“No, there’s no use bothering her. I know what to do well enough, but I am so worried about the class.”

“O, go along to sleep. I’ll take your old class.”

Hannah was asleep herself before Catherine had finished sighing with grateful relief and returned to her own room.

An hour later, Hannah woke with a start to the consciousness that something unpleasant had happened. Almost immediately that vagueness gave way to irritating clearness. She got up and peeped into Catherine’s room. She was sleeping, but the swollen cheek left no room for hope that the whole episode was a nightmare. Hannah dressed quietly, frowning the while at her unconsidered offer of the early morning.

“I do think this town would be twice as nice if there weren’t any children in it. They spoil everything. I never taught anybody anything in all my life. And I never went to Sunday-school either, except in Germany. She will just have to get some one else,” she fussed. “A promise like that doesn’t count. I was so sleepy I didn’t know what I was saying.”

With unwelcome plainness she recalled the facts that Dorcas and Polly had classes of their own, Bertha and Agnes were out of town, and Dot and Win and Bess belonged to another denomination.

“Why couldn’t she have waited till Alice came? She’s always ready for things like that. O, dear. I suppose I’ll have to try. Catherine would keep a promise herself, if she made it in delirium tremens!”

She stole down stairs before any one was stirring, save Inga in the kitchen, found a Bible and took it over to the window-seat, where she opened it gingerly.

“I wonder where they begin,” she thought. “Might as well look Genesis over first, to refresh my memory.” She spread the thin pages open, and began to read. Outside the open window the birds were noisily celebrating the sunny morning. Inga ground the coffee. A bell rang for early service somewhere. Hannah’s eyes wandered from the page.

“‘And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.’ It sounds just like poetry,” she thought. “But what could I tell youngsters about it? They would be sure to want to know just how the waters were kept off the firmaments. I hope–no, I know, Elsmere *is* in that class!” In silent horror, Hannah sat staring out of the window. Memories of Catherine’s Sunday dinner talk swarmed back into her mind. She had thought the stories amusing: how Elsmere had chewed gum and put it into the collection envelope; how Perdita Osgood had described in vivid detail her seasickness of a summer before; how the little Hamilton girl had asked personal and embarrassing questions of Catherine herself. It had sounded funny, when Catherine told the tales in her quiet way,–but to be alone with them for an hour! Hannah’s heart failed her entirely. She shut the Bible and marched up to Catherine’s room. Catherine was dressing, as far away from the mirror as possible.

“Hannah, dear,” she called, seeing the brown hair and blue eyes through a crack in the door. “Do come in. You don’t know what a dear you were to take that class. I went straight to sleep, and didn’t mind the pain nearly so much after that. It worried me so. You see, the Sunday-school is so small and I had been over and over it in my mind, and couldn’t think of any one who would do. It’s the last class any one is ever willing to take.”

“Why?” asked Hannah, her prepared refusal suspended.

“O, because it’s so big, and there are all ages of little people in it. But you’ll do beautifully. Children always love you. Do you know what the lesson is?”

Hannah hesitated. Then a glance at Catherine’s distorted face made her ashamed of herself, and she answered bravely:

“No. What is it? I’ll have to study up a lot.”

“You’ll find plenty of material in those leaflets and books in the pile there on the table by my Bible. It’s about the Good Shepherd. And if you’re going down, will you ask mother to come in before breakfast? I don’t believe I’ve been doing the right things.”

So Hannah, laden with Helps and Hints, went slowly down stairs again, and after having sent Dr. Helen up to see her afflicted daughter, resumed her place in the window-seat and put her mind resolutely on the subject of the lesson.

“‘Bring in the 23rd Psalm,’” she read in one suggestion. “That’s good. I know that much and I can make them repeat it the whole hour, if nothing else comes into my head. How is she, Dr. Helen?”

Dr. Helen smiled ruefully. “She will be all right after a while, but it is a pity, isn’t it? You were a good girl to relieve her mind about that class. She cares so much about it. Good morning, Frieda! *Hast du gut geschlafen?*”

The Three Gables household was a church-going one. Hannah, in her white gown with sweet-peas scattered over it, met the doctors in the hall.

“Is Frieda late?” she asked, putting on her gloves. “It isn’t like her.”

“No, but she begged so hard to stay with Catherine whose state seems to waken deeps of pity in her, that I couldn’t refuse. She said she would do anything for her, even to reading

poetry!”

They all laughed, for Frieda’s English reading was distinctly lacking in smoothness, and her rendering of poetry would doubtless be harrowing.

“That would hurt Catherine more than the toothache,” said Hannah, “but they will find something better to do,” and she walked sedately down the path between the doctors, her Bible and Quarterly in her hands, wondering if martyrs on the way to the stake chatted on indifferent topics, and noticed birds and bees and grasshoppers.

Meanwhile Catherine and Frieda up stairs were surprising themselves and each other. The first glimpse of Catherine’s swollen cheek had roused Frieda’s sense of mirth, but compassion for physical pain followed quickly.

“*Ach weh! Weh! Schade! Schade!*” she had murmured in a deep sympathetic tone, which Catherine found unexpectedly soothing. Accustomed as she had always been to brisk remedial measures, and beyond those, to wordless pity and a deliberate ignoring of the evil, she was interested and touched by this demonstration. She had felt shy with Frieda from the first, wishing so earnestly to know her well and win her love that she could not be perfectly simple and natural with her. This shyness had combined with the little aloofness, which every one felt in Catherine, to shut Frieda’s heart. But this morning the barriers were down. Catherine, instead of being perfect, exquisite, was nothing short of hideous. The agent had proved that she could look absurd. Here she was shown mortal to the point of needing help from Frieda. What made Hannah feel awkward and useless, caused Frieda to come to the front, competent and tender. She made Catherine cozy with pillows, and sat beside her, speaking, in tones which carried healing and comfort, of all sorts of interesting and delightful things and places. She told stories of her school in Germany, of her home and Hannah’s visit, of her little friend who had been to a birthday party at the palace, of the strange “church social” to which Hannah had taken her in Berlin, of her rides with Herr Karl in the Tiergarten, rapturous descriptions of the Tiergarten itself, dropping unconsciously into German phrases, her eyes shining and her cheeks taking on an unwontedly charming color, while Catherine lay and listened, entranced, as though she were in a world where pain had no power.

It was not so pleasant at the little gray church. Hannah, all through the sermon, wrestled mentally with the parable. It seemed to her it was a very slippery parable! She would no sooner highly resolve to hold it till she had wrenched its moral from it, and reduced that moral to terms which the youngest babe could surely comprehend, than she would find that the elusive subject had slipped from her grasp, and her whole mind would be fixed upon the problem of how long it would take a fly to crawl all the way across the expansive back of Mrs. Graham, who sat in the pew in front.

She went through the service like a well-constructed automaton, rising, sitting, singing even, with no notion of what she was doing or why she was doing it. She bowed her head with the others for the benediction, and then the soft stirring and cheerful tones of greeting about her, told her that her hour was come.

The superintendent directed her to “Miss Smith’s class.” To her final dismay, she found that that meant a seat on the platform in full view of the congregation. The little church was barely more than a chapel, and the chorus choir had two pews upon the platform. Here, it seemed, for purposes of segregation, Catherine held her flock during the interminable opening exercises, after which she led them to their own room in the basement. As one in a dream, Hannah went to the seat pointed out to her. Margaret Kittredge and Peter and Perdita were already present. The little Hamilton girl came in with two unknown others. Then more and more. The little girls settled themselves fussily, getting up frequently to crush their stiff starchy skirts into place. Their wide-brimmed hats interfered when they moved and they were never still. The little boys huddled together, and punched each other without motive, crowding each other off the seat, and showing the pennies they held in their moist little palms.

The superintendent tapped his bell. The noisy groups of the Sunday-school at large lapsed into an approach to order, the teachers staring consciously ahead with an excess of propriety, and the children alertly refraining from anything more riotous than fumbling with hymn-books. Hannah’s own charges felt the change in the atmosphere, and quietness fell upon them. She welcomed it gratefully, aware that it was in no wise due to her own effort, and spreading a hymn-book open for the first song, stooped to allow the small boy next her to look on, then lent her voice as freely as she could to the chirping chorus. As the exercises continued, she became rather more accustomed to her prominent seat, and, inspired by Dorcas Morehouse’s austere countenance in the front row below her, she even turned once and looked down the squirming row beside her, shaking her head gravely at Perdita, who was showing signs of uprising. Peter caught the look of reproach and passed it on to his twin with interest, hauling her into her place with a tug which resulted in a loud parting of gathers. The Bible reading over, “birthdays” were called for, and the little Hamilton girl trotted importantly forward to the superintendent’s table, where she let seven pennies drop from her fat fingers into a yawning frog, receiving in exchange a printed text. Acknowledging this courtesy with a jerky bow, she switched her way back to the pew she had left, and crumpled herself into a space not half wide enough to hold her. The minister rose to lead in prayer. Hannah bowed her head devoutly, trusting in the power of example. She was conscious of the heavy breathing of Margaret beside her, due to the unwonted strain of

pressing her chin close to her chest. The minister's voice droned on and on, but Hannah was sending up a fervent petition of her own, and for a brief space heard nothing. Then–Bang! "I want to sit by Her." There was a thud of falling bodies, and Elsmere, late but ardent, plumped himself into the place at Hannah's right, from which he had forcibly removed a little boy with fat red legs, which were now waving in the air. Hannah felt herself as red as the evicted legs, and as the prayer came to an abrupt stop, would have given worlds to be able to flee and hide her mortified face.

At a tap from the bell in the superintendent's hand, the class slipped to the floor, shook out its skirts and grasped its caps. The organ started up wheezily, and every one burst into song: "See the mighty host advancing, Satan leading on!" as Hannah, heading the wiggling line of wandering-eyed children, got somehow off the platform and into a little basement room which had been equipped for primary work with chairs of varying heights, a great colored chart and a mission map.

There she breathed more freely. Whatever the next half-hour had in store for her, she would at least be alone with it. These fifteen wigglers had become part of her. She must blush for them as for herself, but they were not onlookers, anyhow. The mere absence of Dorcas' gaze was refreshment.

There was a brief period of settling into chairs, some mild squabbling over two desirable blue ones, a little dispute as to the privilege of passing the envelope, and at last Hannah found that something definite was expected of her. The chart showed a brightly-colored shepherd holding in his arms a weak lamb.

"Say, won't that lamb kick him? They're awful leggy," suggested an interested youth in the first row.

"I seen a lamb onct," announced his neighbor, rocking perilously on the two back legs of her chair. "It was a ram lamb and it butted me in my stomach, it did. Hurt. Hurt awful."

"Huh!" grunted Perdita. "I don't believe it hurt as much as when my mother sewed my finger in the sewing-machine. Did your stomach bleed?"

"Children," said Hannah desperately. "Don't talk, please. No, Peter, not another word from anybody. Now who can tell the Golden Text?"

Dead silence.

"Doesn't any one know the Golden Text?"

"Miss Smith doesn't do that way," suggested some one. "She always says: 'Peter, you may tell us the Golden Text.'"

"Very well," agreed Hannah hurriedly. "Peter, you may tell us the Golden Text."

"Let me," cried Elsmere. "I know 'bout lambs. Mary had a little lamb, fleeciswhitissnow."

"Elsmere," said Hannah sternly. "I asked Peter to tell us the Golden Text."

"Mine is a walker," said Peter loudly.

Hannah looked mystified.

"Pooh!" remarked the Hamilton girl loftily. "That ain't this Sunday's. 'Wine is a mocker' was to-morrow's. 'Tain't this Sunday's."

"What is this Sunday's?" asked Hannah hopefully. "Doesn't anybody know? 'I am'–don't you remember? 'I am the good–':

"I am the good–" Peter got so far and then stopped, stolid.

"I know," cried Elsmere once more. "Put in his thumb, pull out a plum, good boy am I!"

The others snickered, and Hannah bit her lip. "No. 'I am the good shepherd.' It was Jesus who said it. Now all of you say it together."

Lamblike, they followed her lead, and she succeeded in passing over several minutes. But they soon grew restive again, and one little hand pawed the air.

"Well, what is it?"

"The Grahams is coming to our house to dinner."

"That's nice. Now we will talk about the shepherd psalm. How many of you know it?"

There was a moment of doubt. "Shall not want?" ventured one of the older ones presently.

"Yes, that's it exactly," said Hannah gladly. "You've all heard it lots of times. Now I'll recite it for you, and then you can tell me what it means."

With the Bible prudently open to save her from any possible embarrassment at a sudden lapse of memory, she began slowly to recite the psalm, pausing for explanatory comments as she went along.

"I was in a valley onct," said a sleepy boy, who had contributed nothing so far to the morning's entertainment. "I fell off'n the dock and the boat was clost up to me, and that was a valley."

"How'd you get out?" asked several with interest.

“Man pulled me out,” and the speaker subsided.

Hannah stole a glance at her watch, as she finished the psalm. She had strung it out as long as she could, but there were still several minutes to dispose of.

“Now I wonder who can tell me what that was all about?” she asked, with feigned sprightliness. “I think you can, the little girl with the red dress. What’s your name? O, yes, Gwendolen.”

Every one turned to look at Gwendolen. She stuck her finger in her mouth, presumably to stem the tide of speech, for as she withdrew it the words fell out over one another all in one breath.

“Don’t want anyfing to eat. Lay down in the grass an’ roll. Put kerosene on my head. Can’t git any more in my cup, all spillin’ over.”

The door opened and once more the superintendent tapped his bell. Hannah, with a deep sigh of thankfulness, marshalled her troop and drove them back to their place, taking her martyr’s seat in their midst.

Through the reading of the secretary’s report and the singing of three stanzas of the closing hymn, they behaved fairly well, subdued by the drowsy atmosphere of air unchanged since the morning service. The last stanza of the hymn was nearly sung. Elsmere rose to his feet and plucked Peter by the hair of his head. Hannah cast an appealing glance at the superintendent, who was nearer the offender than herself. He took a quick stride forward, with his hand uplifted, just as the last wailing sound of the hymn died away. His hand on Elsmere’s collar, he observed the congregation standing with bowed heads. They had misinterpreted his gesture. Casting a look of understanding at Hannah, gripping Elsmere tightly, he pronounced the expected benediction, and as the audience broke up into home-going groups, set the boy down with emphasis.

“We don’t usually close with a prayer,” he said to Hannah, “but they thought that was what I meant, when I stepped forward. I nearly throttled the child but–”

“I think you will be forgiven,” said Hannah firmly. “Miss Smith will be here next Sunday, but I, I am thankful to say, shall not!”

PART THREE

TOGETHER AT LAST

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

ALICE ON THE WAY

Out on a Dakota prairie, in a corner of a motionless Pullman sat a short girl in a plain blue suit, her grey eyes behind thick glasses bent upon the pages of a red leather book.

“‘Beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.’” She read the words over and over, and the book fell from her hands as she looked out on the limitless fields. “‘Beauty for ashes.’ What a striking way of putting it! ‘The oil of joy’–why, I wonder what we are stopping here so long for. It doesn’t look like a station.”

And suddenly Alice Prescott sat up straight and looked about her, alert and alive.

The porter came slowly in response to her repeated ring. “What’s the matter? Why, there’s an engine off the track a little ways off, and our crew and engine has gone to help. No, nobody hurt. Just a freight engine. Don’t know how long. Mebbe one hour. Mebbe two.”

“But I’ll miss my connections!”

“Too bad, Miss.” The porter looked at her with lazy curiosity. The train had already been at a standstill for ten minutes, and every other woman on the car had put him through a catechism long ago. This girl looked awake and practical. How could a porter understand that the mere beauty of words and ideas could render one unconscious to delays in transportation?

Alice rose and walked up and down the aisle. Three women, rather overdressed, were playing cards in a remote section. A man slept in a corner. She went to the door, and seeing groups of passengers standing outside along the track, jumped down from the high step and walked a little, tasting the fresh air with pleasure. The country offered nothing to her gaze. Her eye, accustomed to mountains, found endless level stretches harrowing rather than soothing. She recalled a Dakota girl at Dexter who was always telling of the beauty of the prairie, and longing for it. “I suppose it’s a matter of habit,” she thought to herself. “There is certainly something that kindles your imagination in such a sight. It would be dreary if it weren’t cultivated, but it must be wonderful to see a whole country reclaimed from wildness

and made productive. ‘Beauty for ashes’ O!” and with a little shiver of pleasure, she repeated the lines that had so charmed her a few minutes before. “‘The spirit of heaviness.’ What a strange thing to include in the same message with the vengeance of the Lord! It makes blues and dullness seem so important. It doesn’t say anything here about Christ’s coming to heal bodily suffering or sin, and it does explicitly say he is to cure the blues. Isn’t that interesting?”

Her walk had brought her to the first of the line of day-coaches by this time, and she glanced up at the listless faces leaned against the dirty window-panes. As she passed, each pair of eyes rested wearily on her figure. Suddenly a thought struck her. Blues and dullness! Where were they ever more to the fore than here? She entered the car impulsively and stood looking people over. She spoke to the nearest woman.

“It’s a nuisance having to wait so, isn’t it? Wouldn’t you like to come out for a little walk?”

“No,” snapped the woman, “I wouldn’t.” Alice flushed, then smiled and went on down the aisle. Evidently her mission of good fairy was not going to be successful at the start. “Some people want to be ‘heavy,’” she thought. “I’ll take some one who looks as though she wanted to be lightened up. Here’s one.”

The red-eyed cindery young woman who was curled up in her seat, dabbing her cheeks with a smeary handkerchief, looked as though any change would be a welcome one. Alice stopped resolutely. “Can I do anything for you?” she asked, not at all sure of her reception.

The girl lifted her eyes and swallowed a sob. “Nobud-d-dy can,” she wailed; “I’m going to be m-m-married!”

Alice’s face twitched. “Won’t you tell me about it?” she asked. “Cheering folks up” was proving an intricate business. “If the garment of praise doesn’t fit any one,” she thought, “I’ll just have to carry it back and wear it myself.”

The bride gulped and spoke again:

“It’s to be to-night and I’ve missed my train at the Junction already, and I don’t know what to do. Everybody was invited and the supper won’t keep, and I lost my solid silver hatpin, anyway.”

“Can’t you come out and walk with me?” suggested Alice. “The air will make you feel better. Bathe your eyes and come.”

Still tearful, but manifestly a little relieved, the bride obeyed and, once out on the prairie, poured forth her tale. She had at the last moment decided she could not bear to be married without a veil, and had gone early in the morning to the nearest town to invest her last money in that frivolity. Fate was against her, however, for there were no veils in the shops, and a persuasive milliner had induced her to give up her cherished notion and buy a hat instead. “And I’m most sure the ribbon’s cotton-back,” she sighed. “I don’t know why I bought it, anyway. That’s always the way with me. I think I know what I’ll get, and then they coax me into getting something different. Once I went down town to buy me a pair of black stockings, and I got an Alice blue silk waist, instead. Stephen he thinks it’s funny and he says he’ll see to the shopping when we’re married. I wisht he’d come to-day.”

“Wouldn’t it be fun if he had?” said Alice. “There is a minister on the train, and we could have had a lovely wedding out here!”

This romantic idea cheered them both for a time, but its power was brief. There were signs of a tear-shower imminent, and Alice was at her wits’ end for devices to adjust that garment of praise to fit.

Then came a great inspiration. “Let’s walk to the Junction,” she exclaimed. “I’ll go with you, and you can get a team there, and drive home.”

“But you’d miss your train.”

“O, no, I wouldn’t. It has to come right along there behind us, and I could jump on the cow-catcher if it came; but it can’t come without an engine, and there isn’t one in sight, and it’s only two miles to your Junction, you say. That won’t be anything of a walk. Go and get your hat-box.”

The hat-box was not all. Though the journey was to be only a short one, the bride had taken a satchel with her of a type Alice especially loathed. This was a trifle, however, to a spirit so bent on adventure, and Alice seized the “grip” and started off at a brisk pace.

“I can’t walk so fast,” said the bride fretfully. “My shoes hurt.”

Alice looked from her own broad-soled street shoes to the high-heeled, misshapen things on her companion’s feet. The latter looked at them, too, with pride and affection. “I’m going to wear them at the wedding and I thought that, being they was so tight, I’d best break ’em in a little first.”

“I see,” and Alice moderated her own pace to the hobbling gait of the wedding slippers. Two miles seemed more of an undertaking now and she began to wonder if she had been rash in her suggestion. “I’ll carry it through,” she said to herself. “I know I can, and I won’t back down. We’ll get tired if we keep going without rests,” she said aloud. “So let’s walk ten minutes and then rest. You can tell by your watch.”

The bride brightened at the allusion to the great plated and chased timepiece suspended from a rhinestone dove very near to her breast-bone. “Steve give me that when we was first engaged,” she explained, and Alice smiled indulgently. “He give me my bracelet for Christmas, and all his friends give me bangles.” She jingled the thing proudly as she spoke. “There’s thirty-four of ’em.”

“Thirty-four friends! He must be a popular man!” said Alice.

“O, he is, awful. And he’s the handsomest! You just ought to see him.”

“The garment of praise is settling into place without a wrinkle,” thought Alice. “I hope she won’t take it all, for I may need a corner of it myself, to console me for this abominable bag, and the tinkle of that bracelet. I suppose she would think it was finer than the jade one Mrs. Langdon gave me. And I wonder what she would think if she knew my necklace was under my dress, so it wouldn’t show in travelling. O, well, she’s a nice little thing, and I hope Steve will be good to her.”

“I’m afraid you’ll be all beat out helping me,” said the bride remorsefully, as they paused once more for a rest. “I don’t know how I’ll ever thank you, anyhow.”

“O, that’s all right,” and Alice seized the bag and bore it mightily forward.

“O, dear,” sighed the bride presently. “There’s somebody driving this way. I wish they was going the other, and would give us a lift.”

The black speck down the road, which here ran alongside the track, expanded rapidly, developing into a smart buggy with two good horses, and a man driving. He leaned forward as he neared them, and suddenly reined in the horses with a jerk.

“Great Guns!” he shouted, throwing the reins over the dashboard, and leaping out over the wheel.

“It’s Steve,” cried the bride in a rapture, and Alice pinched herself with delight as Steve embraced his lady.

“However in the world did you get off here?” he asked, releasing her enough to reply.

“How did you?” she answered, and he laughed, “O, I thought I’d drive over to the Junction to meet you and carry you home, and I heard about the train being stalled out here and couldn’t get out for hours, so I drove on, that’s all. But the idea of you hoofing it in!” He put his head back and laughed loudly.

His fiancée then remembered Alice and introduced her, telling Steve of her kind interest. He was all cordiality, and offered to give her a ride back to the train.

“No, no,” she protested. “I love to walk. And do hurry along home and have the wedding. I’m so glad it all turned out all right; and you’re feeling happier, aren’t you?” she asked the girl.

Steve put his arm around his little bride gently. “I guess she won’t ever feel bad again. I shan’t let her go off alone any more. And thank you for what you done. I shan’t forget it. Say, couldn’t you stop off now for the wedding?”

“O, do,” begged the bride, and Alice had to refuse tenderly. She watched them get into the buggy, and drive happily away, waving to her as they did so. Then she turned back to her train, and her own car.

One of the card-playing women was tired and inclined to be sociable. So Alice sat with her, by invitation, and listened to the history of her family’s diseases and operations, and her difficulties with servants, till the train was started once more and the rumble of the cars resumed their interrupted song of “Getting nearer, getting nearer.”

“I must hear it that way every minute,” Alice thought, as she took her own seat again, and while the lamps were lighted, watched in the windows not the rushing landscape but her own face. “It would be so easy to hear ‘Getting farther,’ and think of leaving home for nine whole months, but I’ll just remember Hannah and Catherine and Frieda and dear Dexter,– and that will keep the garment from slipping off my shoulders.”

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN
FINDING A VOCATION

On the second afternoon after Alice’s arrival, the four girls walked down to the post-office to mail their letters, Catherine having written to Miss Lyndesay, while the other three wrote to their mothers. Now, pleasantly conscious of duty performed, they strolled idly along the street.

It was “library afternoon” and Catherine had a book to exchange for a busy neighbor, who much enjoyed the library privileges, but seldom had time to choose her own books. The girls turned in at the library door, which was hospitably open. Several people were waiting at the desk, while Algernon busily attended to their wants. Catherine laid down her book and went over to the fiction shelves to find something to take its place. The other girls wandered

about, looking at the soldierly rows of books, and at the effective picture bulletin which Bess had made to celebrate the Fourth of July, a list of patriotic books under crossed flags,–turned the pages of the half dozen magazines on the reading-table, and then, by common consent gathered in the little alcove devoted to children's books.

"Three copies of *Alice in Wonderland*!" exclaimed Alice. "That seems a rather large proportion!"

Catherine, who had secured *Friendship Village*, and was rejoicing in her good fortune, answered the criticism.

"You see, each member of the club selected a book for the first order, and Dot and Max both chose *Alice* and neither would give up, so we finally ordered two; and then somebody gave us a copy afterward."

"What did you choose?"

Catherine laughed. "Can't you guess?"

Hannah pounced on a big copy of Pyle's *Robin Hood*.

"This, of course. Do you remember how you gave it to me to read the first evening I was at your house?"

Frieda had been looking the shelves over as if seeking something, and now straightened up, disappointed.

"Nowhere is there the *Laetus Sorte Mea* book," she said sadly.

"That's so!" exclaimed Catherine, regretfully. "We'll put it on the suggestion list at once. Do you see any other lack, any of you?"

They all laughed, looking about at the few hundred volumes on the shelves, but Frieda said earnestly:

"There are many Germans here, Dr. Harlow told me. And the older ones cannot read English. Can they have no share in the library?"

"That's right," said Alice. "They are taxpayers and I should think you ought to get a few German books every year, Catherine. It's done in other places."

Algernon was at liberty for a moment, and came over to the group.

"Are we talking too much?" asked Catherine.

"No, no. There's no one at the reading-table. What are you discussing?"

"Frieda thinks there should be German books here for the people in town who can't read English."

"There ought," said Algernon gravely. "But I don't know what to order. I don't want to start out with Goethe and Schiller. I asked the German minister, and he gave a list of religious books, but that isn't what we want, either."

Frieda's eyes shone. "Please let me make you a list," she said eagerly. "And I have two or three books in my trunk which I would gladly give, O, gladly."

Algernon's pleasure was as great as her own.

"That would be simply bully! We can order one each time we send for new books, and it won't be long before we have a good supply. I say, Catherine, would you mind taking the desk for a few minutes? There come the program committee of the Study Club, and I ought to be free to talk with them."

Catherine consented willingly, always liking to manipulate the simple machinery of the loan desk. Frieda sat down at once with a pencil and paper to make out her list, and Alice and Hannah helped themselves to magazines and waited.

Catherine looked about her at the little room and her heart swelled with pride and pleasure. So much had come of her thought of making Algernon useful. He was already quite a different person, with a dignity that became him well. The pile of cards in the charging tray before her showed that the library was being used by a goodly number of borrowers. The program committee was evidence that part, at least, of its use, was for more than mere recreation.

"O, I am so glad, so glad!" sang Catherine's heart. "There are so many things to be glad about. And see my dear, dear Wide-Awakes. I think they really are the most beautiful girls I ever beheld!"

A stranger might have thought that rather an extravagant speech, for Catherine herself was the only one of the four who could be called beautiful. But Frieda's face was unusual and interesting, Alice's sweet, though plain, and Hannah's the sort that always called for a second glance and a smile of pleasure.

"Have you anything in the library on the Past, the Present and the Future?" asked a voice, and Catherine stopped her musing.

"The what?" she asked, not believing her ears. She had been thinking of the past, the present and the future as she watched her three friends' faces, but that was quite a different matter.

“I have to write a paper on that subject,” said a complacent young woman, rather showily dressed, “and I thought I’d maybe better read up on it a little.”

“I should think it would be wise,” murmured Catherine. “But I hardly know–the Past, the Present, and the Future of what?”

“Why, not of anything. Just the Past, the Present and the Future,” said the other, with a shade of impatience in her tone. “Maybe I’d better wait till the real librarian is at liberty. He always knows what to give out.”

“Perhaps that would be best,” faltered Catherine. “It is such a very large subject, you know.”

“Yes, that’s why I chose it. I like a large subject. There is so much more to say on it. I wrote on ‘Woman’ last year, but it wasn’t broad enough!”

A little girl, who came in wanting a fairy story, gave Catherine a chance to turn away and hide her amusement. The child wanted to know what the story was about, and before Catherine realized what she was doing, she had her arm about the little girl’s waist, and, kneeling beside the low table, was showing her the pictures in a beautiful illustrated *Tanglewood Tales*, telling the story of Persephone as that sweet sad tale has seldom been told.

Some one came in and wanted a book, but Catherine did not know it. Alice, who had had some library experience at college, stepped quietly to the desk and served the customer. Hannah dropped her magazine and stole nearer the alcove, listening to the story. Frieda looked up from her writing, as Catherine’s voice, full of wistfulness, came to her ear:

“And Mother Ceres wandered and wandered over the face of the earth, but there was not any Persephone anywhere. And the grass forgot to grow, and the flowers forgot to blossom, and the wheat withered and died, for Mother Ceres’ heart was broken. How could she care for other things, when Persephone was gone?”

The members of the program committee, one by one, paused in their busy searching through Poole’s Index, and waited while the sweet voice went on:

“And poor little Persephone was lonely down in the dark king’s palace underground. She pined and pined, and would not eat or be comforted. And the poor King was sad, too. He wanted a little girl so badly, you know, and now that he had found one, he could not make her happy. It is a terrible thing not to be able to make people happy!”

The little girl cuddling close to Catherine, her eyes turning only from the pictured page to Catherine’s face, sighed softly.

Algernon, watching and listening to the story of the tempting pomegranate, suddenly drew a deep breath, and his face lighted up as it always did when a new idea came to him.

“And then Quicksilver hurried her away, past the fierce dog with the three terrible heads, and up to the world again. Such a dry parched world! Not any green grass, not a single, flower. Not a single corn-stalk or spear of wheat. And poor old Mother Ceres sitting at home on her door-step, weary and sad and hopeless, wishing for her own little girl. And what do you think? As Persephone and Quicksilver walked along, pretty fast, you may be sure, for you can think how eager the little girl was to see her dear mother again, all along the sides of the path where they walked, the grass turned green and the flowers began to blossom and nod, and the corn-stalks lifted up their heads and waved new tassels, and the wheat sprang up, and the trees put out fresh leaves, and the birds sang, and the little dried-up brooks began to run and ripple over stones. And Mother Ceres, sitting and looking out over the dry brown world, suddenly saw a green glow over everything and she stood up, very angry, and said: ‘Does the earth disobey me? I said that if the earth should ever grow green again, it should be along the path by which my daughter should come back to my arms.’

“And then a sweet child voice said: ‘Open your arms, dear Mother, for I have come back to you, and all the earth is green and blossoming!’”

The little girl threw her arms around Catherine’s neck and kissed her.

“O, I’m so glad she came back,” she cried. “Tell me about it again.”

Catherine smiled but her eyes were dreamy still. Algernon made his way over to her.

“You found my vocation for me,” he said eagerly, “and now I’ve found yours. We’ll have a story-hour in this library hereafter,–with bars up to keep the grown-ups out! You’re better than the professional I heard at Madison.”

Catherine looked bewildered, but Alice took her hand and squeezed it.

“I knew you could. I heard you once ‘telling’ to Jonathan Edwards out under the hemlocks when you thought no one else was listening. It’s a glorious gift, dear, and I feel sure you’ll do wonders with it some day. See! Hannah and Frieda are almost crying! Come on, girls. She doesn’t even know what she has done. We’ll have to take her home and have her mother explain it!”

Catherine revived from her dazed condition sufficiently to protest against being led out of the door, and the four went gayly up the hill together; but Catherine’s mind was intent on the suggestion which Algernon had made. “Professional? Work? A vocation? Anything so simple and delightful, and *natural* as telling stories? Could *I* do something that would make

lots of people happier and better, as Aunt Clara's pictures do, and Mother's work and Father's?" The bliss of the idea was quite too much for her, and she broke away from the others, exclaiming:

"I'll race you all to the porch steps. One, two, three, scramble!"

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN
DOCTOR'S ORDERS

Dr. Helen, dismissing her last patient at the office door, glanced into the waiting-room. To her surprise, she saw Alice sitting there with a magazine in her hand.

"Why, my dear, what is wrong? Are you ill? Come in here." Alice rose and followed her into the little white room.

"Nothing is wrong. I wanted to see you alone for a few minutes, and I thought this was the best way to do it. Are you quite free now?"

"Entirely. Sit down in this comfortable chair. I was startled. To have you fall ill after a week with us would be distressing."

"It has been such a dear week!" sighed Alice. "And I've rested all the time and have loved being with the girls. No, I'm quite well. But I had a letter from Mrs. Langdon, at Dexter, you know, just before I left home, and she told me I might tell you, if I cared to, what she has never let me tell any one outside the family,–that is, that I am one of the girls she is helping through college. I'm glad she said I might, for I've often wished Catherine knew, and it will be next best if you do."

"It is a rather trying condition of Mrs. Langdon's," said Dr. Helen sympathetically, "and sometimes creates difficult situations for the girls concerned, but I long ago gave up hope that she would ever change her ways. I quite understand how you feel, because, during my last two years at Dexter, I was one of her girls, too."

"You?" Alice's tone expressed the deepest surprise, and Dr. Helen continued.

"My father could not afford to send me, and I earned the money for my first two years, and was struggling along, trying to spend several hours a day earning money and at the same time to keep up with my work, when Mrs. Langdon, who was staying at home that winter, heard about me from friends. She helped me finish my college course, and gave me substantial aid in taking my professional course. I repaid the money afterward, but I couldn't repay the kindness."

"She is wonderfully kind," said Alice, "though her queer ways make you forget it sometimes. I had had letters from her before I left home the first year, of course, about the business part, and I went on, feeling that I wasn't going entirely among strangers, but she paid no attention to me at all. It was only by chance that I met her in the spring through Hannah."

"Poor child! You must have been much disappointed and very lonely at first. But she is a friend worth having, in spite of her peculiarities. I am glad she let you share your secret with me. Did she say anything about her own health when she wrote? I almost never hear from her."

"Not a word. But she asked me to call on her old friend, Madam Kittredge, while I was here."

"She is our pastor's mother, a beautiful woman, and nearly blind. You must certainly call. Catherine always makes the rounds of the old ladies among our patients once a summer, and she loves to go to Madam Kittredge's. She must take you. I wonder–What is that? Come!"

A rustling of skirts and the sound of whispers was heard in the waiting-room. In answer to the doctor's invitation, the door was slowly opened, and Hannah put her head in at the crack, Frieda's appearing just below it, and Catherine's just above.

"Well, here you are!" cried Hannah. "We've been searching the house from attic to cellar for Alice, and finally had an inspiration and came here."

"Anything so exclusive as this," remarked Catherine, as she entered, "makes the rest of us jealous."

"Fearfully chealous," said Frieda earnestly, putting her arm around Alice's neck, and perching on the arm of her chair.

Hannah and Catherine sat down on the window-seat, pushing the curtains out of the way as they did so.

"Mother really wanted to have her office curtains made of antiseptic gauze," said Catherine. "Why don't you two say anything?"

"You interrupted me just as I was having an inspiration," said her mother.

"O, what a pity," sighed Hannah. "Because Catherine is bored."

“Bored? Catherine? Did she tell you so?”

“Yes, I did,” said Catherine stoutly. “I knew they were, too; and I thought if I owned up that I was, they would say they were, but they won’t.”

“Incorruptible politeness!” said Dr. Helen. “How do you account for your own sudden ennui?”

“It’s not just to-day,” said Catherine. “I really think my life is rather dull, anyhow. Of course, having the girls here is quite an event, but I wish there were big, exciting things I had to do or see to. Mending, and helping Inga make salads and beds, and even going to college is tiresome. Just what every one else does. And the worst of it is that every one expects me to be enthusiastic all the time!”

They all laughed at Catherine’s disconsolate tone, but Dr. Helen looked professional. “This heat is enough to make any one cross,” she said. “I suppose the rest of you feel the same way, but, being guests, don’t dare say so?”

“Do prescribe for us, Dr. Helen,” begged Hannah. “I don’t feel especially bored just now, but I often do. Going to Europe was the only event in my life!”

“And going to college in mine!” said Alice.

“Coming here is all that has ever happened to me,” said Frieda solemnly.

“You poor things! It is a serious state of affairs. I suppose you pine for kidnappers, or lovers or financial difficulties or fearful illnesses or Arctic explorations.”

“Exactly!” cried Catherine. “Especially the last, on a day like this. But, really, Mother, of course, I don’t feel as I said more than once in a great while, and I was talking to amuse myself; but can’t you suggest something for us to do this afternoon? The more we lie around and keep cool, the warmer we grow. The Boat Club seems to have tired of picnics, and I want to do something while Alice is here,–something really interesting and pleasant to remember, something we didn’t plan ourselves.”

“Yes, do tell us something,” the others pleaded.

Dr. Helen drew a prescription pad to her.

“Don’t talk,” she said, “while I am thinking. I’ll undertake the case, if you will all agree to follow orders exactly, and in case of a relapse, to remember and act upon the spirit of to-day’s prescription.”

“Agreed!” they chorused, and then sat in silence and watched her hand as it moved over the little sheets. These she folded like powder-papers, endorsed on the outside, and handed over to her patients.

“To be taken at half-past three o’clock, in good spirits and your prettiest afternoon frock,” read Hannah. “I didn’t suppose that you would prescribe spirits, Dr. Helen! What does yours say, Catherine?”

“They are all alike on the outside,” said Dr. Helen. “Now run away and play. I have telephoning to do, and mustn’t be bothered.”

They bent over her for kisses and danced away, looking anything but bored.

At half-past three, dressed according to orders, they gathered on the porch, and at a signal opened their little papers.

There was a minute of silence, and then their eyes met, annoyed and yet amused a little.

Hannah spoke first.

“Evidently the rest of you aren’t any more fascinated than I am! I didn’t count on going off all by myself to see a stranger! But we asked for a prescription, and we all promised to follow it, so here goes. Doctors always give disagreeable medicine!”

“Mine isn’t unpleasant, except that I have to do it alone,” said Alice. “Which way does Madam Kittredge live, Catherine?”

“Two doors beyond Dot’s, where we were yesterday. You can’t miss it. I wish I could go with you, but let’s hurry up and get back. Do you know the way to yours, Frieda?”

“It tells the way plainly enough,” said Frieda, grumbling a little. “But I think I wish I were a scientific Christian, like the ones you told me about!”

The others laughed sympathetically.

“Too late to save yourself now,” said Hannah. “Go ahead and get it over, and then we’ll get even with Dr. Helen some way for playing us such a mischievous trick. Good-by. I have to go down town for mine.”

Dr. Helen from her window watched them separate, and smiled. A few minutes later Bert appeared, looking for some one to amuse him.

The doctor told him of the malady that had seized her maidens, and of their quest for healing.

“It’s an epidemic,” said Bert solemnly. “I’ve got it bad, and I saw Arch an hour ago, and he

was so low he couldn't even smile. Said he was going to cut out paper dolls or string buttons, if this kept up. Can't you prescribe for us, Doctor?"

"Why, yes. Get Archie and bring him up here to supper this evening. Tell him he needn't smile. Perhaps my ladies-errant may have stories to tell that will ease your pain a little!"

Bert joyfully undertook to bring Archie, and set off at once while Dr. Helen gave Inga instructions for an especially festive supper, and with her own hands prepared a frozen dessert.

The four girls, who had barely slept apart in the week since Alice's arrival, were now walking along widely separate paths, each one feeling oddly alone, and yet not wholly disliking the sensation. Catherine, well-used to her mother's ways and beliefs, smiled to herself as she went off to tell stories and play cat's cradle with the washerwoman's little girl, who had a "spine" and had to be "kep' quiet with high epidemics somethin' fierce."

"It's just like Mother," she thought. "She knew I was peevish and really needed to be alone. Just as she used to send me to my 'boudoir' to pout by myself when I was little. The hours with the girls seem so precious that I can't bear to lose one, but I suppose I did need to be alone. You know, Mr. Squirrel, or Mr. Oakkitten, as Frieda would call you, what George Herbert said:

> 'By all means use sometimes to be alone.
> Salute thyself: see what thy soul doth wear.'

"You needn't scamper away up the tree so fast. I'm not going to stay round here long enough to interfere with your looking over your spiritual wardrobe. I wonder if your soul wears soft gray fur?" And the story-teller walked quickly on through the woods, chanting to herself: "Old world, how beautiful thou art!" and planning for an unusually effective dénouement for the tale of the Three Little Pigs.

Hannah, traversing the blistering length of Main Street, had arrived at the gloomy brick building labelled Hotel, and had inquired for Mrs. Tracy of whom her prescription told her this much: "Travelling man's wife, convalescent after long severe illness."

Mrs. Tracy would receive her in her room, and Hannah followed the proprietor, who was also bell-boy and head waiter, up the shabby stairs, feeling decidedly foolish, but determined not to give up.

Once inside the room, she forgot her own feelings. It was a most doleful place, with ugly walls, cheap stained furniture and huge figured curtains; but she was met by a sweet-faced young woman in a soft blue négligée.

"Dr. Helen telephoned me that you were coming," she said, taking Hannah's hand and looking into her eyes with a bright look that made Hannah feel interested at once.

"Will you take the place of honor?" She indicated a stiff little settee, upholstered in magenta cotton velvet.

"It must be what the *Courier* advertisement meant, when it spoke of furniture, 'warranted upholstered,'" said Hannah seating herself, and smiling her most merry smile at her attractive little hostess.

The thin face almost dimpled with pleasure.

"So you read the *Courier*, too! Mr. Tracy bought back numbers of it to amuse me, and I've collected the most delightful clippings. You see, I'm alone so much. The nurse wasn't very entertaining, and my husband has to be away all the week, and I have to have some one to laugh with, or at least, something to laugh at!"

"What fun!" said Hannah. "Do show me your clippings."

"I was just pasting in a birth notice when you came," said Mrs. Tracy, lifting a small scrap-book from a table. "It's about as good as anything. 'Mr. and Mrs. Ezra Kling are the proud parents of a fine baby girl. Present indications are that the lovely lump intends to stay.'"

"O!" Hannah shrieked and leaned forward to look. Mrs. Tracy handed her the book.

"That's why I cut them out and paste them. No one would believe them, otherwise. Here is a gem of music criticism: 'As he stepped to the edge of the platform, the word Artist came to every lip. His natural pathos mingled with his baritone in such a manner that it was impossible to tell where one left off and the other began. And in his dramatic numbers, the writhings of his face showed the convulsive agonies of a soul in pain.'"

"One of my friends told me about a singer coming to a little village, and they described her appearance and her dress, and wound up the paragraph by saying: 'The soloist wore white shoes. No other stage decorations were necessary.'"

"Delightful–unless it was deliberate wit! As it was in a Kansas paper, which spoke of some one's 'blowing large chunks of melody out of a flute.' But the charm of these Winsted gems is the entire unconsciousness of the writer. For instance, here: 'The élite lingerie of Winsted invited their gentleman friends to a leap-year ball!'"

"O, see here!" cried Hannah, turning the pages joyfully. "'The hall was decorated with syringe blossoms!'"

“Only a misprint, and I saw in a Chicago paper the other day that one of the fashionable ladies wore a gown with a gold-colored y-o-l-k. This is partly a misprint, too, ‘easy *hairs* were scattered about with a lavish hand.’ But I think it would take a hand that was powerful as well as lavish, to scatter easy chairs very generally! That was the same party where the hostess and her daughters ‘dispensed with the refreshments in the dining-room!’ But I am not going to keep you laughing over the *Courier* all the afternoon,” and Mrs. Tracy tried to take the book away from Hannah.

“Just one more,” she begged. “Listen! ‘Mrs. Gray’s speech was replete with wit, wisdom and winsome ways.’ O dear, Mrs. Tracy! I never saw anything so funny as this book in all my life!”

“The trouble with it is that it gets one started on a certain line, and it is very hard to get away from it.”

“Like telling funny names you have heard,” suggested Hannah. “Alice and Catherine and Frieda and I got to telling those last night, and we laughed so long and so hard that Dr. Helen came up and put us to bed!”

“Did you have any funnier than Pearl Button?”

“Not really?” protested Hannah. “Alice swore she knew one girl called Dusk Delight Dinwiddie, because she was born at twilight and they thought she was delightful. That was what we were laughing over when Dr. Helen came in, and she stopped long enough to tell us of a college acquaintance of hers named Revelation Rasmussen, who married Will Kelly, and an Ella G. Gray whom they nick-named ‘Country Churchyard’!”

“What jolly times you girls must be having,” said Mrs. Tracy. “You see, I know all about you. Dr. Helen–I began calling her Dr. Smith, but I couldn’t keep it up–has told me all sorts of interesting stories, and those about you four are the most entertaining. I listen to all your doings as though you were characters in a serial story. You don’t mind, I hope?”

“Mind? Of course not. We aren’t story-book girls at all, though, but very flesh-and-bloody! Why didn’t Dr. Helen tell us about you before, and let us come to see you?”

“It has only been a little while that I have felt like seeing people, and when she suggested sending her daughter, I told her not to, for I didn’t want your fun interrupted. And I remember when I was your age, I dreaded calling on sick people. I always felt as though I ought to carry them tracts or–”

“Wine jelly,” finished Hannah. “Yes, that’s the way I felt a little, to-day. I was afraid I’d not be able to think of anything to say, and I planned to offer to read to you.”

“That was very good of you, but I’ve read and been read to so much that I’m glad of other occupations. The nurse exhausted the library’s resources. Then I took up picture puzzles. Mr. Tracy brings them out to me every week, but we both get cross about them because they interest us so that we spend half his precious day over them! Just now I am trying to teach myself to knit, out of a book, and I’m in a dreadful tangle. I think the chamber-maid knows how, and I mean to ask her.”

“O, let me bring Frieda in to show you. She knows how to do all such things, and would dearly love to. And you ought to meet all your story characters and see if we are like what you imagined. I must go now, for Dr. Helen expressly said that I wasn’t to stay long, and I know you are tired.”

“I’ll soon be rested, and it has been such fun to have you. Wait! Let me give you one of my roses!”

Hannah took the rose, and then put out her hand for good-by. There was something so sweet and winning about the white little face, where tired lines were showing in spite of the smile, that Hannah impulsively bent over and kissed it; and then, promising to come next day with Frieda, she flew down the corridor and out into the street, entirely recovered from her ennui of the morning.

Frieda, meanwhile, was following minute directions which led her at last to a tiny cottage by the riverside. She went up the walk and rapped on the door. No one answered. A second attempt was as unsuccessful, and Frieda turned away, half ready to give up this strange errand which she did not quite fancy. Dr. Helen had asked her to go to this house and buy flowers! It did not look like a florist’s. There was a garden behind the house, though. She decided to go back there before giving up. Dr. Helen usually was wise.

Behind the house was a neat, neat garden, with vegetables and berry bushes and gorgeous flowers of every kind. There were little trees whitewashed up to the branches, and whitewashed stones marked the corners of the paths. Frieda stood looking about with pleasure, when she saw coming down the path a little old lady with a black knitted shawl over her head, and a little old man in carpet slippers, with a big pipe in his mouth. They met her shyly and she put her errand in her embarrassed English. The old lady shook her head and looked hopefully at the old man. He shook his and grunted. Frieda tried once more. She frequently had difficulty in making herself understood. This time she used gestures, and made such an earnest effort to be clear that the old people began to look worried. The old lady shook her head again and then, turning to her husband, asked him something in German. Then there was excitement! Frieda plunged into German with them, and the others,

delighted to find she knew their language, talked fast and faster.

When she told them she was newly come from their beloved country, their eyes filled with tears and they asked question after question. Leading her to an arbor under the whitewashed trees, they made her sit down. The little old lady hurried into the house and brought out *Kuchen* and beer. Frieda was blissful. They spoke good German, and had visited Berlin. They were full of respect when they learned that Frieda's father was a Herr Professor, for they themselves had been simple tradespeople. In answer to her questions, they told her how their children had come to America, had prospered, and had sent for the old parents. With sad voices they explained their entire inability to adjust themselves to the new country and the new ways. The language they had not even attempted to acquire. At last, their sons had built this little cottage for them, and, with a grandchild, who spoke both languages, to act as interpreter, they lived peacefully and quietly on.

"But we miss the old country sometimes," said the grandfather. "Our neighbors and the pleasant evenings and the bands."

"Don't you know the other Germans here?" asked Frieda. "Dr. Harlow tells me there are many."

"They are not from our part of Germany," said the little grandmother gently. "And they are Methodists, while we are Lutherans."

"But our sons come often to see us, and we have the garden and each other," said the grandfather cheerfully. "And sometimes we get hold of a German book or paper."

"O!" cried Frieda delightedly. "There will be many German books for you soon," and she told them eagerly about the library and the list of books Algernon had already ordered at her suggestion. They listened with intelligent interest, and exchanged looks of pleasure at the thought of such a storehouse to draw on in the long winter evenings, "when the garden takes its nap," as the little Frau said lovingly.

The sun was perceptibly lower when Frieda rose to go. Then she remembered Dr. Helen's errand. The faces of her host and hostess shone at the name. "Heavenly kind! Yes! She had done much for them. They would send her flowers gladly, but sell them to her? Never!"

With big shears they cut great stalks of everything the garden contained, and, piling Frieda's arms with blossoms, while she uttered protests and exclamations of delight, they escorted her to the gate. There, in spite of her boasted emancipation from childhood, she dropped a courtesy and left them, crying "*Ade!*" as long as they could see her.

At the supper table at Three Gables, Dr. Helen, with Bert on one side, and Archie on the other, called on each girl in turn for her story of the afternoon.

Alice's turn came last.

"It was such a beautiful prescription!" she said. "I went to see Madam Kittredge. Her daughter took me up to her big room furnished with old mahogany heirlooms that made me feel as though I were in New England. And there in an arm-chair sat the most beautiful white-haired woman I ever saw. She is quite imposing and grand, but her smile saves her from being awesome. I loved her at first sight, and was not shy about staying alone with her. You would hardly know she is blind, would you? And she is perfectly delightful. She asked about Mrs. Langdon, and told me some droll stories of her odd ways, even when she was a young girl. She and Mrs. Langdon and another girl were together a great deal when they were young, and now they live within a radius of a hundred miles, but she says they never travel, so it might almost as well be a thousand. One is blind and one is lame and the third is deaf! She laughed about it as though it were not sad at all. The deaf one has been quite ill recently, and Madam Kittredge is making the prettiest present for her. She says Mrs. Langdon writes regular letters to them both, but Madam Kittredge can reply only by dictation, or by sending little gifts, and she takes the greatest pleasure in doing that. She showed me what she was getting ready for 'Matty,' as she calls the one who lives in Milwaukee. It seemed so queer to hear her speak of Mrs. Langdon as 'Sue'! If you should see her once,–" turning to Bert, who sat beside her,–"you would appreciate it. She is almost a fierce-looking old lady, and she says the most startlingly frank things if she chooses. I don't believe any ordinary person could help being a little afraid of Mrs. Langdon, but Madam Kittredge seems to think her a delicious joke. But I started to tell about the present. You see, this Matty is all alone in the world. She never married and she hasn't much money, and she just loves pretty things, especially pretty colors. And so Madam Kittredge is sending her a rainbow basket. It ought to have seemed pathetic to see her handling the colored things and hear her telling about the pleasure she was sure her friend would take in them, when she couldn't see them herself, but somehow it wasn't. She doesn't seem to think of herself at all, and so she doesn't make other people. She said she made excellent use of her sight while she had it, and can picture everything clearly now. The basket itself was beautiful, a big green sweet-grass scrap basket, with a great green bow. And inside were six parcels, each tied with a bow of ribbon, so that all the rainbow shades are there. The friend is to draw one each day for a week. Mrs. Kittredge undid them and let me look. She says she likes the feel of the soft paper and ribbon. First was a little red rose bush in a pot–"

"Is she going to send the thing that way? How can she?"

"I asked, myself, and she smiled and said she allowed herself some extravagances, and one

was to carry out her little ideas like that without minding if they did cost rather more doing it her way. She said her friend would enjoy the rose ten times as much coming that way as she would if it were ordered from a Milwaukee florist, so she's sending it. I like her independent spirit!"

"It might take an independent fortune as well," remarked Dr. Harlow, "but Madam Kittredge is fortunate enough to have that, or its equivalent, and she uses a good proportion of it in conventional charities, so she is safe from criticism if she chooses to assist the express companies. Perhaps she's a stockholder in one, for all I know! What did she have for orange, Alice?"

"A box of tangerines, with those tiny, tiny ones like doll oranges; I forget what you call them. They looked so pretty in a nest of green. The yellow parcel was a little sunset picture, only a little colored photograph, she said, but with a charming glow. The basket itself was for the green stripe in the rainbow, and there was a lovely pale blue knitted scarf, which Madam Kittredge made herself. The indigo bothered her, but she sent her daughter searching everywhere till she found a beautiful Persian pattern ribbon with an indigo ground, and she made that up into sachets with violet scent."

"That finished off two at once," said Hannah. "If I were Matty, I'd object. I thought you said there were six parcels."

"One of the sachets was done up with dark blue ribbon and the other with violet. But there was still another parcel, a white one, the prettiest of all, for it held skeins of all the soft shades of embroidery silk you ever saw in a white silk case. I don't see how any one could help liking to look at them. Madam Kittredge said that what suggested the whole idea to her was Matty's writing about how she enjoyed having colored silk samples to look at, as she lay in bed. She does embroidery, too, when she is well enough, so she will like the silks to use, by and by."

"What a charming basket!" Catherine drew a deep breath of pleasure. "I should love to see it."

"She said she shouldn't send it for a day or two, so if you go in to-morrow, you can. I'm sure she'd love to have you. She wanted one more thing to make it complete. You see, without intending it, she had put in something for every sense but hearing. There was color and fragrance and touch and taste, and she said she wanted to get some music into it, and she couldn't think how. Of course her friend is deaf, but that didn't matter. She said her mind's ear was as true as ever, and she wanted her to *hear* something out of that basket. And wasn't it lovely! I happened to think of something which she said would do exactly!"

"What?" "Tell us!" "Think of having a hand in such a pretty present!" The other girls leaned forward eagerly, and the boys looked almost as interested. Alice went on a trifle shyly, as she came to tell her own part.

"I suggested some little poem full of color words, and that delighted her and she thought a minute. I didn't know any, and I wished Catherine were there with her headful! But Madam Kittredge has a headful of her own. She had me get out two or three books and look up some that she thought might do, but they didn't just suit her; and then she had me open her clipping book and hunt for one called *Indian Summer*. It was just the thing and I loved it the minute I read it. She let me copy it for her, and make an illuminated initial with her water-colors. She seems to have everything imaginable in that big roomy desk of hers. I was glad of the chance to copy it, for I could learn it and I want to keep it always."

"Please recite it for us," said Dr. Helen, and, the others all joining in her request with words or looks, Alice repeated the beautiful lines lovingly:

"Faint blue the distant hills before,
  Yellow the harvest lands behind;
Wayfarers we upon the path
  The thistledown goes out to find.

"On naked branch and empty nest,
  The woodland's blended gold and red,
Dim glory lies which autumn shares
  With faces of the newly dead.

"Tender this moment of the year
  To eyes that seek and feet that roam;
It is the lifting of the latch,
  A footstep on the flags of home.

"Now may the peace of withered grass
  And goldenrod abide with you;
Abide with me–for what is death?
  Pall of a leaf against the blue."

Feeling that a benediction had been pronounced, they all adjourned to the porch, Dr. Harlow sitting down by Archie and chatting with him in a friendly way about his own Andover experiences years before, while the girls talked quietly with Bert, who had dropped his

nonsense for the time. Dr. Helen was sitting a little apart, but by and by Hannah slipped over to her chair.

“I’m not so very clever about things,” she said, “and I always like to have them explained. So won’t you tell me just what you meant by this afternoon? You know we all promised to use the prescription again, if we needed it.”

“Yes,” said Dr. Helen encouragingly, and waited.

“Well. You might have meant several things. You might just have meant that we needed a change. We had been sitting about and wishing it was cooler and talking nonsense and gossip–almost!–and we hadn’t been doing anything useful. Perhaps you wanted us to find out that we’d be happier if we did something for some one else, even if it looked disagreeable at first. I’ve always had that preached to me!”

“I didn’t preach!” objected Dr. Helen.

“No, you prescribed. That’s your way of preaching, though. You set us to preaching to ourselves, and it’s much more objectionable. I can shut my ears when other people preach to me, but I can’t get away from myself! But I was wondering if, perhaps, besides all that, you didn’t want us to see how cheerful and happy some people manage to be without much to make them so. Even that little girl with the spine plays she is an enchanted princess, Catherine says, and has lovely times, winding balls of yarn and cutting paper chains. She has to get a certain number of them done before the enchantment will be broken. I know who suggested that idea to her,” said Hannah, looking searchingly into the doctor’s face. “I’ve found out a lot of things this afternoon about you, professionally. Perhaps *that* was what you were after! Just advertising!”

Dr. Helen’s laugh at this brought Dr. Harlow over to her; and Archie joined the other group.

“Go on, Hannah,” said Dr. Helen, seeing Hannah hesitate a little. “Dr. Harlow will be interested in your analysis of my prescription.”

“I wasn’t going to analyse it any more, but I was just thinking that whichever you meant, they were really all of them the same thing Miss Lyndesay meant when she talked to us about being *laetus*, I mean, *laetae sorte mea*, I mean *nostra*!”

Dr. Harlow chuckled softly, but Dr. Helen put a kiss on the sweet mouth with the earnest curve.

“When you finish school, Hannah,” suggested Dr. Harlow, “you can come out here and help us in the office, making up prescriptions for spiritually afflicted folk–we’ve all got to take up that line nowadays, you know–and handling the Latin end of the business. Helen never was strong on Latin. She translated ‘*E pluribus unum*’ as ‘One too many’ when she was young!”

The boys got up to leave, and the doctor’s raillery was checked, but Hannah pondered over it as she went up to bed. About midnight she heard him closing the doors for the night, and, slipping her bright kimono over her night-dress, she stole out into the hall and half-way down stairs.

“Dr. Harlow,” she called softly, and the doctor looked up to see her leaning over the banister, her curly brown braids falling forward.

“I know now why you laughed,” she said. “It should be *sortibus*. *Laetae sortibus nostra!* O, dear no, *nostris*. I guess I’d rather do the surgery, and let you attend to the Latin!”

“Perhaps it would be wise!” said Dr. Harlow.

CHAPTER NINETEEN
JOURNALISM

“I’m glad you’re all here. I’m in the deuce of a mess, and I want to be helped out.”

So speaking, Max seated himself upon a porch settee and waited for expressions of sympathy and curiosity from the girls before him. When he had received them, he deigned to give a few details.

“You know, I’m to be editor of the college paper next year, and Morse has promised me all summer that when he went away for two weeks’ vacation, he’d let me take his place. Well, he went last week and I got out the Courier. It was a good number, too. I don’t suppose any of you noticed the difference?”

“I remember hearing father say the editorial was especially good,” said Catherine.

“And I heard Mrs. Tracy bewailing the fact when I went in to see her yesterday, that the paper had lost all its spice, and there wasn’t a single ridiculous item in it, not even a funny typographical mistake, so I’m sure you ought to feel complimented,” said Hannah.

“It’s true enough, but that’s just where my pickle comes in,” said Max gloomily. “I didn’t tell any one about it, because I wanted to carry it through without any one’s knowing. But the

reporter has struck, because I blue-pencilled his notes. He says no college boy is going to tamper with his work, and he's just calmly left; and what's worse, his brother has withdrawn an 'ad' which means quite a loss for Morse. I see now why Morse let so many things go by!"

"That is a pity!" said Catherine sympathetically, while the others declared themselves in stronger terms. Max looked gratified. "Now what I want of you girls is to help me gather up news and make the next paper better than any issue has been since that young puppy came on it. And I'll get 'ads' enough to offset the brother's withdrawal, and a new subscription if I have to pay for it myself. I want to leave things in at least as good shape as I found them. Jenkins will come back again as soon as Morse does. He loves to write his wild stuff, and is only willing to stop for a week, because he feels important, acting insulted. Probably thought I'd eat humble pie and raise his salary, too. Why, he had the Ortmeyer-Rawlins wedding fixed out with a scare-head THE WAY OF ALL FLESH! And started it out with a quotation from Shakespeare or somebody about Love looking with the mind, not with the eyes! The bride and all her male relatives would have been down at the office with sticks. She's a pretty girl, you know!"

"It would have been worse, if she hadn't been," said Alice. "What else did you cut out? It sounds like my pupils' work. I'll help you blue-pencil. It's just my line."

"The other things weren't funny, just poor constructions and general flatness, personals that were too personal, you know, and that sort of thing. But he had a rhapsody on Dawn all worked up that he wanted to run in, this week. It began: 'When I arise at daybreak, a thousand quotations surge into my mind!' The fellow is daft on quoting. He sits with his feet on the desk and reads Bartlett by the hour. Well, I'm rid of him, and I'm looking for substitutes."

"I'd like nothing better than reporting," said Hannah. "I'll interview the prominent strangers who come to town and get their views on things. Imagine me strutting around the hotel lobby, getting acquainted!" And Hannah assumed the swaggering manner which she fancied characteristic of reporters.

"The only prominent stranger in town is Frieda," laughed Max. "You'll have to get her opinion of American education or the tariff."

"That's easy. I know all Frieda's opinions. If they are favorable, she gives them out plainly, and if they aren't she keeps still, so it's no work to guess at them. I wish I could do like she does!" she added, with a sudden earnest tone in her voice.

"I'll blue-pencil all your reportings, if you use such grammar as 'like she does!'" said Alice sternly.

"Then I'll get mad and resign as Jenkins did!" answered Hannah. "I guess I know the privileges of a reporter!"

"Do you think you could get the news?" asked Max. "I suppose I could manage alone, but I'd like to have the paper fuller and better than ever, and I thought if you girls would go in, we could have a lark out of it, and not tell the rest."

"Indeed we can get news!" cried Catherine. "If you let us tell Mother and Father, they can give us news which will be perfectly legitimate, and Hannah and I have some calls to make. Frieda doesn't want to go, and Alice wasn't here when these girls called. They are some of the gossippy kind, and we'll let them talk and report as much as seems fair. And the Three B's meet here this week, and we can make a good society column thing of that."

"Why not have Algernon give you library notes?" suggested Alice.

"He does, always, but he would be glad to do something extra, I'm sure," said Max. "I don't know but it would be a good plan to take him in on this. He's in a position to gather news easily."

"I don't see how I can help," said Frieda, sadly.

"If you'll tell me something interesting about German schools," said Alice, "I'll write it up, and that will go in as our contribution. You could make room for it, couldn't you, Mr. Editor?"

"Indeed, I could. I'd be mighty glad to get it. It would be better than filling up with poetry, the way they often do. By the way, I did cut out a poem of the reporter's. I forgot all about that. Wonder where it is," and he began searching in his pockets.

"That's what made him angry," cried Catherine. "Anybody would be angry at that. Was it a very bad poem?"

"I can't remember much of it. Only it had a refrain every two inches of 'My woe! My woe!'

'I cannot tell the world my woe,'

was the way it began, and then he went straight ahead to try to do that very thing. Here! I've got a scrap of it.

'Things are seldom what they seem,
Nor is Life what its livers dream,
My woe, my woe!'"

The audience shouted with laughter, but Catherine looked sympathetic.

“Poor boy!” she said. “He probably loved his quotations and his poetry, and had looked forward to Mr. Morse’s being away to have a beautiful time with the paper. I don’t blame him for resigning and eating his heart out. Not a poem of mine will I send you, Mr. Penfield, or any of your hard-hearted staff. I’ll confine myself to finding out what’s happening in Winsted, and leave the head-lines to your own inventive genius.”

Two days later, the editorial staff of the Courier had an impromptu meeting in the library. Max had come in to ask Algernon for notes, and Catherine and Hannah were waiting for Frieda and Alice to join them to go to a tea at Dot’s.

“We’ve called on the biggest gossips we could find,” called Hannah cheerfully, as Max came in, “and I’ve got at least ten items.” She showed a note-book which slipped inside her card-case.

“She was dreadful!” said Catherine. “She would stop and make notes before we had got a block away from the house, for fear she would forget, and asked questions that made me hold my breath.”

“Well,” Hannah defended herself. “I wanted details. I don’t want just little bare sentences. And Catherine was just as bad. She took such an interest in the new people who had moved in next door to the Galleghers’, that I know the Gallegher girls were almost scandalized.”

Max ran his eye over Hannah’s list of news items approvingly. “That’s a fine start. Can’t you do some more calls?”

Catherine shook her head. “No, we don’t know any more of the very gossippy kind, but we are going to a tea at Dot’s, and we’ll make a society note of that. How are the editorials coming?”

Max made a wry face. “I declare, I’m pretty nearly stumped. At college there always seemed to be a lot of vital matters to discuss. But here there isn’t anything after a little spiel on the crops and a paragraph on politics. I don’t dare go in heavy there, for I’m not sure just what Morse’s position is, and don’t want to commit him. I can’t think of any public enterprise to work up, or any nuisance to be suppressed.”

“I wish you’d suppress mosquitoes and flies,” said Hannah, brushing away one of the latter insects, and petting a swollen place on her wrist.

“Why not write an editorial on it?” suggested Catherine. “You can give him material to read, can’t you, Algernon?”

Algernon came over to the corner where the three were talking in tones fitting a library.

“What’s that? O, indeed, yes,” and the boy’s face lightened with pleasure as he found some one really desiring information of a worthy nature. “I’ll get you something right away. There was an article in a last month’s magazine.”

“I could do elegant head-lines,” said Max:

> “KEROSENE THE KONQUEROR!
> MOSQUITOES MASSACRED!
> THE FLIGHT OF THE FLY!”

As Algernon brought the magazine and a book, Alice and Frieda arrived in their party raiment, and, bidding the boys good-by, the four girls drifted out and down the street looking like pretty butterflies.

Max lingered for a few minutes’ chat with Algernon about the paper, telling him some of his difficulties and desires. Algernon’s store of information proved of value here, too, and Max accepted gratefully a hint or two about the mechanical part of the work.

“I say, Swinburne,” he said suddenly, as he got up to go, taking fly and mosquito literature with him, “couldn’t you get off and run up to Madison for a few days this fall? I’d like to show you around and have you meet some of the fellows. If I were you, I’d try to pass off a few subjects. You could, without half trying, and perhaps you’d be able to get up and take your degree some time.”

“Thanks,” said Algernon, “I’ll think about it,” and Max went whistling away; but Algernon, as he selected a fairy tale for the little Hamilton girl, felt his heart light and his courage high. “I’ll get to college yet, as true as I’m alive,” he said aloud, and the little Hamilton girl looked up at him. “What did you say?” she asked. “I don’t want true stories, but fairy ones.”

CHAPTER TWENTY
THE THREE R’S

The meeting of the Three R’s the next evening was one of particular importance. Not only to the eager reporters, who found that even Dot’s party would not spread out sufficiently to use up the space they had allotted to social events, but to the club members themselves. It was Judge Arthur’s fiftieth birthday, and as he was a childless man, quite alone in the world, his

friendly neighbors were determined to make the day memorable for him. The meeting was to be at Three Gables, so the journalists were behind the scenes from the start. The only difficulty in the way of their writing it up was that they were so busy all day that there was not time to take a pen in hand.

“I always see to the refreshments when they meet here,” said Catherine to her three helpers, as she appeared, wearing by Hannah’s request, her brown smock. “You can crack the nuts for the salad if you will, Frieda; and Hannah, if you and Alice will get the dishes out of the way, that would be the most help. Mother wants Inga to sweep the living-room, and we can have a jolly time out here.”

“You ought to see the kitchen at Frieda’s house,” said Hannah, as she made a fine suds in the rinsing pan and poured it over the glasses. “What did you think of our black stoves and things, Frieda?”

“I saw one in the American church first, you know.”

Hannah smiled at the diplomatic evasion. “You are the nicest thing I ever saw, Frieda. You don’t say anything unfavorable of anything any more. When I was at your house I kept criticising the whole country. But you are so polite,–as polite as Karl!”

Frieda looked pleased, but she only said sedately: “We were children when you were in Berlin, Hannah. Now it is proper for us to act like grown-ups.”

“You were awfully grown-up in that pillow fight last night!”

Instantly the mask of primness vanished from Frieda’s face, and roguish twinkles showed themselves.

“Don’t let me ever catch you turning prig, Frieda Lange,” advised Hannah. “And now don’t ask me what a prig is, for I don’t know in German, and there’s no way here to find out. What else are you going to have for eats, Catherine?”

Catherine shuddered. “I suppose you’d think I was a prig if I told you how I hate that word ‘eats,’ so I won’t tell you! The chief thing to-night is the birthday cake, of course. And Inga is going to make grape-fruit sherbet. It’s so nice with a little tang of tartness to it, you know. And we’ll have olive sandwiches with the salad and coffee. You can all help with those!”

“It’s such fun to help,” said Alice. “At home there are so many of us, and no maid at all, you know, and we have awfully jolly times, really. Mother is cook and she has a different scullery-maid for each meal. And the rest of us divide up the rooms, and so on. The boys are great workers, too. Even little Jack brings in kindlings and wipes the silver. He plays the knives are men, and the forks their wives and the spoons the little children.”

“O, so did I, always,” cried Catherine. “And it used to worry me dreadfully not to know positively that the proper couples were together. Once I tied them all neatly with different colored silks, but Mother didn’t approve. Through with the nuts so soon, Frieda? Then you can begin on the sandwiches.”

“Ach! The butter is too difficult!”

“Cream it, then. So!” and Alice illustrated. “I’ll go to work on these, too, while Hannah puts away the dishes, for I don’t know where they belong.”

“All right,” said Catherine. “But please don’t talk, any of you, for a few minutes. I don’t want to lose a word that any of you say, and I’m afraid the cake may suffer.”

Dr. Helen stopped at the door and looked in at the group of silent workers. They all threw her kisses, and she went smiling on her way.

“I wish I had four of my own,” she thought to herself. “How the other mothers must be missing them! Four more interesting and delightful girls I never have known. Hannah has grown more mature since I saw her last, and Frieda is distinctly unique. Alice is the kind you can tie to. But I really think, without prejudice, my Catherine is a shade sweeter and steadier and more responsible than all the rest!”

By five o’clock the house was all ready. The decorations were great masses of goldenrod which Bert and Polly had gathered. Frieda had suggested tying them with bows of red ribbon, whereat the others had shrieked with horror and tried to Americanize her color sense a little. She approved of the birthday cake, and was interested in the big tin circle which held fifty candle-sockets, and would slip over the cake as it rested on a tray. Winding this circle with smilax proved a task just to Frieda’s mind, and she worked at it with Hannah’s help, while Alice and Catherine planned the “recreation” for the evening.

“I’m so glad,” said Catherine, stretching a little, “that we don’t have to get the Rest ready for them. Refreshments and Recreation are enough to provide!”

“You need the Rest yourself,” said Hannah. “I think it was a shame that out-of-town call had to come for your mother this afternoon. She would have enjoyed these things, and she looked so tired.”

“I know. But I’m so glad she could go away and feel sure I’d carry things through. You don’t know what a comfort that is to me! Whenever I feel discouraged about things, I always pluck up spirit by remembering that I’m really useful to her. I couldn’t practise medicine myself, you know, but there have been lots of things Mother couldn’t have done, if I hadn’t been here

to help at home. I wish she could be here this afternoon, though, for she is so clever at foolishnesses like this."

"You're clever enough at it, yourself," growled Hannah. "I don't see how you can do it. You and Alice make me sick with envy. You can cook and manage and tutor and make rhymes and everything, and I can't do much of anything!"

"How about playing the violin?" suggested Alice.

"I can't do that," said Frieda suddenly. "I cannot do one thing. O, there comes Dr. Helen, after all! We were wishing you were here," and Frieda sprang up and ran to meet the doctor. The others followed her and in an instant Dr. Helen found her arms full of welcoming girls.

"I met a messenger on the way, telling me that I need not come, and I'll admit it was a relief. I knew you'd get on all right, but I did want a finger in the pie. There! You may put my hat and coat away, Hannah, if you will, and I'll get right to work. How prettily you are putting that smilax on, Frieda!"

"That's right to cheer Frieda up, Mother," said Catherine. "She was just saying that she couldn't do anything."

"Frieda was saying that? I thought you embroidered that wonderful apron yourself?"

"O, of course, but that is only *Handarbeit*," said Frieda.

"Hand work is highly valued these days," remarked the doctor. "If you could teach Catherine to sew so well, Frieda, I should be even prouder of her than I am now. But it must not distress you when you find that there is some one thing you can't do. No one does everything well. It's one of my pet theories that for every talent one has, there is some other he hasn't. It's part of the balancing of the world. Think how very disagreeable it would be if there were one person who could do everything, and some one else who could do nothing at all."

"Don't you think there are some people who can't do anything?" asked Alice.

"Not really. Some people never seem to find their special line. I've known people so perverse they wouldn't do what they could, simply because they would have preferred something else. But I'm a firm believer that every one has a gift."

"Is *Handarbeit* a gift?" asked Frieda, looking with respect at the graceful vine twining over the shoulder of her blue apron.

"Indeed it is," said Dr. Helen. "And it is a gift more widely distributed than everybody knows. If you can, do help Catherine to discover that it is one of hers!"

"She helped me find out that I liked to sew," said Hannah. "I hated the sight of a needle before I went to Germany. But I didn't know you hated sewing, Catherine."

"I don't," Catherine answered tranquilly. "But there are always so many other things to do, and there is so much to read. It makes me shiver to think that I have only three years more at Dexter, and I haven't begun to read all I want to. I'd like to move over to the library and stay there."

"That's a serious criticism of your college life, Catherine," said Dr. Helen.

Hannah giggled. "I suppose there is a library at Dexter, but I was there a whole term, and never went inside it once!"

Everybody laughed. "Well," said Dr. Helen, "that was the other extreme. But I suppose if you young people were all-wise and learned, there'd be no point in sending you to college at all. And the world would be much more monotonous if it were filled with grown-ups! What a conflagration those red candles will make, Frieda!"

Catherine had left her seat and gone across the room to the poetry section of the bookcase, and was now turning the pages of a small green book.

"Listen to this Singing Leaf, Mother!

"'The wisest finding that I have
  Is very young, no doubt,
Yet many a man must needs grow old
  Before he finds it out.

"'How happily it comes about–
  And I was never told!–
That we must all be young awhile
  Before we *can* be old!'"

Dr. Helen laughed. "That is certainly very appropriate, and a good close to our rather sermonizing talk. I suppose fifty-year-old birthday parties should lead one to serious thinking! But now show me how far your nonsense rhyming has progressed. It's nearly supper time."

The Three R's were early comers and late stayers. Before the summer twilight was over, they had gathered in force. Alice, counting, suddenly said:

“Why, there are just forty-nine. Wouldn’t it be fun if just one more should come?”

“Who isn’t here?” asked some one. “Perhaps there will be one other, though almost everybody has come.”

“The Judge himself isn’t here yet,” said Dr. Harlow. “He’ll make the fiftieth. There he is! Let’s line up, and give him a royal welcome!”

The suggestion “took,” and the little judge came up the walk, bowing on all sides, and smiling. As he reached the door and shook hands with Dr. Harlow and Dr. Helen, he looked about him peeringly. “Where’s my girl?” he asked.

“Here I am,” said Catherine, “and here is a little souvenir for you, Judge Arthur, with wishes for many returns of the day.” She presented with a flourish, a huge feather duster adorned with a great green bow. That was the signal and the others at once produced parcels of all sizes and shapes, and bestowed them upon the judge, who opened them under a rapid fire of friendly wit.

The special form of recreation offered for the evening was called “Strange Compounds.” Catherine had taken the idea from the nonsense verses which had been spreading over the country as generally as the limericks of a few years before. The guests grouped themselves at little tables, and some, with shears and pages cut from old natural histories, geographies or poultry and live stock journals, created grotesque illustrations for the verses descriptive of the hippopotamustang and the kangarooster and other strange beasts which Catherine and Alice concocted during the afternoon. Others labored over historical combinations and the deeds of Bathrobespierre were sung in limpid strains, and the plaintive history of Old Black Joan of Archæology set every one off into a gale of mirth. The Three R’s had done so many foolish things together in the many years since their beginning as a club, that they were ready to laugh before a joke was thought of, and in that atmosphere of appreciation the frailest wit was bound to flourish. Mrs. Osgood headed a party of gardeners whose attempts at grafting produced such startling results as cro-custards and gerani-umbrellas. When some one requested help in developing the theme of a disaster, Judge Arthur shouted from the animal table that he had attempted to draw a wild-cat-astrophe and the picture would probably do for both!

Just in time to save them all from mental collapse, the white-gowned maidens brought in the dainty salad, sandwiches and cups of fragrant coffee. Then the noble birthday cake, wreathed in scarlet flame, was set before the judge, the candles blown out with good wishes, and the cake cut and served with the ice.

Dr. Harlow rose to announce that the prize for the most complete compound was given to Mr. Kittredge, who had conceived of a “pigeon-toad, with a lovely long dove-tail, and a pot-pied waistcoat ringed and streaked, and a sweet dove-cot-ton veil.” Frieda and Hannah came solemnly into the room, bearing a crate, from the top of which appeared the head of a rooster, with a big bow of ribbon around its neck. They set it down before the minister amid the shouts of the assembled company.

“You may crow as much as you like, Sir,” said the doctor, “but this fellow will beat you.” And straightway, as though primed for his part, the rooster opened his mouth and filled the room with a long and lusty cock-a-doodle-doo!

“I was so afraid they would hear him before we brought him in,” said Frieda to the girls, as the four gathered on the window-seat. “He kept growing and growing out there!” and then she looked bewildered at the others’ sudden mirth. Her peculiarities of pronunciation were so few that the girls could never learn to expect them, and this, added to the other nonsense of the evening, was too much for even Catherine’s self-control.

“I never saw grown-up people do such funny things,” said Hannah, in order to cover their laughter. “Do they always act this way, Catherine?”

“O, no, indeed. I never saw them put in a whole evening quite so foolishly before. I didn’t know whether they would take the idea up or not, but Judge Arthur loves to laugh, and lately mother said they had had quite stupid commonplace meetings,–cards and talking politics and literary and musical programs,–and she wanted something entirely different. They’re a lot of dears, anyway! The younger set wouldn’t think of laughing so hard and being so hilarious, even the Boat Club; and you should see the formal dignified parties that the Galleghers and those girls give! They go in carriages and the dancing doesn’t begin till nine, though every one has a six o’clock supper and almost goes to sleep waiting for it to be stylishly late to go. Max and Archie and Bess and Win always go, and sometimes the rest of us get in, but we hardly feel acquainted with each other when we meet in such surroundings. Polly’s mother told her she ought to entertain that crowd a while ago, because she was ‘indebted,’ and she planned a luncheon party, and at the last minute changed her mind and got up a Boat Club picnic instead. That was the last picnic before you girls came.”

“I’ve heard so much about those jolly picnics,” said Hannah, “and we haven’t been to one!”

“I know. Isn’t it odd that it happens so? But we’ll have one the night before we go back to college. The moon will be full, and the boys have all the plans made. There! They’re beginning to leave.” And Catherine went forward to help her mother’s guests find hats and scarfs.

“I never heard Catherine talk so much at once before,” said Frieda lazily. “She looks

beautiful to-night, too,–to boot!" She had just heard that phrase and though a little uncertain as to its exact significance, took pleasure in inserting it here and there in her speech.

"She's a darling dear," assented Alice, "and so is Dr. Helen, to boot! Now let's help Inga clear things away and go to bed."

A half-hour later, Frieda and Alice in the guest-room were sound asleep, and Hannah in her little bed was sleeping likewise. But Catherine was sitting by the window writing, by moon and candle light, notes for the *Courier*, due to appear to-morrow, and still lacking at least two columns! She wrote slowly and conscientiously, trying to be clear and simple, and yet not so unlike the usual style of the *Courier* as to excite comment. Presently she finished and, resting her elbows on the window-sill, looked out into the night. Capella twinkled at her and she leaned out to identify such of her beloved constellations as she could.

The house stood high on a hillside, and overlooked the streets of the little town. Suddenly through the trees Catherine saw the gleam of a moving lantern, then another and a third. She heard a voice call, and an answer from a distance.

"I wonder what it means?" she thought, watching and listening. "It sounds and looks very mysterious. *The Courier!*"

The recently acquired news instinct recognized in this mystery of voices and moving lights at the dead of night a possible "scoop" for her paper. To be sure, her paper was the only one in Winsted, but that did not matter. She got up, and taking a long light cloak from the closet threw it over her shoulders, drawing the silk hood over her head. Then she stole out into the corridor and down the stairs, her party skirts rustling, and the boards now and then creaking under her stockinged feet. Down stairs she stopped, put on her pumps, and then let herself out, closing the door softly behind her.

Outside everything was very still. Catherine felt a little frightened and foolish. But having started, she would not turn back. Resolutely she went down the walk in the direction in which she had seen the lights.

"I might take Hotspur, though," she thought, and turned back toward his house under the porch. The big dog sprang up to meet her, and leaped upon her, then drew her toward his kennel. Puzzled, Catherine followed him, and once there, knelt down and looked inside. Curled on the straw inside the roomy doghouse were two little figures. She pulled at them and called. Suddenly one sat up and said: "Mamma! Peter!"

"Perdita Osgood! what are you doing here?" and Catherine drew a sleepy dishevelled-looking little girl out and into her arms. Perdita blinked and woke entirely.

"Elsmere and me went journeying," she said, "and we stayed all night in Hotspur's house, so bears wouldn't get us."

Then Catherine remembered the other slumberer, and dragged Elsmere out with more force than gentleness.

"I see now what the lights and the calling were," she said. "They discovered that the children were not at home, and were out looking for them. Poor Polly and poor Algernon! Elsmere, wake up here, and come along home this minute. There, Perdita, I'll carry you, you sleepy, naughty little girl. Elsmere, come along. Give me your hand."

Down the hill they went, and through the short cut to the Osgood house, Elsmere running beside Catherine, who walked as rapidly as though Perdita had no weight, Hotspur leaping and bounding alongside.

In the path, through a little grove, they saw a twinkling lantern and Catherine called:

"Polly, Algernon! They're here! I'm bringing them home." With a rush the lantern-bearers were upon her, and Perdita was taken from her arms into Mr. Osgood's, while Algernon, husky and faint with relief, picked up his brother and listened to Catherine's story. She followed the others to the Osgoods', where Polly and Mrs. Osgood were waiting in suspense. Perdita had been put to bed as usual, but when Mrs. Osgood came home from the Three R's party she had gone in to tuck the children up, and kiss them good night. Perdita was not there, and they searched the house before they thought of being alarmed. Not finding her anywhere, they had roused Peter and questioned him. He could only say: "I say, 'Perdita, Perdita, stay home with Peter. Elsmere bad boy.'"

That suggested Elsmere, and investigation showed that, though he had not been missed at home, he was not there. Then the men had taken lanterns, and gone out to search.

No one was more distressed than Peter. "I'd ought to tooken care of Perdita better," he would sob. "I'd ought to watched her better."

"There, there, boy," Catherine and Polly soothed him. "You did your best, and she's home now, all safe, and won't go journeying again, ever. She didn't like Hotspur's house, and she will stay home with Peter."

"O, Catherine," sighed Polly. "You are an only child, and you don't know what agonies you can have over your brothers and sisters. It seems to me ever since Peter and Perdita were born I've been worrying about one or both of them!"

"Poor Polly!" said Catherine sympathetically. "But I don't suppose you'd give me your share in them, would you?"

Polly caught Peter close, and hugged him till he protested and drew away from her.

“Kiss me,” she begged.

“I did,” said Peter.

“Kiss me again.”

“I did twice,” said Peter. “I want to go to bed. Aw-ful sleepy!” and, with a yawn that set the others to imitating him, he stumbled off toward the stairs, in his little night clothes. Polly followed to make him comfortable, while Mr. Osgood took Catherine home.

“You did us a great service to-night, my dear,” he said, as he lifted his hat to say good night, when she had reached her home porch. “But I haven’t learned yet how you happened to find them.”

“I was out reporting for the *Courier*,” she told him and then, laughing softly at his astonished expression, explained her meaning. “And though I did find out the news, I can’t write it up,” she sighed. “I know how real journalists feel when they have to sacrifice a scoop for reasons of delicacy.”

“The *Courier* shall not suffer!” said Mr. Osgood. “Since it was for its sake that you went out, I’ll have to see that Max gets a little assistance. My profession doesn’t advertise, but I have some influence with one or two concerns that do, and I’ll see that your next number is full of something more profitable to the management than harrowing accounts of midnight searches for missing babies!”

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE
THE LAST PARTY

Rain.

Rain.

Rain.

“It’s beastly,” said Alice, with her nose pressed to the window-pane, watching the cold drifting downpour.

“Let’s go in and see if the others are awake.”

So Frieda put on her heavy leather slippers, lined with figured satin and edged with fur, and a very bunchy bathrobe, and followed Alice’s kimonoed figure across the wide corridor to Catherine’s room.

They pushed the door softly open and entered.

Then they exchanged glances of mischief. Dr. Helen did not believe in girls sleeping two in a bed, but Alice had found the big mahogany bed in the guest-room lonely, and Frieda had found the cot narrow; so they had made a law for themselves and slept together; and here, in Catherine’s four-poster, were also two heads, one auburn and one brown.

“Wake up, you two!” said Alice, tickling Hannah’s plump cheek, while Frieda tweaked the pink bow from Catherine’s bronze braids.

“Time to take off your pink bow, dear. It’s daylight and it looks worse than goldenrod with red ribbon.”

“Ouch! You needn’t have given that last yank. I’m awake. Hannah!”

Hannah sighed and turned over. “Don’t bother me,” she said. “I didn’t get to sleep last night until this morning.”

“Why aren’t you in your own room and bed?” asked Frieda severely.

“I’ll wager you two slept together, yourselves,” said Catherine. “O, Hannah, do wake up! It’s raining!”

“Yes, that’s what we came to tell you,” said Alice. “We’ve just been watching it wash away our beautiful moonlight picnic.”

Hannah sat up and looked out.

“Isn’t it beastly?” she remarked.

“I should call it foul,” said Catherine, beginning to comb out her great braids.

“Why not fish-ous?” suggested Alice mischievously, whereupon Hannah pitched a pillow at her.

“Ow! Look out for my glasses!”

“Well, don’t make such flat puns then. I believe you sleep with your glasses on. How funny they must look staring away in the dark. There goes the rising-bell. I’ll beat every one of you to breakfast.”

Dr. Helen was not sorry to see the rain. An all afternoon picnic, with the evening and a late-rising moon added, did not seem to her a wise plan for the day before going back to college,–"though I do dislike putting a damper on your pleasure," she said at breakfast.

"There's a damper on this one," sighed Catherine. "Alice has not been up the river yet, and the other girls haven't been to one real Boat Club picnic. Mother!" and an inspired look came into Catherine's eyes, "why couldn't we have our picnic in the library instead? It would be as appropriate a way to end this summer as on the river, and this is one of the closed evenings. Don't you think we could?"

The other girls held their breath with eagerness, while Dr. Helen considered.

"I don't see any objection," she said presently. "I suppose that would be more fun than having them all come here?"

"O, heaps more," cried Hannah. "It would be the jolliest kind of a lark."

"Would the Board be willing?" suggested Alice.

"I'm sure of that," said Catherine. "Algernon will be the hardest to persuade, for he feels as though the library were almost holy ground, but I'll interview him at once."

The telephone was kept busy for the next half-hour; by its means everything was arranged, and every one notified, and the girls went to work making preparations for the supper. Polly and Dot came over in the afternoon and the time slipped quickly by, trunk-packing and sandwich-making being mingled in what seemed to the doctor, some of the time, an almost hopeless jumble. At last the sounds of talk and laughter and running up and down stairs ceased. The boys had arrived to carry baskets, and a rain-coated procession tramped gayly off, waving good-bys now and then to the two doctors standing in the window.

"It hardly seems as though Catherine could be the same girl," said her father. "She is so eager and full of fun."

"But she keeps her quaint sweet dignity all the same," answered Dr. Helen softly. "She will never lose her characteristic charm, and it is such a comfort to have her well enough to wish to eat a cold supper in that bare little room!"

"Can't they heat the place?" asked Dr. Harlow sharply.

"O, yes," his wife assured him, "and they have all solemnly promised me to dry their skirts as soon as they get there! Hannah always contrives to get into puddles."

"*She's* not much changed," chuckled the little doctor. "Her language is as funny now and then as Frieda's. She told me they were going to relegate themselves on watermelon this evening!"

"It was a fortunate day for us when Catherine found her," and Dr. Helen's eyes smiled, as they always did when Hannah's image came before her mind. "And, do you know, I am very much pleased with Alice. She has the honestest eyes, and her manners are as unconscious and simple as can be. I should like to see her mother."

"Father's not so important, of course! But I agree with you, she's the true blue sort. It's Frieda for me, though. Of all inscrutable countenances, hers is the most. I believe she is, on the whole, the most unforeseen young person I have ever had dealings with, and in whatever direction she may choose to let herself out, in the future, she will do something interesting, or 'I shall astonish'!"

At which quotation from the young lady in question, they both laughed, and went out to their own supper, not at all sorry to have a quiet evening alone.

It was not a quiet evening in the little library. Behind the drawn shades, the boys and girls were busy spreading the long reading-table with a white cloth, setting out upon it the motley collection of plates, cups and silver ware which came out of the various picnic baskets, and an equally motley, but very appetizing, array of good things to eat. Winifred had laden Max with a chafing-dish, all legs and handles, he declared, and with this at one end, Bess' little copper teakettle at the other, Dorcas' asters for centerpiece and Polly's red-shaded candles at accurate intervals between, the whole effect was "very festival," as Frieda said admiringly.

As a finishing touch, Bertha and Algernon, official hosts, walked around the table laying typewritten catalog cards at each place.

The others swarmed around instantly, examining and commenting.

"Cunning!" "Real library place cards!" "What a pretty idea!" "But *what* do they mean?"

Algernon and Bertha only laughed.

"No one can sit down till he has found his proper place," said Algernon sternly. "This is a well-conducted library!"

"They all have the same number," cried Bert. "I'm on to that. See! It's the date, fixed up to look like the mystic symbols they mark the books with. 190.9 Se 16. September 16th, 1909. That's so much, gained. Now some of you others can figure out the rest. I've done my share."

The others wandered around the table, picking up the cards and laying them down again.

"*Brightness, or Beauty*," read Polly, disgustedly. "Imagine any one of us owning up to that!

Of course, we all know we have them both, but who is going to claim them?"

"It's going to be a conflict between modesty and hunger soon, I can see that," said Archie.

"*Peace* and *Purity* are all well enough. If I could find a half-way sort like *Perfect Honesty* or *Genius*, I'd stop there! What's this? *Bright Raven!* I tell you, it's a game, made out of book titles. But I'll be jiggered if I ever heard of one of them."

"I never did, either," said Dorcas, shortly. "They must have hunted around in very queer places to find things that none of us know. *Star of the Sea*, though, does sound familiar. Isn't it one of Tennyson's?"

Bertha choked and turned away, avoiding Algernon's eye.

"Hurry up, and find yours, the rest of you," said Tom suddenly, "I'm fixed and I'm ready to eat."

Every one pounced upon him, to discover that he had chosen to install himself at a place marked *The Whiskered One*.

"I'm the only fellow here who ever wore a mustache," he said, "so it's plain, though rather far-fetched."

"It's not your place, though, Tom, truly," said Bertha. "I'm afraid we'll have to help. The librarian always does help stupid people."

"We won't ask him, though! If you two were bright enough to make these cards, we'll figure out the meanings or go without our supper," said Polly decisively, and the girls echoed her, though the boys groaned, and Max helped himself to a sandwich.

"Now, listen," said Polly. "I'm president of this club, and I call you all to order. I'll read the cards, one after another and you must all think, and perhaps we'll be able to get on to the system–I mean, to understand it."

Every one struck an attitude and waited while Polly walked up one side of the table and down the other, reading aloud in order:

"*The Whiskered One.*
Chastity.
Star of the Sea.
A Twin.
Consecrated to God.
Extremely Bold; or Holy Prince.
Peace.
A Lover of Peace.
Brightness, or Beauty.
The Greatest One.
Purity.
The Woman Strong with the Spear.
Bright Raven.
Grace.
A Gazelle.
A Princess of Noble Birth."

When she had finished, there was a moment's silence and then everybody but Hannah burst out laughing.

With a little "O!" she flew across the room to the big dictionary, and opening it toward the back, dropped on her knees before it.

"I have it!" she cried joyfully. "I used to study and study the meanings of names when I was a youngster, and here they are. Mine means Grace and I know where I'm going to sit, and the rest of you can find out in a minute."

The long delayed supper was at last eaten, and sitting idly around the table, with watermelon rinds before them, the young people talked over the summer which seemed already closed.

"We've accomplished a lot, haven't we?" said Polly. "I'm really proud of the Boat Club this year. It never used to stand for anything but its own fun before, but from now on it will be a recognized factor in Winsted life."

"Bully for you, Polly!" said Bert. "I never heard any one say 'factor' offhand like that. It's one of the words I've always held sacred to special topics and theses and such."

"Like 'objective' and 'subjective'?" asked Polly. "I always feel about those as the old lady did about her pies, after she labelled them T. M."

"What did she label them like that for?" asked Frieda, leaning forward from her seat between Winifred and Archie.

"O, dear," sighed Bert in mock despair. "Frieda has made us explain all the old jokes we knew this summer, and I don't see how that one was overlooked. Did you ever hear the riddle about when a door is not a door, Frieda?"

"Yes," said Frieda good-naturedly. "It was in an English book I learned. There was a whole chapter on riddles, and the answers were printed upside down!"

“That dear Edith and Mary book!” cried Hannah. “Such a fine lot of riddles as there were! I think you and I ought to give a copy of that book to the library, Frieda!”

“That reminds me,” exclaimed Algernon. “We have had gifts to-day. I saved them to tell you when you should all be listening, for they came to us through our honorary members, the Wide-Awakes.”

“Hear!” “Hear!” shouted Max, but Polly rapped the meeting to order. Alice and Hannah and Catherine and Frieda looked puzzled, and the others interested, as Algernon went on.

“Mr. Kittredge told me to-day that they had voted to give the Sunday-school library books to us, as he thought the public library much more important than theirs, and they wanted to help all they could, following the good example of several of the Sunday-school teachers. That’s a compliment to Dorcas and Catherine, both. So that’s one of the four ‘notorious Wide-Awakes,’ as Mr. Graham calls them. And then a Mr. Tracy came in with his arms full of boxes, and said that his wife had been ill here at the hotel for some weeks, and she had amused herself during her convalescence with working on picture puzzles; now she was well and going away, she did not want to take them with her, and, as the Winsted Library had been a great help to her, she would like to give them these six or seven puzzles, to be loaned to people like books. She said she thought a small library like this where the librarian knew every one personally, could easily handle such a department, for convalescents and lonely old people. Pictures and games and all such things might be included, to be loaned at the librarian’s discretion, only.”

“What a good idea!” cried Polly, “but how do the Wide-Awakes come in on that?”

“Just this way. Mrs. Tracy said that if we would let her name the collection, she would be glad to add to it from time to time. And when we consented, as, of course, we did, she said she wanted it called The Hannah Eldred Department.”

“Three cheers for Mrs. Tracy!” shouted Bert, and Max sprang to his feet and led off with a right good will. Then followed cheers for Hannah, for Catherine, for the Wide-Awakes and the Boat Club. When the noise subsided, Algernon took the floor again.

“That’s not all, either! You know, most of you, that Frieda started the German part of the library, giving some books and an invaluable list; but none of you know what Miss Prescott told me a day or two ago. It is a secret, but I think she will let me tell it now, just for completeness, won’t you, Miss Prescott?”

Alice blushed and smiled.

“If you really wish, but I don’t like to be thanked for what is only a promise as yet.”

“Never mind about that. It will be more than a promise soon. Miss Prescott does very clever designing, and she heard me lamenting the fact that we have no book-plate for the library, and most kindly offered to furnish one.”

“I’ll submit it to my teacher in designing,” said Alice shyly, “and then Mr. Swinburne will present it to the Board to accept or reject as they see fit. You’re not bound to take it, but I did want to help along somehow!”

“We ought to do that cheering all over again,” said Archie, “but I move you, Madam President, that Miss Lange and Miss Prescott consider themselves specially included in the yells of a moment ago, and that the meeting proceed to sing the Boat Club song.”

The passers-by, if there had been any, must have wondered at the joyous burst of song that followed this remark. As a matter of fact, however, there were no passers-by at all. The rain had washed the streets clear, and the corner lights, glimmering faintly through the wet, fell on one figure only.

Standing before the library window, holding a great cotton umbrella over his head, and peering patiently through a crack between the casing and the shade, was a small boy, in an overcoat several sizes too large for him.

Agnes’ seat was near the window. Suddenly she saw a small nose and an inquiring eye pressed against the crack.

“Look!” she said, and all eyes followed her gesture.

Bert sprang to open the door and drag the dripping little figure in. Polly and Catherine quickly took off the great coat and shut the vast umbrella. Then they drew the little chap to the table, where Bertha had a plate of goodies ready for him.

“Attention, everybody!”

Max sprang to his feet.

“Sing to the air of the Boat Club Song:

“He is the Boat Club mascot,
Give a cheer! give a cheer!
For the Boat Club mascot,
Elsmere! Elsmere!”

“Do it again!” cried Elsmere, brandishing a fork and making Bertha dodge, “Give a cheer, Elsmere! Boat Club stomach! Give a cheer!”

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO
AUF WIEDERSEHEN

Such a bustling place as Three Gables was on that Friday morning!

“It seems a pity that you can’t stay till Monday, when college really opens,” said Dr. Helen, pressing out a filmy waist in the dining-room, where the four girls were gathered, setting last stitches.

“But the new girls who have come on early and those who have had to take ‘exams’ are just the ones who need cheering up, and we are the official Comfort Committee, aren’t we, Alice?”

Alice, fastening the thread after sewing in a fresh ruche, nodded. “Got to keep the blues away, or perish trying to,” she said. “And Hannah has to be home before Monday. And Frieda needs a day or two to get settled. Hilda said she’d come back to-day, and they could get their room in order before Sunday. I’m so glad you’re going to room with Hilda, Frieda dear. She’s such a darling child.”

“Is she still given to crushes?” asked Hannah. “She fairly worshiped Lilian Burton’s door-sill when I was there.”

“Crushes are going out of fashion at Dexter,” said Catherine emphatically. “And one of the reasons I thought it would be good for Hilda to room with Frieda was that Frieda has too much sense to indulge in them, and she will keep Hilda suppressed.”

“Catherine, you have such a positive manner when you talk about Dexter,” said Hannah thoughtfully. “You’ll be House President senior year. O, dear!” for Frieda, in getting up to help Dr. Helen fold up the ironing-board, had brushed by Hannah’s chair, and a fat little button bag rolling to the floor had emptied its contents all over the room.

“Such a lot of buttons, Hannah!” exclaimed Dr. Helen, stooping to help gather them up.

Hannah laughed. “Mamma was so surprised when I came back from Dexter because there were as many in it as when I went, and I told her there were more because I had put in all the buttons that had come off while I was there! And then she was shocked!”

The doorbell rang and Inga came in with a big parcel for Catherine with Grandma Hopkins’ compliments. Catherine opened it, wondering, and the others dropped their work.

“A cake! Did you ever in your life? And I already have Mrs. Graham’s jelly, and Mr. Graham’s bag of nuts, and old Mrs. Hitchcock’s jar of preserves! Mother, how can I ever thank them all?”

“How can you ever get them all transported to Dexter, is what I’m wondering! Do they always send girls off to school with food for the term, Catherine?” asked Hannah.

“Well, I had cookies and mince pie to take last year, after my trunk was packed. Mother persuaded me to leave the pie, but I was sorry afterward. And one of Polly’s mother’s friends baked a chicken for her to carry all the way to Wellesley! People are so kind! How do you suppose I can carry this cake, though, Mother? It’s such an awkward shape, and I couldn’t pack it with my clothes!”

“Do you remember how Inez brought a pail of honey in her trunk,” put in Alice, “and how it leaked out all over everything she had?”

“I’ll put the cake into a stout hat-box, and fasten a heavy cord and a handle on it, and you can get it there safely, I think. You won’t have to carry it, except just getting on and off the train.” Dr. Helen hurried off to see to that bit of packing, herself.

Bertha, Agnes and Dot, and even Dorcas, found excuses to drop in at the house that morning. Win and Bess promised to be at the train. On the way home from school three or four of Catherine’s Sunday-school children ran in to say good-by. Polly was in and out a dozen times, and Peter and Perdita came together to present a beautiful photograph of themselves in their newest garments and shiniest shoes. Dinner was interrupted by the trunkman’s arrival, and Dr. Harlow had to keep a watchful eye upon each girl to see that she did not forget to eat.

Algernon and Bert came to escort the party to the station, and they started out merrily enough. When they reached the sidewalk, Catherine turned and ran back to the house for a private farewell to her mother, who preferred saying good-by there instead of going to the station. College seemed suddenly robbed of its pleasure, and the length of days between September and Thanksgiving intolerable, but they were used to helping each other be brave, and they blinked away the tears and parted smiling, Catherine turning frequently to wave good-bys till the house was lost in the trees.

It was quite like a reception at the station. While Dr. Harlow attended to ticket-buying, the young people clustered together, talking at random and laughing easily.

“It will be so lonely without you all,” sighed Bess. “All the other college folk will be off by Tuesday at the latest, and here we shall languish!”

“You’ll not have much time to languish if you assist in the kindergarten, Winifred,” said Catherine affectionately. “I’m so glad you are going to do it! You’ll make them sing like little nightingales. O, Bess, you go right by Grandma Hopkins’ on the way home, don’t you? Would you mind running in and telling her that the cake got off all right? I’ll write her, of course, but I know she will want to know. Algernon! You don’t mean it? Miss Ainsworth drawing her own novels! How perfectly delicious! O Max, there you are! What did Mr. Morse say? Was he pleased with the way we handled the paper?”

“Seemed to be. How I wish I were still on, to be able to write up your departure fittingly! I say, who’s that odd little pair over there? They seem to be looking this way as if they wanted something.”

The others turned and Frieda, who had been standing in a dreary silence, listening to the chatter of all these dear boys and girls whom she was leaving perhaps forever, suddenly ran across the platform to where a little old lady in black with a knitted shawl over her head, and a little old man in ill-fitting clothes were standing.

“We came to tell our little friend good-by,” “And to wish her *Gute Reise!*” They spoke in a kind of duet.

“Here are a few poor blossoms from our garden–”

“That you forget not the old people–”

“And a trifle of *Kuchen* that I made myself–”

“And this I have carved for you, to put your pens on–”

Frieda, beaming and exclaiming her gratitude, made a pretty picture and the young people, observing her and hearing the rapid German, felt that they were seeing her in a better light than they had before, much as they had already learned to like and enjoy her.

Dot clung to Hannah, and the gentle Agnes, who had found Alice incredibly congenial, walked arm in arm with her a little apart from the others, while Catherine in the center of the group held her father’s arm fast.

They were off at last.

“I thought that child in the back seat was Elsmere,” sighed Catherine, starting up and dropping back again, relieved. “That child actually gets on my mind so that I expect to see him everywhere.”

“Algernon tied him up, or he would have been there. He is a little rascal. It was a relief to me to have Perdita live up to her name and reputation, though,” said Hannah. “I heard about her all summer as a little mischief, and I never saw her do an indecorous thing. I didn’t *see* her do that.”

“Well, you may mark my words,” said Catherine, “before you have grown many years older you will hear astonishing tales of Perdita Osgood. Peter’s influence will not always keep her in check. Polly told me that yesterday she tried to vaccinate the cat, with a mixture of ground chalk and vinegar! Peter came for help to prevent her!”

“American children are pretty bad, aren’t they, Frieda?” said Alice mischievously, for Frieda’s lips were set sternly.

“Don’t make her say so,” pleaded Hannah teasingly. “She has made such a beautiful record.”

Frieda flushed a little, but slipped her hand into her pocket and felt there the shape of the little carved frame of Karl’s picture and held her tongue once more. She would not quarrel with Hannah in this last hour for anything!

“Next year,” Hannah said thoughtfully, “I am surely coming to Dexter, and you three are to get the fire-wall room for us, and we’ll live in glory and rapture.”

“If it were only *this* year!” Alice moaned out the words, and the others sighed with her. The excitement of getting off had died, and they were becoming painfully aware of the separation that was approaching with every revolution of the wheels.

There were other passengers in the car, but they felt peculiarly alone, none the less. It was a curious tie that bound them. They felt that their friendship, so oddly started, had something more vital in it than most school-girl relations. They had all been sorry to leave bright, lovable Polly, but still, so long as they four stayed together, nothing could matter very much.

“O, dear,” sighed Hannah aloud. “I do think I spend all my time getting along without somebody or other!”

“‘We meet so seldom, yet we surely part so often,’” quoted Catherine musingly.

“O, Catherine, my darling, if you dare begin on that sad Rossetti woman!” cried Alice. “You don’t know how dreadful she is about it, Hannah! She goes about for days with a distant sad look in her eyes and, if she is spoken to suddenly, she says, ‘When I was dead my spirit turned,’ or ‘Does the road wind uphill all the way? Yes, to the very end!’ or something equally doleful. I feel as though some one were dying in the next room, and I do believe I’ll hide the book.”

“It won’t do you any good,” remarked Catherine serenely. “I know almost all of her by heart. But you must admit, Allie, that I do say cheerful things at times. You got sick of the Jumblies

last year."

"They were as idiotic as the Rossetti lady, in another way. We'll never agree on such subjects, Catherine!"

"Well, anyhow, Catherine isn't going to read so much poetry this year," said Hannah.

"And Hannah is going to read more," rejoined Catherine, at which Hannah made a wry face and set them all laughing.

"Dexter!"

"Already? O, Hannah darling, how can we ever let you go on without us?"

All three were kissing her, but Hannah laughed at their sorrowful faces.

"I'll go out on the platform with you. And I'll carry the hat-box, Catrina. Shall you have a spread to-night? Oh! it's the same dear little, queer little station! And there's Miss Eliot, and Dy-the Allen! Glory! Glory! Glory! Dy-the, going on this train? Joy and rapture! I should have died of loneliness!"

And Hannah plunged down the steps and threw out her arms to embrace Dy-the, when thud! out fell the bottom of the hat-box, and with it Grandma Hopkins' lovely cake!

Miss Eliot looked into the distressed blue eyes and laughed.

"Just the same Hannah!" she said. "Dy-the, take good care of her and don't let her get lost in Chicago. Now, child, introduce me to your Frieda and get back on the train at once."

"Here she is," said Hannah, casting one more sad look at the shattered cake, over which a baggage-man had rolled a heavy truck. "And, Frieda, Miss Eliot is the one to go to, always, when you need anything, from shoe-strings to a scolding. O, Catherine, I'm so sorry. I just wanted to help!"

Catherine caught her in a mighty hug.

"Never you mind one minute. It would have given us indigestion, and it was so funny to see it go smash! Give your father my love, won't you, darling? And Aunt Clara, when you see her."

"And write from the very first station," said Alice. "I'm so glad Dy-the is going to be with you."

"Give Karl my greetings," said Frieda, holding on to Hannah's hand tightly. "And O, ever my love to Tante Edith and Uncle Edward!"

"Come, Babe, not another minute," and Dy-the, little but determined, plucked Hannah from detaining arms, and set her firmly on the platform of the rear car. There, as the train glided out, she stood, her eyes fixed upon the little group of three with arms around each other.

"Good-by! Good-by!" she called and they answered. Then Frieda ran a little nearer, holding out her arms in a pleading gesture, and over the noise of the retreating train their voices rang out together:

"*Auf Wiedersehen!*"

"*Auf glückliches Wiedersehen!*"

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