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"I'M IN A DREADFUL FIX"

Betty Wales
Freshman

BY
MARGARET WARDE

Author of

Betty Wales, Sophomore
Betty Wales, Junior
Betty Wales, Senior
Betty Wales, B. A.
Betty Wales & Co.
Betty Wales on the Campus
Betty Wales Decides



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Betty Wales, Freshman

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BETTY WALES

CHAPTER I

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

"Oh, dear, what if she shouldn't meet me!" sighed Betty Wales for the hundredth time at least, as she gathered up her bags and umbrella, and followed the crowd of noisy, chattering girls off the train.

"So long, Mary. See you to-morrow."

"Get a carriage, Nellie, that's a dear. You're so little you can always break through the crowd."

"Hello, Susanna! Did you get on the campus too?"

"Thanks awfully, but I can't to-night. My freshman cousin's up, you know, and homesick and—"

"Oh, girls, isn't it fun to be back?"

It all sounded so jolly and familiar. Weren't any of them freshmen? Did they guess that she was a freshman "and homesick"? Betty straightened proudly and resolved that they should not. If only the registrar had got father's telegram. As she stood hesitating on the station platform, amazed at the wilderness of trunks and certain that no one could possibly find her until that shouting, rushing mob in front of her had dispersed, a pretty girl in immaculate white duck hurried up to her.

"Pardon me," she said, reaching out a hand for Betty's golf clubs, "but aren't you a stranger here? Could I help you, perhaps, about getting your luggage up?"

Betty looked at her doubtfully. "I don't know," she said. "Yes, I'm going to enter college, and my elder sister couldn't get here until a later train. But father telegraphed the registrar to meet me. Do you know her? Could you point her out?"

The pretty girl's lips curved into the faint suggestion of a smile. "Yes," she said, "I know her—only too well for my peace of mind occasionally. But I'm afraid she hasn't come to meet you. You see she's very busy these first days—there are a great many of you freshman, all wanting different things. So she sends us down instead."

"Oh, I see." Betty's face brightened. "Then if you would tell me how to get to Mrs. Chapin's on Meriden Place."

"Mrs. Chapin's!" exclaimed the pretty girl. "That's easy. Most of you want such outlandish streets. But that's close to the campus, where I'm going myself. My time is just up, I'm happy to say. Give me your checks and your house number, and then we'll take a car, unless you wouldn't mind walking. It's not far."

On the way to Mrs. Chapin's Betty learned that her new friend's name was Dorothy King, that she was a junior and roomed in the Hilton House, that she went in for science, but was fond of music and was a member of the Glee Club; that she was back a day early for the express purpose of meeting freshmen at the trains. In return Betty explained how she had been obliged at the last moment to come east alone; how sister Nan, who was nine years older than she and five years out of college, was coming down from a house party at Kittery Point, but couldn't get in till eight that night; and father had insisted that Betty be sure to arrive by daylight.

"Wales-Wales—" repeated the pretty junior. "Why, your sister must have been the clever Miss Wales in '9-, the one who wrote so well and all. She is? How fine! I'm sorry, but I leave you here. Mrs. Chapin's is that big yellow house, the second on the left side—yes. I know you'll like it there. And Miss Wales, you mustn't mind if the sophomores get hold of that joke about your asking the registrar to meet you. I won't tell, but it will be sure to leak out somehow. You see it's really awfully funny. The registrar is almost as important as the president, and a lot more dignified and unapproachable, until you get to know her. She'll think it too good to keep, and the sophomores will be sure to get hold of it and put it in the book of grinds for their reception-souvenirs they give you, you know. Now good-bye. May I call later? Thank you so much. Good-bye."

Betty was blushing hotly as she climbed Mrs. Chapin's steps. But her chagrin at having proved herself so "verdant" a freshman was tempered with elation at the junior's cordiality. "Nan said I wasn't to run into friendships," she reflected. "But she must be nice. She knows the Clays. Oh, I hope she won't forget to come!"

Betty Wales had come to college without any particular enthusiasm for it, though she was naturally an enthusiastic person. She loved Nan dearly, but didn't approve of her scheme of life, and wasn't at all prepared to like college just because Nan had. Being so much younger than her sister, she had never visited her at Harding, but she had met a good many of her friends; and comparing their stories of life at Harding with the experiences of one or two of her own mates who were at the boarding-school, she had decided that of two evils she should prefer college, because there seemed to be more freedom and variety about it. Being of a philosophical turn of mind, she was now determined to enjoy herself, if possible. She pinned her faith to a remark that her favorite among all Nan's friends had made to her that summer. "Oh, you'll like college, Betty," she had said. "Not just as Nan or I did, of course. Every girl has her own reasons for liking college—but every nice girl likes it."

Betty decided that she had already found two of her reasons: the pretty Miss King and Mrs. Chapin's piazza, which was exceedingly attractive for a boarding-house. A girl was lounging in a hammock behind the vines, and another in a big piazza chair was reading aloud to her. "They must be old girls," thought Betty, "to seem so much at home." Then she remembered that Mrs.

Chapin had said hers would probably be an "all freshman house," and decided that they were friends from the same town.

Mrs. Chapin presently appeared, to show Betty to her room and explain that her roommate would not arrive till the next morning. Betty dressed and then sat down to study for her French examination, which came next day; but before she had finished deciding which couch she preferred or where they could possibly put two desks and a tea-table, the bell rang for dinner.

This bid fair to be a silent and dismal meal. All the girls had come except Betty's roommate, and most of them, being freshmen, were in the depths of examinations and homesickness. But there was one shining exception, a very lively sophomore, who had waited till the last moment hoping to get an assignment on the campus, and then had come to Mrs. Chapin's in the place of a freshman who had failed in her examinations. 13

"She had six, poor thing!" explained the sophomore to Betty, who sat beside her. "And just think! She'd had a riding horse and a mahogany desk with a secret drawer sent on from home. Wish I could inherit them along with her room. Now, my name is Mary Brooks. Tell me yours, and I'll ask the girl on the other side and introduce you; and that will start the ball rolling."

These energetic measures succeeded much better than Mrs. Chapin's somewhat perfunctory remarks about the dry weather, and the whole table was soon talking busily. The two piazza girls proved to be sisters, Mary and Adelaide Rich, from Haddam, Connecticut. Betty decided that they were rather stupid and too inclined to stick together to be much fun. A tall, homely girl at the end of the table created a laugh by introducing herself as Miss Katherine Kittredge of Kankakee. 14

"The state is Illinois," she added, "but that spoils the alliteration."

"The what?" whispered Betty to the sophomore.

But Miss Brooks only laughed and said, "Wait till you've finished freshman English."

Betty's other neighbor was a pale, quiet little girl, with short hair and a drawl. Betty couldn't decide whether she meant to be "snippy" or was only shy and offish. After she had said that her name was Roberta Lewis and her home Philadelphia, Betty inquired politely whether she expected to like college.

"I expect to detest it," replied Miss Lewis slowly and distinctly, and spoke not another word during dinner. But though she ate busily and kept her eyes on her plate, Betty was sure that she heard all that was said, and would have liked to join in, only she didn't know how.

The one really beautiful girl at the table was Miss Eleanor Watson. Her complexion was the daintiest pink and white, her black hair waved softly under the big hat which she had not stopped to take off, and her hazel eyes were plaintive one moment and sparkling the next, as her mood changed. She talked a good deal and very well, and it was hard to realize that she was only sixteen and a freshman. She had fitted for college at a big preparatory school in the east, and so, although she happened to be the only Denver girl in college, she had a great many friends in the upper classes and appeared to know quite as much about college customs as Miss Brooks. All this impressed Betty, who admired beauty and pretty clothes immensely. She resolved to have Eleanor Watson for a friend if she could, and was pleased when Miss Watson inquired how many examinations she had, and suggested that they would probably be in the same divisions, since their names both began with W. 15

The remaining girl at Mrs. Chapin's table was not particularly striking. She had a great mass of golden brown hair, which she wore coiled loosely in her neck. Her keen grey eyes looked the world straight in the face, and her turned-up nose and the dimple in her chin gave her a merry, cheerful air. She did not talk much, and not at all about herself, but she gave the impression of being a thoroughly nice, bright, capable girl. Her name was Rachel Morrison. 16

After dinner Betty was starting up-stairs when Mary Brooks called her back. "Won't you walk over to the campus with me, little girl?" she asked. "I have one or two errands. Oh no, you don't need a hat. You never do here."

So they wandered off bareheaded in the moonlight, which made the elm-shaded streets look prettier than ever. On the dusky campus girls strolled about in devoted pairs and sociable quartettes. On the piazza of one of the dwelling-houses somebody was singing a fascinating little Scotch ballad with a tinkling mandolin accompaniment.

"Must be Dorothy King," said the sophomore. "I thought she wouldn't come till eight. Most people don't."

"Oh!" exclaimed Betty, "I know her!" And she related her adventure at the station.

"That's so," said Miss Brooks. "I'd forgotten. She's awfully popular, you know, and very prominent,—belongs to no end of societies. But whatever the Young Women's Christian Association wants of her she does. You know they appoint girls to meet freshmen and help them find boarding-places and so on. She's evidently on that committee. Let's stop and say hello to her." 17

Betty, hanging behind, was amazed to see the commotion caused by Miss Brooks's arrival. The song stopped abruptly, the mandolin slammed to the floor, and performers and audience fell as one woman upon the newcomer.

"Why, Mary Brooks! When did you come?"

"Did you get a room, honey?"

"Oh, Mary, where did you put on that lovely tan?"

"Mary, is Sarah coming back, do you know?"

"Hush up, girls, and let her tell us!"

It was like the station, only more so, and oh, it was nice-if you were in it. Mary answered some of their questions and then looked around for Betty. "I've lost a freshman," she said, "Here, Miss Wales, come up and sit on the railing. She knows you, Dottie, and she wants to hear you sing. These others are some of the Hilton House, Miss Wales. Please consider yourselves introduced. Now, Dottie."

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So the little Scotch ballad began again. Presently some one else came up, there were more effusive greetings, and then another song or two, after which Miss King and "some of the Hilton House" declared that they simply must go and unpack. Betty, suddenly remembering her trunk and her sister, decided to let Miss Brooks do her other "errands" alone, and found her way back to Mrs. Chapin's. Sure enough, Nan was sitting on the piazza.

"Hello, little sister," she called gaily as Betty hurried up the walk. "Don't say you're sorry to be late. It's the worst possible thing for little freshmen to mope round waiting for people, and I'm glad you had the sense not to. Your trunk's come, but if you're not too tired let's go up and see Ethel Hale before we unpack it."

Ethel Hale had spent a whole summer with Nan, and Betty beat her at tennis and called her Ethel, and she called Betty little sister, just as Nan did. But here she was a member of the faculty. "I shall never dare come near her after you leave," said Betty. Just as she said it the door of the room opened-Nan had explained that it was a freshman trick to ring front door-bells-and Ethel rushed out and dragged them in.

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"Miss Blaine and Miss Mills are here," she said.

Betty gathered from the subsequent conversation that Miss Blaine and Miss Mills were also members of the faculty; and they were. But they had just come in from a horseback ride, and they sat in rather disheveled attitudes, eating taffy out of a paper bag, and their conversation was very amusing and perfectly intelligible, even to a freshman who had still an examination to pass.

"I didn't suppose the faculty ever acted like that. Why, they're just like other people," declared Betty, as she tumbled into bed a little later.

"They're exactly like other people," returned Nan sagely, from the closet where she was hanging up skirts. "Just remember that and you'll have a lot nicer time with them."

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So ended Betty's first day at college. Nan finished unpacking, and then sat for a long time by the window. Betty loved Nan, but Nan in return worshiped Betty. They might call her the clever Miss Wales if they liked; she would gladly have given all her vaunted brains for the fascinating little ways that made Betty friends so quickly and for the power to take life in Betty's free-and-easy fashion. "Oh, I hope she'll like it!" she thought. "I hope she'll be popular with the girls. I don't want her to have to work so hard for all she gets. I wouldn't exchange my course for hers, but I want hers to be the other kind."

Betty was sound asleep.

CHAPTER II BEGINNINGS

21

The next morning it poured.

"Of course," said Eleanor Watson impressively at breakfast. "It always does the first day of college. They call it the freshman rain."

"Let's all go down to chapel together," suggested Rachel Morrison.

"You're going to order carriages, of course?" inquired Roberta Lewis stiffly.

"Hurrah! Another joke for the grind-book," shrieked Mary Brooks. Then she noticed Roberta's expression of abject terror. "Never mind, Miss Lewis," she said kindly. "It's really an honor to be in the grind-book, but I promise not to tell if you'd rather I wouldn't. Won't you show that you forgive me by coming down to college under my umbrella?"

"She can't. She's coming with me," answered Nan promptly. "I demand the right to first choice."

"Very well, I yield," said Mary, "because when you go my sovereignty will be undisputed. You'll have to hurry, children."

22

So the little procession of rain-coats flapping out from under dripping umbrellas started briskly off to join the longer procession that was converging from every direction toward College Hall. Roberta and Nan were ahead under one umbrella, chatting like old friends.

"I suppose she doesn't think we're worth talking to," said Rachel Morrison, who came next with Betty.

"Probably she's one of the kind that's always been around with grown people and isn't used to girls," suggested Betty.

"Perhaps," agreed Rachel. "Anyhow, I can't get a word out of her. She just sits by her window and reads magazines and looks bored to death when Katherine or I go in to speak to her. Isn't Katherine jolly? I'm so glad I don't room alone."

"Are you?" asked Betty. "I can tell better after my roommate comes. Her name sounds quite nice. It's Helen Chase Adams, and she lives somewhere up in New Hampshire. Did you ever see so many girls?"

There seemed to be no end to them. They jostled one another good-naturedly in the narrow halls, swarmed, chattering, up the stairs, and filled the chapel to overflowing. It was very exciting to see the whole college together. Even Roberta Lewis condescended to look interested when Mary Brooks showed her the faculty rows, and pointed out the college beauty, the captain of the sophomore basket-ball team, and other local celebrities.

"That's evidently a freshman," declared Eleanor Watson, who was in the row behind with Katherine and the Riches. "Doesn't she look lost and unhappy?" And she pointed out a tall, near-sighted girl who was stalking dejectedly down the middle aisle.

A vivacious little brunette was sitting next Eleanor. "Pardon me," she said sweetly, "but did you mean the girl who's gone around to the side and is now being received with open arms by most of the faculty? She's a senior, the brightest girl in the class, we think, and she's sad because she's lost her trunk and broken her glasses. You're a freshman, I judge?"

"Thank you, yes," gasped Eleanor with as much dignity as she could muster, and resolved to keep her guesses to herself in future.

The chapel service was short but very beautiful. The president's kindly welcome to the entering class, "which bids fair to be the largest in the history of the institution," completely upset the composure of some of the aforesaid class, and a good many moist handkerchiefs grew moister, and red eyes redder during the prayer. But on the whole the class of 190- conducted itself with commendable propriety and discretion on this its first official appearance in the college world.

"I'm glad I don't have that French exam.," said Katherine, as she and Betty picked out their umbrellas from a great, moist heap in the corner of the hall. "Come down with me and have a soda."

Betty shook her head. "I can't. Nan asked me to go with her and Eth-I mean Miss Hale, but I simply must study." And she hurried off to begin.

At the entrance to the campus Eleanor Watson overtook her. "Let's go home and study together," she proposed. "I can't see why they left this French till so late in the week, when everybody has it. What did you come to college for?" she asked abruptly.

Betty thought a minute. "Why, for the fun of it, I guess," she said.

"So did I. I think we've stumbled into a pretty serious-minded crowd at Mrs. Chapin's, don't you?"

"I like Miss Morrison awfully well," objected Betty, "and I shouldn't call Katherine Kittredge of Kankakee serious-minded, but—"

"Oh, perhaps not," interrupted Eleanor. "Anyhow I know a lot of fine girls outside, and you must meet them. It's very important to have a lot of friends up here. If you want to amount to anything, you can't just stick with the girls in your own house."

"Oh, no," said Betty meekly, awed by the display of worldly wisdom. "It will be lovely to meet your friends. Let's study on the piazza. I'll get my books."

"Wait a minute," said Eleanor quickly. "I want to tell you something. I have at least two conditions already, and if I don't pass this French I don't suppose I can possibly stay."

"But you don't act frightened a bit," protested Betty in awestruck tones.

"I am," returned Eleanor in a queer, husky voice. "I could never show my face again if I failed." She brushed the tears out of her eyes. "Now go and get your books," she said calmly, "and don't ever mention the subject again. I had to tell somebody."

Betty was back in a moment, looking as if she had seen a ghost. "She's come," she gasped, "and she's crying like everything."

"Who?" inquired Eleanor coolly.

"My roommate-Helen Chase Adams."

"What did you do?"

"I didn't say a word-just grabbed up my books and ran. Let's study till Nan comes and then she'll settle it."

It was almost one o'clock before Nan appeared. She tossed a box of candy to the weary students, and gave a lively account of her morning, which had included a second breakfast, three strawberry-ices, a walk to the bridge, half a dozen calls on the campus, and a plunge in the swimming-tank.

"I didn't dream I knew so many people here," she said. "But now I've seen them all and they've

promised to call on you, Betty, and I must go to-night."

"Not unless she stops crying," said Betty firmly, and told her story.

"Go up and ask her to come down-town with us and have a lunch at Holmes's," suggested Nan.

"Oh you come too," begged Betty, and Nan, amused at the distress of her usually self-reliant sister, obediently led the way up-stairs.

"Come in," called a tremulous voice.

Helen Chase Adams had stopped crying, at least temporarily, and was sitting in a pale and forlorn heap on one of the beds. She jumped up when she saw her visitors. "I thought it was the man with my trunk," she said. "Is one of you my roommate? Which one?"

"What a nice speech, Miss Adams!" said Nan heartily. "I've been hoping ever since I came that somebody would take me for a freshman. But this is Betty, who's to room with you. Now will you come down-town to lunch with us?"

Betty was very quiet on the way down-town. Her roommate was a bitter disappointment. She had imagined a pretty girl like Eleanor Watson, or a jolly one like Katherine and Rachel; and here was this homely little thing with an awkward walk, a piping voice, and short skirts. "She'll just spoil everything," thought Betty resentfully, "and it's a mean, hateful shame." Over the creamed chicken, which Nan ordered because it was Holmes's "specialty," just as strawberry-ice was Cuyler's, the situation began to look a little more cheerful. Helen Chase Adams would certainly be an obliging roommate.

"Oh, I wouldn't think of touching the room till you get back from your French," she said eagerly. "Won't it be fun to fix it? Have you a lot of pretty things? I haven't much, I'm afraid. Oh, no, I don't care a bit which bed I have." Her shy, appealing manner and her evident desire to please would have disarmed a far more critical person than Betty, who, in spite of her love of "fine feathers" and a sort of superficial snobbishness, was at heart absolutely unworldly, and who took a naive interest in all badly dressed people because it was such fun to "plan them over." She applied this process immediately to her roommate.

"Her hat's on crooked," she reflected, "and her pug's in just the wrong place. Her shirt-waist needs pulling down in front and she sticks her head out when she talks. Otherwise she'd be rather cute. I hope she's the kind that will take suggestions without getting mad." And she hurried off to her French in a very amiable frame of mind.

Helen Chase Adams thanked Nan shyly for the luncheon, escaped from the terrors of a tête-à-tête with an unfamiliar grown-up on the plea of having to unpack, and curled up on the couch that Betty had not chosen, to think it over. The day had been full of surprises, but Betty was the culmination. Why had she come to college? She was distinctly pretty, she dressed well, and evidently liked what pretty girls call "a good time." In Helen Chase Adams's limited experience all pretty girls were stupid. The idea of seeing crowds of them in the college chapel, much less of rooming with one, had never entered her head. A college was a place for students. Would Miss Wales pass her examination? Would she learn her lessons? What would it be like to live with her day in and day out? Helen could not imagine-but she did not feel in the least like crying.

Just as the dinner-bell rang, Betty appeared, looking rather tired and pale. "Nan's gone," she announced. "She found she couldn't make connections except by leaving at half past five, so she met me down at the college. And just at the last minute she gave me the money to buy a chafing-dish. Wasn't that lovely? I know I should have cried and made a goose of myself, but after that-I beg your pardon-I haven't any sense." She stopped in confusion.

But Helen only laughed. "Go on," she said. "I don't mind now. I don't believe I'm going to be homesick any more, and if I am I'll do my best not to cry."

How the rest of that first week flew! Next day the freshman class list was read, and fortunately it included all the girls at Mrs. Chapin's. Then there were electives to choose, complicated schedules to see through, first recitations to find, books to buy or rent, rooms to arrange, and all sorts of bewildering odds and ends to attend to. Saturday came before any one was ready for it, bringing in its wake the freshman frolic, a jolly, informal dance in the gymnasium, at which the whole college appears, tagged with its name, and tries to get accustomed to the size of the entering class, preparatory to becoming acquainted with parts of it later on. To Betty's great delight Dorothy King met her in the hall of the Administration Building the day before and asked permission to take her to the frolic. At the gymnasium Miss King turned her over to a bewildering succession of partners, who asked her the stereotyped questions about liking college, having a pleasant boarding-place, and so on, tried more or less effectively to lead her through the crowd to the rather erratic music of one piano, and assured her that the freshman frolic was not at all like the other college dances. They all seemed very pleasant, but Betty felt sure she should never know them again. Nevertheless she enjoyed it all immensely and was almost sorry when the frolic was over and they adjourned to Dorothy's pretty single room in the Hilton House, where a few other upper-class girls had been invited to bring their freshmen for refreshments.

"Wasn't it fun?" said Betty to a fluffy-haired, dainty little girl who sat next her on Dorothy's couch.

"I don't think I should call it exactly fun," said the girl critically.

"Oh, I like meeting new people, and getting into a crowd of girls, and trying to dance with them," explained Betty.

"Yes, I liked it too," said the girl. She had an odd trick of lingering over the word she wished to distinguish. "I liked it because it was so queer. Everything's queer here, particularly roommates. Do you have one?"

Betty nodded. "Well, mine never made up her bed in her life before, and first she thought she couldn't, but her mother told her to take hold and see what a Madison could do with a bed—they're awfully proud of their old family—so she did; but it looks dreadfully messy yet, and it makes her late for chapel every single morning. Is yours anything like that?"

Betty laughed. "Oh, no," she said. "She's very orderly. Won't you come and see us?"

The little freshman promised. By that time the "plowed field" was ready—an obliging friend had stayed at home from the frolic to give it an early start—and they ate the creamy brown squares of candy with a marshmallow stuffed into each, and praised the cook and her wares until a bell rang and everybody jumped up and began saying good-bye at once except Betty, who had to be enlightened by the campus girls as to the dire meaning of the twenty-minutes-to-ten bell.

"Don't you keep the ten o'clock rule?" asked the fluffy-haired freshman curiously.

"Oh, yes," said Betty. "Why, we couldn't come to college if we didn't, could we?" And she wondered why some of the girls laughed.

"I've had a beautiful time," she said, when Miss King, who had come part way home with her, explained that she must turn back. "I hope that when I'm a junior I can do half as much for some little freshman as you have for me."

"That's a nice way to put it, Miss Wales," said Dorothy. "But don't wait till you're a junior to begin."

As Betty ran home, she reflected that she had not seen Helen dancing that evening. "Oh, Helen," she called, as she dashed into the room, "wasn't it fun? How many minutes before our light goes out? Do you know how to dance?"

Helen hesitated. "I—well—I know how, but I can't do it in a crowd. It's ten minutes of ten."

"Teach you before the sophomore reception," said Betty laconically, throwing a slipper into the closet with one hand and pulling out hairpins with the other. "What a pity that to-morrow's Sunday. We shall have to wait a whole day to begin."

CHAPTER III

DANCING LESSONS AND A CLASS-MEETING

The next morning Helen had gone for a walk with Katherine, and Betty was dressing for church, when Eleanor Watson knocked at the door. She looked prettier than ever in her long silk kimono, with its ruffles of soft lace and the great knot of pink ribbon at her throat.

"So you're going to church too," she said, dropping down among Betty's pillows. "I was hoping you'd stay and talk to me. Did you enjoy your frolic?"

"Yes, didn't you?" inquired Betty.

"I didn't go," returned Eleanor shortly.

"Oh, why not?" asked Betty so seriously that Eleanor laughed.

"Because the girl who asked me first was ill; and I wouldn't tag along with the little Brooks and the Riches and your fascinating roommate. Now don't say 'why not?' again, or I may hurt your feelings. Do you really like Miss Brooks?"

Betty hesitated. As a matter of fact she liked Mary Brooks very much, but she also admired Eleanor Watson and coveted her approval. "I like her well enough," she said slowly, and disappeared into the closet to get something she did not want and change the subject.

Eleanor laughed. "You're so polite," she said. "I wish I were. That is, I wish I could make people think I was, without my taking the trouble. Don't go to church."

"Helen and Katherine are coming back for me. You'd better go with us," urged Betty.

"Now that Kankakee person—" began Eleanor. The door opened suddenly and Katherine and Helen came in. Katherine, who had heard Eleanor's last remark, flushed but said nothing. Eleanor rose deliberately, smoothed the pillows she had been lying on, and walked slowly off, remarking over her shoulder, "In common politeness, knock before you come in."

"Or you may hear what I think of you," added Katherine wickedly, as Eleanor shut the door.

Helen looked perplexed. "Should I, Betty?" she asked, "when it's my own room."

"It's nicer," said Betty. "Nan and I do. How do you like our room, Katherine?"

"It's a beaut," said Katherine, taking the hint promptly. "I don't see how you ever fixed your desks and couches, and left so much space in the middle. Our room is like the aisle in a Chicago theatre. That Japanese screen is a peach and the water-color over your desk is another. Did you

buy back the chafing-dish?"

Betty laughed. She had amused the house by getting up before breakfast on the day after Nan left, in her haste to buy a chafing-dish. In the afternoon Rachel had suggested that a teakettle was really more essential to a college establishment, and they had gone down together to change it. But then had come Miss King's invitation to eat "plowed field" after the frolic; and the chafing-dish, appearing once more the be-all and end-all of existence, had finally replaced the teakettle.

"But we're going to have both," ventured Helen shyly.

"Oh yes," broke in Betty. "Isn't it fine of Helen to get it and make our tea-table so complete?" As a matter of fact Betty much preferred that the tea-table should be all her own; but Helen was so delighted with the idea of having a part in it, and so sure that she wanted a teakettle more than pillows for her couch, that Betty resolved not to mind the bare-looking bed, which marred the cozy effect of the room, and above all never to let Helen guess how she felt about the tea-table. "But next year you better believe I'm hoping for a single room," she confided to the little green lizard who sat on her inkstand and ogled her while she worked.

When church was over Katherine proposed a stroll around the campus before dinner. "I haven't found my bearings at all yet," she said. "Now which building is which?"

Betty pointed out the Hilton House proudly. "That's all I know," she said, "except these up here in front of course—the Main Building and Chapel, and Science and Music Halls."

"We know the gymnasium," suggested Helen, "and the Belden House, where we bought our screen, is one of the four in that row."

They found the Belden House, and picked out the Westcott by its name-plate, which, being new and shiny, was easy to read from a distance. Then Helen made a discovery. "Girls, there's water down there," she cried. Sure enough, behind the back fence and across a road was a pretty pond, with wooded banks and an island, which hid its further side from view.

"That must be the place they call Paradise," said Betty. "I've heard Nan speak of it. I thought it was this," and she pointed to a slimy pool about four yards across, below them on the back campus. "That's the only pond I'd noticed."

"Oh, no," declared Katherine. "I've heard my scientific roommate speak of that. It's called the Frog Pond and 'of it more anon,' as my already beloved Latin teacher occasionally remarks. To speak plainly, she has promised to let me help her catch her first frog."

They walked home through the apple orchard that occupied one corner of the back campus.

"It's not a very big campus, and not a bit dignified or imposing, but I like it," said Betty, as they came out on to the main drive again, and started toward the gateway.

"Nice and cozy to live with every day," added Katherine. Helen was too busy comparing the red-brick, homely reality with the shaded marble cloisters of her dreams, to say what she thought.

Betty's dancing class was a great success. With characteristic energy she organized it Monday morning. It appeared that while all the Chapin house girls could dance except Helen and Adelaide Rich, none of them could "lead" but Eleanor.

"And Miss King's friends said we freshmen ought to learn before the sophomore reception, particularly the tall ones; and most of us are tall," explained Betty.

"That's all right," interposed Eleanor, "but take my advice and don't learn. If you can't lead, the other girl always will; and the men say it ruins a girl's dancing."

"Who cares?" demanded Katherine boldly. "Imagine Betty or Miss Brooks trying to see over me and pull me around! I want to learn, for one—men or no men."

"So do I," said Rachel and Mary Rich together. "And I," drawled Roberta languidly.

"Oh well, if you're all set upon it, I'll play for you," said Eleanor graciously. She was secretly ashamed of the speech that Katherine had overheard the day before and bitterly regretted having antagonized the girls in the house, when she had meant only to keep them—all but Betty—at a respectful distance. She liked most of them personally, but she wished her friends to be of another type—girls from large schools like her own, who would have influence and a following from the first; girls with the qualities of leadership, who could control votes in class-meetings and push their little set to first place in all the organized activities of the college. Eleanor had said that she came to college for "fun," but "fun" to her meant power and prominence. She was a born politician, with a keen love of manœuvring and considerable tact and insight when she chose to exercise it. But inexperience and the ease with which she had "run" boarding-school affairs had made her over-confident. She saw now that she had indulged her fondness for sarcasm too far, and was ready to do a good deal to win back the admiration which she was sure the Chapin house girls had felt for her at first. She was particularly anxious to do this, as the freshman class-meeting was only a week off, and she wanted the votes of the house for the Hill School candidate for class-president.

So three evenings that week, in spite of her distaste for minor parts and bad pianos, she meekly drummed out waltzes and two-steps on Mrs. Chapin's rickety instrument for a long half hour after dinner, while Betty and Roberta—who danced beautifully and showed an unexpected aptitude in imparting her accomplishment—acted as head-masters, and the rest of the girls furnished the novices with the necessary variety of partners, practiced "leading," and incidentally got better acquainted. On Friday evening, as they sat in the parlor resting and discussing the

progress of their pupils and the appalling length of the Livy lesson for the next day, Eleanor broached the subject of the class-meeting.

"You know it's to-morrow at two," she said. "Aren't you excited?"

"It will be fun to see our class together," said Rachel. Nobody else seemed to take much interest in the subject.

"Well, of course," pursued Eleanor, "I'm particularly anxious about it because a dear friend of mine is going to be proposed for class president—Jean Eastman—you know her, Betty."

"Oh yes," cried Betty, enthusiastically. "She's that tall, dark girl who was with you yesterday at Cuyler's. She seemed lovely."

Eleanor nodded and got up from the piano stool. "I must go to work," she said, smiling cordially round the little group. "Tell them what a good president Jean will make, Betty. And don't one of you forget to come."

"She can be very nice when she wants to," said Katherine bluntly when Eleanor was well out of hearing.

"I think she's trying to make up for Sunday," said Betty. "Let's all vote for her friend."

The first class-meeting of 190- passed off with unwonted smoothness. The class before had forgotten that it is considered necessary for a corporate body to have a constitution; and the class before that had made itself famous by suggesting the addition of the "Woman's Home Monthly" to the magazines in the college reading-room. 190- avoided these and other absurdities. A constitution mysteriously appeared, drawn up in good and regular form, and was read and promptly adopted. Then Eleanor Watson nominated Jean Eastman for president. After she and the other nominees had stood in a blushing row on the platform to be inspected by their class, the voting began. Miss Eastman was declared elected on the first ballot, with exactly four votes more than the number necessary for a choice.

"I hope she'll remember that we did that," Katherine Kittredge leaned forward to say to Betty, who sat in the row ahead of her with the fluffy-haired freshman from the Hilton and her "queer" roommate.

That night there was a supper in Jean's honor at Holmes's, so Eleanor did not appear at Mrs. Chapin's dinner-table to be duly impressed with a sense of her obligations. "How did you like the class-meeting?" inquired Rachel, who had been for a long walk with a girl from her home town, and so had not seen the others.

"I thought it was all right myself," said Adelaide Rich, "but I walked home with a girl named Alford who was dreadfully disgusted. She said it was all cut and dried, and wanted to know who asked Eleanor Watson to write us a constitution. She said she hoped that hereafter we wouldn't sit around tamely and be run by any clique."

"Well, somebody must run us," said Betty consolingly. "Those girls know one another and the rest of us don't know any one well. I think it will all work around in time. They will have their turns first, that's all."

"Perhaps," admitted Adelaide doubtfully. Her pessimistic acquaintance had obtained a strong hold on her.

"And the next thing is the sophomore reception," said Rachel.

"And Mountain Day right after that," added Betty.

"What?" asked Helen and Roberta together.

"Is it possible that you don't know about Mountain Day, children?" asked Mary Brooks soberly. "Well, you've heard about the physical tests for the army and navy, haven't you? This is like those. If you pass your entrance examinations you are allowed a few weeks to recuperate, and then if you can climb the required mountain you can stay on in college."

"How very interesting!" drawled Roberta, who had some idea now how to take Mary's jibes. "Now, Betty, please tell us about it."

Betty explained that the day after the sophomore reception was a holiday, and that most of the girls seized the opportunity to take an all-day walk or drive into the country around Harding.

"Let's all ask our junior and senior friends about the nicest places to go," said Rachel, emphasizing "junior and senior" and looking at Mary. "Then we can make our plans, and engage a carriage if we want one. I should think there might be quite a rush."

"You should, should you?" jeered Mary. "My dear, every horse that can stand alone and every respectable vehicle was engaged weeks ago."

"No one has engaged our lower appendages," returned Katherine. "So if worse comes to worst, we are quite independent of liveries. Which of us are you going to take to the sophomore reception?"

"Roberta, of course," said Mary. "Didn't you know that Roberta and I have a crush on each other? A crush, my dears, in case you are wanting to know, is a warm and adoring friendship. Sorry, but I'm going out this evening."

"Has she really asked you, Roberta?" asked Betty.

"Yes," said Roberta.

"How nice! I'm going with a sophomore whose sister is a friend of Nan's."

"And Hester Gulick is going to take me—she's my friend from home," volunteered Rachel.

"I was asked to-day," added Helen. "After the class-meeting an awfully nice girl, a junior, came up here. She said there were so many of us that some of the juniors were going to help take us. Isn't it nice of them?"

Nobody spoke for a moment; then Katherine went on gaily. "And we other three have not yet been called and chosen, but I happen to know that it's because so many people want us, and nobody will give up. So don't the rest of you indulge in any crowing."

"By the way, Betty," said Rachel Morrison, "will you take some more dancing pupils? I was telling two girls who board down the street about our class and they said they wanted to learn before the reception and would much rather come here than go to that big class that two seniors have in the gym. But as they don't know you, they would insist on paying, just as they would at the other class."

Betty looked doubtfully at Roberta. "Shall we?" she said.

"I don't mind," answered Roberta, "if only you all promise not to tell my father. He wouldn't understand. Do you suppose Miss Watson would play?"

"If not, I will," said Mary Rich.

"And we could use the money for a house spread," added Betty, "since we all help to earn it."

"And christen the chafing-dish," put in Katherine.

"Good. Then I'll tell them—Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays," said Rachel; and the dinner-table dissolved.

CHAPTER IV WHOSE PHOTOGRAPH?

The dancing class went briskly on; so did the Livy class and the geometry, the English 1, the French required and the history elective. The freshmen were getting acquainted with one another now, and seldom confused their classmates with seniors or youthful members of the faculty. They no longer attempted to go out of chapel ahead of the seniors, or invaded the president's house in their frantic search for Science Hall or the Art Gallery. For October was fast wearing away. The hills about Harding showed flaming patches of scarlet, and it was time for the sophomore reception and Mountain Day. Betty was very much excited about the reception, but she felt also that a load would slip off her shoulders when it was over. She was anxious about the progress of the dancing pupils, who had increased to five, besides Helen and Adelaide, and for whom she felt a personal responsibility, because the Chapin house girls persisted in calling the class hers. And what would father say if they didn't get their money's worth? Then there was Helen's dress for the reception, which she was sure was a fright, but couldn't get up the courage to inquire about. And last and worst of all was the mysterious grind-book and Dorothy King's warning about father's telegram to the registrar. She had never mentioned the incident to anybody, but from certain annoying remarks that Mary Brooks let fall she was sure that Mary knew all about it and that the sophomores were planning to make telling use of it.

"How's your friend the registrar?" Mary would inquire solemnly every few days. And if Betty refused to answer she would say slyly, "Who met you at the station, did you tell me? Oh, only Dottie King?" until Betty almost decided to stop her by telling the whole story.

Two days before the reception she took Rachel and Katherine into her confidence about Helen's dress.

"You see if I could only look at it, maybe I could show her how to fix it up," she explained, "but I'm afraid to ask. I'm pretty sure she's sensitive about her looks and her clothes. I should want to be told if I was such a fright, but maybe she's happier without knowing."

"She can't help knowing if she stays here long," said Rachel.

"Why don't you get out your dress, and then perhaps she'll show hers," suggested Katherine.

"I could do that," assented Betty doubtfully. "I could find a place to mend, I guess. Chiffon tears so easily."

"Good idea," said Rachel heartily. "Try that, and then if she doesn't bite you'd better let things take their course. But it is too bad to have her go looking like a frump, after all the trouble we've taken with her dancing."

Betty went back to her room, sat down at her desk and began again at her Livy. "For I might as well finish this first," she thought; and it was half an hour before she shut the scarlet-covered book with a slam and announced somewhat ostentatiously that she had finished her Latin lesson.

"And now I must mend my dress for the reception," she went on consciously. "Mother is always

cautioning me not to wait till the last minute to fix things.”

“Did you look up all the constructions in the Livy?” asked Helen. Betty was so annoyingly quick about everything.

“No,” returned Betty cheerfully from the closet, where she was rummaging for her dress. “I shall guess at those. Why don’t you try it? Oh, dear! This is dreadfully mussed,” and she appeared in the closet door with a fluffy white skirt over her arm.

“How pretty!” exclaimed Helen, deserting her Livy to examine it. “Is it long?”

“Um-um,” said Betty taking a pin out of her mouth and hunting frantically for a microscopic rip. “Yes, it’s long, and it has a train. My brother Will persuaded mother to let me have one. Wasn’t he a brick?”

“Yes,” said Helen shortly, going back to her desk and opening her book again. Presently she hitched her chair around to face Betty. “Mine’s awfully short,” she said.

“Is it?” asked Betty politely.

There was a pause. Then, “Would you care to see it?” asked Helen.

Betty winked at the green lizard. “Yes indeed,” she said cordially. “Why don’t you try it on to be sure it’s all right? I’m going to put on mine in just a minute.”

She breathed a sigh of relief when she saw the dress. It was a simple white muslin. The sleeves were queer, the neck too high to be low and too low to be high, and the skirt ridiculously short. “But it might have been a lot worse,” reflected Betty. “If she’ll only fix it!”

“Wait a minute,” she said after she had duly admired it. “I’ll put mine on, and we’ll see how we both look dressed up.”

“You look like a regular princess out of a story-book,” said Helen solemnly, when Betty turned to her for inspection.

Betty laughed. “Oh, wait till to-morrow night,” she said. “My hair’s all mussed now. I wonder how you’d look with your hair low, Helen.”

Helen flushed and bit her lip. “I shan’t look anyhow in this horrid short dress,” she said.

“Then why don’t you make it longer, and lower in the neck?” inquired Betty impatiently. Helen was as conscientiously slow about making up her mind as she was about learning her Livy. “It’s hemmed, isn’t it? Anyhow you could piece it under the ruffle.”

“Do you suppose mamma would care?” said Helen dubiously. “Anyway I don’t believe I have time—only till to-morrow night.”

“Oh I’ll show you how,” Betty broke in eagerly. “And if your mother should object you could put it back, you know. You begin ripping out the hem, and then we’ll hang it.”

Helen Chase Adams proved to be a pains-taking and extremely slow sewer. Besides, she insisted on taking time off to learn her history and geometry, instead of “risking” them as Betty did and urged her to do. The result was that Betty had to refuse Mary Brooks’s invitation to “come down to the gym and dance the wax into that blooming floor” the next afternoon, and was tired and cross by the time she had done Helen’s hair low, hooked her into the transformed dress, and finished her own toilette. She had never thought to ask the name of Helen’s junior, and was surprised and pleased when Dorothy King appeared at their door. Dorothy’s amazement was undisguised.

“You’ll have to be costumer for our house plays next year, Miss Wales,” she said, while Betty blushed and contradicted all Helen’s explanations. “You’re coming on the campus, of course.”

“So virtue isn’t its only reward after all,” said Eleanor Watson, who had come in just in time to hear Miss King’s remark. “Helen Chase Adams isn’t exactly a vision of loveliness yet. She won’t be mistaken for the college beauty, but she’s vastly improved. I only wish anybody cared to take as much trouble for me.”

“Oh, Eleanor!” said Betty reproachfully. “As if any one could improve you!”

Eleanor’s evening dress was a pale yellow satin that brought out the brown lights in her hair and eyes and the gleaming whiteness of her shoulders. There were violets in her hair, which was piled high on her head, and more violets at her waist; and as she stood full in the light, smiling at Betty’s earnestness, Betty was sure she had never seen any one half so lovely.

“But I wish you wouldn’t be so sarcastic over Helen,” she went on stoutly. “She can’t help being such a freak.”

Eleanor yawned. “I was born sarcastic,” she said. “I wish Lil Day would hurry. Did you happen to notice that I cut three classes straight this morning?”

“No,” said Betty aghast. “Oh, Eleanor, how dare you when—” She stopped suddenly, remembering that Eleanor had asked her not to speak of the entrance conditions.

“When I have so much to make up already, you mean,” Eleanor went on complacently. “Oh, I shall manage somehow. Here they come.”

A few moments later the freshman and sophomore classes, with a sprinkling of juniors to make the numbers even, were gathered *en masse* in the big gymnasium. All the afternoon loyal

sophomores had toiled thither from the various campus houses, lugging palms, screens, portières and pillows. Inside another contingent had arranged these contributions, festooned the running-track with red and green bunting, risked their lives to fasten Japanese lanterns to the cross-beams, and disguised the apparatus against the walls with great branches of spruce and cedar, which still other merry, wind-blown damsels, driving a long-suffering horse, had deposited at intervals near the back door. By five o'clock it was finished and everybody, having assured everybody else that the gym never looked so well before, had gone home to dress for the evening. Now the lights softened what Mary Brooks called the "hidjous" greens of the freshman bunting, a band played sweet music behind the palms, and pretty girls in pretty gowns sat in couples on the divans that lined the walls, or waited in line to speak to the receiving party. This consisted of Jean Eastman and the sophomore president, who stood in front of the fireplace, where a line of ropes intended to be used in gym practice had been looped back and made the best sort of foundation for a green canopy over their heads. Ten of the prettiest sophomores acted as ushers, and four popular and much envied seniors presided at the frappé bowls in the four corners of the room.

"There's not much excitement about a manless dance, but it's a fascinating thing to watch," said Eleanor to her partner, as they stood in the running-track looking down at the dancers.

"I'm afraid you're blasé, Miss Watson," returned the sophomore. "Only seniors are allowed to dislike girl dances."

Eleanor laughed. "Well, I seem to be the only heretic present," she said. "They're certainly having a good time down there."

They certainly were. The novelty of the occasion appealed to the freshmen, and the more sophisticated sophomores were bound to make a reputation as gallant beaux. So although only half the freshman could dance at once and even then the floor was dreadfully crowded, and in spite of the fact that the only refreshment was the rather watery frappé which gave out early in the evening, 190-'s reception to 190- was voted a great success.

At nine o'clock the sophomore ushers began arranging the couples in a long line leading to the grind table, and Betty knew that her hour had come. The orchestra played a march, and as the girls walked past the table the sophomore officers presented each freshman with a small booklet bound in the freshman green, on the front cover of which, in letters of sophomore scarlet, was the cryptic legend: "Puzzle-name the girl." This was explained, however, by the inside, where appeared a small and rather cloudy blue-print, showing the back view of a girl in shirt-waist and short skirt, with a pile of books under her arm, and the inevitable "tam" on her head. On the opposite page was a facsimile telegraph blank, filled out to the registrar,

"Please meet my dear young daughter, who will arrive on Thursday by the 6:15, and oblige,

"Thomas —."

Everybody laughed, pushed her neighbors around for a back view, and asked the sophomores if the telegram had truly been sent, and if this was the real girl's picture. So no one noticed Betty's blushes except Mary Brooks, upon whom she vowed eternal vengeance. For she remembered how one afternoon the week before, she and Mary had started from the house together, and Mary, who said she was taking her camera down-town for a new film, had dropped behind on some pretext. Betty had been sure she heard the camera click, but Mary had grinned and told her not to be so vain of her back.

However, nobody recognized the picture. The few sophomores who knew anything about it were pledged to secrecy, as the grinds were never allowed to become too personal, and the freshmen treated the telegram as an amusing myth. In a few minutes every one was dancing again, and only too soon it was ten o'clock.

"Wasn't it fun?" said Betty enthusiastically, as she and Helen undressed.

"Oh yes," agreed Helen. "I never had such a good time in my life. But, do you know, Miss Watson says she was bored, and Roberta thought it was tiresome and the grind-book silly and impossible."

"Truth is stranger than fiction sometimes," said Betty sagely, smothering a laugh in the pillows.

She was asleep in five minutes, but Helen lay for a long while thinking over the exciting events of the evening. How she had dreaded it! At home she hated dances and never went if she could help it, because she was such a wall-flower. She had been afraid it would be the same here, but it wasn't. What a lovely time she had had! She could dance so well now, and Miss King's friends were so nice, and college was such a beautiful place, though it was so different from what she had expected.

Across the hall Roberta had lighted her student lamp and was sitting up to write an appreciative and very clever account of the evening to her cousin, who was reporter on a Boston paper and had made her promise to send him an occasional college item.

And Eleanor, still in the yellow satin, sat at her desk scribbling aimlessly on a pad of paper or staring at a clean sheet, which began, "My dear father." She had meant to write him that she was tired of college and wanted to come home at once; but somehow she couldn't begin. For she thought, "I can see him raise his eyebrows and smile and say, 'so you want to throw up the sponge, do you? I was under the impression that you had promised to stay out the year,' as he did to the private secretary who wouldn't sit up with him till three in the morning to write letters."

Finally she tore up "My dear father," and went to bed in the dark.

CHAPTER V

UP HILL-AND DOWN

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The next day was just the sort that everybody had been hoping for on Mountain Day,—crisp and clear and cool, with the inspiring tang in the air, the delicious warmth in the sunshine, and the soft haze over the hills, that belong to nothing but a New England October at its best. The Chapin house breakfast-table was unusually lively, for each girl wanted to tell what she thought about the reception and how she was going to spend Mountain Day; and nobody seemed anxious to listen to anybody's else story.

"Sh-sh," demanded Mary Brooks at last. "Now children, you've talked long enough. Run and get your lunch boxes and begin making your sandwiches. Mrs. Chapin wants us to finish by ten o'clock."

"Ten o'clock!" repeated Katherine. "Well, I should hope so. Our horse is ordered for nine."

"Going to be gone all day?" inquired Mary sweetly.

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"Of course," answered Katherine with dignity.

"Well, don't kill the poor beast," called Mary as she ran up-stairs for her box.

Mary was going off in a barge with the sophomore decorating committee, who wanted a good chance to congratulate and condole with one another over their Herculean labors and ultimate triumph of the day before. The Rich sisters had decided to spend the holiday with an aunt who lived twenty miles down the river; Eleanor had promised early in the fall to go out with a party of horseback riders; and Helen, whose pocketbook had been prematurely flattened to buy her teakettle, had decided to accept the invitation of a girl in her geometry division to join an economical walking party. This left Rachel, Katherine, Roberta and Betty, who had hired a horse and two-seated trap for the day, invited Alice Waite, Betty's little friend from the Hilton House, to join them, and were going to drive "over the notch."

"I haven't the least idea what a notch is like," said Katherine. "We don't have such things where I come from. But it sounds interesting."

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"Doesn't it?" assented Rachel absently, counting the ham sandwiches. "Do you suppose the hills are very steep, Betty?"

"Oh, I guess not. Anyhow Katherine and I told the man we were going there and wanted a sure-footed horse."

"Who's going to drive?" asked Roberta.

"Why, you, of course," said Katherine quickly. "You said you were used to driving."

"Oh, yes, I am," conceded Roberta hastily and wondered if she would better tell them any more. It was true that she was used to horses, but she had never conquered her fear of them, and they always found her out. It was a standing joke in the Lewis family that the steadiest horse put on airs and pranced for Roberta. Even old Tom, that her little cousins drove out alone—Roberta blushed as she remembered her experience with old Tom. But if the girls were depending on her—"Betty drives too," she said aloud. "She and I can take turns. Are you sure we have enough gingersnaps?"

Everybody laughed, for Roberta's fondness for gingersnaps had become proverbial. "Half a box apiece," said Rachel, "and it is understood that you are to have all you want even if the rest of us don't get any."

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When the horse arrived Roberta's last fear vanished. He was meekness personified. His head drooped sadly and his eyes were half shut. His fuzzy nose and large feet bespoke docile endurance, while the heavy trap to which he was harnessed would certainly discourage all latent tendencies to undue speed. Alice Waite, Rachel and Katherine climbed in behind, Betty and Roberta took the front seat, and they started at a jog trot down Meriden Place.

"Shall we go through Main Street?" asked Roberta. "He might be afraid of the electric cars."

"Afraid of nothing," said Betty decidedly. "Besides, Alice wants to stop at the grocery."

The "beastie," as Katherine called him, stood like a statue before Mr. Phelps's grocery and never so much as moved an eyelash when three trolley cars dashed by him in quick succession.

"What did you get?" asked Katherine, when Alice came out laden with bundles.

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"Olives—"

"Good! We forgot those."

"And bananas—"

"The very thing! We have grapes."

"And wafers and gingersnaps—"

Everybody laughed riotously. "What's the matter now?" inquired Alice, looking a little offended. Rachel explained.

"Well, if you have enough for the lunch," said Alice, "let's keep these out to eat when we feel hungry." And the box was accordingly stuffed between Betty and Roberta for safe keeping.

Down on the meadow road it was very warm. By the time they reached the ferry, the "beastie's" thick coat was dripping wet and he breathed hard.

"Ben drivin' pretty fast, hain't you?" asked the ferryman, patting the horse's hairy nose.

"I should think not," said Katherine indignantly. "Why, he walked most of the way."

"Wall, remember that there trap's very heavy," said the ferryman solemnly, as he shoved off.

Beyond the river the hills began. The "beastie" trailed slowly up them. Several times Roberta pulled him out to the side of the road to let more ambitious animals pass him.

"Do you suppose he's really tired?" she whispered to Betty, as they approached a particularly steep pitch. "He might back down."

"Girls," said Betty hastily, "I'm sick of sitting still, so I'm going to walk up this next hill. Any of you want to come?"

Relieved of his four passengers the horse still hung his head and lifted each clumsy foot with an effort.

"Oh, Roberta, there's a watering trough up here," called Betty from the top of the hill. "I'm sure that'll revive him."

By their united efforts they got the "beastie" up to the trough, which was most inconveniently located on a steep bank beside the road; and while Betty and Alice kept the back wheels of the trap level, Katherine unfastened the check-rein. To her horror, as the check dropped the bits came out of the horse's mouth.

"How funny," said Alice, "just like everything up here. Did you ever see a harness like that, Betty?" Betty left her post at the hind wheel and came around to investigate.

"Why he has two bits," she said. "Of course he couldn't go, poor creature. And see how thirsty he is!"

"Well, he's drunk enough now," said Roberta, "and you'll have to put the extra bits in again—that is, if you can. He'd trail his nose on the ground if he wasn't checked."

The "beastie" stood submissively while the bits were replaced and the check fastened. Then he chewed a handful of clover with avidity and went on again as dejectedly as ever. Presently they reached a long, level stretch of road and stopped in the shade of a big pine-tree for a consultation.

"Do you suppose this is the top?" asked Rachel.

Just then a merry tally-ho party of freshmen, tooting horns and singing, drew up beside them. "Is this the top of the notch?" asked Betty, waving her hand to some girls she knew.

"No, it's three miles further on," they called back. "Hurrah for 190-!"

"Well?" said Betty, who felt in no mood for cheering.

"Let's go back to that pretty grove two hills down and tie this apology for a horse to the fence and spend the rest of the day there," suggested Katherine.

Everybody agreed to this, and Roberta backed her steed round with a flourish.

"Now let's each have a gingersnap before we start down," she said. So the box was opened and passed. Roberta gathered the reins in one hand, clucked to the horse, and put her gingersnap into her mouth for the first bite. But she never got it, for without the slightest provocation the "beastie" gave a sudden spring forward, flopped his long tail over the reins, and started at a gallop down the road. Betty clung to the dashboard with one hand and tried to pluck off the obstructing tail with the other. Roberta, with the gingersnap still in her mouth, tugged desperately at the lines, and the back seat yelled "Whoa!" lustily, until Betty, having rearranged the tail and regained her seat, advised them to help pull instead. They had long since left the little grove behind, had dashed past half a dozen carriages, and were down on the level road near the ferry, when the "beastie" stopped as suddenly as he had started. Roberta deliberately removed the gingersnap from her mouth, handed the reins to Betty to avoid further interruption, and began to eat, while the rest of the party indulged in unseemly laughter at her expense.

"We've found out what that extra bit was for," said Rachel when the mirth had subsided, "and we can advise the liveryman that it doesn't work. But what are we going to do now?"

"Murder the liveryman," suggested Katherine.

"But the horse is sure-footed; he didn't lie," objected Alice so seriously that everybody burst out laughing again.

"He told the truth, but not the whole truth," said Rachel. "Next time we'll ask how many bits the horse has to wear and how it takes to hills. Now what can we do?"

"We can't go back to the woods, that's sure," said Katherine. "And it's too hot to stay down here. Let's go home and get rid of this sure-footed incubus, and then we can decide what to do next."

The ferryman greeted them cheerfully. "Back so soon?" he said. "Had your dinner?"

"Of course not," replied Katherine severely. "It's only twelve o'clock. We're just out for a morning drive. Do you remember saying that this horse was tired? Well, he brought us down the hills at about a mile a minute."

"Is that so!" declared the ferryman with a chuckle. "Scairt, were you? Why didn't you git them young Winsted fellers, that jest started up, to rescue yer? Might a ben quite a story."

"We didn't need rescuing, thank you," said Katherine. "Did you see any men?" she whispered to Betty.

Betty nodded. "Four, driving a span. They were awfully amused. Miss King was in another of the carriages," she added sadly. Then she caught sight of Roberta and began to laugh again. "You were so funny with that cookie in your mouth," she said. "Were you dreadfully frightened?"

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"No," said Roberta, with a guilty blush. "I always expect something to happen. Horses are such uncertain creatures."

They drove back through the meadows at a moderate pace, deposited the horse and a certified opinion of him with an apologetic liveryman, and carried their lunch down to Paradise. "For it's as pretty as any place and near, and we're all hungry," Alice said.

Paradise was deserted, for the girls had preferred to range further afield on Mountain Day. So the five freshmen chose two boats, rowed up stream without misadventure, spread out their luncheon on a grassy knoll, and ate, talked, and read till dinner time. As they crossed the campus, they met parties of dusty, disheveled pedestrians, laden with purple asters and autumn branches. A barge stopped at the gateway to deposit the campus contingent of the sophomore decorating committee, and in front of the various dwelling-houses empty buckboards, surreys and express wagons, waiting to be called for, showed that the holiday was over.

"I don't think our first Mountain Day has been so bad after all, in spite of that dreadful horse," said Rachel.

74

"So much pleasant variety about it," added Katherine.

"Let's not tell about the runaway," said Alice who hated to be teased.

"But Miss King saw us," expostulated Betty, "and you can trust Mary Brooks to know all about it."

When Mary, who was late in dressing, entered the dining-room, she gave a theatrical cry of joy. "I'm so glad you're all safe," she said. "And how about that cookie, Roberta?"

"I'm sorry, but it's gone. They're all gone," said Roberta coolly. "Now you might as well tell us how you knew."

"Knew!" repeated Mary scornfully. "The whole college knows by this time. We were lunching on the notch road, near the top, when four Winsted men came up, and asked if they might join us. They knew most of us. So we said yes, if they'd brought any candy, and they told us a strange story about five girls—very young girls, they said," interpolated Mary emphatically, "that they'd seen dashing down the notch. One was trying to eat a cookie, and another was pulling the horse's tail, and the rest were screaming at the top of their lungs, so naturally the horse was frightened to death. Pretty soon three carriage loads of juniors came along and they confirmed the awful news and gave us the names of the victims, and you can imagine how I felt. The men want to meet you, but I told them they couldn't because of course you'd be drowned in the river."

75

"I hope you'll relieve their minds the next time they come to see you," said Katherine. "Are they the youths who monopolize our piazza every Wednesday and Saturday afternoon?"

"Two of them help occasionally."

Katherine winked meaningly at the rest of the Mountain Day party. "We'll be there," she said, "though it goes against my conscience to receive calls from such untruthful young gentlemen."

The next Saturday afternoon Betty and Katherine established themselves ostentatiously on the front piazza to await the arrival of Mary's callers, Rachel had gone to play basket-ball, and Roberta had refused to conspire against Mary's peace of mind, particularly since the plot might involve having to talk to a man. Promptly at three o'clock two gentlemen arrived.

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"Miss Brooks is that sorry, but she had to go out," announced the maid in tones plainly audible to the two eavesdroppers. "Would you please to come back at four?"

Katherine and Betty exchanged disappointed glances. "Checked again. She's too much for us," murmured Katherine. "Shall we wait?"

"And is Miss Wales in—Miss Betty Wales?" pursued the spokesman, after a slight pause.

The maid looked severely at the occupants of the piazza. "Yes, sor, you can see that yoursilf," she said and abruptly withdrew.

The man laughed and came quickly toward Betty, who had risen to meet him. "I'm John Parsons," he said. "I roomed with your brother at Andover. He told me you were here and asked me to call. Didn't he write to you too? Miss Brooks promised to present me, but as she isn't in—"

"Oh, yes, Will wrote, and I'm very glad to meet you, Mr. Parsons," Betty broke in. "Only I didn't know you were—I mean I didn't know that Miss Brooks's caller was you. Miss Kittredge, Mr. Parsons. Wasn't your friend going to wait?"

77

"Bob," called Mr. Parsons after the retreating figure of his companion, "come back and hear about the runaway. You're wanted."

It was fully half-past four when Messrs. Parsons and Hughes, remembering that they had another engagement, left their escorts by request at the gymnasium and returned from a pleasant walk through Paradise and the campus to Meriden Place, where a rather frigid reception awaited them. Betty and Katherine, having watched the finish of the basket-ball game, followed them, and spent the time before dinner in painting a poster which they hung conspicuously on Mary's door. On it a green dragon, recently adopted as freshman class animal, charged the sophomores' purple cow and waved a long and very curly tail in triumph. Underneath was written in large letters, "Quits. Who is going to the KΦ dance at Winsted?"

"I'm dreadfully afraid mother won't let me go though," said Betty as they hammered in the pins with Helen's paper-weight. "And anyhow it's not for three whole weeks." 78

When the drawing was securely fastened, Betty surveyed it doubtfully. "I wonder if we'd better take it down," she said at last. "I don't believe it's very dignified. I'm afraid I oughtn't to have asked Mr. Parsons to call his friend back, but I did so want to meet both of them and crow over Mary. And it was they who suggested the walk. Katherine, do you mind if we take this down?"

"Why, no, if you don't want to leave it," said Katherine looking puzzled. "I'm afraid Mr. Hughes didn't have a very good time. Men aren't my long suit. But otherwise I think we did this up brown."

Just then Eleanor came up, and Katherine gave her an enthusiastic account of the afternoon's adventure. Betty was silent. Presently she asked, "Girls, what is a back row reputation?"

"I don't know. Why?" asked Eleanor.

"Well, you know I stopped at the college, Katherine, to get my history paper back. Miss Ellis looked hard at me when I went in and stammered out what I wanted. She hunted up the paper and gave it to me and then she said, 'With which division do you recite, Miss Wales?' I told her at ten, and she looked at me hard again and said, 'You have been present in class twelve times and I've never noticed you. Don't acquire a back row reputation, Miss Wales. Good-day,' and I can tell you I backed out in a hurry." 79

"I suppose she means that we sit on the back rows when we don't know the lesson," said Helen who had joined the group.

"I see," said Betty. "And do you suppose the faculty notice such things as that and comment on them to one another?"

"Of course," said Eleanor wisely. "They size us up right off. So does our class, and the upper class girls."

"Gracious!" said Betty. "I wish I hadn't promised to go to a spread on the campus to-night. I wish— What a nuisance so many reputations are!" And she crumpled the purple cow and the green dragon into a shapeless wad and threw it at Rachel, who was coming up-stairs swinging her gym shoes by their strings.

CHAPTER VI

LETTERS HOME

80

Betty was cross and "just a tiny speck homesick," so she confided to the green lizard. Nothing interesting had happened since she could remember, and it had rained steadily for four days. Mr. Parsons, who played right tackle on the Winsted team, had written that he was laid up with a lame shoulder, which, greatly to his regret, would prevent his taking Betty to his fraternity dance. Helen was toiling on a "lit." paper with a zealous industry which got her up at distressingly early hours in the morning, and was "enough to mad a saint," according to her exasperated roommate, whose own brief effusion on the same subject had been hastily composed in one evening and lay neatly copied in her desk, ready to be handed in at the proper time. Moreover, "gym" had begun and Betty had had the misfortune to be assigned to a class that came right in the middle of the afternoon.

"It's a shame," she grumbled, fishing out her fountain pen which had fallen off her desk and rolled under the bureau. "I shall change my lit. to afternoon—that's only two afternoons spoiled instead of four—and then tell Miss Andrews that I have a conflict. Haven't you finished that everlasting paper?" 81

"No," said Helen meekly. "I'm sorry that I'm so slow. I'll go out if you want to have the girls in here."

"Oh no," called Betty savagely, dashing out into the hall. Eleanor's door was ornamented with a large sign which read, "Busy. Don't disturb." But the door was half-way open, and in the dusky room, lighted, as Eleanor liked to have it, by candles in old-fashioned brass sticks, Eleanor sat on a pile of cushions in the corner, strumming softly on her guitar.

"Come in," she called. "I put that up in case I wanted to study later. Finished your lit. paper?"

Betty nodded. "It's awfully short."

"I'm going to do mine to-night-that and a little matter of Livy and French and-let me see-Bible-no, elocution."

"Can you?" asked Betty admiringly.

"I'm not sure till I've tried. I've been meditating asking your roommate to do the paper. Would you?"

"No," said Betty so emphatically that Eleanor stopped playing and looked at her curiously.

"Why not? Do you think it's wrong to exchange her industry for my dollars?"

Betty considered. She still admired Eleanor, but she had learned her limitations. Her beauty wove a spell about all that she did, and she was very clever and phenomenally quick when she cared to apply herself. But she cared so seldom, roused herself only when she could gain prestige, when there was something to manipulate, to manage. And apparently she was not even to be trusted. Still, what was the use of quarreling with her about honor and fair play? To Betty in her present mood it seemed a mere waste of time and energy.

"Well, for one reason," she said at last, "Helen hasn't her own paper done yet, and for another I don't think she writes as well as you probably do;" and she rose to go.

"That was a joke, Bettina," Eleanor called after her. "I am truly going to work now-this very instant. Come back at ten and have black coffee with me."

Betty went on without answering to Rachel's room. "Come in," chorused three cheerful voices.

"No, go get your lit. paper first. We're reading choice selections," added Katherine.

"She means she is," corrected Rachel, handing Betty a pillow. "You look cross, Betty."

"I am," said Betty savagely, recounting a few of her woes. "What can we do? I came to be amused."

"In a Miracle play of this type—" began Katherine, and stopped to dodge a pillow. "But it is amusing, Betty."

"I'm afraid it will amuse Miss Mills, if the rest is anything like what you read," said Rachel with a reminiscent smile. "What are you doing, Roberta?"

"Writing home," drawled Roberta, without looking up from her paper.

"Well, you needn't shake your fountain pen over me, if you are," said Katherine. "I also owe my honored parents a letter, but I've about made up my mind never to write to them again. Listen to this, will you." She rummaged in her desk for a minute. "Here it is."

"My dear daughter'-he only begins that way when he's fussed. I always know how he's feeling when I see whether it's 'daughter' or 'K.' 'My dear daughter:-Your interesting letter of the 12th inst. was received and I enclose a check, which I hope will last for some weeks.' ('I'm sorry to say it's nearly gone already," interpolated Katherine.) "'Your mother and I enjoyed the account of the dance you attended in the gymnasium, of the candy pull which Mrs. Chapin so kindly arranged for her roomers, and the game of hockey that ended so disastrously for one of your friends. We are glad that you attended the Morality play of 'Everyman,' though we are at a loss to know what you mean by the 'peanut gallery.' However it occurs to us that with your afternoon gymnasium class, your recitations, which, as I understand it, fully engage your mornings, and all these diversions in one week, you could have spent but little time in the study of your lessons. Do not forget that these years should be devoted to a serious preparation for the multifarious duties of life, and do not neglect the rich opportunities which I am proud to be able to give you. The Wetherbees have—' Oh well, the rest of it is just Kankakee news," said Katherine, folding the letter and putting it back in her desk. "But isn't that first bit lovely? Why, I racked my brain till it ached, positively ached, thinking of interesting things to say in that letter, and now because I didn't mention that I'd worked three solid hours on my German every day that week and stood in line at the library for an hour to get hold of Bryce's American Commonwealth, I receive this pathetic appeal to my better self."

"How poetic you're getting," laughed Betty. "Do you know it's awfully funny, but I got a letter something like that too. Only mine was from Nan, and it just said she hoped I was remembering to avoid low grades and conditions, as they were a great bother. She said she wanted me to have a good time, but as there would be even more to do when I got on the campus, I ought not to fall into the habit of neglecting my work this year."

"Mine was from Aunt Susan," chimed in Rachel. "She said she didn't see when I could do any studying except late at night, and she hoped I wasn't being so foolish as to undermine my health and ruin my complexion for the sake of a few girlish pleasures. Isn't that nice-girlish pleasures? She put in a five dollar bill, though I couldn't see why she should, considering her sentiments."

Roberta put the cap on to her fountain pen and propped it carefully against an adjacent pillow. "I've just answered mine," she said, sorting the sheets in her lap with a satisfied smile.

"Did you get one, too? What did you say?" demanded Betty.

"The whole truth," replied Roberta languidly. "It took eight pages and I hope he'll enjoy it."

"I say," cried Katherine excitedly. "That's a great idea. Let's try it."

"And read them to one another afterward," added Rachel. "They might be more entertaining than your lit. paper."

"May I borrow some paper?" asked Betty. "I'm hoping Helen will finish to-night if I let her alone."

Roberta helped herself to a book from the shelves and an apple from the table, and the rest settled themselves to their epistolary labors. Except for the scratching of Betty's pen, and an occasional exclamation of pleasure or perplexity from one of the scribes, the room was perfectly still. Betty had just asked for an envelope and Katherine was numbering her pages when Mary Brooks knocked at the door.

"What on earth are you girls doing?" she inquired blandly, selecting the biggest apple in the dish and appropriating the Morris chair, which Katherine had temporarily vacated. "I haven't heard a sound in here since nine o'clock. I began to think that Helen had come in and blown out the gas again by mistake and you were all asphyxiated."

Everybody laughed at the remembrance of a recent occasion when Helen had absent-mindedly blown out the gas while Betty was saying her prayers.

"It wasn't so funny at the time," said Betty ruefully. "Suppose she'd gone to sleep without remembering. We've been writing home, Mary," she said, turning to the newcomer, "and now we're going to read the letters, and we've got to hurry, for it's almost ten. Roberta, you begin."

"Oh no," said Roberta, looking distressed.

"I wish somebody would tell me what this is all about first," put in Mary. Rachel explained, while Katherine and Betty persuaded Roberta to read her letter.

"It isn't fair," she protested, "when I wrote a real letter and you others were just doing it for fun."

"Go on, Roberta!" commanded Mary, and Roberta in sheer desperation seized her letter and began to read.

"DEAR PAPA:-I have been studying hard all the evening and it is now nearly bedtime, but I can at least begin a letter to you. To-day has been the fourth rainy day in succession and we have thoroughly appreciated the splendid opportunity for uninterrupted work. Yesterday morning-I think enough has happened in these two days to fill my letter-I was up at seven as usual. I stuck a selection from Browning into my mirror, as it was the basis of our elocution lesson, and nearly learned it while I dressed. Before chapel I completed my geometry preparation. This was fortunate, as I was called on to recite, the sixth proposition in book third being my assignment. The next hour I had no recitation, so I went to the library to do some reference work for my English class. Ten girls were already waiting for the same volume of the Century Dictionary that I wanted, so I couldn't get hold of it till nearly the end of the hour. I spent the intervening time on the Browning. I had Livy the next hour and was called on to translate. As I had spent several hours on the lesson the day before, I could do so. After the elocution recitation I went home to lunch. At quarter before two I began studying my history. At quarter before four I started for the gymnasium. At five I went to a tea which one of the girls was giving for her mother, so I felt obliged to go. I stayed only half an hour and cannot remember how I spent the half hour till dinner, so I presume it was wasted. I am afraid I am too much given to describing such unimportant pauses in the day's occupation and magnifying their length and the frivolous pleasure which we thoughtlessly derive from them.

"In the evening— Oh it all goes on like that," cried Roberta. "Just dull and stuffy and true to the facts. Some one else read."

"It's convincing," chuckled Mary. "Now Katherine."

Katherine's letter was an absurd mixture of sense and nonsense, in which she proved that she studied at least twelve hours out of the twenty-four. Rachel's was a sensible explanation of just how much time, or rather how little, a spread, a dance or a basket-ball game takes.

"That's what they don't understand," she said, "and they don't know either how fast we can go from one thing to another up here. Why, energy is in the air!"

Betty's letter, like her literature paper, was extremely short. "I couldn't think of much to say, if I told the truth," she explained, blushing. "I don't suppose I do study as much as I ought."

Mary had listened with an air of respectful attention to all the letters. When the last one was finished she rose hastily. "I must go back," she said. "I have a theme to write. I only dropped in to ask if that famous spread wasn't coming off soon."

"Oh, yes," said Betty. "Let's have it next week Wednesday. Is anything else going on then? I'll ask Eleanor and you see the Riches and Helen."

A few days later Mary appeared at the lunch table fairly bursting with importance. "Well," she said, beaming around the table. "What do you suppose has happened now? Really, Mrs. Chapin, you ought to be proud of us. We began to be famous before college opened—"

"What?" interrupted Eleanor.

"Is it possible you didn't know that?" inquired Mary. "Well, it's true nevertheless. And we were the heroines of Mountain Day, and now we're famous again."

"How?" demanded the table in a chorus.

Mary smiled enigmatically. "This time it is a literary sensation," she said.

"Is it Helen's paper?" hazarded Betty.

"Mine, of course," said Katherine. "Strange Miss Mills didn't mention it this morning when I met her at Cuyler's."

Mary waited until it was quiet again. "If you've quite finished guessing," she said, "I'll tell you. You remember the evening when I found four of you in Rachel and Katherine's room writing deceitful letters to your fond parents. Well, I had been racking my brains for weeks for a pleasing and original theme subject. You know you are supposed to spend two hours a week on this theme course, and I had spent two hours for four weeks in just thinking what to write. I'm not sure whether that counts at all and I didn't like to ask—it would have been so conspicuous. So I was in despair when I chanced upon your happy gathering and was saved. Miss Raymond read it in class to-day," concluded Mary triumphantly.

"You didn't put us into it—our letters!" gasped Roberta.

"Indeed I did," said Mary. "I put them all in, as nearly as I could remember them, and Miss Raymond read it in class, and made all sorts of clever comments about college customs and ideals and so on. I felt guilty, because I never had anything read before, and of course I didn't exactly write this because the letters were the main part of it. So after class I waited for Miss Raymond and explained how it was. She laughed and said that she was glad I had an eye for good material and that she supposed all authors made more or less use of their acquaintance, and when I went off she actually asked me to come and see her. My junior friends are hoping it will pull me into a society and I'm hoping it will avert a condition."

"Where is the theme?" asked Eleanor. "Won't you read it to us?"

"It's—why, I forgot the very best part of the whole story. Sallie Hill has it for the 'Argus.' She's the literary editor, you know, and she wants it for the next number. So you see you are famous.

"Why don't some of you elect this work?" asked Mary, when the excitement had somewhat subsided. "It's open to freshmen, and it's really great fun."

"I thought you said that you spent eight hours and were in despair—" began Eleanor.

"So I was," said Mary. "I declare I'd forgotten that. Well, anyhow I'm sure I shan't have any trouble now. I think I've learned how to go at it. Why, do you know, girls, I have an idea already. Not for a theme—something else. It concerns all of you—or most of you anyway."

"I should think you'd made enough use of us for the present," said Betty. "Why don't you try to make a few sophomores famous?"

"Oh it doesn't concern you that way. You are to— Oh wait till I get it started," said Mary vaguely; and absolutely refused to be more explicit.

CHAPTER VII

A DRAMATIC CHAPTER

The Chapin house girls decided not to spend the proceeds of the dancing class for an elaborate supper, as they had first intended, but to turn their "spread" into the common college type, where "plowed field" and chocolate made with condensed milk and boiling water are the chief refreshments, and light-hearted sociability ensures a good time for everybody.

"But do let's have tea too," Betty had proposed. "I hate the chocolate that the girls make, and I don't believe tea keeps many of us awake. Did I tell you that mother sent a big box of cheese crackers?"

The spread was to be in Betty's room, partly because she owned the only chafing-dish in the house, and partly because eighteen girls—the nine hostesses and the one guest asked by each—could get into it without uncomfortable crowding. Eleanor had lent her pile of floor cushions and her beloved candlesticks for the occasion, everybody had contributed cups and saucers. Betty and Helen had spent the afternoon "fixing up," and the room wore a very festive air when the girls dropped in after dinner to see if the preparations were complete.

"I think we ought to start the fudge before they come," said Betty, remembering the procedure at Miss King's party.

"Oh, no," protested Eleanor. "Half-past eight is early enough. Why, most of the fun of a spread is mixing the things together and taking turns tasting and stirring."

"It would be awkward to finish eating too early, when that's the only entertainment," suggested Rachel.

"Or the candy might give out before ten," added Mary Rich.

The majority ruled, and as some of the girls were late, and one had some very amusing blue-prints to exhibit, it was considerably after half-past eight before the fudge was started. At first it furnished plenty of excitement. Betty, who had been appointed chief fudge-maker, left it for a moment, and it took the opportunity to boil over. When it had settled down after this exploit, it refused to do anything but simmer. No amount of alcohol or of vigorous and persistent stirring

had any effect upon it, and Betty was in despair. But Eleanor, who happened to be in a gracious mood, came gallantly to the rescue. She quietly disappeared and returned in a moment, transformed into a gypsy street singer. She had pulled down her black hair and twisted a gay scarf around it. Over her shirt-waist she wore a little velvet jacket; and a short black skirt, a big red sash, an armful of bangles and bracelets, and the guitar hung over her shoulder, completed her disguise.

"Sing a lil'?" she asked, smiling persuasively and kissing her hand to the party.

Then she sat down on the pile of cushions and played and sang, first a quaint little folk-song suited to her part, and then one or two dashing popular airs, until the unaccommodating fudge was quite forgotten, except by Betty, who stirred and frowned, and examined the flame and tested the thickness of the rich brown liquid, quite unnoticed. Eleanor had just shrugged her shoulders and announced, "I no more sing, now," when somebody else knocked on the door, or rather pushed it open, and a grotesque figure slouched in.

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At least half of it was head, black and awful, with gruesome green features. Short, unjointed arms came out of its waist, with green claws dangling where the hands should have been; and below its short skirt flapped the tails of a swallow-tail coat. The girls were too much astonished to speak, as the creature advanced silently into the room, and without a word began dancing something that, as Katherine expressed it afterward, was a cross between a double-shuffle and a skirt-dance. When it had succeeded in reducing its audience to a state of abject and tearful mirth, the creature stopped suddenly, announced, "You've seen the Jabberwock," in sepulchral tones, and flopped on to the end of a couch, saying breathlessly, "Mary Brooks, please help me out of this. I'm suffocating."

"How did you do it, Miss Lewis?" inquired the stately senior, who was Mary's guest, wiping her eyes and gasping for breath as she spoke.

"It's perfectly simple," drawled Roberta indifferently. "The head is my black silk petticoat. I painted on the features, because the children like to have me do it at home, and it's convenient to be ready. The arms are a broom-handle, stuck through the sleeves of this old coat, which is buttoned around my waist."

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"And now you're going to do the Bandersnatch, aren't you?" inquired the senior craftily, perceiving that the other side of the petticoat was decorated with curious red spots.

"I-how did you-oh, no," said Roberta, blushing furiously, and stuffing the telltale petticoat under a convenient pillow. "I don't know why I brought the things for this. I never meant to do it up here. I-I hope you weren't bored. I just happened to think of it, and Eleanor couldn't sing forever, and that fudge—"

"That fudge won't cook," broke in Betty in tragic tones. "It doesn't thicken at all, and it's half-past nine this minute. What shall I do?"

Everybody crowded around the chafing-dish, giving advice and suggesting unfailing remedies. But none of them worked.

"And there's nothing else but tea and chocolate," wailed Adelaide.

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"But you can all have both," said Betty bravely, "and you've forgotten the crackers, Adelaide. I'll pass them while you and Katherine go for more cups."

"And you can send the fudge round to-morrow," suggested Mary Brooks consolingly. "It's quite the thing, you know. Don't imagine that your chafing-dish is the only one that's too slow for the ten-o'clock rule."

Betty insisted upon sitting up to finish the fudge, but she ended by getting up before breakfast the next morning to cook it on Mrs. Chapin's stove.

"Nobody seemed to care much about its being so slow, except me," she said to Helen, as they did it up in neat little bundles to be handed to the guests of the evening at chapel. "Weren't Eleanor and Roberta fine?"

"Yes," agreed Helen enthusiastically. "But isn't it queer that Roberta won't let us praise her? She seems to be ashamed of being able to be so funny."

Betty laughed. "That's Roberta," she said. "It will be months before she'll do it again, I'm afraid. I suppose she felt last night as if she had to do what she could for the honor of the house, so she came out of her shell."

101

"She told Rachel that she did it on your account. She said you looked as if you wanted to cry."

Betty flushed prettily. "How nice of her! I did want to cry. I felt as if I was to blame about the fudge. I wish I had a nice stunt like that of Eleanor's to come to people's rescue with."

"Were those what you call stunts?" inquired Helen earnestly. "I didn't know what they were, but they were fine."

"Why, Helen Chase Adams, do you mean that you've been in college two months and don't know what a stunt is—" began Betty, and stopped, blushing furiously and fearing that she had hurt Helen's feelings. For the reason why she did not know about stunts was obvious.

Helen took it very simply. "You know I'm not asked to things outside," she said, "and I don't seem to be around when the girls do things here. So why should I know?"

"No reason at all," said Betty decidedly. "They are just silly little parlor tricks anyway—most of them—not worth wasting time over. Do you know Miss Willis told us in English class that a great deal of slang originated in college, and she gave 'stunt' as an example. She said it had been used here ever so long and only a few years outside, in quite a different meaning. Isn't that queer?"

"Yes," said Helen indifferently. "She told my division too, but she didn't say what it meant here. I suppose she thought we'd all know."

Betty, stealing a glance at her, saw her wink back the tears. "She does care about the fun," thought Betty. "She cares as much as Rachel or I, or Eleanor even. And she is left out. It isn't a bit fair, but what's to be done about it?"

Being young and very happy herself, she speedily forgot all about the knotty problem of the unequal distribution of this world's goods, whether they be potatoes or fudge parties. Occasionally she remembered again, and gave Helen a helping hand, as she had done several times already. But college is much like the bigger world outside. The fittest survive on their own merits, and these must be obvious and well advertised, or they are in great danger of being overlooked. And it is safer in the long run to do one's own advertising and to begin early. Eleanor understood this, but she forgot or ignored the other rules of the game. Betty practiced it unconsciously, which is the proper method. Helen never mastered its application and succeeded in spite of it.

Several evenings after that one on which the fudge had refused to cook, Alice Waite was trying to learn her history lesson, and her "queer" roommate, who loved to get into her bed as well as she hated to make it, was trying to go to sleep—an operation rendered difficult by the fact that the girl next door was cracking butternuts with a marble paper-weight—when there was a soft tap on the door.

"Don't answer," begged the sleepy roommate.

"May be important," objected Alice, "but I won't let her stay. Come in!"

The door opened and a young gentleman in correct evening dress, with an ulster folded neatly over his arm, entered the room and gazed, smiling and silent, about him. He was under average height, slightly built, and had a boyish, pleasant face that fitted ill with his apparent occupation as house-breaker and disturber of damsels.

The roommate, who had sat up in bed with the intention of repelling whatever intruder threatened her rest, gave a shriek of mingled terror and indignation and disappeared under the bedclothes. Alice rose, with as much dignity as the three heavy volumes which she held in her lap, and which had to be untangled from her kimono, would permit. She moved the screen around her now hysterical roommate and turned fiercely upon the young gentleman.

"How dare you!" she demanded sternly. "Go!" And she stamped her foot somewhat ineffectively, since she had on her worsted bedroom slippers.

At this the young gentleman's smile broke into an unmistakably feminine giggle.

"Oh, you are so lovely!" he gurgled. "Don't cry, Miss Madison. It's not a real man. It's only I-Betty Wales."

"Betty!" gasped Alice. "Betty Wales, what are you doing? Is it really you?"

"Of course," said Betty calmly, pulling off her wig by way of further evidence, and sitting down with careful regard for her coattails in the nearest chair. "I hope," she added, "that I haven't really worried Miss Madison. Take the screen away, Alice, and see what she's doing."

"Oh, I'm all right now, thank you," said Miss Madison, pushing back the screen herself. "But you gave me an awful fright. What are you doing?"

"Why, we're going to give a play at our house Saturday," explained Betty, "and to-night was a dress rehearsal. I wanted to bring Alice a ticket, and I thought it would be fun to come in these clothes and frighten her; so I put on a skirt and a rain-coat and came along. I left my skirt in your entrance-way. Get it for me please, Alice, and I'll put it on before I send any one else into hysterics."

"Oh, not yet," begged Miss Madison. "I want to look at you. Please stand up and turn around, so I can have a back view."

Betty readjusted her wig and stood up for inspection.

"What's the play?" asked Alice.

Betty considered. "It's a secret, but I'll tell you to pay for giving you both such a scare. It's 'Sherlock Holmes.' Mary Brooks saw the real play in New York, and she wrote this, something like the real one, but different so we could do it. She could think up the plot beautifully but she wasn't good at conversation, so Katherine helped her, and it's fine."

"Is there a robbery?" inquired Alice.

"Oh, yes, diamonds."

"And a murder?"

"Well, a supposed murder. The audience thinks it is, but it isn't really. And there's a pretend fire too, just as there is in the real play."

"And who are you?"

"I'm the villain," said Betty. "I'm to have curling black mustaches and a fierce frown, and then you'd know without asking."

"I should think they'd have wanted you for the heroine," said Alice, who admired Betty immensely. 107

"Oh, no," demurred the villain. "Eleanor is leading lady, of course. She has three different costumes, and she looks like a queen in every one of them. Katherine is going to be Sherlock Holmes, and Adelaide Rich is Dr. Watson and-oh, I mustn't tell you any more, or Alice won't enjoy it Saturday."

"We had a little play here," said Miss Madison, "but it was tame beside this. Where did you get all the men's costumes?"

"Rented them, and the wigs and mustaches and pistols," and Betty explained about the dancing-school money which the house had voted to Roberta's project instead of to the spread.

"I wish I could act," said Alice. "I should love to be a man. But my mother wouldn't let me, so it's just as well that I'm a perfect stick at it."

"Roberta's father wouldn't let her either," said Betty, "but mother didn't mind, as long as it's only before a few girls. I presume she wouldn't like my coming over here and frightening you. But I honestly didn't think you'd be deceived." 108

"I'm so glad you came," said Miss Madison lying back luxuriously among her pillows. "Does the story of the play take place in the evening?"

"Yes, all of it. I'm dressed for the theatre, but I'm detained by the robbery."

"Then I have something I want to lend you. Alice, open the washstand drawer, please-no, the middle one-in that flat green box. Thank you. Your hat, sir villain," she went on, snapping open an opera hat and handing it to Betty with a flourish.

"How perfectly lovely!" exclaimed Betty. "But how in the world did you happen to have it?"

"Why, I stayed with my cousins for two weeks just before I came up here, and I found it in their guest-chamber bureau. It wasn't Cousin Tom's nor Uncle Dick's, and they didn't know whose it was; so they gave it to me, because I liked to play with it. Should you really like to use it?"

"Like it!" repeated Betty, shutting the hat and opening it again with a low bow. "Why it will be the cream of the whole performance. It would make the play go just of itself," and she put it on and studied the effect attentively in the mirror. 109

"It's rather large," said Alice. "If I were you, I'd just carry it."

"It is big," admitted Betty regretfully, "or at least it makes me look very small. But I can snap it a lot, and then put it on as I exit. Miss Madison, you'll come to the play of course. I hadn't but one ticket left, but after lending us this you're a privileged person."

"I hoped you'd ask me," said Miss Madison gratefully. "The play does sound so exciting. But that wasn't why I offered you the hat."

"Of course not, and it's only one reason why you are coming," said Betty tactfully. "Now Alice, you must bring in my skirt. I have to walk so slowly in all these things, and it must be almost ten."

When Sir Archibald Ames, villain, had been transformed into a demure little maiden with rumpled hair and a high, stiff collar showing above her rain-coat, Betty took her departure. A wave of literary and dramatic enthusiasm had inundated the Chapin house. The girls were constantly suggesting theme topics to one another-which unfortunately no one but Mary Brooks could use, at least until the next semester; for in the regular freshman English classes, subjects were always assigned. And they were planning theatre parties galore, to see Jefferson, Maude Adams, and half a dozen others if they came to Harding. Betty, who had a happy faculty of keeping her head just above such passing waves, smiled to herself as she hurried across the dark campus. 110

"Next week, when our play is over it will be something else," she thought. Rachel was already interested in basket-ball and had prospects of being chosen for the freshman class team. Eleanor had been practicing hard on her guitar, hoping to "make" the mandolin club; and was dreadfully disappointed at finding that according to a new rule freshmen were ineligible and that her entrance conditions would have excluded her in any case.

"So many things to do," sighed Betty, who had given up a hockey game that afternoon to study history. "I suppose we've got to choose," she added philosophically. "But I choose to be an all-around girl, like Dorothy King. I can't sing though. I wonder what my one talent is." 111

"Helen," she said, as she opened her door, "have you noticed that all college girls have one particular talent? I wonder what ours will turn out to be. See what I have for the play."

Helen, who looked tired and heavy-eyed, inspected the opera hat listlessly. "I think your talent is getting the things you want," she said, "and I guess I haven't any. It's quarter of ten."

"Sherlock Holmes" was quite as exciting as Miss Madison had anticipated. Most college plays, except the elaborate ones given in the gymnasium, which are carefully learned, costumed and rehearsed, and supervised by a committee from the faculty—are amusing little farces in one or two short scenes. "Sherlock Holmes," on the other hand, was a four act, blood-curdling melodrama, with three different stage settings, an abundance of pistol shots, a flash-light fire, shrieks and a fainting fit on the part of the heroine, the raiding of a robbers' den in the dénouement, and "a lot more excitement all through than there is in Mr. Gillette's play," as Mary modestly informed her caste. It was necessarily cruder, as it was far more ambitious, than the commoner sort of amateur play; but the audience, whether little freshmen who had seen few similar performances, or upper class girls who had seen a great many and so fully appreciated the novelty of this one, were wildly enthusiastic. Every actress, down to Helen, who made a very stiff and stilted "Buttons," and Rachel and Mary Rich who appeared in the robbers' den scene as Betty's female accomplices, and in the heroine's drawing-room as her wicked mother and her stupid maid respectively, was rapturously received; and Dr. Holmes and Sir Archibald, whose hat was decidedly the hit of the evening, were forced to come before the curtain. Finally, in response to repeated shouts for "author," Mary Brooks appeared, flushed and panting from her vigorous exertions as prompter, stage manager, and assistant dresser, and informed the audience that owing to the kindness of Mrs. Chapin there was lemon-ice in the dining-room, and would every one please go out there, so that this awful mess,—with a comprehensive wave of her hand toward the ruins of the robbers' den piled on top of the heroine's drawing-room furniture, which in turn had been a rearrangement of Dr. Holmes's study,—could be cleared up, and they could dance there later?

At this the audience again applauded, sighed to think that the play was over, and then joyfully adjourned to the dining-room to eat Mrs. Chapin's ice and examine the actors at close range. All these speedily appeared, except Helen, who had crept up-stairs quite unnoticed the moment her part was finished, and Eleanor, who, hunting up Betty, explained that she had a dreadful headache and begged Betty to look after her guests and not for anything to let them come up-stairs to find her. Betty, who was busily washing off her "fierce frown" at the time, sputtered a promise through the mixture of soap, water and vaseline she was using, delivered the message, assured herself that the guests were enjoying themselves, and forgot all about Eleanor until half-past nine when every one had gone and she came up to her room to find Helen in bed and apparently fast asleep, with her face hidden in the pillows.

"How queer," she thought. "She's had the blues for a week, but I thought she was all right this evening." Then, as her conjectures about Helen suggested Eleanor's headache, she tiptoed out to see if she could do anything for the prostrate heroine.

Eleanor's transom was dark and her door evidently locked, for it would not yield when Betty, anxious at getting no answer to her knocks, tried to open it. But when she called softly, "Eleanor, are you there? Can I do anything?" Eleanor answered crossly, "Please go away. I'm better, but I want to be let alone."

So, murmuring an apology, Betty went back to her own room, and as Helen seemed to be sound asleep, she saw no reason for making a nuisance of herself a second time, but considerably undressed in the dark and crept into bed as softly as possible.

If she had turned on her light, she would have discovered two telltale bits of evidence, for Helen had left a very moist handkerchief on her desk and another rolled into a damp, vindictive little wad on the chiffonier. It was not because she knew she had done her part badly that she had gone sobbing to bed, while the others ate lemon-ice and danced merrily down-stairs. Billy was a hard part; Mary Brooks had said so herself, and she had only taken it because when Roberta positively refused to act, there was no one else. Helen couldn't act, knew she couldn't, and didn't much care. But not to have any friends in all this big, beautiful college—that was a thing to make any one cry. It was bad enough not to be asked anywhere, but not to have any friends to invite oneself, that was worse—it was dreadful! If she went right off up-stairs perhaps no one would notice; they would think at first that somebody else was looking after her guests while she dressed, and then they would forget all about her and never know the dreadful truth that nobody she had asked to the play would come.

When it had first been decided to present "Sherlock Holmes" and the girls had begun giving out their invitations, Helen, who felt more and more keenly her isolation in the college, resolved to see just how the others managed and then do as they did. She heard Rachel say, "I think Christy Mason is a dear. I don't know her much if any, but I'm going to ask her all the same, and perhaps we shall get better acquainted after awhile."

That made Helen, who took the speech more literally than it was meant, think of Caroline Barnes. One afternoon she and Betty had been down-town together, and on the way back Miss Barnes overtook them, and came up with them to see Eleanor, who was an old friend of hers. Betty introduced her to Helen and she walked between them up the hill and necessarily included both of them in her conversation. She was a homely girl, with dull, inexpressive features; but she was tall and well-proportioned and strikingly well dressed. Betty had taken an instant dislike to her at the time of their first meeting and greatly to Eleanor's disgust had resisted all her advances. Eleanor had accused her frankly of not liking Caroline.

"No," returned Betty with equal frankness, "I don't. I think all your other friends are lovely, but Miss Barnes rubs me the wrong way."

Helen knew nothing of all this, and Miss Barnes's lively, slangy conversation and stylish, showy clothes appealed to her unsophisticated taste.

When the three parted at the head of the stairs, Miss Barnes turned back to say, "Aren't you coming to see me? You owe me a call, you know."

Helen and Betty were standing close together, and though part of the remark applied only to Betty, she looked at them both.

Betty said formally, "Thank you, I should like to," and Helen, pleased and eager, chorused, "So should I."

Later, in their own room, Betty said with apparent carelessness but with the covert intention of dropping Helen a useful hint, "You aren't going to see Miss Barnes, are you? I'm not."

And Helen had flushed again, gave some stammering reply and then had had for the first time an unkind thought about her roommate. Betty wanted to keep all her nice friends to herself. It must be that. Why shouldn't she go to see Miss Barnes? She wasn't asked so often that she could afford to ignore the invitations she did get. And later she added, Why shouldn't she ask Miss Barnes to the play, since Eleanor wasn't going to?

So one afternoon Helen, arrayed in her best clothes, went down to call and deliver her invitation. Miss Barnes was out, but her door was open and Helen slipped in, and writing a little note on her card, laid it conspicuously on the shining mahogany desk.

That was one invitation. She had given the other to a quiet, brown-eyed girl who sat next her in geometry, not from preference, but because her name came next on the class roll. This girl declined politely, on the plea of another engagement.

Next day Miss Barnes brushed unseeingly past her in the hall of the Science Building. The day after that they met at gym. Finally, when almost a week had gone by without a sign from her, Helen inquired timidly if she had found the note.

"Oh, are you Miss Adams?" inquired Miss Barnes, staring past her with a weary air. "Thank you very much I'm sure, but I can't come," and she walked off.

Any one but Helen Adams would have known that Caroline Barnes and Eleanor Watson had the reputation of being the worst "snobs" in their class, and that Miss Ashby, her neighbor in geometry, boarded with her mother and never went anywhere without her. But Helen knew no college gossip. She offered her invitation to two girls who had been in the dancing-class, read hypocrisy into their hearty regrets that they were going out of town for Sunday, and asked no one else to the play. If she had been less shy and reserved she would have told Rachel or Betty all about her ill-luck, have been laughed at and sympathized with, and then have forgotten all about it. But being Helen Chase Adams, she brooded over her trouble in secret, asked nobody's advice, and grew shyer and more sensitive in consequence, but not a whit less determined to make a place for herself in the college world.

She would have attached less significance to Caroline Barnes's rudeness, had she known a little about the causes of Eleanor's headache. Eleanor had gone down to Caroline's on the afternoon of the play, knocked boldly, in spite of a "Don't disturb" sign posted on the door, and found the pretty rooms in great confusion and Caroline wearily overseeing the packing of her books and pictures.

Eleanor waited patiently until the men had gone off with three huge boxes, and then insisted upon knowing what Caroline was doing.

"Going home," said Caroline sullenly.

"Why?" demanded Eleanor.

"Public reason-trouble with my eyes; real reason-haven't touched my conditions yet and now I have been warned and told to tutor in three classes. I can't possibly do it all."

"Why Caroline Barnes, do you mean you are sent home?"

Caroline nodded. "It amounts to that. I was advised to go home now, and work off the entrance conditions and come again next fall. I thought maybe you'd be taking the same train," she added with a nervous laugh.

Eleanor turned white. "Nonsense!" she said sharply. "What do you mean?"

"Well, you said you hadn't done anything about your conditions, and you've cut and flunked and scraped along much as I have, I fancy."

"I'm sorry, Caroline," said Eleanor, ignoring the digression. "I don't know that you care, though. You've said you were bored to death up here."

"I-I say a great deal that I don't mean," gulped Caroline. "Good-bye, Eleanor. Shall I see you in New York at Christmas? And don't forget-trouble with my eyes. Oh, the family won't mind. They didn't like my coming up in the first place. I shall go abroad in the spring. Good-bye."

Eleanor walked swiftly back through the campus. In the main building she consulted the official bulletin-board with anxious eyes, and fairly tore off a note addressed to "Miss Eleanor Watson, First Class." It had come-a "warning" in Latin. Once back in her own room, Eleanor sat down to

consider the situation calmly. But the more she thought about it, the more frightened and ashamed she grew. Thanksgiving was next week, and she had been given only until Christmas to work off her entrance conditions. She had meant to leave them till the last moment, rush through the work with a tutor, and if she needed it get an extension of time by some specious excuse. Had the last minute passed? The Latin warning meant more extra work. There were other things too. She had "cut" classes recklessly—three on the day of the sophomore reception, and four on a Monday morning when she had promised to be back from Boston in time for chapel. Also, she had borrowed Lil Day's last year's literature paper and copied most of it verbatim. She could make a sophisticated defence of her morals to Betty Wales, but she understood perfectly what the faculty would think about them. The only question was, how much did they know?

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When the dinner-bell rang, Eleanor pulled herself together and started down-stairs.

"Did you get your note, Miss Watson?" asked Adelaide Rich from the dining-room door.

"What note?" demanded Eleanor sharply.

"I'm sure I can't describe it. It was on the hall table," said Adelaide, turning away wrathfully. Some people were so grateful if you tried to do them a favor!

It was this incident which led Eleanor to hurry off after dinner, and again at the end of the play, bound to escape nerve-racking questions and congratulations. Later, when Betty knocked on her door, her first impulse was to let her in and ask her advice. But a second thought suggested that it was safer to confide in nobody. The next morning she was glad of the second thought, for things looked brighter, and it would have been humiliating indeed to be discovered making a mountain out of a mole-hill.

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"The trouble with Caroline was that she wasn't willing to work hard," she told herself. "Now I care enough to do anything, and I must make them see it."

She devoted her spare hours on Monday morning to "making them see it," with that rare combination of tact and energy that was Eleanor Watson at her best. By noon her fears of being sent home were almost gone, and she was alert and exhilarated as she always was when there were difficulties to be surmounted.

"Now that the play is over, I'm going to work hard," Betty announced at lunch, and Eleanor, who was still determined not to confide in anybody, added nonchalantly, "So am I." It was going to be the best of the fun to take in the Chapin house.

But the Chapin house was not taken in for long.

"What's come over Eleanor Watson?" inquired Katherine, a few days later, as the girls filed out from dinner.

125

"She's working," said Mary Brooks with a grin. "And apparently she thinks work and dessert don't jibe."

"I'm afraid it was time," said Rachel. "She's always cutting classes, and that puts a girl behind faster than anything else. I wonder if she could have had a warning in anything."

"I think she could—" began Katherine, and then stopped, laughing. "I might as well own up to one in math.," she said.

"Well, Miss Watson is going to stay here over Thanksgiving," said Mary Rich.

Then plans for the two days' vacation were discussed, and Eleanor's affairs forgotten, much to the relief of Betty Wales, who feared every moment lest she should in some way betray Eleanor's confidence.

On the Wednesday after Thanksgiving Eleanor burst in on her merrily, as she was dressing for dinner.

"I just wanted to tell you that some of those conditions that worry you so are made up," she said. "I almost wore out my tutor, and I surprised the history department into a compliment, but I'm through. That is, I have only math., and one other little thing."

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"I don't see how you did it," sighed Betty. "I should never dare to get behind. I have all I want to do with the regular work."

Eleanor leaned luxuriously back among the couch cushions. "Yes," she said loftily. "I suppose you haven't the faintest idea what real, downright hard work is, and neither can you appreciate the joys of downright idleness. I shall try that as soon as I've finished the math."

"Why?" asked Betty. "Do you like making it up later?"

"I shouldn't have to. You know I'm getting a reputation as an earnest, thorough student. That's what the history department called me. A reputation is a wonderful thing to lean back upon. I ought to have gone in for one in September. I was at the Hill School for three years, and I never studied after the first three months. There's everything in making people believe in you from the first."

"What's the use in making people believe you're something that you're not?" demanded Betty.

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"What a question! It saves you the trouble of being that something. If the history department once gets into the habit of thinking me a thorough, earnest student, it won't condition me because I fail in a written recitation or two. It will suppose I had an off day."

"But you'd have to do well sometimes."

"Oh, yes, occasionally. That's easy."

"Not for me," said Betty, "so I shall have to do respectable work all the time. But I shall tell Helen about your idea. She works all the time, and it makes her dull and cross. She must have secured a reputation by this time; and I shall insist upon her leaning back on it for a while and taking more walks."

CHAPTER IX

PAYING THE PIPER

128

"I feel as if there were about three days between Thanksgiving and Christmas," said Rachel, coming up the stairs, to Betty, who stood in the door of her room half in and half out of her white evening dress.

"That leaves one day and a half, then, before vacation," laughed Betty. "I'm sorry to bother you when you're so pressed for time, but could you hook me up? Helen is at the library, and every one else seems to be off somewhere."

"Certainly," said Rachel, dropping her armful of bundles on the floor. "I'm only making Christmas presents. Is the KΦ dance coming off at last?"

"Yes—another one, that is; and Mr. Parsons asked me, to make up for the one I had to miss. Now, would you hold my coat?"

"Betty! Betty Wales! Wait a minute," called somebody just as Betty reached the Main Street corner, and Eleanor Watson appeared, also dressed for the dance.

129

"Why didn't you say you were going to Winsted?" she demanded breathlessly. "Good, here's a car."

"Why didn't you say you were going?" demanded Betty in her turn as they scrambled on.

"Because I didn't intend to until the last minute. Then I decided that I'd earned a little recreation, so I telegraphed Paul West that I'd come after all. Who is your chaperon?"

"Miss Hale."

"Well please introduce me when we get down-town, so that I can ask if I may join her party."

Ethel Hale received Betty with enthusiasm, and Eleanor with a peculiar smile and a very formal permission to go to Winsted under her escort. As the two were starting off to buy their tickets, she called Betty back.

"Aren't you going to sit with me on the way over, little sister?" she asked.

"Of course," said Betty, and they settled themselves together a moment later for the short ride.

"You never come to see me, Betty," Miss Hale began, when they were seated.

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"I'm afraid to," confessed Betty sheepishly. "When you're a faculty and I'm only a freshman."

"Nonsense," laughed Miss Hale. Then she glanced at Eleanor, who sat several seats in front of them, and changed the subject abruptly. "What sort of girl is Miss Watson?" she asked.

Betty laughed. "All sorts, I think," she said. "I never knew any one who could be so nice one minute and so trying the next."

"How do you happen to know her well?" pursued Miss Hale seriously.

Betty explained.

"And you think that on the whole she's worth while?"

"I'm afraid I don't understand—" Betty was beginning to feel as if she was taking an examination on Eleanor's characteristics.

"You think that on the whole she's more good than bad; and that there's something to her, besides beauty. That's all I want to know. She is lovely, isn't she?"

"Yes, indeed," agreed Betty enthusiastically. "But she's very bright too. She's done a lot of extra work lately and so quickly and well. She's very nice to me always, but she dislikes my roommate and she and I are always disagreeing about that or something else. I don't think—you know she wouldn't do a dishonorable thing for the world, but I don't approve of some of her ideas; they don't seem quite fair and square, Ethel."

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"Um," assented Ethel absently. "I'm glad you could tell me all this, Betty. I shouldn't have asked you, perhaps; it's rather taking advantage of our private friendship. But I really needed to know. Ah, here we are!"

As she spoke, the train slowed down and a gay party of Winsted men sprang on to the platform, and jostled one another down the aisles, noisily greeting the girls they knew and each one hunting for his particular guest of the afternoon. They had brought a barge down to take the girls

to the college, and in the confusion of crowding into it Betty found herself separated from Ethel. "I wish I'd asked her why she wanted to know all that," she thought, and then she forgot everything but the delicious excitement of actually being on the way to a dance at Winsted.

Most of the fraternity house was thrown open to the visitors, and between the dances in the library, which was big enough to make an excellent ball-room also, they wandered through it, finding all sorts of interesting things to admire, and pleasantly retired nooks and corners to rest in. Mr. Parsons was a very attentive host, providing partners in plenty; and Betty, who was passionately fond of dancing and had been to only one "truly grown-up" dance before, was in her element. But every once in awhile she forgot her own pleasure to notice Eleanor and to wonder at her beauty and vivacity. She was easily belle of the ball. She seemed to know all the men, and they crowded eagerly around her, begging for dances and hanging on her every word. Eleanor's usually listless face was radiant. She had a smile and a gay sally for every one; there was never a hint of the studied coldness with which she received any advances from Helen or the Riches, nor of the scornful ennui with which she faced the social life of her own college.

"Aren't you glad you came?" said Betty, when they met at the frappé table.

"Rather," said Eleanor laconically. "This is life, and I've only existed for months and months. What would the world be like without men and music?"

"Goodness! what a wise-sounding remark," laughed Betty.

Just then Miss Hale came up in charge of a very young and callow freshman.

"Please lend me your fan, Betty," she said. "I was afraid it would look forward for a chaperon to bring one, and I'm desperately warm."

Eleanor, who had turned aside to speak to her partner, looked up quickly as Ethel spoke, and meeting Miss Hale's gray eyes she flushed suddenly and moved away.

Betty handed Ethel the fan. "I wish—" she began, looking after Eleanor's retreating figure. But as she spoke the music started again and a vivacious youth hurried up and whisked her away before she had time to finish her sentence; and she could not get near Ethel again.

"Men do make better partners than girls," she said to Mr. Parsons as they danced the last waltz together. "And I think their rooms are prettier than ours, if these are fair samples. But they can't have any better time at college than we do."

"We certainly couldn't get on at all without you girls across the river," Mr. Parsons was saying gallantly, when the music stopped and Eleanor, followed by Mr. West, hurried up to Betty.

"Excuse me one moment, Mr. Parsons," she said, as she drew Betty aside. "I've been trying to get at you for ever so long," she went on. "I'm in a dreadful fix. You know I told you I hadn't intended to come here to-day, but I didn't tell you the reason why. The reason was that to-day was the time set for my math. exam, with Miss Mansfield. I tried to get her to change it, but I couldn't, so finally I telephoned her that I was ill. Some one else answered the 'phone for her, saying that she was engaged and, Betty—I'm sure it was Miss Hale."

Betty looked at her in blank amazement. "You said you were ill and then came here!" she began. "Oh, Eleanor, how could you! But what makes you think that Miss Hale knows?"

"I'm sure I recognized her voice when she asked you for the fan, and then haven't you noticed her distant manner?" said Eleanor gloomily. "Are they friends, do you know?"

"They live in the same house."

"Then that settles it. You seem to be very chummy with Miss Hale, Betty. You couldn't reconcile it with your tender conscience to say a good word for me, I suppose?"

"I-why, what could I say after that dreadful message?" Then she brightened suddenly. "Why, Eleanor, I did. We talked about you all the way over here. Ethel asked questions and I answered them. I told her a lot of nice things," added Betty reassuringly, "though of course I couldn't imagine why she wanted to know. What luck that you hadn't told me sooner!"

Eleanor stared at her blankly. "I suppose," she said at last, "that it will serve me right if Miss Hale tells Miss Mansfield that I was here, and Miss Mansfield refuses me another examination; but do you think she will?"

Betty glanced at Ethel. She was standing at the other end of the room, talking to two Winsted men, and she looked so young and pretty and so like one of the girls herself that Betty said impulsively, "She couldn't!" Then she remembered how different Ethel had seemed on the train, and that the girls in her classes stood very much in awe of her. "I don't know," she said slowly. "She just hates any sort of cheating. She might think it was her duty to tell. Oh, Eleanor, why did you do it?"

Eleanor shrugged her shoulders expressively. Then she turned away with a radiant smile for Mr. West. "I am sorry to have kept you men waiting," she said. "How much more time do we have before the barge comes?"

Whatever Miss Hale meant to do, she kept her own counsel, deliberately avoiding intercourse with either Ethel or Betty. She bade the girls a gay good-bye at the station, and went off in state in the carriage they had provided for her.

"I suppose it's no use asking if you had a good time," said Betty sympathetically, as she and Eleanor, having decided to go home in comfort, rolled away in another.

"I had a lovely time until it flashed over me about that telephone message. After that of course I was worried almost to death, and I would give anything under the sun if I had stayed at home and passed off my math. like a person of sense."

"Then why don't you tell Miss Mansfield so?" suggested Betty.

"Oh, Betty, I couldn't. But I shan't probably have the chance," she added dryly. "Miss Hale will see her after dinner. I hope she'll tell her that I appeared to be enjoying life."

The next morning when Eleanor presented herself at Miss Mansfield's class-room for the geometry lesson, another assistant occupied the desk. "Miss Mansfield is out of town for a few days," she announced. Eleanor gave Betty a despairing glance and tried to fix her attention on the "originals" which the new teacher was explaining. It seemed as if the class would never end. When it did she flew to the desk and inquired if Miss Mansfield would be back to-morrow.

"To-morrow? Oh no," said the young assistant pleasantly. "She's in Boston for some days. No, not this week; next, I believe. You are Miss Watson? No, there was no message for you, I think."

The next week was a longer and more harassing one than any that Eleanor could remember. She had not been blind to Betty's scorn of her action. Ever since she came to Harding she had noted with astonishment the high code of honor that held sway among the girls. They shirked when they could, assumed knowledge when they had it not, managed somehow to wear the air of leisurely go-as-you-please that Eleanor loved; but they did not cheat, and like Betty they despised those who did. So Eleanor, who a few months before would have boasted of having deceived Miss Mansfield, was now in equal fear lest Miss Hale should betray her and lest some of her mates should find her out. She wanted to ask Lil Day or Annette Gaynor what happened if you cut a special examination; but suppose they should ask why she cared to know? That would put another knot into the "tangled web" of her deception. It would have been some comfort to discuss the possibilities of the situation with Betty, but Eleanor denied herself even that outlet. No use reminding a girl that she despises you! If only Betty would not look so sad and sympathetic and inquiring when they met in the halls, in classes or at table. At other times Eleanor barricaded herself behind a "Don't disturb" sign and studied desperately and to much purpose. And every morning she hoped against hope that Miss Mansfield would hear the geometry class.

The suspense lasted through the whole week. Then, just two days before the vacation, Miss Mansfield reappeared and Eleanor asked timidly for an appointment.

"Come to-day at two," began Miss Mansfield.

"Oh thank you! Thank you so much!" broke in Eleanor and stopped in confusion.

But Miss Mansfield only smiled absently. "Most of my belated freshmen don't express such fervent gratitude for my firmness in pushing them through before the vacation. They try to put me off." She had evidently quite forgotten the other appointment.

"I shall be so glad to have it over," Eleanor murmured.

Miss Mansfield looked after her thoughtfully as she went down the hall. "Perhaps I've misjudged her," she told herself. "When a girl is so pretty, it's hard to take her seriously."

She said as much to Ethel Hale when they walked home to lunch together, but Ethel was not at all enthusiastic over Miss Watson's earnestness.

"She's very late in working off a condition, I should say," she observed coldly.

"Yes, but I've been away, you know," explained Miss Mansfield. "Oh, Ethel, I wish you could meet him. You don't half appreciate how happy I am."

Ethel, who had decided after much consideration to let Eleanor's affairs take their course, made a mental observation to the effect that an engagement induces shortness of memory and tenderness of heart. Then she said aloud that she also wished she might meet "him."

Time flies between Thanksgiving and Christmas, particularly for freshmen who are looking forward to their first vacation at home. It flies faster after they get there, and when they are back at college it rushes on quite as swiftly but rather less merrily toward the fateful "mid-years." None of the Chapin house girls had been home at Thanksgiving time, but they were all going for Christmas, except Eleanor Watson, who intended to spend the vacation with an aunt in New York.

They prepared for the flitting in characteristic ways. Rachel, who was very systematic, did all her Christmas shopping, so that she needn't hurry through it at home. Roberta made but one purchase, an illustrated "Alice in Wonderland," for her small cousins, and spent all her spare time in re-reading it herself. Helen, in spite of Betty's suggestions about leaning back on her reputation, studied harder than ever, so that she could go home with a clear conscience, while Katherine was too excited to study at all, and Mary Brooks jeered impartially at both of them. Betty conscientiously returned all her calls and began packing several days ahead, so as to make the time seem shorter. Then just as the expressman was driving off with her trunk, she remembered that she had packed her short skirt at the very bottom.

"Thank you ever so much. If he'd got much further I should have had to go home either in this gray bath robe that I have on, or in a white duck suit," she said to Katherine who had gone to rescue the skirt and came back with it over her arm.

She and Katherine started west together and Eleanor and Roberta went with them to the nearest junction. The jostling, excited crowd at the station, the "good-byes" and "Merry Christmases," were great fun. Betty, remembering a certain forlorn afternoon in early autumn, laughed happily to herself.

"What's the joke?" asked Katherine.

"I was thinking how much nicer things like this seem when you're in them," she said, waving her hand to Alice Waite.

At the Cleveland station, mother and Will and Nan and the smallest sister were watching eagerly for the returning wanderer.

"Why, Betty Wales, you haven't changed one bit," announced the smallest sister in tones of deepest wonder. "Why, I'd have known you anywhere, Betty, if I'd met you on the street."

"Three months isn't quite as long as all that," said Betty, hugging the smallest sister, "but I was hoping I looked a little older. Nobody ever mistakes me for a senior, as they do Rachel Morrison. And I ought to look years and years wiser."

"Nonsense," said Will with a lordly air. "Now a college girl—"

Everybody laughed. "You see we all know your theories about intellectual women," said mother. "So suppose you take up the suit case and escort us home."

The next morning a note arrived from Eleanor.

"DEAREST BETTY," it ran:

"As you always seem to be just around the corner when I get into a box, I want to tell you that I rode down to New York with Miss Hale. She asked me to sit with her and I couldn't well refuse, though I wanted to badly enough. She knew, Betty, but she will never tell. She said she was glad to know me on your account. She asked me how the term had gone with me, and I blushed and stammered and said that I was coming back in a different spirit. She said that college was the finest place in the world for a girl to get acquainted with herself—that cowardice and weakness of purpose and meanness and pettiness stood out so clearly against the background of fineness and squareness; and that four years was long enough to see all sorts of faults in oneself, and change them according to one's new theories. As she said it, it didn't sound a bit like preaching.

"I didn't tell her that I was only in college for one year. I sent her a big bunch of violets to-day—she surely couldn't regard it as a bribe now—and after Christmas I'll try to show her that I'm worth while.

"Merry Christmas, Betty.

"ELEANOR."

Nan frowned when Betty told her about Eleanor. "But she isn't a nice girl, Betty. Did I meet her?"

"Yes, she's the one you thought so pretty—the one with the lovely eyes and hair."

"Betty," said Nan soberly, "you don't do things like this?"

"I!" Betty flushed indignantly. "Weren't there all kinds of girls when you were in college, Nan? Didn't you ever know people who did 'things like this?'"

Nan laughed. "There certainly were," she said. "I'll trust you, Betty. Only don't see too much of Miss Watson, or she'll drag you down, in spite of yourself."

"But Ethel's dragging her up," objected Betty. "And I gave her the first boost, by knowing Ethel. Not that I meant to. I never seem to accomplish things when I mean to. You remember Helen Chase Adams?"

"With great pleasure. She noticed my youthful appearance."

"Well, I've been all this term trying to reform her clothes, but I can't improve her one bit, except when I set to work and do it all myself. I should think you'd be afraid she'd drag me into dowdiness, I have to see so much of her."

Nan smiled at the dainty little figure in the big chair. "I don't notice any indications yet," she said. "It took you an hour to dress this morning, exactly as it always does. But you'd better take care. What are you going to do to-day?"

"Make your friend Helen Chase Adams a stock for Christmas," announced Betty, jumping up and pulling Nan after her. "And you've got to help, seeing you admire her so much."

CHAPTER X

A RUMOR

After Christmas there were goodies from home to eat and Christmas-gifts to arrange in their new quarters. Betty's pièce de resistance was a gorgeous leather sofa pillow stamped with the head of a ferocious Indian chief. Eleanor had a great brass bowl, which in some mysterious fashion was

kept constantly full of fresh roses, a shelf full of new books, and more dresses than her closet would hold. Katherine had a chafing-dish, Rachel a Persian rug, and Roberta an illustrated "Alice in Wonderland" of her own. To Betty's great relief Helen had brought back two small pillows for her couch, all her skirts were lengthened, and the Christmas stock of black silk with its white linen turnovers replaced the clumsy woolen collars that she had worn with her winter shirt-waists. And-she was certainly learning to do her hair more becomingly. There wasn't a very marked improvement to be sure, but if Betty could have watched Helen's patient efforts to turn her vacation to account in the matter of hair-dressing, she would have realized how much the little changes meant, and would have been more hopeful about her pupil's progress. Not until the end of her junior year did Helen Adams reach the point where she could be sure that one's personal appearance is quite as important a matter as one's knowledge of calculus or Kantian philosophies; but, thanks largely to Betty, she was beginning to want to look her best, and that was the first step toward the things that she coveted. The next, and one for which Betty, with her open-hearted, free-and-easy fashion of facing life, was not likely to see the need, must be to break down the barriers that Helen's sensitive shyness had erected between herself and the world around her. The self-confidence that Caroline Barnes had cruelly, if unintentionally wounded, must be restored before Helen could find the place she longed for in the little college world.

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No one had had any very exciting vacation adventures except Rachel, who was delayed on her way home by a freight wreck and obliged to spend Christmas eve on a windswept siding with only a ham sandwich between her and starvation, and Eleanor, whose vacation had been one mad whirl of metropolitan gaiety. Her young aunt, who sympathized with her niece's distaste for college life, and couldn't imagine why on earth Judge Watson had insisted upon his only daughter's trying it for a year at least, did her utmost to make Eleanor enjoy her visit. So she had dined at the Waldorf, sat in a box at the theatre and the opera, danced and shopped to her heart's content, and had seen all the sights of New York. And at all the festivities Paul West, a friend of the family and also of Eleanor's, was present as Eleanor's special escort and avowed admirer. Naturally she had come back in an ill humor. Between late hours and excitement she was completely worn out. She wanted to be in New York, and failing that she wanted Paul West to come and talk New York to her, and bring her roses for the big brass bowl that she had found in a dingy little shop in the Russian quarter. She threw her good resolutions to the winds, received Miss Hale's thanks for the violets very coldly, and begged Betty to forget the sentimental letter that she had written before Christmas.

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"But I thought it was a nice letter," said Betty. "Eleanor, why won't you give yourself a chance? Go and see Ethel this afternoon, and-and then set to work to show her what you said you would," she ended lamely.

Eleanor only laughed. "Sorry, Betty, but I'm going to Winsted this afternoon. Paul has taken pity on me; there's a sleighing party. I thought perhaps you were invited too."

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"No, but I'm going skating with Mary and Katherine," said Betty cheerfully, "and then at four Rachel and I are going to do Latin."

"Oh, Latin," said Eleanor significantly. "Let me think. Is it two or three weeks to mid-years?"

"Two, just."

"Well, I suppose I shall have to do a little something then myself," said Eleanor, "but I shan't bother yet awhile. Here comes the sleigh," she added, looking out of the window. "Paul's driving, and your Mr. Parsons has asked Georgie Arnold. What do you think of that?"

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"I should certainly hope he wouldn't ask the same girl to everything, if that's what you mean," said Betty calmly, helping Eleanor into her new coat.

Eleanor shrugged her shoulders. "Good-bye," she said. "For my part, I prefer to be the one and only-while I last," and snatching up her furs she was off.

Betty found Mary and Katherine in possession of her room and engaged in an animated discussion about the rules of hockey.

"I tell you that when the thing-um-bob is in play," began Katherine.

"Not a bit of it," cut in Mary.

"Come along, girls," interrupted Betty, fishing her skates from under her couch, and pulling on her "pussy" mittens. "Never mind those rules. You can't play hockey to-day. You promised to skate with me."

It was an ideal winter's afternoon, clear, cold and still. The ice on Paradise was smooth and hard, and the little pond was fairly alive with skaters, most of them Harding girls. Betty was a novice, with one weak ankle that had an annoying habit of turning over suddenly and tripping her up; so she was timid about skating alone. But between Mary and Katherine she got on famously, and thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon. At four Mary had a committee meeting, Katherine an engagement to play basket-ball, and Betty had agreed to meet Rachel. So with great reluctance they took off their skates and started up the steep path that led past the boat-house to the back gate of the campus.

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"Goodness, but I'm stiff," groaned Mary, stopping to rest a minute half way up. "I'd have skated until dinner time though, if it hadn't been for this bothering committee. Never be on committees, children."

"Why don't you apply your own rules?" inquired Katherine saucily.

"Oh, because I'm a vain peacock like the rest of the world. The class president comes to me and says, 'Now Mary, nobody but you knows every girl in the class. You can find out the sentiments of all sorts and conditions on this matter. And then you have such fine executive ability. I know you hate committees, but—' Of course I feel pleased by her base flattery, and I don't come to my senses until it's too late to escape. Is to-day the sixteenth?"

152

"No, it's Saturday, the twentieth," said Katherine. "Two weeks next Monday to mid-years."

"The twentieth!" repeated Mary in tones of alarm. "Then, my psychology paper is due a week from Tuesday. I haven't done a thing to it, and I shall be so busy next week that I can't touch it till Friday or Saturday. How time does fly!"

"Don't you even know what you're going to write on or anything that you're going to say?" asked Betty, who always wrote her papers as soon as they were assigned, to get them off her mind, and who longed to know the secret of waiting serenely until the eleventh hour.

"Why, I had a plan," answered Mary absently, "but I've waited so long that I hardly know if I can use it."

Just then Alice Waite and her roommate came panting up the hill, and Mary, who seldom took much exercise and was very tired, fell back to the rear of the procession. But when the freshmen stopped in front of the Hilton House she trilled and waved her hand to attract their attention.

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"Oh, Betty, please take my skates home," she said as she limped up to the group. Then she smiled what Roberta had named her "beamish" smile. "I know what you girls are talking about," she said. "Will you give me a supper at Holmes's if I'm right?"

"Yes," said Katherine recklessly, "for you couldn't possibly guess. What was it?"

"You're wondering about those fifty freshmen," answered Mary promptly.

"What freshmen?" demanded the four girls in a chorus, utterly ignoring the lost wager.

"Why, those fifty who, according to a perfectly baseless rumor, are going to be sent home after mid-years."

"What do you mean?" gasped Betty.

"Hadn't you heard?" asked Mary soothingly. "Well, I'm sure it will be all over the college by this afternoon. Now understand, I don't believe it's true. If it were ten or even twenty it might be, but fifty—why, girls, it's preposterous!"

"But I don't understand you," said Miss Madison excitedly. She had grown very pale and was hanging on to Katherine's arm. "Do you mean that there is such a story—that fifty freshmen are to be sent home after mid-years?"

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"Yes," said Mary sadly, "there is, and that's what I meant. I'm sorry that I should have been the one to tell you, but you'd have heard it from some one else, I'm sure. A thing like that is always repeated so. Remember, I assure you I don't believe a word of it. Somebody probably started it on purpose to frighten you little freshmen. If you would take my skates, Betty. I hate to lug them around till dinner time. Now good-bye, and do cheer up."

Left to themselves the four freshmen stared blankly at one another. Finally Katherine broke the mournful silence.

"Girls," she said solemnly, "it's utter foolishness to worry about this report. Mary didn't believe it herself, and why should we?"

"She's not a freshman," suggested Alice gloomily.

"There are almost four hundred freshmen. Perhaps the fifty wouldn't be any of us," put in Betty.

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Miss Madison maintained a despairing silence.

"Well," said Katherine at last, "if it is true there's nothing to be done about it now, I suppose; and if it isn't true, why it isn't; so I think I'll go to basket-ball," and she detached Miss Madison and started off.

Betty gave a prolonged sigh. "I must go too," she said. "I've promised to study Latin. I presume it isn't any use, but I can't disappoint Rachel. I wish I was a fine student like Rachel. She won't be one of the fifty."

Alice, who had been in a brown study, emerged, just as Betty turned away.

"Wait a minute," she commanded. "Of course it's awfully queer up here, but still, if they have exams. I don't see the use of cooking it all up beforehand. I mean I don't see the use of exams. if it is all decided."

Her two friends brightened perceptibly.

"That's a good idea," declared Betty. "Every one says the mid-years are so important. Let's do our best from now on, and perhaps the faculty will change their minds."

As she walked home, Betty thought of Eleanor. "She'll be dreadfully worried. I shan't tell her a word about it," she resolved. Then she remembered Mary Brooks's remark. Yes, no doubt some one else would enlighten Eleanor. It was just too bad. But perhaps Mary was right and the story was only a story.

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It is hard for freshmen on the eve of their mid-year examinations to be perfectly calm and

philosophical. The story of the fifty unfortunates ran like wild-fire through the college, and while upper-class girls sniffed at it as absurd and even freshmen, particularly the clever ones, pooh-poohed it in public, it was the cause of many anxious, and some tearful moments. Betty, after her first fright, had accepted the situation with her usual cheerfulness, and so had Alice and Rachel, who could not help knowing that her work was of exceptionally high grade, while Helen irritated her house-mates by affecting an anxiety which, as Katherine put it, "No dig, who gets 'good' on all her written work, can possibly feel." Katherine was worried about her mathematics, in which she had been warned before Thanksgiving, but she confided to Betty that she had counted them up, and without being a bit conceited she really thought there were fifty stupider girls in the class of 19-. Roberta and the Riches, however, were utterly miserable, and Eleanor wrote to Paul West that she was busy—she had written "ill" first, and then torn up the note—and indulged in another frantic fit of industry, even more violent than its predecessors had been.

157

"But I thought you wanted to go home," said Betty curiously one afternoon when Eleanor had come in to borrow a lexicon. "You say you hate it here, and you hate to study. So why do you take so much trouble about staying?"

Eleanor straightened proudly. "Haven't you observed yet that I have a bad case of the Watson pride?" she asked. "Do you think I'd ever show my face again if I failed?"

"Then why—" began Betty.

"Oh, that's the unutterable laziness that I get from my—from the other side of the house," interrupted Eleanor. "It's an uncomfortable combination, I assure you," and taking the book she had come for, she abruptly departed.

Betty realized suddenly that in all the year Eleanor had never once spoken of her mother.

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After that she couldn't help being sorry for Eleanor, but she pitied Miss Madison more. Miss Madison was dull at books and she knew it, and had actually made herself ill with work and worry. Going to see her Hilton House friends on the Friday afternoon after the skating party, Betty found Miss Madison alone and undisguisedly crying.

"I know I'm foolish," she apologized. "Most people just laugh at that story, but I notice they study harder since they heard it. And I'm such a stupid."

Betty, who hated tears, had a sudden inspiration. "Why don't you ask about it at the registrar's office?" she suggested.

"Oh, I couldn't," wailed Miss Madison.

"Then I shall," returned Betty. "That is, I shall ask one of the faculty."

"Would you dare?"

"Yes, indeed. They're human, like other people," said Betty, quoting Nan. "I don't see why some one didn't think of it sooner."

That night at dinner Betty announced her plan. The freshmen looked relieved and Mary Brooks showed uncalled-for enthusiasm.

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"Do go," she urged. "It's high time such an absurd story was shown up at its real value. It's absurd. The way we talk and talk about a report like that, and never dare to ask the faculty if it's true."

"Do you take any freshman courses?" inquired Eleanor sarcastically.

Mary smiled her "beamish" smile. "No," she said, "but I'm an interested party nevertheless—quite as much so as any of the famous fifty."

"Whom shall you ask, Betty?" pursued Katherine, ignoring the digression.

"Miss Mansfield. I have her the first hour, and besides, since she's been engaged she's so nice and sympathetic."

Next day the geometry class dragged unmercifully for three persons. Eleanor beat a nervous tattoo on the seat-arm, Miss Madison stared fixedly at the clock, and Betty blushed and twisted and wished she could have seen Miss Mansfield before class. The delayed interview was beginning to seem very formidable. But it wasn't, after the first plunge.

"What an absurd story!" laughed Miss Mansfield. "Not a word of truth in it, of course. Why I don't believe the girl who started it thought it was true. How long has it been in circulation?"

160

Betty counted the days. "I didn't really believe it," she added shyly.

"But you worried," said Miss Mansfield, smiling down at her. "Next time don't be taken in one little bit,—or else come to headquarters sooner."

Eleanor and Miss Madison were waiting outside the door when Betty dashed at them with a little squeal of ecstasy. There was a moment of rapturous congratulation; then Miss Madison picked up the note-book she had dropped and held out her hand solemnly to Betty.

"You've—why I think you've saved my life," she said, "and now I must go to my next class."

"You're a little hero," added Eleanor, catching Betty's arm and rushing her off to a recitation in Science Hall.

Roberta received the joyful news more calmly. "We may any of us flunk our mid-years yet," she

said.

"But we can study for them in peace and comfort," said Adelaide Rich.

161

Mary Brooks asked endless questions at luncheon. Did the girls all accept Miss Mansfield's denial as authoritative? Did it travel as fast as the original story had done? How did people think the rumor had started?

"Why, nobody mentioned that," said Rachel in surprise. "How odd that we shouldn't have wondered!"

"Shows your sheep-like natures," said Mary, rising abruptly. "Well, now I can finish my psychology paper."

"Haven't you worked on it any?" inquired Betty.

"Oh, yes, I made an outline and developed some topics last night. But I couldn't finish until today. I was so worried about you children."

Toward the end of the next week Rachel came in to dinner late and in high spirits. "I've had such a fine walk!" she exclaimed. "Hester Gulick and I went to the bridge, and on the way back we overtook a senior named Janet Andrews. She is such fun. She'd walked down-town with Professor Hinsdale. He teaches psychology, doesn't he? They seem to be very good friends, and he told her such a funny thing about the fifty-freshmen story. How do you suppose it started?"

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"Oh, please tell us," cried everybody at once.

"Why, an awfully clever girl in his sophomore class started it as an experiment, to see how it would take. She told it to some freshmen, saying explicitly that it wasn't true, and they told their friends, and so it went all over the college until last Saturday Betty got Miss Mansfield to deny it. But no one knew how it started until yesterday when Professor Hinsdale looked over a paper in which the girl had written it all up, as a study in the way rumors spread and grow. This one was so big to begin with that it couldn't grow much, though it seems, according to the paper, that some people had added to it that half the freshmen would be conditioned in math."

"How awfully funny!" gurgled Betty. Then she jumped almost out of her chair. "Why, Mary Brooks!" she said.

Everybody looked at Mary, who blushed guiltily and remarked with great dignity that Professor Hinsdale was an old telltale. But when she had assured herself that the freshmen, with the possible exception of Eleanor, were disposed to regard the psychological experiment which had victimized them with perfect good-nature, and herself with considerable admiration, she condescended to accept congratulations and answer questions.

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"Seriously, girls," she said at last, "I hope no one got really scared. I wanted to explain when I heard Betty tell how unhappy Miss Madison was, but I really thought Miss Mansfield's denial would cheer her up more and reach her almost as quickly, and at the same time it would help me out so beautifully. It made such a grand conclusion!"

"You see," she went on, "Professor Hinsdale put the idea into my head when he assigned the subjects away back last month. He said he was giving them out early so we would have time to make original observations. When he mentioned 'Rumor,' he spoke of village gossip, and the faked stories that are circulated on Wall Street to make stocks go up or down, and then of the wild way we girls take up absurd reports. The last suggestion appealed to me, but I couldn't remember anything definite enough, so I decided to invent a rumor. Then I forgot all about it till that Saturday that I went skating, and 'you know the rest,' as our friend Mr. Longfellow aptly remarks. When I get my chef-d'œuvre back you may have a private view, in return for which I hope you'll encourage your friends not to hate me."

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"Isn't she fun?" said Betty a little later, when she and Helen were alone together. "Do you know, I think this rumor business has been a good thing. It's made a lot of us work hard, and only seriously frightened three or four."

"Yes," said Helen primly. "I think so too. The girls here are inclined to be very frivolous."

"Who?" demanded Betty.

Helen hesitated. "Oh, the girls as a whole."

"That doesn't count," objected Betty. "Give me a name."

"Well, Barbara Gordon."

"Takes sixteen hours, has her themes read in Mary's class, and in her spare moments paints water colors that are exhibited in Boston," said Betty promptly.

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"Really?" gasped Helen.

"Really," repeated Betty. "Of course she was very well prepared, and so her work here seems easy to her. Next year I hope that you and I won't have to plod along so."

Helen said nothing, but she was deeply grateful to Betty for that last sentence. "You and I"—as if there was something in common between them. The other girls set her apart in a class by herself and labeled her "dig." If one was born slow and conscientious and plodding, was there any hope for one,—any place among these pretty girls who worked so easily and idled so gracefully? Helen shut her lips firmly and resolved to keep on hunting.

CHAPTER XI
MID-YEARS AND A DUST-PAN

166

Viewed in retrospect the tragic experiences of one's freshman year seem often the most insignificant of trifles; but that does not prevent their being at the time momentous as the fate of empires. There are mid-year examinations, for instance; after one has survived them a few times she knows that being "flunked out" is not so common an experience as report represents it to be, and as for "low grades" and "conditions," if one has "cut" or been too often unprepared she deserves and expects them, and if she has done her best and still finds an unwelcome note or two on the official bulletin board, why, she must remember that accidents will happen, and are generally quite endurable when viewed philosophically. But in freshman year one is inexperienced and easily the dupe of mischievous sophomores. Then how is one to prepare for the dreadful ordeal? The distinction is not at all clear between the intelligent review that the faculty recommend and the cramming that they abhor. There is a disconcerting little rhyme on this subject that has been handed down from generation to generation for so long that it has lost most of its form and comeliness; but the point is still sharp. It is about a girl who followed the faculty's advice on the subject of cramming, took her exercise as usual, and went to bed each night at ten o'clock, as all good children should. The last stanza still rhymes, thus:

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"And so she did not hurry,
Nor sit up late to cram,
Nor have the blues and worry,
But-she failed in her exam."

Mary Brooks took pains that all her "young friends," as she called them, should hear of this instructive little poem.

"I really thought," said Betty on the first evening of the examination week, "when that hateful rumor was contradicted, that I should never be scared again, but I am."

"There's unfortunately nothing rumorous about these exams.," muttered Katherine wrathfully. "The one I had to-day was the real article, all right."

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"And I have my three worst to-morrow and next day," mourned Betty, "so I've got permission to sit up after ten to-night. Don't all the rest of you want to come in here and work? Then some one else can ask Mrs. Chapin for the other nights."

"But we must all attend strictly to business," said Mary Rich, whereat Helen Adams looked relieved.

And business was the order of the week. An unwonted stillness reigned over the Chapin house, broken occasionally by wild outbursts of hilarity, which meant that some examination or other was over and had not been so bad after all. Every evening at ten the girls who felt it necessary to sit up later assembled in one room, comfortably attired in kimonos—all except Roberta, who had never been seen without her collar—and armed with formidable piles of books; and presently work began in earnest. There was really no reason, as Rachel observed, why they should not stay in their own rooms, if they were going to sit up at all. This wasn't the campus, where there was a night-watchman to report lights, and Mrs. Chapin was very accommodating about giving permission.

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"This method benefits her gas bill though," said Katherine, "and therefore keeps her accommodating. Besides, it's much easier to stick to it in a crowd."

Eleanor never went through the formality of asking Mrs. Chapin's permission to do anything, and she did not care for the moral support of numbers. She was never sleepy, she said, pointing significantly to her brass samovar, and she could work best alone in her own room. She held aloof, too, from the discussions about the examinations which were the burden of the week's table-talk, only once in a while volunteering a suggestion about the possible answer to an obscure or ambiguous question. Her ideas invariably astonished the other freshmen by their depth and originality, but when any one exclaimed, Eleanor would say, sharply, "Why, it's all in the text-book!" and then relapse into gloomy silence.

"I suppose she talks more to her friends outside," suggested Rachel, after an encounter of this sort.

"Not on your life," retorted Katherine. "She's one of the kind that keeps herself to herself. She hates us because we have to know as much about her as we do, living here in the house with her. I hope she gets through all right."

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"She's awfully clever," said Mary Rich admiringly. "She'd never have said that a leviathan was some kind of a church creed, as I did in English."

"Yes, she's a clever-blunderer, but she's also a sadly mistaken young person," amended Katherine.

It was convenient to have one's examinations scattered evenly through the week with time for study between them, but pleasanter on the whole to be through by Thursday or Friday, with several days of delicious idleness before the new semester began. And as a certain faction of the

college always manages to suit its own convenience in such matters, the campus, which is the unfailing index of college sentiment, began to wear a leisurely, holiday air some time before the dreaded week was over.

The ground was covered deeply with snow which a sudden thaw and as sudden a freeze had coated with a thick, hard crust. This put a stop to snow-shoeing and delayed the work of clearing the ice off Paradise pond, where there was to be a moonlight carnival on the evening of the holiday that follows mid-year week. But it made splendid coasting. Toboggans, "bobs" and hand sleds appeared mysteriously in various quarters, and the pasture hills north of the town swarmed with Harding girls out for fresh air, exercise and fun.

On Friday afternoon an ingenious damsel who had no sled conceived the idea of substituting a dust-pan. So she borrowed one of an obliging chambermaid and went out to the little slope which divides the front from the back campus to try her experiment. In twenty minutes the hill was alive with girls, all the available dust-pans had been pressed into service, and large tin pans were found to do nearly as well. Envious groups of girls who could get neither the one nor the other watched the absurd spectacle from the windows of the nearest campus houses or hurried downtown to buy tinware. Sleds were neglected, toboggans despised; the dust-pan fad had taken possession of the college.

Betty, who had the happy faculty of being on hand at interesting moments, was crossing the campus on her way home from the Hilton House. She had taken her last examination, had helped Alice Waite finish up a box of candy, and now had nothing to do until dinner time, so she stopped to watch the novel coasting, and even had one delicious ride herself on Dorothy King's dust-pan.

Near the gate she met Mary Brooks and Roberta and asked them if they had been through the campus.

"No," said Mary, "we've been having chocolate at Cuyler's." And she dragged her companions back to within sight of the hill. Then she abruptly turned them about and hurried them off in the other direction.

"Let's go straight down and buy some dust-pans," she began enthusiastically. "We have just time before dinner, and we can slide all to-morrow afternoon."

"Oh, no," demurred Roberta. "I couldn't."

Betty laughed at her expression of alarm, and Mary demanded, "Why not?"

"Oh, I couldn't," repeated Roberta. "It looks dangerous, and, besides, I have to dress for dinner."

"Dangerous nothing!" jeered Mary. "Don't be so everlastingly neat and lady-like, child. What's the use? Well," as Roberta still hung back, "carry my fountain pen home, then, and don't spill it. Come on, Betty," and the two raced off down the hill.

Roberta looked after them admiringly, wishing she were not such a "muff" at outdoor sports.

The next afternoon Betty and Mary hurried over to the campus directly after luncheon to try their new toys. The crust was still firm and the new sport popular as ever.

"You see it's much more exciting than a 'bob,'" a tall senior was explaining to a group of on-lookers. "You can't steer, so you're just as likely to go down backward as frontward; and being so near the ground gives you a lovely creepy sensation."

"The point is, it's such a splendid antidote for overstudying. It just satisfies that absolutely idiotic feeling that every one has after mid-years," added an athletic young woman in a gray sweater, as she joined the group with her dust-pan tucked scientifically under her arm.

She was Marion Lawrence, sophomore vice-president, and Mary Brooks's best friend. Betty, fearing to be in the way, joined another lone freshman from the Belden House.

"Do you suppose you could sit up to study to-night if you had to?" inquired the freshman as they stood waiting their turns to go down.

"No, only it seems as if you always could do what you have to," answered Betty, starting off.

She decided presently that dust-pan coasting was not so much fun as it looked. Mary Brooks, coming to find her and ask her to join a racing tournament captained by herself and Marion Lawrence, declared noisily that she was having "the time of her gay young life," but Betty after the first coast or two began to think of going home. Perhaps it was because she was so tired. It seemed so much trouble to walk up on the slippery crust and such a long way round by the path. So she refused to enter the tournament. "I'm not going to stay long enough," she explained. "I shall just have two more slides. Then I'm going home to take a nap. That's my best antidote for overstudy."

The next coast was nicer. Perhaps the dust-pan had been too new. The Belden House freshman said that hers went better since her roommate had used it and scraped off all the paint in a collision.

"I wonder there aren't more collisions," said Betty, preparing for her last slide.

Half-way down she discovered that the other freshman and the rest hadn't started—that the hill was almost clear. Then somebody called shrilly, "Look out, Miss Wales." She turned her head back toward the voice, the dust-pan swirled, and she turned back again to find herself slipping rapidly sidewise straight toward a little lady who was walking serenely along the path that cut the coast at right angles. She was a faculty—Betty hadn't the least idea what her name was, but

she had noticed her on the "faculty row" at chapel. In an instant more she was certainly going to run into her. Betty dug her heels frantically into the crust. It would not break.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, but I can't stop!" she called.

At that the little lady, who was walking rapidly with her head bent against the wind, looked up and apparently for the first time noticed the dust-pan coasters. Mirth and confusion overcame her. She stopped an instant to laugh, then started back, then changed her mind and dashed wildly forward, with the inevitable result that she fell in an undignified heap on top of Betty and the dust-pan. The accident took place on the edge of the path where the crust was jagged and icy. Betty, who had gone head-first through it, emerged with a bleeding scratch on one cheek and a stinging, throbbing wrist. Fortunately her companion was not hurt.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" sighed Betty, trying to brush the snow off her victim with one hand. "I do hope you'll forgive me for being so careless." Then she sat down suddenly on the broken crust. "It's only that my wrist hurts a little," she finished abruptly.

The girls had gathered around them by this time, sympathizing and lamenting that they had not warned Betty in time. "But we thought of course you saw Miss Ferris," said the tall senior, "and we supposed she was looking out for you."

So this was Miss Ferris—the great Miss Ferris. Rachel had sophomore zoology with her and Mary Brooks had said that she was considered the most brilliant woman on the faculty. She was "house-teacher" at the Hilton, and Alice Waite and Miss Madison were always singing her praises.

She cut Betty's apologies and the girls' inquiries short. "My dear child, it was all my fault, and you're the one who's hurt. Why didn't you girls stop me sooner—call to me to go round the other way? I was in a hurry and didn't see or hear you up there." Then she sat down on the crust beside Betty. "Forgive me for laughing," she said, "but you did look so exactly like a giant crab sidling along on that ridiculous dust-pan. Have you sprained your wrist? Then you must come straight over to my room and wait for a carriage."

Betty's feeble protests were promptly overruled, and supported by Mary Brooks on one side and Miss Ferris on the other she was hurried over to the Hilton House and tucked up in Miss Ferris's Morris chair by her open fire, to await the arrival of the college doctor and a carriage. In spite of her embarrassment at having upset so important a personage, and the sharp pains that went shooting up and down her arm, she was almost sorry when doctor and carriage arrived together. Miss Ferris was even nicer than the girls had said. Somehow she made one feel at home immediately as she bustled about bringing a towel and a lotion for Betty's face, hot water for her wrist, and "butter-thins" spread with delicious strawberry jam to keep her courage up. Before she knew it, Betty was telling her all about her direful experiences during examination week, how frightened she had been, and how sleepy she was now,—"not just now of course"—and how she had been all ready to go home when the spill came. And Miss Ferris nodded knowingly at Mary and laughed her little rippling laugh.

"Just like these foolish little freshmen; isn't it?" she said, exactly as if she had been one last year too. And yet there was a suspicion of gray in her hair, and she was a doctor of philosophy and had written the leading article in the learned German magazine that lay on her table.

"You must come again, both of you, when I can make tea for you properly," she said as she closed the carriage door.

Betty, leaning whitely back on Mary's shoulder, with her arm on Miss Ferris's softest down pillow, smiled happily between the throbs. If she was fated to have sprained her wrist, she was glad that she had met Miss Ferris.

Saturday night and Sunday were long and dismal beyond belief. The wrist ached, the cheek smarted, and a bad cold added its quota to Betty's miseries. But she slept late Monday morning, and when she woke felt able to sit up in bed and enjoy her flowers and her notoriety. Just after luncheon the entire Chapin house came in to congratulate and condole with her.

"It's too windy to have any fun outdoors," began Rachel consolingly.

"Who sent you those violets?" demanded Katherine.

"Miss Ferris. Wasn't it dear of her? There was a note with them, too, that said she considered herself still 'deeply in my debt,' because of her carelessness—think of her saying that to me!—and that she hopes I won't hesitate to call on her if she 'can ever be of the slightest assistance.' And Mary, she said for us not to forget that Friday is her day at home."

"You are the luckiest thing, Betty Wales," sighed Rachel, who worshiped Miss Ferris from afar.

"Now if I'd knocked the august Miss Ferris down," declared Katherine, "I should probably have been expelled forthwith. Whereas you—" She finished the sentence with an expressive little gesture.

"Who gave you the rest of this conservatory, Betty?" asked Mary Brooks.

"Clara Madison brought the carnations, and Nita Reese, a girl in my geometry division, sent the white roses, and Eleanor the pink ones, and the freshman I was sliding with these lilies-of-the-valley. It's almost worth a sprained wrist to find out how kind people are to you," said Betty gratefully.

"Too bad you'll miss to-night," said Mary, "but maybe it will snow."

"I don't mind that. The worst thing is my not being able to get my conditions off the bulletin," said Betty, making a wry face.

"Goodness! That is a calamity!" said Katherine with mock seriousness.

"Nonsense! You've studied," from Rachel.

"If you should have any conditions, I'll bring them to you," volunteered Eleanor quietly. Then she looked straight at Rachel and Katherine and smiled pleasantly. "I'm sorry to say that I haven't studied," she said.

Betty thanked her, feeling more pleased at the apparent harmony of the household than she had been with all her flowers. It was so difficult to like Eleanor and Rachel and Katherine and Helen, all four, so well, when Rachel and Katherine had good reason for disliking Eleanor, and Helen wouldn't hitch with any of the rest.

"Do you know that Prexy had forbidden sliding on dust-pans?" asked Mary Rich in the awkward pause that followed.

"Oh, yes," added Mary Brooks, "I forgot to tell you. So it's just as well that I lost mine in the shuffle."

"But I'm sorry to have been the one to stop the fun," said Betty sadly.

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"Oh, it wasn't wholly that. Two other girls banged into each other after we left."

"But you're the famous one," added Rachel, "because you knocked over Miss Ferris. She looked so funny and knowing when Prexy announced it in chapel."

"I wish I could do something for you too," said Helen timidly, after the rest had drifted out of the room.

"Why you have," Betty assured her. "You helped a lot both times the doctor came, and you've stayed out of the room whenever I wanted to sleep, and brought up all my meals, and written home for me."

Helen flushed. "That's nothing. I meant something pretty like those," and she pointed to the tableful of flowers, and then going over to it buried her face in the bowl of English violets.

Betty watched her for a moment with a vague feeling of pity. "I don't suppose she has ten cents a month to spend on such things," she thought, "and as for having them sent to her—" Then she said aloud, "We certainly don't need any more of those at present. Were you going to the basketball game?"

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"I thought I would, if you didn't want me."

"Not a bit, and you're to wear some violets—a nice big bunch. Hand me the bowl, please, and I'll tie them up."

Helen gave a little gasp of pleasure. Then her face clouded. "But I couldn't take your violets," she added quickly.

Betty laughed and went on tying up the bunch, only making it bigger than she had at first intended. After Helen had gone she cried just a little. "I don't believe she ever had any violets before," she said to the green lizard. "Why, her eyes were like stars—she was positively pretty."

More than one person noticed the happy little girl who sat quite alone in the running track, dividing her eager attention between the game and the violets which she wore pinned to her shabby, old-fashioned brown jacket.

Meanwhile Betty, propped up among her pillows, was trying to answer Nan's last letter.

"You seem to be interested in so many other people's affairs," Nan had written, "that you haven't any time for your own. Don't make the mistake of being a hanger-on."

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"You see, Nan," wrote Betty, "I am at last a heroine, an interesting invalid, with scars, and five bouquets of flowers on my table. I am sorry that I don't amount to more usually. The trouble is that the other people here are so clever or so something-or-other that I can't help being more interested in them. I'm afraid I am only an average girl, but I do seem to have a lot of friends and Miss Ferris, whom you are always admiring, has asked me to five o'clock tea. Perhaps, some day—"

Writing with one's left hand was too laborious, so Betty put the letter in a pigeon-hole of her desk to be finished later. As she slipped the sheets in, Miss Ferris's note dropped out. "I wonder if I shall ever want to ask her anything," thought Betty, as she put it carefully away in the small drawer of her desk that held her dearest treasures.

CHAPTER XII

A TRIUMPH FOR DEMOCRACY

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By Wednesday Betty was well enough to go to classes, though she felt very conspicuous with her scratched face and her wrist in a sling. And so when early Wednesday afternoon Eleanor pounced

on her and Katherine and demanded why they were not starting to class-meeting, she replied that she at least was not going.

"Nor I," said Katherine decidedly. "It's sure to be stupid."

"I'm sorry," said Eleanor. "We may need you badly; every one is so busy this week. Perhaps you'll change your minds before two-thirty, and if you do, please bring all the other girls that you can along. You know the notice was marked important."

"Evidently all arranged beforehand," sniffed Katherine, as Eleanor departed, explaining that she had promised to be on hand early, ready to drum up a quorum if necessary.

Betty looked out at the clear winter sunshine. "I wanted a little walk," she said. "Let's go. If it's long and stupid we can leave; and we ought to be loyal to our class."

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"All right," agreed Katherine. "I'll go if you will. I should rather like to see what they have on hand this time."

"They" meant the Hill-School contingent, who from the initial meeting had continued to run the affairs of the class of 19-. Some of the girls were indignant, and a few openly rebellious, but the majority were either indifferent or satisfied that the Hill clique was as good as any other that might get control in its stead. So the active opposition had been able to accomplish nothing, and Hill's machine, as a cynical sophomore had dubbed it, had elected its candidates for three class officers and the freshman representative on the Students' Commission, while the various class committees were largely made up of Jean Eastman's intimate friends.

"I hope that some of the crowd have nicer manners than our dear Eleanor and are better students," Mary Brooks had said to Betty. "Otherwise I'm afraid your ship of state will run into a snag of faculty prejudices some fine day."

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Betty belonged to the indifferent faction of the class. She was greatly interested in all its activities, and prepared to be proud of its achievements, but she possessed none of the instincts of a wire-puller. So long as the class offices were creditably filled she cared not who held them, and comparing her ignorance of parliamentary procedure with the glib self-confidence of Jean, Eleanor and their friends, she even felt grateful to them for rescuing the class from the pitfalls that beset inexperience.

Katherine, on the other hand, was a bitter opponent of what she called "ring rule," and Adelaide Rich, who was the only recruit that they could succeed in adding to their party, had never forgotten the depths of iniquity which her pessimistic acquaintance had revealed in the seemingly innocent and well conducted first meeting, and was prepared to distrust everything, down to the reading of the minutes.

The three were vigorously applauded when they appeared in the door of No. 19, the biggest recitation room in the main building and so the one invariably appropriated to freshman assemblies. Katherine whispered to Mary that she had not known Betty was quite so popular as all that; but a girl on the row behind the one in which they found seats explained matters by whispering that three had been the exact number needed to make up a quorum.

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The secretary's report was hastily read and accepted, and then Miss Eastman stated that the business of the meeting was to elect a class representative for the Washington's Birthday debate.

"Some of you know," she continued, "that the Students' Commission has decided to make a humorous debate the main feature of the morning rally. We and the juniors are to take one side, and the senior and sophomore representatives the other. Now I suppose the first thing to decide is how our representative shall be chosen."

A buzz of talk spread over the room. "Why didn't they let us know beforehand—give us time to think who we'd have?" inquired the talkative girl on the row behind.

The president rapped for order as Kate Denise, her roommate, rose to make a motion.

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"Madame president, I move that the freshman representative aforesaid be chosen by the chair. Of course," she went on less formally, turning to the girls, "that is by far the quickest way, and Jean knows the girls as a whole so well—much better than any of us, I'm sure. I think that a lot depends on choosing just the right person for our debater, and we ought not to trust to a haphazard election."

"Haphazard is good," muttered the loquacious freshman, in tones plainly audible at the front of the room.

"Of course that means a great responsibility for me," murmured the president modestly.

"Put it to vote," commanded a voice from the front row, which was always occupied by the ruling faction. "And remember, all of you, that if we ballot for representative we don't get out of here till four o'clock."

The motion was summarily put to vote, and the ayes had it at once, as the ayes are likely to do unless a matter has been thoroughly discussed.

"I name Eleanor Watson, then," said Miss Eastman with suspicious promptness. "Will somebody move to adjourn?"

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"Well, of all ridiculous appointments!" exclaimed the loquacious girl under cover of the applause and the noise of moving chairs.

"Right you are!" responded Katherine, laughing at Adelaide Rich's disgusted expression.

But Betty was smiling happily with her eyes on the merry group around Eleanor. "Aren't you glad, girls?" she said. "Won't she do well, and won't the house be proud of her?"

"I for one never noticed that she was a single bit humorous," began Mary indignantly.

Katherine pinched her arm vigorously. "Don't! What's the use?" she whispered.

"Nor I, but I suppose Miss Eastman knows that she can be funny," answered Betty confidently, as she hurried off to congratulate Eleanor.

She was invited to the supper to be given at Cuyler's that night in Eleanor's honor, and went home blissfully unconscious that half the class was talking itself hoarse over Jean Eastman's bad taste in appointing a notorious "cutter" and "flunker" to represent them on so important an occasion, just because she happened to be the best dressed and prettiest girl in the Hill crowd.

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The next afternoon most of the girls were at gym or the library, and Betty, who was still necessarily excused from her daily exercise, was working away on her Latin, when some one knocked imperatively on her door. It was Jean Eastman.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Wales," she said hurriedly. "Will you lend me a pencil and paper? Eleanor has such a habit of keeping her desk locked, and I want to leave her a note."

She scribbled rapidly for a moment, frowned as she read through what she had written, and looked doubtfully from it to Betty. Then she rose to go. "Will you call her attention to this, please?" she said. "It's very important. And, Miss Wales,—if she should consult you, do advise her to resign quietly and leave it to me to smooth things over."

"Resign?" repeated Betty vaguely.

"Yes," said Jean. "You see—well, I might as well tell you now, that I've said so much. The faculty object to her taking the debate. Perhaps you know that she's very much in their black books but I didn't. And I never dreamed that they would think it any of their business who was our debater, but I assure you they do. At least half a dozen of them have spoken to me about her poor work and her cutting. They say that she is just as much ineligible for this as she would be for the musical clubs or the basket-ball team. Now what I want is for Eleanor to write a sweet little note of resignation to-night, so that I can appoint some one else bright and early in the morning."

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Betty's eyes grew big with anxiety. "But won't the girls guess the reason?" she cried. "Think how proud Eleanor is, Miss Eastman. It would hurt her terribly if any one found out that she had been conditioned. You shouldn't have told me—indeed you shouldn't!"

Jean laughed carelessly. "Well, you know now, and there's no use crying over spilt milk. I used that argument about the publicity of the affair to the faculty, but it was no go. So the only thing for you to do is to help Eleanor write a nice, convincing note of resignation that I can read at the next meeting, when I announce my second appointment."

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"But Eleanor won't ask my help," said Betty decidedly, "and, besides, what can she say, after accepting all the congratulations, and having the supper?"

Jean laughed again. "I'm afraid you're not a bit ingenious, Miss Wales," she said rising to go, "but fortunately Eleanor is. Good-bye."

When Betty handed Eleanor the note she read it through unconcernedly, unconcernedly tore it into bits as she talked, and spent the entire evening, apparently, in perfect contentment and utter idleness, strumming softly on her guitar.

The next morning Betty met Jean on the campus. "Did she tell you?" asked Jean.

Betty shook her head.

"I thought likely she hadn't. Well, what do you suppose? She won't resign. She says that there's no real reason she can give, and that she's now making it a rule to tell the truth; that I'm in a box, not she, and I may climb out of it as best as I can."

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"Did she really say that?" demanded Betty, a note of pleasure in her voice.

"Yes," snapped Jean, "and since you're so extremely cheerful over it, perhaps you can tell me what to do next."

Betty stared at her blankly. "I forgot," she said. "The girls mustn't know. We must cover it up somehow."

"Exactly," agreed Jean crossly, "but what I want to know is—how."

"Why not ask the class to choose its speaker? All the other classes did."

Jean looked doubtful. "I know they did. That would make it very awkward for me, but I suppose I might say there had been dissatisfaction—that's true enough,—and we could have it all arranged—Well, when I call a meeting, be sure to come and help us out."

The meeting was posted for Saturday, and all the Chapin house girls, except Helen, who never had time for such things, and Eleanor, attended it. Eleanor was expecting a caller, she said. Besides, as she hadn't been to classes in the morning there was no sense in emphasizing the fact by parading through the campus in the afternoon.

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At the last minute she called Betty back. "Paul may not get over to-day," she said. "Won't you

come home right off to tell me about it? I-well, you'll see later why I want to know-if you haven't guessed already."

The class of 19- had an inkling that something unusual was in the wind and had turned out in full force. There was no need of waiting for a quorum this time. After the usual preliminaries Jean Eastman rose and began a halting, nervous little speech.

"I have heard," she began, "that is-a great many people in and out of the class have spoken to me about the matter of the Washington's Birthday debate. I mean, about the way in which our debater was appointed. I understand there is a great deal of dissatisfaction-that some of the class say they did not understand which way they were voting, and so on. So I thought you might like to reconsider your vote. I certainly, considering position in the matter, want you to have the chance to do so. Now, can we have this point thoroughly discussed?" Then, as no one rose, "Miss Wales, won't you tell us what you think?"

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Betty stared helplessly at Jean for a moment and then, assisted by vigorous pushes from Katherine and Rachel, who sat on either side of her, rose hesitatingly to her feet. "Miss Eastman,-I mean, madame president," she began. She stopped for an instant to look at her audience. Apparently the class of 19- was merely astonished and puzzled by Jean's suggestion; there was no indication that any one-except possibly a few of the Hill girls-had any idea of her motive. "Madame president," repeated Betty, forcing back the lump that had risen in her throat when she realized that the keeping of Eleanor's secret lay largely with her, "Miss Watson is my friend, and I was very much pleased to have her for our representative. But I do feel, and I believe the other girls do, as they come to think it over, that it would have been better to elect our representative. Then we should every one of us have had a direct interest in the result of the debate. Besides, all the other classes elected theirs, and so I think, if Miss Watson is willing—"

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"Miss Watson is perfectly willing," broke in Jean. "A positive engagement unfortunately prevents her being here to say so, but she authorized me to state that she preferred the elective choice herself, and to tell you to do just as you think best in the matter. She—Go on, Miss Wales."

"Oh, that was all," said Betty hastily slipping back into her seat.

A group of girls in the farthest corner of the room clapped vigorously.

"Nothing cut-and-dried about that," whispered Katherine to Adelaide Rich.

"Are there any more remarks?" inquired the president. No one seemed anxious to speak, and she went on rather aimlessly. "Miss Wales has really covered the ground, I think. The other classes all elected their debaters, and I fancy they want us to do the same. As for the faculty-well, I may as well say that they almost insist upon a change."

"Good crawl," whispered Katherine, who was quick to put two and two together, to Adelaide Rich, who never got the point of any but the most obvious remarks, and who now looked much perplexed.

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Meanwhile Betty had been holding whispered consultations with some of the girls around her, and now she rose again. Her "madame president" was so obviously prior to Kate Denise's that when Kate was recognized there was an ominous murmur of discontent and Jean apologized and promptly reversed her decision.

"Perhaps I oughtn't to speak twice," said Betty blushing at the commotion she had caused, "but if we are to change our vote, some of us think it would be fun to hold a preliminary debate now, and choose our speaker on her merits. We did that once at school—"

"Good stunt," called some one.

"I move that Miss Wales as chairman select a committee of arrangements, and that we have a five minute recess while the committee meets."

"I move that there be two committees, one for nominating speakers and the other for choosing a subject."

"I move that we reconsider our other vote first."

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The motions were coming in helter-skelter from all quarters, instead of decorously from the front row as usual. The president was trying vainly to restore order and to remember whose motion should have precedence, and to make way somehow for the prearranged nomination, which so far had been entirely crowded out, when three girls in one corner of the room began thumping on their seat-arms and chanting in rhythmic, insistent chorus, "We-want-Emily-Davis. We-want-Emily-Davis. We-want-Emily-Davis."

Hardly any one in the room had ever heard of Emily Davis, but the three girls constituted an original and very popular little coterie known individually as Babe, Babbie, and Bob, or collectively as "the three B's." They roomed on the top floor of the Westcott House and were famous in the house for being at the same time prime favorites of the matron and the ringleaders in every plot against her peace of mind, and outside for their unique and diverting methods of recreation. It was they who had successfully gulled Mary Brooks with a rumor as absurd as her own; and accounts of the "spread" they had handed out to the night-watchman in a tin pail, and dangled just out of his reach, in the hope of extracting a promise from that incorruptible worthy not to report their lights, until the string incontinently broke and the ice cream and lobster salad descended as a flood, were reported to have made even the august president of the college laugh. Ergo, if they "wanted" Emily Davis, she must be worth "wanting." So their friends took up the cry, and it quickly spread and gathered volume, until nearly everybody in the room was shouting

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the same thing. Finally the president stepped forward and made one determined demand for order.

"Is Miss Emily Davis present?" she called, when the tumult had slightly subsided.

"Yes," shouted the Three and the few others who knew Miss Davis by sight.

"Then will she please-why, exactly what is it that you want of her?" questioned the president, a trifle haughtily.

"Speech!" chorused the Three.

"Will Miss Davis please speak to us?" asked the president.

At that a very tall girl who was ineffectually attempting to hide behind little Alice Waite was pulled and pushed to her feet, and amid a sudden silence began the funniest speech that most of the class of 19- had ever listened to; but it was not so much what she said as her inimitable drawling delivery and her lunging, awkward gestures that brought down the house. When she took her seat again, resolutely ignoring persistent cries of "More!" the class applauded her to the echo and elected her freshman debater by acclamation.

It was wonderful what a change those twenty riotous minutes had made in the spirit of the class of 19-. For the first time in its history it was an enthusiastic, single-hearted unit, and to the credit of the Hill girls be it said that no one was more enthusiastic or joined in the applause with greater vigor than they. They had not meant to be autocratic-except three of them; they had simply acted according to their lights, or rather, their leaders' lights. Now they understood how affairs could be conducted at Harding, and during the rest of the course they never entirely forgot or ignored the new method.

To Betty's utter astonishment and consternation the lion's share of credit for the sudden triumph of democracy was laid at her door. The group around her after the meeting was almost as large and quite as noisy as the one that was struggling to shake hands with Miss Davis.

"Don't! You mustn't. Why, it was the B's who got her, not I," protested Betty vigorously.

"No, you began it," said Babe.

"You bet you did," declared Bob.

"Yes, indeed. We were too scared to speak of her until you proposed something like it," added Babbie in her sweet, lilting treble.

"You can't get out of it. You are the real founder of this democracy," ended Christy Mason decidedly. Betty was proud of Christy's approval. It was fun, too, to have the Hill girls crowding around and saying pleasant things to her.

"I almost think I'm somebody at last. Won't Nan be pleased!" she reflected as she hurried home to keep her promise to Eleanor. Then she laughed merrily all to herself. "Those silly girls! I really didn't do a thing," she thought. And then she sighed. "I never get a chance to be a bit vain. I wish I could-one little wee bit. I wonder if Mr. West came."

It did not occur to Betty as at all significant that Jean Eastman and Kate Denise had not spoken to her after the meeting, until, when she knocked on Eleanor's door, Eleanor came formally to open it. "Jean and Kate are here," she said coldly, "so unless you care to stop—"

Jean and Kate nodded silently from the couch where they were eating candy.

"Oh, no," said Betty in quick astonishment. "I'll come some other time."

"You needn't bother," answered Eleanor rudely. "They've told me all about it," and she shut the door, leaving Betty standing alone in the hall.

Betty winked hard to keep back the tears as she hurried to her own room. What could it all mean? She had done her best for Eleanor, and nobody had guessed-they had been too busy laughing at that ridiculous Emily Davis-and now Eleanor treated her like this. And Jean Eastman, too, when she had done exactly what Jean wanted of her. Jean's curtness was even less explainable than Eleanor's, though it mattered less. It was all-queer. Betty smiled faintly as she applied Alice Waite's favorite adjective. Well, there was nothing more to be done until she could see Eleanor after dinner. So she wiped her eyes, smoothed her hair, and went resolutely off to find Roberta, whose heavy shoes-another of Roberta's countless fads-had just clumped past her door.

"I'm writing my definitions for to-morrow's English," announced Roberta. "For the one we could choose ourselves I'm going to invent a word and then make up a meaning for it. Isn't that a nice idea?"

"Very," said Betty listlessly.

Roberta looked at her keenly. "I believe you're homesick," she said. "How funny after such a jubilant afternoon."

Betty smiled wearily. "Perhaps I am. Anyway, I wish I were at home."

Meanwhile in Eleanor's room an acrimonious discussion was in progress.

"The more I think of it," Kate Denise was saying emphatically, "the surer I am that she didn't do a thing against us this afternoon. She isn't to blame for having started a landslide by accident, Jean. Did you see her face when Eleanor turned her down just now? She looked absolutely

nonplussed."

"Most people do when the lady Eleanor turns and rends them," returned Jean, with a reminiscent smile.

"Just the same," continued Kate Denise, "I say you have a lot to thank her for this afternoon, Jean Eastman. She got you out of a tight hole in splendid shape. None of us could have done it without stamping the whole thing a put-up job, and most of the outsiders who could have helped you out, wouldn't have cared to oblige you. It was irritating to see her rallying the multitudes, I'll admit; but I insist that it wasn't her fault. We ought to have managed better."

"Say I ought to have managed better and be done with it," muttered Jean crossly.

"You certainly ought," retorted Eleanor. "You've made me the laughing-stock of the whole college."

"No, Eleanor," broke in Kate Denise pacifically. "Truly, your dignity is intact, thanks to Miss Wales and those absurd B's who followed her lead."

"Never mind them. I'm talking about Betty Wales. She was a friend of mine—she was at the supper the other night. Why couldn't she leave it to some one else to object to your appointing me?"

"Oh, if that's all you care about," said Jean irritably, "don't blame Miss Wales. The thing had to be done you know. I didn't see that it mattered who did it, and so I—well, I practically asked her. What I'm talking about is her way of going at it—her having pushed herself forward so, and really thrown us out of power by using what I—" Jean caught herself suddenly, remembering that Eleanor did not know about Betty's having been let into the secret.

"By using what you told her," finished Kate innocently. "Well, why did you tell her all about it, if you didn't expect—"

Eleanor stood up suddenly, her face white with anger. "How dared you," she challenged. "As if it wasn't insulting enough to get me into a scrape like this, and give any one with two eyes a chance to see through your flimsy little excuses, but you have to go round telling people—"

"Eleanor, stop," begged Jean. "She was the only one I told. I let it out quite by accident the day I came up here to see you. Not another soul knows it but Kate, and you told her yourself. You'd have told Betty Wales, too,—you know you would—if we hadn't seen you first this afternoon."

"Suppose I should," Eleanor retorted hotly. "What I do is my own affair. Please go home."

Jean stalked out in silence, but Kate, hesitating between Scylla and Charybdis, lingered to say consolingly, "Cheer up, Eleanor. When you come to think it over, it won't seem so—"

"Please go home," repeated Eleanor, and Kate hurried after her roommate.

CHAPTER XIII

SAINT VALENTINE'S ASSISTANTS

If Eleanor had taken Kate's advice and indulged in a little calm reflection, she would have realized how absolutely reasonless was her anger against Betty Wales. Betty had been told of the official objections which made it necessary for Eleanor to be withdrawn from the debate. Her action, then, had been wholly proper and perfectly friendly. But Eleanor was in no mood for reflection. A wild burst of passion held her firmly in its grasp. She hated everybody and everything in Harding—the faculty who had made such a commotion about two little low grades—for Eleanor had come surprisingly near to clearing her record at mid-years,—Jean, who had stupidly brought all this extra annoyance upon her; the class, who were glad to get rid of her, Betty, who—yes, Jean had been right about one thing—Betty, who had taken advantage of a friend's misfortune to curry favor for herself. They were all leagued against her. But—here the Watson pride suddenly asserted itself—they should never know that she cared, never guess that they had hurt her.

She deliberately selected the most becoming of her new evening gowns, and in an incredibly short time swept down to dinner, radiantly beautiful in the creamy lace dress, and—outwardly at least—in her sunniest, most charming mood. She insisted that the table should admire her dress, and the pearl pendant which her aunt had just sent her.

"I'm wearing it, you see, to celebrate my return to the freedom of private life," she rattled on glibly. "I understand you've found a genius to take my place. I'm delighted that we have one in the class. It's so convenient. Who of you are going to the Burton House dance to-night?"

So she led the talk from point to point and from hand to hand. She bantered Mary, deferred to Helen and the Riches, appealed in comradely fashion to Katherine and Rachel. Betty alone she utterly, though quite unostentatiously, ignored; and Betty, too much hurt to make any effort, stood aside and tried to solve the riddle of Eleanor's latest caprice. On the way up-stairs Eleanor spoke to her for the first time. She went up just ahead of her and at the top of the flight she turned and waited.

"I understand that you quite ran the class to-day," she said with a flashing smile. "The girls tell me that you're a born orator, as good in your way as the genius in hers."

Betty rallied herself for one last effort. "Don't make fun of me, Eleanor. Please let me come in and tell you about it. You don't understand—"

"Possibly not," said Eleanor coldly. "But I'm going out now."

"Just for a moment!"

"But I have to start at once. I'm late already."

"Oh, very well," said Betty, and turned away to join Mary and Roberta.

Eleanor's mind always worked with lightning rapidity, and while she dressed she had gone over the whole situation and decided exactly how she would meet it; and in the weeks that followed she kept rigidly to the course she had marked out for herself, changing only one detail. At first she had intended to have nothing more to do with Jean, but she saw that a sudden breaking off of their friendship would be remarked upon and wondered at. So she compromised by treating Jean exactly as usual, but seeing her as little as possible. This made it necessary to refuse many of her invitations to college affairs, for wherever she went Jean was likely to go. So she spent much of her leisure time away from Harding; she went to Winsted a great deal, and often ran down to Boston or New York for Sunday, declaring that the trips meant nothing to a Westerner used to the "magnificent distances" of the plains. Naturally she grew more and more out of touch with the college life, more and more scornful of the girls who could be content with the narrow, humdrum routine at Harding. But she concealed her scorn perfectly. And she no longer neglected her work; she attended her classes regularly and managed with a modicum of preparation to recite far better than the average student. Furthermore her work was now scrupulously honest, and she was sensitively alert to the slightest imputation of untruthfulness. She offered no specious explanations for her withdrawal from the debate, and when Mary Brooks innocently inquired "what little yarn" she told the registrar, that she could get away so often, Eleanor fixed her with an unpleasantly penetrative stare and answered with all her old-time hauteur that she did not tell "yarns."

"I have a note from my father. So long as I do my work and go to all my classes, they really can't object to my spending my Sundays as he wishes."

Betty observed all these changes without being in the least able to reconcile them with Eleanor's new attitude toward herself. Unlike the friendship with Jean, Eleanor's intercourse with her had been inconspicuous, confined mostly to the Chapin house itself. Even the girls there, because Eleanor had stood so aloof from them, had seen little of it, so Eleanor was free to break it off without thinking of public opinion, and she did so ruthlessly. From the day of the class meeting she spoke to Betty only when she must, or, if no one was by, when some taunting remark occurred to her.

At first Betty tried her best to think how she could have offended, but she could not discuss the subject with any one else and endless consideration and rejection of hypotheses was fruitless, so after Eleanor had twice refused her an interview that would have settled the matter, she sensibly gave it up. Eleanor would perhaps "come round" in time. Meanwhile it was best to let her alone.

But Betty felt that she was having more than her share of trouble; Helen was quite as trying in her way as Eleanor in hers. She had entirely lost her cheerful air and seemed to have grown utterly discouraged with life.

"And no wonder, for she studies every minute," Betty told Rachel and Katherine. "I think she feels hurt because the girls don't get to like her better, but how can they when she doesn't give them any chance?"

"She's awfully touchy lately," added Katherine.

"Poor little thing!" said Rachel.

Then the three plunged into an animated discussion of basket-ball, and Rachel and Katherine, who were on a sort of provisional team that included most of the best freshman players and arrogated to itself the name of "The Stars," showed Betty in strictest confidence the new cross-play that "T. Reed" had invented. "T. Reed" seemed to be the basket-ball genius of the freshman class. She was the only girl who was perfectly sure to be on the regular team.

It is one of the fine things about college that no matter who of your friends are temporarily lost to you, there is always somebody else to fall back upon, and some new interest to take the place of one that flags. Betty had noticed this and been amused by it early in her course. Sometimes, as she said to Miss Ferris in one of her many long talks with that lady, things change so fast that you really begin to wonder if you can be the same person you were last week.

Besides the inter-class basket-ball game, there was the Hilton House play to talk about and look forward to, and the rally; and, nearer still, St. Valentine's day. It was a long time, to be sure, since Betty had been much excited over the last named festival; in her experience only children exchanged valentines. But at Harding it seemed to be different. While the day was still several weeks off she had received three invitations to valentine parties. She consulted Mary Brooks and found that this was not at all unusual.

"All the campus houses give them," Mary explained, "and the big ones outside, just as they do for Hallowe'en. They have valentine boxes, you know, and sometimes fancy dress balls."

And there the matter would have dropped if Mary had not spent all her monthly allowance three full weeks before she was supposed to have any more. Poverty was Mary's chronic state. Not that Dr. Brooks's checks were small, but his daughter's spending capacity was infinite.

"You wait till you're a prominent sophomore," she said when Katherine laughed at her, "and all your friends are making societies, and you just have to provide violets and suppers, in hopes that they'll do as much for you later on. The whole trouble is that father wants me to be on an allowance, instead of writing home for money when I'm out. And no matter how much I say I need, it never lasts out the month."

"Why don't you tutor?" suggested Rachel, who got along easily on a third of what Mary spent. "I hope to next year."

"Tutor!" repeated Mary with a reminiscent chuckle. "I tried to tutor my cousin this fall in algebra, and the poor thing flunked much worse than before. But anyway the faculty wouldn't give me regular tutoring. I look too well-to-do. Ah! how deceitful are appearances!" sighed Mary, opening her pocketbook, where five copper pennies rattled about forlornly.

But the very next day she dashed into Betty's room proclaiming loudly, "I have an idea, and I want you to help me, Betty Wales. You can draw and I'll cut them out and drum up customers, and I guess I can write the verses. We ought to make our ad. to-night."

"Our what?" inquired Betty in an absolutely mystified tone.

Then Mary explained that she proposed to sell valentines. "Lots of the girls who can't draw buy theirs, not down-town, you know—we don't give that kind here,—but cunning little hand-made ones with pen-and-ink drawings and original verses. Haven't you noticed the signs on the 'For Sale' bulletin?"

Betty had not even seen that bulletin board since she and Helen had hunted second-hand screens early in the fall, but the plan sounded very attractive; it would fill up her spare hours, and keep her from worrying over Eleanor, and getting cross at Helen, so she was very willing to help if Mary honestly thought she could draw well enough.

"Goodness, yes!" said Mary, rushing off to borrow Roberta's water-color paper and Katherine's rhyming dictionary.

So the partnership was formed, a huge red heart covered with hastily decorated samples was stuck up on the "For Sale" bulletin in the gymnasium basement, and, as Betty's cupids were really very charming and her Christy heads quite as good as the average copy, names began to appear in profusion on the order-sheet.

Mary had written two sample verses with comparative ease, and in the first flush of confidence she had boldly printed on the sign: "Rhymed grinds for special persons furnished at reasonable rates." But later, when everybody seemed to want that kind, even the valuable aid of the rhyming dictionary did not disprove the adage that poets are born, not made.

"I can't—I just can't do them," wailed Mary finally. "Jokes simply will not go into rhyme. What shall we do?"

"Get Roberta—she writes beautifully—and Katherine—she told me that she'd like to help," suggested Betty, without looking up from the chubby cupid she was fashioning.

So Katherine and Roberta were duly approached and Katherine was added to the firm. Roberta at first said she couldn't, but finally, after exacting strict pledges of secrecy, she produced half a dozen dainty little lyrics, bidding Mary use them if she wished—they were nothing. But no amount of persuasion would induce her to do any more.

However, Katherine's genius was nothing if not profuse, and she preferred to do "grinds," so Mary could devote herself to sentimental effusions,—which, so she declared, did not have to have any special point and so were within her powers,—and to the business end of the project. This, in her view, consisted in perching on a centrally located window-seat in the main building, in the intervals between classes, and soliciting orders from all passers-by, to the consequent crowding of the narrow halls and the great annoyance of the serious-minded, who wished to reach their recitations promptly. But from her point of view she was strikingly successful.

"I tell you, I never appreciated how easy it is to make money if you only set about it in the right way," she announced proudly one day at luncheon. "By the way, Betty, would you run down after gym to get our old order sheet and put up a new one? I have a special topic in psychology tomorrow, and if Professor Hinsdale really thinks I'm clever I don't want to undeceive him too suddenly."

Betty promised, but after gym Rachel asked her to stay and play basket-ball with "The Stars" in the place of an absent member. Naturally she forgot everything else and it was nearly six o'clock when, sauntering home from an impromptu tea-drinking at the Belden House, she remembered the order sheet. It was very dusky in the basement. Betty, plunging down the steps that led directly into the small room where the bulletin board was, almost knocked down a girl who was curled up on the bottom step of the flight.

"Goodness! did I hurt you?" she said, a trifle exasperated that any one should want to sit alone in the damp darkness of the basement.

There was no answer, and Betty, whose eyes were growing accustomed to the dim light, observed with consternation that her companion was doing her best to stop crying.

As has already been remarked, Betty hated tears as a kitten hates rain. Personally she never cried without first locking her door, and she could imagine nothing so humiliating as to be caught, unmistakably weeping, by a stranger. So she turned aside swiftly, peered about in the shadows for the big red heart, changed the order sheet, and was wondering whether she would better hurry out past the girl or wait for her to recover her composure and depart, when the girl took the situation out of her hands by rising and saying in cheery tones, "Good-evening, Miss Wales. Are you going my way?"

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"I-why it's Emily-I mean Miss-Davis," cried Betty.

"Yes, it's Emily Davis, in the blues, the more shame to her, when she ought to be at home getting supper this minute. Wait just a second, please." Miss Davis went over to the signs, jerked down one, and picking up her books from the bottom step announced without the faintest trace of embarrassment, "Now I'm ready."

"But are you sure you want me?" inquired Betty timidly.

"Bless you, yes," said Miss Davis. "I've wanted to know you for ever so long. I'm sorry you caught me being a goose, though."

"And I'm sorry you felt like crying," said Betty shyly. "Why, Miss Davis, I should want to laugh all the time if I'd done what you did the other day. I should be so proud."

Miss Davis smiled happily down at her small companion. "I was proud," she said simply. "I only hope I can do as well week after next. But Miss Wales, that was the jam of college life. There's the bread and butter too, you know, and sometimes that's a lot harder to earn than the jam."

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"Do you mean—" began Betty and stopped, not wanting to risk hurting Miss Davis's feelings.

"Yes, I mean that I'm working my way through. I have a scholarship, but there's still my board and clothes and books."

"And you do it all?"

Miss Davis nodded. "My cousin sends me some clothes."

"How do you do it, please?"

"Tutor, sort papers and make typewritten copies of things for the faculty, put on dress braids (that's how I met the B's), mend stockings, and wait on table off and on when some one's maid leaves suddenly. We thought it would be cheaper and pleasanter to board ourselves and earn our money in different ways than to take our board in exchange for regular table-waiting; but I don't know. The other way is surer."

"You mean you don't find work enough?"

Miss Davis nodded. "It takes a good deal," she said apologetically, "and there isn't much tutoring that freshmen can do. After this year it will be easier."

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"Dear me," gasped Betty. "Don't you get any-any help from home?"

"Well, they haven't been able to send any yet, but they hope to later," said Miss Davis brightly.

"And does it pay when you have to work so hard for it?"

"Oh, yes," answered Miss Davis promptly. "All three of us are sure that it pays."

"Three of you live together?"

"Yes. Of course there are ever so many others in the college, and I'm sure all of them would say the same thing."

"And-I hope I'm not being rude-but do girls-do you advertise things down on that bulletin board? I don't know much about it. I never was there but once till I went to-day on-on an errand for a friend," Betty concluded awkwardly. Perhaps she had been an interloper. Perhaps that bulletin board had not been meant for girls like her.

Miss Davis evidently assumed that she had been to leave an order. "You ought to buy more," she said laughingly. "But you want to know what I was there for, don't you? Why yes, we do make a good deal off that bulletin board. One of the girls paints a little and she advertises picture frames-Yale and Harvard and Pennsylvania ones, you know. I sell blue-prints. A senior lends me her films. She has a lot of the faculty and the campus, and they go pretty well. We use the money we make from those things for little extras-ribbons and note-books and desserts for Sunday. We hoped to make quite a bit on valentines—"

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"Valentines?" repeated Betty sharply.

"Yes, but a good many others thought of it too, and we didn't get any orders-not one. Ours weren't so extra pretty and it was foolish of me to be so disappointed, but we'd worked hard getting ready and we did want a little more money so much."

They had reached Betty's door by this time, and Miss Davis hurried on, saying it was her turn to get supper and begging Betty to come and see them. "For we're very cozy, I assure you. You mustn't think we have a horrid time just because-you know why."

Betty went straight to Mary's room, which, since she had no roommate to object to disorder, had been the chief seat of the valentine industry.

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"You're a nice one," cried Katherine, "staying off like this when to-day is the eleventh."

"Many orders?" inquired Mary.

Betty sat down on Mary's couch, ruthlessly sweeping aside a mass of half finished valentines to make room. "Girls, this has got to stop," she announced abruptly.

Mary dropped her scissors and Katherine shut the rhyming dictionary with a bang.

"What is the trouble?" they asked in chorus.

Then Betty told her story, suppressing only Emily's name and mentioning all the details that had made up the point and pathos of it. "And just think!" she said at last. "She's a girl you'd both be proud to know, and she works like that. And we stepped in and took away a chance of-of ribbons and note-books and dessert for Sunday."

"May be not; perhaps hers were so homely they wouldn't have sold anyway," suggested Katherine with an attempt at jocoseness.

"Don't, please," said Betty wearily.

Mary came and sat down beside her on the couch. "Well, what's to be done about it now?" she asked soberly.

"I don't know. We can't give them orders because she took her sign down. I thought perhaps-how much have we made?"

"Fifteen dollars easily. All right; we'll send it to them."

"Of course," chimed in Katherine. "I was only joking. Shall we finish these up?"

"Yes indeed," said Mary, "they're all ordered, and the more money the better, n'est ce pas, Betty? But aren't we to know the person's name?"

Betty hesitated. "Why-no-that is if you don't mind very much. You see she sort of told me about herself because she had to, so I feel as if I oughtn't to repeat it. Do you mind?"

"Not one bit," said Katherine quickly. "And we needn't say anything at all about it, except-don't you think the girls here in the house will have to know that we're going to give away the money?"

"Yes," put in Mary, "and we'll make them all give us extra orders."

"We will save out a dollar for you to live on till March," said Betty.

"Oh no, I shall borrow of you," retorted Mary, and then they all laughed and felt better.

On St. Valentine's morning Betty posted a registered valentine. The verse read:-

"There are three of us and three of you,
Though only one knows one,
So pray accept this little gift
And go and have some fun."

But if the rhyme went haltingly and was not quite true either, as Betty pointed out, since Adelaide and Alice had contributed to the fund, and the whole house had bought absurd quantities of valentines because it was such a "worthy object" ("just as if I wasn't a worthy object!" sighed Mary), there was nothing the matter with the "little gift," which consisted of three crisp ten dollar bills.

"Oh, if they should feel hurt!" thought Betty anxiously, and dodged Emily Davis so successfully that until the day of the rally they did not meet.

That week was a tremendously exciting one. To begin with, on the twentieth the members of both the freshman basket-ball teams were announced. Rachel was a "home" on the regular team, and Katherine a guard on the "sub," so the Chapin house fairly bubbled over with pride and pleasure in its double honors. Then on the morning of the twenty-second came the rally with its tumultuous display of class and college loyalty, its songs written especially for the occasion, its shrieks of triumph or derision (which no intrusive reporter should make bold to interpret or describe as "class yells," since such masculine modes of expression are unknown at Harding), and its mock-heroic debate on the vital issue, "Did or did not George Washington cut down that cherry-tree?"

Every speaker was clever and amusing, but Emily Davis easily scored the hit of the morning. For whereas most freshmen are frightened and appear to disadvantage on such an occasion, she was perfectly calm and self-possessed, and made her points with exactly the same irresistible gaucherie and daring infusion of local color that had distinguished her performance at the class meeting. Besides, she was a "dark horse"; she did not belong to the leading set in her class, nor to any other set, for that matter, and this fact, together with the novel method of her election made her interesting to her essentially democratic audience. So when the judges-five popular members of the faculty-announced their decision in favor of the negative, otherwise the junior-freshman side of the debate, 19-'s enthusiasm knew no bounds, and led by the delighted B's they carried their speaker twice round the gym on their shoulders-which is an honor likely to be remembered by its recipient for more reasons than one.

As the clans were scattering, it suddenly occurred to Betty that, if Emily did not guess anything, it would please her to be congratulated on the excellence of her debate; and if, as was more likely, she had guessed, there was little to be gained by postponing the dreaded interview. She chose a moment when Emily was standing by herself in one corner of the gymnasium. Emily did not wait for her to begin her speech of congratulation.

"Oh, Miss Wales," she cried, "I've been to see you six times, and you are never there. It was lovely of you—lovely—but ought we to take it?"

"Yes, indeed. It belongs to you; honestly it does. Don't ask me how, for it's too long a story. Just take my word for it."

"Well, but—" began Emily doubtfully.

At that moment some one called, "Hurrah for 19-!" Betty caught up the cry and seizing Emily's hand rushed her down the hall, toward a group of freshmen.

"Make a line and march," cried somebody else, and presently a long line of 19- girls was winding in noisy lock-step down the hall, threading in and out between groups of upper-class girls and cheering and gaining recruits as it went.

"Hurrah for 19-!" cried Betty hoarsely.

"Take it for 19-," she whispered to Emily, as the line stopped with a jerk that knocked their heads together.

"If you are sure— Thank you for 19-," Emily whispered back.

"Here's to 19-, drink her down!
Here's to 19-, drink her down!"

As the chorus rose and swelled Betty felt, as she never had before, what it meant to be a college girl at Harding.

As Betty was leaving the gymnasium she met Eleanor face to face in the hallway.

"Wasn't it fun?" said Betty, shyly. Perhaps, now that the debate was over, Eleanor would be ready to make friends again.

"Patronizing the genius, do you mean?" asked Eleanor slowly. "I hope she didn't buy that hideous salmon-pink waist with your money."

"Oh, Eleanor, how did you ever find out?" cried Betty, deeply distressed. Only a few of the Chapin house girls knew anything about the disposition of the valentine money, and not even the rest of the firm had been told who had received it. So Betty had thought the secret perfectly safe.

"No one told me about your private affairs," returned Eleanor significantly. "I guessed and I congratulate you. The genius will be a useful ally. She will get all the freaks' votes for you, when—"

"Eleanor Watson, come on if you're coming," called a voice from the foot of the stairs, and Eleanor marched blithely off, without finishing her sentence.

Betty stared after her with unseeing eyes. So that was it! She was to blame because Jean had told her of Eleanor's predicament—told her against her wish. And now she was supposed to be trying to get votes.

"Votes for what, I wonder? How perfectly absurd!" said Betty to the brick wall she was facing. But the appropriate smile would not come, for the absurdity had cost her a friend whom she had loved dearly in spite of her faults.

CHAPTER XIV A BEGINNING AND A SEQUEL

"I shan't be here to dinner Sunday," announced Helen Chase Adams with an odd little thrill of importance in her voice.

"Shan't you?" responded her roommate absently. She was trying to decide which dress to wear to the Hilton House play. Her pink organdie was prettiest, but she really ought to save that for the Glee Club concert. And should she ask her cousin Jack Burgess up from Harvard for the concert, or would it be better to invite Mr. Parsons? These absorbing questions left her small attention to bestow on so comparatively commonplace a matter as an invitation out to Sunday dinner.

"I thought you might like to have some one in my place," continued Helen, moving the pink organdie waist on to the same chair with the batiste skirt.

Betty came to herself with a start. "I beg your pardon. I didn't see that I had taken up all the chairs. I was trying to decide what to wear to the dramatics."

"And I was thinking what I'd wear Sunday," said Helen.

It was so seldom nowadays that she obtruded her affairs upon any one's notice that Betty glanced at her wonderingly. Her eyes had their starry look, and a smile that she was futilely endeavoring to keep in the background played around the corners of her mouth.

"I'm glad she's got over the blues," thought Betty. "Why, where are you going?" she asked aloud.

"Oh, only to the Westcott House," answered Helen with an assumption of unconcern. "Would you wear the blue silk waist or the brown dress?"

"Well, the Westcott is the swellest house on the campus, you know. When I go there I always put on my very best."

"Yes, but which is my best?"

Betty considered a moment. "Why, of course they're both pretty," she began with kindly diplomacy, "but dresses are more the thing than waists. Still, the blue is very becoming. But I think-yes, I'm sure I'd wear the brown."

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"All right. If you change your mind before Sunday you can let me know."

"Yes," said Betty briefly. She was examining the batiste skirt to see if it would need pressing for the dramatics. After all, Jack was more fun, and probably Mr. Parsons was invited by this time anyhow—he knew lots of Harding girls. What was the name of Jack's dormitory house? She would ask the Riches; they had a brother in the same one. So she strolled off to find the Riches, and incidentally to get the latest basket-ball news from Rachel and Katherine. At nine o'clock they turned her out; they were in training and supposed to be fast asleep by nine-thirty. When she opened her own door, Helen was still sitting idly in the wicker rocker, looking as if she would be perfectly content to stay there indefinitely with her pleasant thoughts for company.

Betty had quite lost interest in Helen lately; she had small patience with people who moped, and besides, between Eleanor and the valentine enterprise, her thoughts had been fully engrossed. But this new mood made her curious. "She acts as if she'd got a crush," she decided. "She's just the kind to have one, and probably her divinity has asked her to dinner, and she can't put her mind on anything else. But who on earth could it be—in the Westcott House?"

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She was on the point of inquiring, when Helen diverted her attention to something else. "I made a wonderful discovery to-day," she said. "Theresa Reed and T. Reed are the same person."

Betty laughed. "They might easily be," she said. "I don't see that it was so wonderful."

"Why, I've known Theresa all this year—she was the one that asked me to go off with her house for Mountain Day. She's the best friend I have here, but she never told me that she was specially interested in basket-ball and I never thought—well, I guess I never imagined that a dear friend of mine could be the celebrated T. Reed," laughed Helen happily. "But all sorts of nice things are happening to me lately."

"That's good," said Betty. "It seems to be just the opposite with me," and she plunged into her note to Jack, which must be ready for the next morning's post.

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All that week Helen went about fairly wreathed in smiles. Her shyness seemed to have vanished suddenly. She joined gaily in the basket-ball gossip at the table, came out into the hall to frolic with the rest of the house at ten o'clock, and in general acted as a happy, well-conducted freshman should.

The Chapin house brought its amazement over the "dig's" frivolity to Betty, but she had very little to tell them. "All I know is that she's awfully pleased about being a friend of T. Reed's. And oh yes—she's invited out to dinner next Sunday. But of course there must be something else."

"Perhaps she's going to have a man up for the concert," suggested Katherine flippantly.

"Are you?" inquired Mary Rich, and with that the regeneration of Helen was forgotten in the far more absorbing topic of the Glee Club concert.

Sunday came at last. "I'm not going to church, Betty," said Helen shyly. "I want to have plenty of time to get dressed for dinner."

"Yes, indeed," said Betty carelessly. She had just received an absurd letter from Jack. He was coming "certain-sure"; he wanted to see her about a very serious matter, he said. "Incidentally" he should be delighted to go to the concert. There was a mysterious postscript too:—"How long since you got so fond of Bob Winchester?"

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"I never heard of any such person. What do you suppose he means?" Betty asked Mary Brooks as they walked home from church together. Mary had also invited a Harvard man to the concert and Dorothy King had found them both seats, so they were feeling unusually friendly and sympathetic.

"I can't imagine. Do let me see his letter," begged Mary. "He must be no end of fun."

"He's a worse tease than you," said Betty, knocking on her door.

"Come in," called Helen Chase Adams eagerly. "Betty, would you please hook my collar, and would one of you see what time it really is? I don't like to depend too much on my watch."

"She'll be at least ten minutes too early," sighed Betty, when Helen had finally departed in a flutter of haste. "And see this room! But I oughtn't to complain," she added, beginning to clear up the dresser. "I'm always leaving it like this myself; but somehow I don't expect it of Helen."

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"Who asked her to dinner to-day?" inquired Mary Brooks. She had been sitting in a retired corner, vastly enjoying the unusual spectacle of Helen Adams in a frenzy of excitement.

"Why, I don't know. I never thought to ask," said Betty, straightening the couch pillows. "I only hope she'll have as good a time as she expects."

"Poor youngster!" said Mary. "Wish I'd asked Laurie to jolly her up a bit."

It is to be presumed that these fears were groundless, since the bell was ringing for five o'clock

vespers when Helen came back. Betty was sitting at her desk pretending to write letters, but really trying to decide whether she should say anything to Eleanor apropos of her remarks about Emily Davis, and if so, whether she should do it now. Mary Brooks curled up on Betty's couch, dividing her attention between Jack Burgess's picture and a new magazine.

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"Had a good time, didn't you?" she remarked sociably when Helen appeared.

"Oh, yes," said Helen happily. "You see I don't go out very often. Were you ever at the Westcott House for dinner?"

"Once," chuckled Mary. "But I found they didn't have ice-cream, because the matron doesn't approve of buying things on Sunday; so I've turned them down ever since."

Helen laughed merrily. "How funny! I never missed it!" There was a becoming flush on her cheeks, a pretty new confidence in her manner.

"Helen, who did you say asked you to the Westcott?" inquired Betty.

"I didn't say, because you didn't ask me," returned Helen truthfully, "but it was Miss Mills."

"Miss Mills!" repeated Mary. "Well, my child, I don't wonder that you were rattled this noon, being invited around by the faculty. Gracious, what a compliment to a young freshman!"

"I should think so!" chimed in Betty eagerly.

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In spite of her embarrassment Helen evidently enjoyed the sensation she was producing. "I thought it was awfully nice," she said.

"Why didn't you tell us sooner?" demanded Mary. "Why, child, you must be a bright and shining shark in lit."

Helen's happy face clouded suddenly. "I'm not, am I, Betty?" she asked appealingly.

Betty laughed. "Why no, since you ask me. No, she isn't, Mary. She sits on the back row with me and we don't either of us say an extra word. It's math, and Latin and Greek that Helen shines in."

"Well, are you awfully devoted to Miss Mills?" pursued Mary. "Is that why she asked you?"

Helen shook her head. "I like her. She reads beautifully and sometimes she says very interesting things, doesn't she, Betty?"

"I hadn't noticed," answered her roommate hastily.

"Well, I think she does, but I never told her I thought so. It couldn't be that."

"Then why did she ask you?" demanded Mary.

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"I suppose because she wanted me," said Helen happily. "I can't think of any other reason. Isn't it lovely?"

"Yes indeed," agreed Mary. "It's so grand that I'm going off this minute to tell everybody in the house about it. They'll be dreadfully envious," and she left the roommates alone.

Helen pulled off her best gloves carefully, and laid them neatly away, then she put up her hat and coat and sat down in her favorite wicker chair. "I guess I left the room in a dreadful muss this noon," she said apologetically. "I guess I acted silly and excited, but you see-I said I hadn't been out often-this is the very first time I've been invited out to a meal since I came to Harding."

"Really?" said Betty, thinking guiltily of her own multitude of invitations.

"Yes, I hoped you hadn't any of you noticed it. I hate to be pitied. Now you can just like me."

"Just like you?" repeated Betty vaguely.

"Yes. Don't you see? I'm not left out any more." She hesitated, then went on rapidly. "You see I had a lovely time at first, at the sophomore reception and the frolic and all, but it stopped and this was a good while coming, and I got discouraged. Wasn't it silly? I-oh, it's all right now. I wouldn't change places with anybody." She began to rock violently. Betty had noticed that Helen rocked when other girls sang or danced jigs.

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"But I thought-we all thought," began Betty, "that you had decided you preferred to study-that you didn't care for our sort of fun. You haven't seemed to lately."

"Not since it came over me why you girls here in the house were nice to me when nobody else was except Theresa," explained Helen with appalling frankness. "You were sorry for me. I thought it out the day after you gave me the violets. Before I came to Harding," she went on, "I did think that college was just to study. It's funny how you change your mind after you get here-how you begin to see that it's a lot bigger than you thought. And it's queer how little you care about doing well in class when you haven't anything else to care about." She gave a little sigh, then got up suddenly. "I almost forgot; I have a message for Adelaide. And by the way, Betty, I saw your Miss Hale; she and somebody else were just going in to see Miss Mills when I left."

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She had scarcely gone when Mary sauntered back as if by accident. "Well, have you found out?" she asked. "As a student of psychology I'm vastly interested in this situation."

"Found out what?" asked Betty unsmilingly.

"Why Miss Mills asked her, and why she is so pleased."

"I suppose Miss Mills asked her because she was sorry for her," answered Betty slowly, "and

Helen is pleased because she doesn't know it. Mary, she's been awfully lonely."

"Too bad," commented Mary. Unhappiness always made her feel awkward.

"But she says this makes up to her for everything," added Betty.

"Oh, I've noticed that life is a pretty even thing in the end," returned Mary, relieved that there was no present call on her sympathies, "but I must confess I don't see how one dinner invitation, even if it is from—"

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Just then Helen tapped on the door.

Down in Miss Mills's room they were discussing much the same point.

"It's a shame for you to waste your Sundays over these children," said Miss Hale.

Miss Mills stopped her tea-making to dissent. "It isn't wasted if she cared. She was so still that I couldn't be sure, but judging from the length of time she stayed—"

"She was smiling all over her face when we met her," interrupted Miss Meredith. "Who is she, anyway?"

"Oh, just nobody in particular," laughed Miss Mills, "just a forlorn little freshman named Adams."

"But I don't quite see how—" began Miss Hale.

"Oh, you wouldn't," said Miss Mills easily. "You were president of your class when you were a freshman. I was nobody in particular, and I know what it's like."

"But why not leave it to her friends to hearten her up?"

"Apparently she hasn't any, or if she has, they're as out of things as she is."

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"Well, to the other girls then."

"When girls are happy they are cruel," said Miss Mills briefly, "or perhaps they're only careless."

Betty, after a week's consideration, put the matter even more specifically. "I tried to make her over because I wanted a different kind of roommate," she said, "and we all let her see that we were sorry for her. Miss Mills made her feel as if—"

"She had her dance card full and was splitting her waltzes," supplied Mary, who was just back from an afternoon at Winsted.

"Exactly like that," agreed Betty, laughing. "I wish I'd done it," she added wistfully.

"You kept her going till her chance came," said Mary. "She owes a lot to you, and she knows it."

"Don't," protested Betty, flushing. "I tell you, I was only thinking of myself when I tried to fix her up, and then after a while I got tired of her and let her alone. I was horrid, but she's forgiven me and we're real friends now."

"Well, we can't do but so much apiece," said Mary practically. "And I've noticed that 'jam,' as your valentine girl called it, is a mighty hard thing to give to people who really need it."

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Nevertheless the gift had been managed in Helen's case; she had gotten her start at last. Miss Mills's tactful little attention had furnished her with the hope and courage that she lacked, had given her back the self-confidence that Caroline Barnes had wounded. Whatever the girls might think, she knew she was "somebody" now, and she would go ahead and prove it. She could, too—she no longer doubted her possession of the college girl's one talent that Betty had laughed about. For there was Theresa Reed, her friend down the street. She was homely and awkward, she wore dowdy clothes and wore them badly, she was slow and plodding; but there was one thing that she could do, and the girls admired her for it and had instantly made a place for her. Helen was glad of a second proof that those things did not matter vitally. She set herself happily to work to study T. Reed's methods, and she began to look forward to the freshman-sophomore game as eagerly as did Betty or Katherine.

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But before the game there was the concert. Jack Burgess, having missed his connections, arrived in Harding exactly twenty-seven minutes before it began. As they drove to the theatre he inquired if Betty had received all three of his telegrams.

"Yes," laughed Betty, "but I got the last one first. The other two were evidently delayed. You've kept me guessing, I can tell you."

"Glad of that," said Jack cheerfully, as he helped her out of the carriage. "That's what you've kept me doing for just about a month. But I've manfully suppressed my curiosity and concealed the wounds in my bleeding heart until I could make inquiries in person."

"What in the world do you mean, Jack?" asked Betty carelessly. Jack was such a tease.

Just then they were caught in the crowd that filled the lobby of the theatre, and conversation became impossible as they hurried through it and into the theatre itself.

"Checks, please," said a businesslike little usher in pink chiffon, and Jack and Betty followed her down the aisle. The theatre was already nearly full, and it looked like a great flower garden, for the girls all wore light evening gowns, for which the black coats of the men made a most effective background; while the odor of violets and roses from the great bunches that many of the girls carried strengthened the illusion.

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"Jove, but this is a pretty thing!" murmured Jack, who had never been in Harding before. "Is this

all college?"

"Yes," said Betty proudly, "except the men, of course. And don't they all look lovely?"

"Who-the men?" asked Jack. Then he gave a sudden start. "Bob Winchester, by all that's wonderful!"

"Who is he?" said Betty idly. "Another Harvard man? Jack"—with sudden interest, as she recognized the name—"what did you mean by that postscript?"

"Good bluff!" said Jack in his most tantalizing drawl.

"Jack Burgess, I expect you to talk sense the rest of the time you're here," remonstrated Betty impatiently. 250

"Well, I will on one condition. Tell me why you sent it to him."

"Sent what to whom?" demanded Betty.

"Oh come," coaxed Jack. "You know what I mean. Why did you send Bob that valentine? It almost crushed me, I can tell you, when I hadn't even heard from you for months."

Betty was staring at him blankly, "Why did I send 'Bob' that valentine? Who please tell me is 'Bob'?"

"Robert M. Winchester, Harvard, 19—. Eats at my club. Is sitting at the present moment on the other side of the aisle, two rows up and over by the boxes. You'll know him by his pretty blush. He's rattled—he didn't think I'd see him."

"Well?" said Betty.

"Well?" repeated Jack.

"I never saw Mr. Robert M. Winchester before," declared Betty with dignity, "and of course I didn't send him any valentine. What are you driving at, Jack Burgess?"

Jack smiled benignly down at her. "But I saw it," he insisted. "Do you think I don't know your handwriting? The verses weren't yours, unless they turn out spring poets amazingly fast up here, but the writing was, except that on the envelope, and the Cupids were. The design was the same as the one on the picture frame you gave me last winter. Beginning to remember?" he inquired with an exasperating chuckle. 251

"No," said Betty severely. Then a light broke over her face. "Oh yes, of course, I made that. Oh Jack Burgess, how perfectly rich!"

"Don't think so myself, but Bobbie will. You see I told him that I could put up a good guess who sent him that valentine, and that I'd find out for sure when I came up. But evidently he couldn't wait, so he's made his sister ask him up too, in the hope of happening on the valentine lady, I suppose. Know his sister?"

"No," said Betty, who was almost speechless with laughter. "Oh, Jack, listen!" and she told the story of the valentine firm. "Probably his sister bought it and sent it to him," she finished. "Or anyway some girl did. Jack, he's looking this way again. Did you tell him I sent it?" 252

"No," said Jack hastily, "that is—I-well, I only said that the girl I knew up here sent it. He evidently suspects you. See him stare."

"Jack, how could you?"

"How couldn't I you'd better say," chuckled Jack. "I never heard of this valentine graft. What should I think, please? Never mind; I'll undeceive the poor boy at the intermission. He'll be badly disappointed. You see, he said it was his sister all along, and—"

The curtain rolled slowly up, disclosing the Glee Club grouped in a rainbow-tinted semicircle about the leader, and the concert began.

At the intermission Jack brought Mr. Winchester and his sister to meet Betty, and there were more explanations and much laughter. Then Jack insisted upon meeting the rest of the firm, so Betty hunted up Mary. Her Harvard man knew the other two slightly, and the story had to be detailed again for his benefit.

"I say," he said when he had heard it, "that's what I call enterprise, but you made just one mistake. Next year you must sell your stock to us. Then all of it will be sure to land with the ladies, and your cousin's feelings won't be hurt." 253

"Good idea," agreed Jack, "but let's keep to the living present, as the poets call it. Are you all good for a sleigh ride to-morrow afternoon?"

"Ah, do say yes," begged Mr. Winchester, looking straight at Betty.

"But your sister said you were going—"

"On the sleeper to-morrow night," finished Mr. Winchester promptly. "And may I have the heart-shaped sign?"

Betty stopped in Mary's room that night to talk over the exciting events of the evening. "Betty Wales, your cousin is the nicest man I ever met," declared Mary with enthusiasm.

Betty laughed. "I shan't tell you what he said about you. It would make you entirely too vain. I'm so sorry that Katherine wasn't there, so she could go to-morrow."

"It was too bad," said Mary complacently. "But then you know virtue is said to be its own reward. She'll have to get along with that, but I'm glad we're going to have another one. Those valentines were a lot of work to do for a girl whose very name I don't know."

CHAPTER XV AT THE GREAT GAME

"Well, I thought I'd seen some excitement before," declared Betty Wales, struggling to settle herself more comfortably on the scant ten square inches of space allotted her by the surging, swaying mass of girls behind. "But I was mistaken. Even the rally was nothing to this. Helen, do you feel as if they'd push you under the railing?"

"A little," laughed Helen, "but I don't suppose they could, do you?"

"I guess not," said Betty hopefully, "but they might break my spine. They're actually sitting on me, and I haven't room to turn around and see who's doing it. Oh, but isn't it fun!"

The day of the great basket-ball game had come at last. A bare two hours more and the freshman team would either be celebrating its victory over the sophomores, or bravely shouldering its defeat; and the college had turned out *en masse* to witness the struggle. The floor of the gymnasium was cleared, only Miss Andrews, the gym teacher, her assistant line-keepers and the ushers in white duck, with paper hats of green or purple, being allowed on the field of battle. On the little stage at one end of the hall sat the faculty, most of them manifesting their partisanship by the display of class-colors. The more popular supporters of the purple had been furnished with violets by their admirers, while the wearers of the green had American beauty roses—red being the junior color—tied with great bows of green ribbon. The prize exhibit was undoubtedly that of the enterprising young head of the chemistry department, who carried an enormous bunch of vivid green carnations; but the centre of interest was the president of the college, who of course displayed impartially the colors of both sides.

He divided interest with a sprightly little lady in a brilliant purple gown, whose arms were so full of violets and daffodils and purple and yellow ribbons that she looked like an animated flower bed. She smiled and nodded at the sophomore gallery from behind their floral tributes; and the freshmen watched her eagerly and wished she had worn the green. But of course she wouldn't; she had nothing but sophomore lit., and all her classes adored her.

In the gallery were the students, seniors and sophomores on one side, juniors and freshmen on the other, packed in like sardines. The front row of them sat on the floor, dangling their feet over the edge of the balcony—they had been warned at the gym classes of the day before to look to their soles and their skirt braids. The next row kneeled and peered over the shoulders of the first. The third row stood up and saw what it could. The others stood up and saw nothing, unless they were very tall or had been lucky enough to secure a place on a stray chair or a radiator. The balcony railings and posts were draped with bunting, and in every hand waved banners and streamers, purple and yellow on one side, red and green on the other.

In the middle of each side were grouped the best singers of the classes, ready to lead the chorus in the songs which had been written for the occasion to the music of popular tunes. These were supposed to take the place of "yells," and cheers, both proscribed as verging upon the unwomanly. By rule the opposing factions sang in turn, but occasionally, quite by accident, both started at once, with deafening discords that rocked the gallery, and caused the musical head of the German Department to stop her ears in agony.

Most of the girls had been standing in line for an hour waiting for the gymnasium doors to open, but a few, like Betty and Helen, had had reserved seat tickets given them by some one on the teams. These admitted their fortunate holders by a back door ahead of the crowd. All the faculty seats were reserved, of course, and the occupants of them were still coming in. As each appeared, he or she was met by a group of ushers and escorted ceremoniously across the floor, amid vigorous hand-clapping from the side whose colors were in evidence, and the singing of a verse of "Balm of Gilead" adapted to the occasion. Most of these had been written beforehand and were now hastily "passed along" from a paper in the hands of the leader. The rhymes were execrable, but that did not matter since almost nobody could understand them; and the main point was to come out strong on the chorus.

"Oh, there's Miss Ferris!" cried Betty, "and she's wearing my ro-goodness, she's half covered with roses. Helen, see that lovely green dragon pennant!"

"Here's to our Miss Ferris, drink her down!"

sang the freshman chorus.

"Here's to our Miss Ferris, drink her down!

Here's to our Miss Ferris, may she never, never perish!

Drink her down, drink her down, drink her down, down, down!"

Back by the door there was a sudden commotion, and the sophomore faction broke out into tumultuous applause as a tall and stately gentleman appeared carrying a "shower bouquet" of daffodils with a border and streamers of violets.

"Here's to Dr. Hinsdale, he's the finest man within hail!
Drink him down, drink him down, drink him down, down, down!"

sang the sophomores.

"There is a team of great renown,"

began the freshmen lustily. What did the sophomores mean by clapping so? Ah! Miss Andrews was opening a door. 260

"They're coming!" cried Betty eagerly.

"Only the sophomore subs," amended the junior next to her. "So please don't stick your elbow into me."

"Excuse me," said Betty hastily. "Oh Helen, there's Katherine!"

Through the door at one side of the stage the freshman subs were coming, through the other the sophomores. Out on the floor of the gym they ran, all in their dark blue gym suits with green or purple stripes on the right sleeves, tossing their balls from hand to hand, throwing them into the baskets, bouncing them adroitly out of one another's reach, trying to appear as unconcerned as if a thousand people were not applauding them madly and singing songs about them and wondering which of them would get a chance to play in the great game. In a moment a little whistle blew and the subs found their places on the edge of the stage, where they sat in a restive, eager row, each girl in readiness to take the field the moment she should be needed.

The door of the sophomore room opened again and the "real team" ran out. Then the gallery shook indeed! Even the freshmen cheered when the mascot appeared hand in hand with the captain. He was a dashing little Indian brave in full panoply of war-paint, beads, and feathers, with fringed leggings and a real Navajo blanket. When he had finished his grand entry, which consisted of a war-dance, accompanied by ear-splitting war-whoops, he came to himself suddenly to find a thousand people staring at him, and he was somewhat appalled. He could not blush, for Mary Brooks had stained his face and neck a beautiful brick-red, and he lacked the courage to run away. So he waited, forlorn and uncomfortable, while the freshman team rushed in, circling gaily about a diminutive knight in shining silver armor, with a green plume. He marched proudly, but with some difficulty, for his helmet was down and his sword, which was much too long for him, had an unbecoming tendency to trip him up. When his hesitating steps had brought him to the middle of the gymnasium, the knight, apparently perceiving the Indian for the first time, dropped his encumbering sword and rushed at his rival with sudden vehemence and blood-curdling cries. The little Indian stared for a moment in blank amazement, then slipping off his blanket turned tail and ran, reaching the door long before his sophomore supporters could stop him. The knight meanwhile, left in full possession of the field, waited for a moment until the laughter and applause had died away into curiosity. Then, deliberately reaching up one gauntleted hand, he pulled off his helmet, and disclosed the saucy, freckled face of the popular son of a favorite professor. 261

He grinned cheerfully at the stage and the gallery, gallantly faced the junior-freshman side, and waving his green plume aloft yelled, "Hip, hip, hurrah for the freshmen!" at the top of a pair of very strong lungs. Then he raced off to find the seat which had been the price of his performance between two of his devoted admirers on the sub team, while the gallery, regardless of meaningless prohibitions and forgetful of class distinctions, cheered him to the echo. 262

All of a sudden a businesslike air began to pervade the floor of the gymnasium. Somebody picked up the knight's sword and the Indian's blanket, and Miss Andrews took her position under the gallery. The ushers crowded onto the steps of the stage, and the members of the teams, who had gathered around their captains for a last hurried conference, began to find their places. 263

"Oh, I almost wished they'd sing for a while more," sighed Betty.

"Do you?" answered Helen absently. She was leaning out over the iron bar of the railing with her eyes glued to the smallest freshman centre. "Why?"

"Oh, it makes me feel so thrilled and the songs are so clever and amusing, and the mascots so funny."

"Oh, yes," agreed Helen. "The things here are all like that, but I want to see them play."

"You mean you want to see her play," corrected Betty merrily. "I don't believe you care for a single other thing but T. Reed. Where is she?"

Helen pointed her out proudly.

"Oh, what an awfully funny, thin little braid! Isn't she comical in her gym suit, anyway? You wouldn't think she could play at all, would you, she's so small." 264

"But she can," said Helen stoutly.

"Don't I know it? I guarded her once—that is, I tried to. She's a perfect wonder. See, there's Rachel up by our basket. Katherine says she's fine too. Helen, they're going to begin."

The assistant gym teacher had the whistle now. She blew it shrilly. "Play!" called Miss Andrews, and tossed the ball out over the heads of the waiting centres. A tall sophomore reached up confidently to grab it, but she found her hands empty. T. Reed had jumped at it and batted it off sidewise. Then she had slipped under Cornelia Thompson's famous "perpetual motion" elbow, and was on hand to capture the ball again when it bounced out from under a confused mass of

homes and centres who were struggling over it on the freshman line. The freshmen clapped riotously. The sophomores looked at each other. Freshman teams were always rattled, and "muffed" their plays just at first. What did this mean? Oh, well, the homes would miss it. They did, and the sophomores breathed again, but only for a moment. Then T. Reed jumped and the ball went pounding back toward the freshman basket. This time a home got it, passed it successfully to Rachel, and Rachel poised it for an instant and sent it cleanly into the basket.

265

The freshmen were shouting and thumping as if they had never heard that it was unlady-like (and incidentally too great a strain on the crowded gallery) to do so. Miss Andrews blew her whistle. "Either the game will stop or you must be less noisy," she commanded, and amid the ominous silence that followed she threw the ball.

This time T. Reed missed her jump, and the tall sophomore got the ball and tossed it unerringly at Captain Marion Lawrence, who was playing home on her team. She bounded it off in an unexpected direction and then passed it to a home nearer the basket, who on the second trial put it in. The sophomores clapped, but the freshmen smiled serenely. Their home had done better, and they had T. Reed!

The next ball went off to one side. In the scramble after it two opposing centres grabbed it at once, and each claimed precedence. The game stopped while Miss Andrews and the line-men came up to hear the evidence. There was a breathless moment of indecision. Then Miss Andrews took the ball and tossed up between the two contestants. But neither of them got it. Instead, T. Reed, slipping in between them, jumped for it again, and quick as a flash sent it flying toward the freshman goal. There was another breathless moment. Could Rachel Morrison put it in from that distance? No, it had fallen just short and the sophomore guards were playing it along to the opposite end of the home space, possibly intending to— Ah! a stalwart sophomore guard, bracing herself for the effort, had tossed it over the heads of the centres straight across the gymnasium, and Marion Lawrence had it and was working toward the basket, meanwhile playing the ball back to a red haired competent-looking girl whose gray eyes twinkled merrily as her thin, nervous hands closed unerringly and vice-like around the big sphere. It was in the basket, and the freshmen's faces fell.

266

"But maybe they've lost something on fouls," suggested Betty hopefully.

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"And T. Reed is just splendid," added Helen.

Everybody was watching the gallant little centre now, but she watched only the ball. Back and forth, up and down the central field she followed it, slipping and sliding between the other players, now bringing the ball down with a phenomenal quick spring, now picking it up from the floor, now catching it on the fly. The sophomore centres were beginning to understand her methods, but it was all they could do to frustrate her; they had no effort left for offensive tactics. Generally because of their superior practice and team play, the sophomores win the inter-class game, and they do it in the first half, when the frightened freshmen, overwhelmed by the terrors of their unaccustomed situation, let the goals mount up so fast that all they can hope to do in the second half is to lighten their defeat. What business had T. Reed to be so cool and collected? If she kept on, there was strong likelihood of a freshman victory. But she was so small, and Cornelia Thompson was guarding her—Cornelia stuck like a burr, and the "perpetual motion" elbow had already circumvented T. Reed more than once.

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After a long and stubborn battle, the freshmen scored another point. But in the next round the big sophomore guard repeated her splendid 'crossboard play, and again Marion Lawrence caught the ball.

Ah! Captain Lawrence is down, sliding heavily along the smooth floor; but in an instant she is up again, brushing the hair out of her eyes with one hand and making a goal with the other.

"Time!" calls Miss Andrews. "The goals are three to two, fouls not counted."

The line-men gather to compare notes on those. The teams hurry off to their rooms, Captain Lawrence limping badly. The first half is finished.

A little shivering sigh of relief swept over the audience. The front row in the gallery struggled to its feet to rest, the back rows sat down suddenly for the same purpose.

"Oh, doesn't it feel good to stretch out," said Betty, pulling herself up by the railing and drawing Helen after her. "Aren't you tired to death sitting still?"

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"Why no, I don't think so," answered Helen vaguely. "It was so splendid that I forgot."

"So did I mostly, but I'm remembering good and hard now. I ache all over." She waved her hand gaily to Dorothy King, then caught Mary Brooks's eye across the hall and waved again. "T. Reed is a dandy," she said. "And Rachel was great. They were all great."

"How do you suppose they feel now?" asked Helen, a note of awe in her voice.

"Tired," returned Betty promptly, "and thirsty, probably, and proud—awfully proud." She turned upon Helen suddenly. "Helen Chase Adams, do you know I might have been down there with the subs. Katherine told me this morning that it was nip and tuck between Marie Austin and me. If I'd tried harder—played an inch better—think of it, Helen, I might have been down there too!"

"I couldn't do anything like that," said Helen simply, "but next year I mean to write a song."

Betty looked at her solemnly. "You probably will. You're a good hard worker, Helen. Isn't it queer," she went on, "we're not a bit alike, but this game is making us feel the same way. I

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wonder if the others feel so too. Perhaps it's one reason why they have this game—to wake us all up and make us want to do something worth while."

"Betty Wales," called Christy Mason from the floor below. Betty leaned over the railing. "Don't forget that you're coming to dinner to-night. We're going to serenade the team. They'll be dining at the Belden with Miss Andrews."

Kate Denise joined her. She had never mentioned the afternoon in Eleanor's room, but she took especial pains to be pleasant to Betty.

"Hello, Betty Wales," she called up. "Isn't it fine? Don't you think we'll win? Anyway Miss Andrews says it's the best game she ever saw."

"Betty Wales," called Dorothy King from her leader's box, "come to vespers with me to-morrow."

Betty met them all with friendly little nods and enthusiastic answers. Then she turned back to Helen. "It's funny, but I'm always interrupted when I'm trying to think," she said. "If there were six of me I think I might be six successful persons. But as it is, I suppose I shall always be just 'that little Betty Wales' and have a splendid time."

"That would be enough for most people," said Helen.

"Oh, I hope not," said Betty soberly. "I don't amount to anything." She slipped down into her place again. The teams were coming back.

"See Laurie limp!"

"Their other home—the one with the red hair—looks as fresh as a May morning."

"Well, so does T. Reed."

"We have a fighting chance yet."

Thus the freshman gallery.

But the second half opened with the rapid winning of three goals by the sophomores. Cornelia Thompson had evidently made up her mind that nobody so small as T. Reed should get away from her and mar the reputation of her famous "ever moving and ever present" elbow. The other freshman centres were over-matched, and once Marion Lawrence and the red-haired home got the ball between them, a goal was practically a certainty.

"Play!" called Miss Andrews for the fourth time.

T. Reed's eyes flashed and her lips shut into a narrow determined line. Another freshman centre got the ball and passed it successfully to T. Reed, who gave it a pounding blow toward the freshman basket. A sophomore guard knocked it out of Rachel Morrison's hands, and it rolled on to the stage. There was a wild scuffle and the freshman balcony broke into tumultuous cheering, for a home who had missed all her previous chances had clutched it from under the president's chair and had scored at last.

A moment later she did it again. There was a pause while a freshman guard was carried off with a twisted ankle and Katherine Kittredge ran to her place. Then the sophomores scored twice. Then the freshmen did likewise. "Time!" called Miss Andrews sharply. The game was over.

"Score!" shrieked the galleries.

Then the freshmen bravely began to sing their team song,

"There is a team of great renown."

They were beaten, of course, but they were proud of that team.

"The freshmen score one goal on fouls. Score, six to eight in favor of the purple," announced Miss Andrews after a moment. "And I want to say—"

It was unpardonably rude, but they could not help interrupting to cheer.

"That I am proud of all the players. It was a splendid game," she finished, when the thoughtful ones had hushed the rest.

Then they cheered again. The sophomore team were carrying their captain around the gym on their shoulders; the freshmen, gathered in a brave little group, were winking hard and cheering with the rest. The gallery was emptying itself with incredible rapidity on to the floor. The stage was watching, and wishing—some of it—that it could go down on the floor and shriek and sing and be young and foolish generally.

Betty and Helen ran down with the rest. "Helen," whispered Betty on the way, "I don't care what happens, I will, I will, I will make them sing to me some day. Oh Helen, don't you love 19-, and aren't you proud of it and of T. Reed?"

At the foot of the stairs they met the three B's. "Come on, come on," cried the three. "We're going to sing to the sophomores," and they seized upon Betty and bore her off to the corner where the freshmen were assembling. Left to herself Helen got into a nook by the door and watched. It was queer how much fun it was to watch, lately.

"Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them:"—she had read it in the library that morning and it kept running in her head. Was it selfish and conceited to want to be worth something to her college—to long to do something that would give her a place among the girls? A month ago Theresa had stood with her high up on the bank and

watched the current sweep by. Now she was in the stream; even Betty Wales envied her; she had "achieved greatness." Betty wanted to be sung to. Well, no doubt she would be, in spite of the "interruptions"; she was "born great." Helen aspired only to write a song to be sung. That wasn't very much, and she would try hard—Theresa said it was all trying and caring—for she must somehow prove herself worthy of the greatness that had been "thrust upon" her.

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Betty was in the centre of an excited group of freshmen. Christy Mason was there too; probably they were planning for the serenade. "She won't mind if I go," thought Helen. She would have liked to speak to Theresa, but she had delayed too long; the teams had disappeared. So she slipped out alone. There would be a long, quiet evening for theme work—for Helen had elected Mary's theme course at mid-years, though no one in the Chapin house knew it.

Betty did not get home till quarter of ten, and then she went straight off to find Katherine and Rachel. "I came to see if there's anything left of Rachel," she said.

"There's a big bump on my forehead," said Rachel, sitting up in bed with a faint smile. "I'm sure of that because it aches."

"Poor lady!" Betty turned to Katherine. "You got your chance, didn't you? I felt it in my bones that you would. Wasn't it all splendid?"

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"Yes indeed," assented the contestants heartily.

"It made me feel so energetic," Betty went on eagerly. "Of course I felt proud of you and of 19-, just as I did at the rally, but there was something else, too. You'll see me going at things next term the way T. Reed went at that ball."

"You're one of the most energetic persons I know, as it is," said Rachel, smiling at her earnestness.

"Yes," said Betty impatiently. "I fly around and make a great commotion, but I fritter away my time, because I forget to keep my eyes on the ball. Why, I haven't done anything this year."

Katherine pulled Betty down beside her on the couch. "Child, you've done a lot," she said. "We were just considering all you've done, and wondering why you weren't asked to usher to-day. You've sub-subbed a lot and you know so many girls on the team and are such good friends with Jean Eastman."

To her consternation Betty felt a hot flush creeping up her neck and over her cheeks. It had been the one consolation in the trouble with Eleanor that none of the Chapin house girls had asked any questions or even appeared to notice that anything was wrong.

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"Oh, I don't know Miss Eastman much," she said quickly. "And as for substituting on the subs, that was a great privilege. That wasn't anything to make me an usher for."

"Well, all the other girls who did it much ushered," persisted Katherine. "Christy Mason and Kate Denise and that little Ruth Ford. And you'd have made such a stunning one."

"Goosie!" said Betty, rising abruptly. "I know you girls want to go to bed. We'll talk it all over tomorrow."

As she closed the door, Rachel and Katherine exchanged glances. "I told you there was trouble," said Katherine, "and mark my words, Eleanor Watson is at the bottom of it somehow."

"Don't let's notice it again, though," answered the considerate Rachel. "She evidently doesn't want to tell us about it."

Betty undressed almost in silence. Her exhilaration had left her all at once and her ambition; life looked very complicated and unprofitable. As she went over to turn out the light, she noticed a sheet of paper, much erased and interlined, on Helen's desk. "Have you begun your song already?" she asked.

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"Oh, no, I wrote a theme," said Helen with what seemed needless embarrassment. But the theme was a little verse called "Happiness." She got it back the next week heavily under-scored in red ink, and with a succinct "Try prose," beneath it; but she was not discouraged. She had had one turn; she could afford to wait patiently for another, which, if you tried long enough and cared hard enough must come at last.

CHAPTER XVI

A CHANCE TO HELP

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Eleanor Watson had gotten neither class spirit nor personal ambition from 19-'s "glorious old defeat," as Katherine called it. The Saturday afternoon of the game she had spent, greatly to the disgust of her friends, on the way to New York, whither she went for a Sunday with Caroline Barnes. Caroline's mother had been very ill, and the European trip was indefinitely postponed, but the family were going for a shorter jaunt to Bermuda. Caroline begged Eleanor to join them. "You can come as well as not," she urged. "You know your father would let you—he always does. And we sail the very first day of your vacation too."

"But you stay three weeks," objected Eleanor, "and the vacation is only two."

"What's the difference? Say you were ill and had to stay over," suggested Caroline promptly.

Eleanor's eyes flashed. "Once for all, Cara, please understand that's not my way of doing business nowadays. I should like to go, though, and I imagine my father wouldn't object. I'll write you if I can arrange it."

She had quite forgotten her idle promise when, on the following Monday morning, she stood in the registrar's office, waiting to get a record card for chapel attendance in place of one she had lost. The registrar was busy. Eleanor waited while she discussed the pedagogical value of chemistry with a sophomore who had elected it, and now, after a semester and a half of gradually deteriorating work, wished to drop it because the smells made her ill.

"Does the fact that we sent you a warning last week make the smells more unendurable?" asked the registrar suggestively, and the sophomore retreated in blushing confusion.

Next in line was a nervous little girl who inquired breathlessly if she might go home right away—four days early. Some friends who were traveling south in their private car had telegraphed her to meet them in Albany and go with them to her home in Charleston.

"My dear, I'm sorry," began the registrar sympathetically, "but I can't let you go. We're going to be very strict about this vacation. A great many girls went home early at Christmas, and it's no exaggeration to say that a quarter of the college came back late on various trivial excuses. This time we're not going to have that sort of thing. The girls who come back at all must come on time; the only valid excuse at either end of the vacation will be serious illness. I'm sorry."

"So am I," said the little girl, with a pathetic quiver in her voice. "I never rode in a private car. But—it's no matter. Thank you, Miss Stuart."

Eleanor had listened to the conversation with a curl of her lip for the stupid child who proffered her request in so unconvincing a manner, and an angry resentment against the authorities who should presume to dictate times and seasons. "They ought to have a system of cuts," she thought. "That's the only fair way. Then you can take them when you please, and if you cut over you know it and you do it at your peril. Here everything is in the air; you are never sure where you stand—"

"What can I do for you, Miss Watson?" asked the registrar pleasantly.

Eleanor got her chapel card and hurried home to telegraph her father for permission to go to Bermuda, and, as she knew exactly what his answer would be, to write Caroline that she might expect her. "You know I always take a dare," she wrote. "My cuts last semester amounted to twice as much as this trip will use up, and if they make a fuss I shall just call their attention to what they let pass last time. Please buy me a steamer-rug, a blue and green plaid one, and meet me at the Forty-second Street station at two on Friday."

Betty knew nothing about Eleanor's plans, beyond what she had been able to gather from chance remarks of the other girls; and that was not much, for every time the subject came up she hastened to change it, lest some one should discover that Eleanor had told her nothing, and had scarcely spoken to her indeed for weeks. When Eleanor finally went off, without a sign or a word of good-bye, Betty discovered that she was dreadfully disappointed. She had never thought of the estrangement between them as anything but a temporary affair, that would blow over when Eleanor's mortification over the debate was forgotten. She had felt sure that long before the term ended there would come a chance for a reconciliation, and she had meant to take the chance at any sacrifice of her pride. She was still fond of Eleanor in spite of everything, and she was sorry for her too, for her quick eyes detected signs of growing unhappiness under Eleanor's ready smiles. Besides, she hated "schoolgirl fusses." She wanted to be on good terms with every girl in 19-. She wanted to come back to a spring term unclouded by the necessity for any of the evasions and subterfuges that concealment of the quarrel with Eleanor and Jean Eastman's strange behavior had brought upon her. And now Eleanor was gone; the last chance until after vacation had slipped through her fingers.

At home she told Nan all about her troubles, first exacting a solemn pledge of secrecy. "Hateful thing!" said Nan promptly. "Drop her. Don't think about her another minute."

"Then you don't think I was to blame?" asked Betty anxiously.

"To blame? No, certainly not. To be sure," Nan added truthfully, "you were a little tactless. You knew she didn't know that you were in the secret of her having to resign, and you didn't intend to tell her, so it would have been better for you to let some one else help Miss Eastman out."

"But I thought I was helping Eleanor out."

"In a way you were. But you see it wouldn't seem so to her. It would look as though you disapproved of her appointment."

"But Nan, she knows now that I knew."

"Then I suppose she concludes that you took advantage of knowing. You say that it made you quite prominent for a while. You see, dear, when a person isn't quite on the square herself—"

But Betty had burst into a storm of tears. "I am to blame," she sobbed. "I am to blame! I knew it, only I couldn't quite see how. Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?"

"Don't cry, dear," said Nan in distress, at the unprecedented sight of Betty in tears. "I tell you, you were not to blame. You were a little unwise perhaps at first, but Miss Watson has refused your apologies and explanations and only laughs at you when you try to talk to her about it. I should drop her at once and forever; but, if you are bound to bring her around, the only way I can

think of is to look out for some chance to serve her and so prove your real friendship-though what sort of friend she can be I can't imagine."

"Nan, she's just like the girl in the rhyme," said Betty seriously.

"When she was good she was very, very good,
And when she was bad she was horrid."

"Eleanor is a perfect dear most of the time. And Nan, there's something queer about her mother. She never speaks of her, and she's been at boarding school for eight years now, though she's not seventeen till May. Think of that!"

"It certainly makes her excusable for a good deal," said Nan. "How is my friend Helen Chase Adams coming on?"

"Why Nan, she's quite blossomed out. She's really lots of fun now. But I had an awful time with her for a while," and she related the story of Helen's winter of discontent. "I suppose that was my fault too," she finished. "I seem to be a regular blunderer."

"You're a dear little sister, all the same," declared Nan.

"I say girls, come and play ping-pong," called Will from the hall below, and the interview ended summarily.

But the memory of Eleanor Watson seemed fated to pursue Betty through her vacation. A few days later an old friend of Mrs. Wales, who had gone to Denver to live some years before and was east on a round of visits, came in to call. The moment she heard that Betty was at Harding, she inquired for Eleanor. "I'm so glad you know her," she said. "She's quite a protégé of mine and she needs nice friends like you if ever a girl did. Don't mention it about college, Betty, but she's had a very sad life. Her mother was a strange woman-but there's no use going into that. She died when Eleanor was a tiny girl, and Eleanor and her brother Jim have been at boarding schools ever since. In the summers, though, they were always with their father in Denver. They worshiped him, particularly Eleanor, and he has always promised her that when she was through school he would open the old Watson mansion and she should keep house for him and Jim. Then last year a pretty little society girl, only four or five years older than Eleanor, set her cap for the judge and married him. Jim liked her, but Eleanor was heart-broken, and the judge, seeing storms ahead, I suppose, and hoping that Eleanor would get interested and want to finish the course, made her promise to go to Harding for a year. Now don't betray my confidence, Betty, and do make allowances for Eleanor. I hope she'll be willing to stay on at college. It's just what she needs. Besides, she'd be very unhappy at home, and her aunt in New York isn't at all the sort of person for her to live with."

So it came about that Betty returned to college more than ever determined to get back upon the old footing with Eleanor, and behold, Eleanor was not there! The Chapin house was much excited over her absence, for tales of the registrar's unprecedented hardness of heart had gone abroad, and almost nobody else had dared to risk the mysterious but awful possibilities that a late return promised. As Betty was still supposed by most of the house to be in Eleanor's confidence, she had to parry question after question as to her whereabouts. To, "Did she tell you that she was coming back late?" she could truthfully answer "No." But the girls only laughed when she insisted that Eleanor must be ill.

"She boasts that she's never been ill in her life," said Mary Brooks.

And Adelaide Rich always added with great positiveness, "It's exactly like her to stay away on purpose, just to see what will happen."

Unfortunately Betty could not deny this, and she was glad enough to drop the argument. She had too many pleasant things to do to care to waste time in profitless discussion. For it was spring term. Nobody but a Harding girl knows exactly what that means. The freshman is very likely to consider the much heralded event only a pretty myth, until having started from home on a cold, bleak day that is springtime only by the calendar, she arrives at Harding to find herself confronted by the genuine article. The sheltered situation of the town undoubtedly has something to do with its early springs, but the attitude of the Harding girl has far more. She knows that spring term is the beautiful crown of the college year, and she is bound that it shall be as long as possible. So she throws caution and her furs to the winds and dons a muslin gown, plans drives and picnics despite April showers, and takes twilight strolls regardless of lurking germs of pneumonia. The grass grows green perforce and the buds swell to meet her wishes, while the sun, finding a creature after his brave, warm heart, does his gallant best for her.

"Do what little studying you intend to right away," Mary Brooks advised her freshmen. "Before you know it, it will be too warm to work."

"But at present it's too lovely," objected Roberta.

"Then join the Athletic Association and trust to luck, but above all join the Athletic Association. I'm on the membership committee."

"Can I get into the golf club section this time?" asked Betty, who had been kept on the waiting list all through the fall.

"Yes, you just squeeze in, and Christy Mason wants you to play round the course with her tomorrow."

"I'm for tennis," said Katherine. "Miss Lawrence and I are going to play as soon as the courts are

marked out. By the way, when do the forget-me-nots blossom?"

"Has Laurie roped you into that?" asked Mary Brooks scornfully.

"Don't jump at conclusions," retorted Katherine.

"I didn't have to jump. The wild ones blossom about the middle of May. You'll have to think of something else if you want to make an immediate conquest of your angel. And speaking of angels," added Mary, who was sitting by a window, "Eleanor Watson is coming up the walk."

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The girls trooped out into the hall to greet Eleanor, who met them all with the carefully restrained cordiality that she had used toward them ever since the break with Betty. Yes, Bermuda had been charming, such skies and seas. Yes, she was just a week late—exactly. No, she had not seen the registrar yet, but she had heard last term that excuses weren't being given away by the dozen.

"I met a friend of yours during vacation," began Betty timidly in the first pause.

Eleanor turned to her unsmilingly. "Oh yes, Mrs. Payne," she said. "I believe she mentioned it. I saw her last night in New York." Then she picked up her bag and walked toward her room with the remark that late comers mustn't waste time.

The next day at luncheon some one inquired again about her excuse. Eleanor shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, that's all right; you needn't be at all anxious. The interview wasn't even amusing. The week is to be counted as unexcused absence—which as far as I can see means nothing whatever."

"You may find out differently in June," suggested Mary, nettled by Eleanor's superior air.

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"Oh, June!" said Eleanor with another shrug. "I'm leaving in June, thank the fates!"

"Perhaps you'll change your mind after spring term. Everybody says it's so much nicer," chirped Helen.

"Possibly," said Eleanor curtly, "but I really can't give you much encouragement, Miss Adams." Whereat poor Helen subsided meekly, scarcely raising her eyes from her plate through the rest of the meal.

"Better caution your friend Eleanor not to air those sentiments of hers about unexcused absences too widely, or she'll get into trouble," said Mary Brooks to Betty on the way up-stairs; but Betty, intent on persuading Roberta to come down-town for an ice, paid no particular attention to the remark, and it was three weeks before she thought of it again.

She found Eleanor more unapproachable than ever this term, but remembering Nan's suggestion she resolved to bide her time. Meanwhile there was no reason for not enjoying life to the utmost. Golf, boating, walking, tennis—there were ten ways to spend every spare minute. But golf usually triumphed. Betty played very well, and having made an excellent record in her first game with Christy, she immediately found herself reckoned among the enthusiasts and expected to get into trim for the June tournament. Some three weeks after the beginning of the term she went up to the club house in the late afternoon, intending to practice putting, which was her weak point and come home with Christy and Nita Reese, another golf fiend, who had spent the whole afternoon on the course.

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But on the club house piazza she found Dorothy King. Dorothy played golf exceedingly well, as she did everything else; but as she explained to Betty, "By junior year all this athletic business gets pretty much crowded out." She still kept her membership in the club, however, and played occasionally, "just to keep her hand in for the summer." She had done six holes this afternoon, all alone, and now she was resting a few moments before going home. She greeted Betty warmly. "I looked for you out on the course," she said, "but your little pals thought you weren't coming up to-day. How's your game?"

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"Better, thank you," said Betty, "except my putting, and I'm going to practice on that now. Did you know that Christy had asked me to play with her in the inter-class foursomes?"

"That's good," said Dorothy cordially. "Do you see much of Eleanor Watson these days?" she added irrelevantly.

"Why-no-t much," stammered Betty, blushing in spite of herself. "I see her at meals of course."

"I thought you told me once that you were very fond of her."

"Yes, I did—I am," said Betty quickly, wondering what in the world Dorothy was driving at.

"She was down at the house last night," Dorothy went on, "blustering around about having come back late, saying that she'd shown what a bluff the whole excuse business is, and that now, after she has proved that it's perfectly easy to cut over at the end of a vacation, perhaps some of us timid little creatures will dare to follow her lead. But perhaps you've heard her talking about it."

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"I heard her say a little about it," admitted Betty, suddenly remembering Mary Brooks's remark. Had the "trouble" that Mary had foreseen anything to do with Dorothy's questions?

"She's said a great deal about it in the last two weeks," went on Dorothy. "Last night after she left, her senior friend, Annette Cramer, and I had a long talk about it. We both agreed that somebody ought to speak to her, but I hardly know her, and Annette says that she's tried to talk to her about other things and finds she hasn't a particle of influence with her." Dorothy paused as if expecting some sort of comment or reply, but Betty was silent. "We both thought," said Dorothy

at last, "that perhaps if you'd tell her she was acting very silly and doing herself no end of harm she might believe you and stop."

"Oh, Miss King, I couldn't," said Betty in consternation. "She wouldn't let me—indeed she wouldn't!"

"She told Annette once that she admired you more than any girl in college," urged Dorothy quietly, "so your opinion ought to have some weight with her."

"She said that!" gasped Betty in pleased amazement. Then her face fell. "I'm sorry, Miss King, but I'm quite sure she's changed her mind. I couldn't speak to her; but would you tell me please just why any one should—why you care?"

"Why, of course, it's not exactly my business," said Dorothy, "except that I'm on the Students' Commission, and so anything that is going wrong is my business. Miss Watson is certainly having a bad influence on the girls she knows in college, and besides, if that sort of talk gets to the ears of the authorities, as it's perfectly certain to do if she keeps on, she will be very severely reprimanded, and possibly asked to leave, as an insubordinate and revolutionary character. The Students' Commission aims to avoid all that sort of thing, when a quiet hint will do it. But Miss Watson seems to be unusually difficult to approach; I'm afraid if you can't help us out, Betty, we shall have to let the matter rest." She gathered up her caddy-bag. "I must get the next car. Don't do it unless you think best. Or if you like ask some one else. Annette and I couldn't think of any one, but you know better who her friends are." She was off across the green meadow.

Betty half rose to follow, then sank back into her chair. Dorothy had not asked for an answer; she had dropped the matter, had left it in her hands to manage as she thought fit, appealing to her as a friend of Eleanor's, a girl whom Eleanor admired. "Whom she used to admire," amended Betty with a sigh. But what could she do? A personal appeal was out of the question; it would effect nothing but a widening of the breach between them. Could Kate Denise help? She never came to see Eleanor now. Neither did Jean Eastman—why almost nobody did; all her really intimate friends seemed to have dropped away from her. And yet she must think of some one, for was not this the opportunity she had so coveted? It might be the very last one too, thought Betty. "If anything happened to hurt Eleanor's feelings again, she wouldn't wait till June. She'd go now." She considered girl after girl, but rejected them all for various reasons. "She wouldn't take it from any girl," she decided, and with that decision came an inspiration. Why not ask Ethel Hale? Ethel had tried to help Eleanor before, was interested in her, and understood something of her moody, many-sided temperament. She had put Eleanor in her debt too; she could urge her suggestion on the ground of a return favor.

In an instant Betty's mind was made up. She looked ruefully at her dusty shoes and mussed shirt-waist. "I can't go to see Ethel in these," she decided, "but if I hurry home now I can dress and go right up there after dinner, before she gets off anywhere." The putting must wait. With one regretful glance out over the green, breezy course Betty started resolutely off toward the dusty highway and the noisy trolleys.

CHAPTER XVII

AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION

"I wish I could do it, Betty, but I'm sure it wouldn't be the least use for me to try. I thought I had a little hold on her for a while, but I'm afraid I was too sure of her. She avoids me now—goes around corners and into recitation rooms when she sees me coming. You see—I wonder if she told you about our trip to New York?"

Betty nodded, wishing she dared explain the full extent of her information.

"I thought so from your coming up here to-night. Well, as you've just said, she's very reserved, strangely so for a young girl; when she lets out anything about herself she wishes that she hadn't the next minute."

"Yes, I've noticed that," admitted Betty grudgingly.

"And so, having once let me get a glimpse of her better self, and then having decided as usual that she wished she hadn't, she needed a proof from me that I was worthy of her confidence. But I didn't give it; I was busy and let the matter drop, and now I am the last person who could go to her. I'm very sorry."

"Oh, dear!" said Betty forlornly.

"But isn't it so? Don't you agree with me?"

"I'm afraid I do."

"Then go back and speak to her yourself, dear. She's very fond of you, and I'm sure a little friendly hint from you is all that she needs."

"No, I can't speak to her either, Ethel. You wouldn't suggest it if you knew how things are between us. But I see that you can't. Thank you just as much. No, I mustn't stop to-night."

Betty walked down the elm-shaded street lost in thought. Eleanor had declaimed upon the

foolishness of coming back on time after vacations through most of the dinner hour, and Betty understood as she had not that afternoon what Dorothy meant. But now her one hope had failed her; Ethel had shown good cause why she should not act as Eleanor's adviser and Betty had no idea what to do next.

"Hello, Betty Wales! Christy and I thought we saw you up at the golf club this afternoon." Nita Reese's room overlooked the street and she was hanging out her front window.

"I was up there," said Betty soberly, "but I had to come right back. I didn't play at all."

"Then I should say it was a waste of good time to go up," declared Nita amiably. "You'd better be on hand to-morrow. The juniors are going to be awfully hard to beat."

"I'll try," said Betty unsmilingly, and Nita withdrew her head from the window, wondering what could be the matter with her usually cheerful friend.

At the corner of Meriden Place Betty hesitated. Then, noticing that Mrs. Chapin's piazza was full of girls, she crossed Main Street and turned into the campus, following the winding path that led away from the dwelling-houses through the apple orchard. There were seats along this path. Betty chose one on the crest of the hill, screened in by a clump of bushes and looking off toward Paradise and the hills beyond. There she sat down in the warm spring dusk to consider possibilities. And yet what was the use of bothering her head again when she had thought it all over in the afternoon? Arguments that she might have made to Ethel occurred to her now that it was too late to use them, but nothing else. She would go back to Dorothy, explain why she could not speak to Eleanor herself, and beg her to take back the responsibility which she had unwittingly shifted to the wrong shoulders. She would go straight off too. She had found an invitation to a spread at the Belden house scrawled on her blotting pad at dinner time, and she might as well be over there enjoying herself as here worrying about things she could not possibly help.

As she got up from her seat she glanced at the hill that sloped off below her. It was the dust-pan coasting ground. How different it looked now in its spring greenery! Betty smiled at the memory of her mishap. How nice Eleanor had been to her then. And Miss Ferris! If only Miss Ferris would speak to Eleanor. "Why, perhaps she will," thought Betty, suddenly remembering Miss Ferris's note. "I could ask her to, anyway. But-she's a faculty. Well, Ethel is too, though I never thought of it." And Dorothy had wanted Betty's help in keeping the matter out of the hands of the authorities. "But this is different," Betty decided at last. "I'm asking them not as officials, but just as awfully nice people, who know what to say better than we girls do. Miss King would think that was all right."

Without giving herself time to reconsider, Betty sped toward the Hilton house. All sorts of direful suppositions occurred to her while she waited for a maid to answer her ring. What if Miss Ferris had forgotten about writing the note, or had meant it for what Nan called "a polite nothing"? Perhaps it would be childish to speak of it anyway. Perhaps Miss Ferris would have other callers. If not, how should she tell her story?

"I ought to have taken time to think," reflected Betty, as she followed the maid down the hall to Miss Ferris's rooms.

Miss Ferris was alone; nevertheless Betty fidgeted dreadfully during the preliminary small-talk. Somebody would be sure to come in before she could get started, and she should never, never dare to come again. At the first suggestion of a pause she plunged into her business.

"Miss Ferris, I want to ask you something, but I hated to do it, so I came right along as soon as I decided that I'd better, and now I don't know how to begin."

"Just begin," advised Miss Ferris, laughing.

"That is what they say to you in theme classes," said Betty, "but it never helped me so very much, somehow. Well, I might begin by telling you why I thought I could come to you."

"Unless you really want to tell that you might skip it," said Miss Ferris, "because I don't need to be reminded that I shall always be glad to do anything I can for my good friend Betty Wales."

"Oh, thank you! That helps a lot," said Betty gratefully, and went on with her story.

Miss Ferris listened attentively. "Miss Watson is the girl with the wonderful gray eyes and the lovely dark hair. I remember. She comes down here a great deal to see Miss Cramer, I think. It's a pity, isn't it, that she hasn't great good sense to match her beauty? So you want me to speak to her about her very foolish attitude toward our college life. Suppose I shouldn't succeed in changing her mind?"

"Oh, you would succeed," said Betty eagerly. "Mary Brooks says you can argue a person into anything."

Miss Ferris laughed again. "I'm glad Miss Brooks approves of my argumentative ability, but are you sure that Miss Watson is the sort of person with whom argument is likely to count for anything? Did you ever know her to change her mind on a subject of this sort, because her friends disapproved of her?"

Betty hesitated. "Yes-yes, I have. Excuse me for not going into particulars, Miss Ferris, but there was a thing she did when she came here that she never does now, because she found how others felt about it. Indeed, I think there are several things."

Miss Ferris nodded silently. "Then why not appeal to the same people who influenced her

before?"

It was the question that Betty had been dreading, but she met it unflinchingly. "One of them thinks she has lost her influence, Miss Ferris, and another one who helped a little bit before, can't, because-I'm that one, Miss Ferris. I unintentionally did something last term that made Eleanor angry with me. It made her more dissatisfied and unhappy here too; so when I heard about this I felt as if I was a little to blame for it, and then I wanted to make up for the other time too. But of course it is a good deal to ask of you." Betty slid forward on to the edge of her chair ready to accept a hasty dismissal.

Miss Ferris waited a moment. "I shall be very glad to do it," she said at last. "I wanted to be sure that I understood the situation and that I could run a chance of helping Miss Watson. I think I can, but you must forgive me if I make a bad matter worse. I'll ask her to have tea with me to-morrow. May I send a note by you?"

"Of course you won't tell her that I spoke to you?" asked Betty anxiously, when Miss Ferris handed her the note. Miss Ferris promised and Betty danced out into the night. Half-way home she laughed merrily all to herself.

"What's the joke?" said a girl suddenly appearing around the corner of the Main Building.

"It was on me," laughed Betty, "so you can't expect me to tell you what it was."

It had just occurred to her that, as there was no possibility of Eleanor's finding out her part in Miss Ferris's intervention, a reconciliation was as far away as ever. "She wouldn't like it if she should find out," thought Betty, "and perhaps it was just another tactless interference. Well, I'm glad I didn't think of all these things sooner, for I believe it was the right thing to do, and it was a lot easier doing it while I hoped it might bring us together, as Nan said. I wonder what kind of things Nan meant."

She dropped the note on the hall table and slipped softly up-stairs. As she sat down at her desk she looked at the clock and hesitated. It was not so late as she had thought, only quarter of nine. There was still time to go back to the Belden. But after a moment's wavering Betty began getting out of her dress and into a kimono. Since the day of the basket-ball game she had honestly tried not to let the little things interfere with the big, nor the mere "interruptions" that were fun and very little more loom too large in her scale of living. "Livy to-night and golf to-morrow," she told the green lizard, as she sat down again and went resolutely to work.

When Eleanor came in to dinner the next evening Betty could hardly conceal her excitement. Would she say anything? If she said nothing what would it mean? The interview had apparently not been a stormy one. Eleanor looked tired, but not in the least disturbed or defiant. She ate her dinner almost in silence, answering questions politely but briefly and making none of her usual effort to control and direct the conversation. But just as the girls were ready to leave the table she broke her silence. "Wait a minute," she said. "I want to ask you please to forget all the foolish things I said last night at dinner. I've said them a good many times, and I can't contradict them to every one, but I can here-and I want to. I've thought more about it since yesterday, and I see that I hadn't at all the right idea of the situation. The students at a college are supposed to be old enough to do the right thing about vacations without the attaching of any childish penalty to the wrong thing. But we all of us get careless; then a public sentiment must be created against the wrong things, like cutting over. That was what the registrar was trying to do. Anybody who stays over as I did makes it less possible to do without rules and regulations and penalties-in other words hurts the tone of the college, just as a man who likes to live in a town where there are churches but never goes to them himself, unfairly throws the responsibility of church-going on to the rest of the community. I hadn't thought of it in that way; I didn't mean to be a shirk, but I was one."

A profound silence greeted Eleanor's argument. Mary Rich, who had been loud in her championship of Eleanor's sentiments the night before, looked angry at this sudden desertion; and Mary Brooks tried rather unsuccessfully not to smile. The rest were merely astonished at so sudden a change of mind. Finally Betty gave a little nervous cough and in sheer desperation began to talk. "That's a good enough argument to change any one's mind," she said. "Isn't it queer how many different views of a subject there are?"

"Of some subjects," said Eleanor pointedly.

It was exactly what Betty should have expected, but she couldn't help being a little disappointed. Eleanor had just shown herself so fine and downright, so willing to make all the reparation in her power for a course whose inconsistency had been proved to her. It was very disheartening to find that she cherished the old, reasonless grudge as warmly as ever. But if Betty had accomplished nothing for herself, she had done all that she hoped for Eleanor, and she tried to feel perfectly satisfied.

"I think too much about myself, anyway," she told the green lizard, who was the recipient of many confidences about this time.

The rest of the month sped by like the wind. As Betty thought it over afterward, it seemed to have been mostly golf practice and bird club. Roberta organized the bird club. Its object, according to her, was to assist Mary Brooks with her zoology by finding bird haunts and conveying Mary to them; its ultimate development almost wrought Mary's ruin. Mary had elected a certain one year course in zoology on the supposition that one year, general courses are usually "snaps," and the further theory that every well conducted student will have one "snap" on her schedule. These

propositions worked well together until the spring term, when zoology 1a resolved itself into a bird-study class. Mary, who was near-sighted, detested bird-study, and hardly knew a crow from a kinglet, found life a burden, until Roberta, who loved birds and was only too glad to get a companion on her walks in search of them, organized what she picturesquely named "the Mary-bird club." Rachel and Adelaide immediately applied for admission, and about the time that Mary appropriated the forget-me-nots that Katherine had gathered for Marion Lawrence and wore them to a dance on the plea that they exactly matched her evening dress, and also decoyed Betty into betraying her connection with the freshman grind-book, Katherine and Betty joined. They seldom accompanied the club on its official walks, preferring to stroll off by themselves and come back with descriptions of the birds they had seen for Mary and Roberta to identify. Occasionally they met a friendly bird student who helped them with their identifications on the spot, and then, when Roberta was busy, they would take Mary out in search of "their birds," as they called them. Oddly enough they always found these rare species a second time, though Mary, because of her near-sightedness, had to be content with a casual glance at them.

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"But what you've seen, you've seen," she said. "I've got to see fifty birds before June 1st; that doesn't necessarily mean see them so you'll know them again. Now I shouldn't know the nestle or the shelcuff, but I can put them down, can't I?"

"Of course," assented Katherine, "a few rare birds like those will make your list look like something."

The pink-headed euthuma, which came to light on the very last day of May, interested Mary so much that she told Roberta about it immediately and Roberta questioned the discoverers. Their accounts were perfectly consistent.

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"Way out on Paradise path, almost to the end, we met a man dashing around as if he were crazy," explained Betty. "We should have thought he was an escaped lunatic if we hadn't seen others like him."

"Yes," continued Katherine. "But he acted too much like you to take us in. So we said we were interested in birds too, and he danced around some more and said we had come upon a rare specimen. Then he pointed to the top of an enormous pine-tree—"

"Those rare birds are always in the very tops of trees," put in Mary eagerly.

"Of course; that's one reason they're rare," went on Betty. "But that minute it flew into the top of a poplar, and we three pursued it. It was a beauty."

"And then you came back after me, and it was still there. Tell her how it was marked," suggested Mary. "Perhaps she knows it under some other name."

"It had a pink head, of course," said Katherine, "and blue wings."

"Goodness!" exclaimed Roberta suspiciously.

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"Don't you mean black wings, Katherine?" asked Betty hastily.

"Did I say blue? I meant black of course. Mary thought they looked blue and that confused me. And its breast was white with brown marks on it."

"What size was it?" asked Roberta.

Katherine looked doubtful. "What should you say, Mary?"

"Well, it was quite small—about the size of a sparrow or a robin, I thought."

"They're quite different sizes," said Roberta wearily. "Your old man must have been color-blind. It couldn't have had a pink head. Who ever heard of a pink-headed bird?"

"We three are not color-blind," Katherine reminded her. "And then there's the name." Roberta sighed deeply. The new members of the Mary-bird club were very unmanageable.

Meanwhile Mary was industriously counting the names on her list, which must be handed in the next day. "I think I'd better put the euthuma down, Roberta," she said finally. "We saw it all right. They won't look the list over very carefully, but they will notice how many birds are on it, and even with the pink-headed euthuma I haven't but forty-five. I rather wish now that I'd bought a text-book, but I thought it was a waste of money when you knew all about the birds, and it would certainly be a waste of money now."

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"Oh, yes," said Roberta. "If only the library hadn't wanted its copy back quite so soon!"

"It was disagreeable of them, wasn't it?" said Mary cheerfully, copying away on her list. "You were going to look up the nestle too. Girls, did we hear the nestle sing?"

"It whistled like a blue jay," said Katherine promptly.

"It couldn't," protested Roberta. "You said it was only six inches long."

"On the plan of a blue jay's call, but smaller, Roberta," explained Betty pacifically.

"Well, it's funny that you can never find any of these birds when I'm with you," said Roberta.

Katherine looked scornful. "We were mighty lucky to see them even twice, I think," she retorted.

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Next day Mary came home from zoology 1a, which to add to its other unpleasant features met in the afternoon, wearing the air of a martyr to circumstance. Roberta, Katherine and Betty happened to be sitting on the piazza translating Livy together. "Girls," she demanded, as she

came up the steps, "if I get you the box of Huyler's that Mr. Burgess sent me will you tell me the truth about those birds?"

"She had the lists read in class!" shouted Katherine.

"I knew it!" said Roberta in tragic tones.

"Did you tell her about the shelcuff's neck?" inquired Betty.

Mary sat down on the piazza railing with her feet cushioned on a lexicon. "I told her all about the shelcuff," she said, "likewise the euthuma and the nestle. What is more, the head of the zoology department was visiting the class, so I also told him, and when I stayed to explain he stayed too, and-oh, you little wretches!"

"Not at all," said Katherine. "We waited until you'd made a reputation for cleverness and been taken into a society. I think we were considerateness itself." 317

Roberta was gazing sadly at Mary. "Why did you try all those queer ones?" she asked. "You knew I wasn't sure of them."

"I had to, my dear. She asked us for the rare names on our lists. I was the third one she came to, and the others had floundered around and told about birds I'd never heard of. I didn't really know which of mine were rare, because I'd never seen any of them but once, you know, and I was afraid I should strike something that was a good deal commoner than a robin, and then it would be all up with me. So I boldly read off these three, because I was sure they were rare. You should have seen her face when I got to the pink-headed one," said Mary, beginning suddenly to appreciate the humor of the situation. "Did you invent them?"

"Only the names," said Betty, "and the stories about finding them. I thought of nestle, and Katherine made up the others. Aren't they lovely names, Roberta?"

"Yes," said Roberta, "but think of the fix Mary is in." 318

Mary smiled serenely. "Don't worry, Roberta," she said. "The names were so lovely and the shelcuff's neck and the note of the nestle and all, and I am honestly so near-sighted, that I don't think Miss Carter will have the heart to condition me. But girls, where did you get the descriptions? Professor Lawrence particularly wanted to know."

Betty looked at Katherine and the two burst into peals of laughter. "Mary Brooks, you invented most of those yourself," explained Katherine, when she could speak. "We just showed you the first bird we happened to see and told you its new name and you'd say, 'Why it has a green crest and yellow wings!' or 'How funny its neck is! It must have a pouch.' All we had to do was to encourage you a little."

"And suppress you a little when you put colors like pink and blue into the same bird," continued Betty, "so Roberta wouldn't get too suspicious."

"Then those birds were just common, ordinary ones that I'd seen before?"

"Exactly. The nestle was a blue jay, and the euthuma was a sparrow. We couldn't see what the shelcuff was ourselves, the tree was so tall." 319

"The primrose by a river's brim,
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more."

quoted Mary blithely. "You can never put that on my tombstone."

"Better tell your friend Dr. Hinsdale about your vivid ornithological imagination," suggested Katherine. "It might interest him."

"Oh, I shall," said Mary easily. "But to-night, young ladies, you will be pleased to learn that I am invited up to Professor Lawrence's to dinner, so that I can see his bird skins. Incidentally I shall meet his fascinating brother. In about ten minutes I shall want to be hooked up, Roberta."

"She's one too many for us, isn't she?" said Katherine, as Mary went gaily off, followed by the devoted Roberta, declaring in loud tones that the Mary-bird club was dissolved.

"I wish things that go wrong didn't bother me any more than they do her," said Betty wistfully. 320

"Cheer up," urged Katherine, giving her a bearish hug. "You'll win in the golf again to-morrow, and everything will come out all right in the end."

"Everything? What do you mean?" inquired Betty sharply.

"Why, singles and doubles-twosomes and foursomes you call them, don't you? They'll all come out right."

A moment later Katherine burst in upon her long-suffering roommate with a vehemence that made every cup on the tea-table rattle. "I almost let her know what we thought," she said, "but I guess I smoothed it over. Do you suppose Eleanor Watson isn't going to make up with her at all?"

It was a glorious summer twilight. The air was sweet with the odor of lilacs and honeysuckle. One by one the stars shone softly out in the velvet sky, across which troops of swallows swooped and darted, twittering softly on the wing. Near the western horizon the golden glow of sunset still lingered. It was a night for poets to sing of, a night to revel in and to remember; but it was assuredly not a night for study. Gaslight heated one's room to the boiling point. Closed windows meant suffocation; open ones—since there are no screens in the Harding boarding house—let in troops of fluttering moths and burly June-bugs.

"And the moral of that is, work while it is yet light," proclaimed Mary Brooks, ringing her bicycle bell suggestively.

There was a sudden commotion on the piazza and then Betty's clear voice rose above the tumult. "We won it, one up! Isn't that fine? Oh no, not the singles; we go on with them to-morrow, but I can't possibly win. Oh, I'm so hot!"

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Eleanor Watson smiled grimly as these speeches floated up to her from below. She had been lounging all the breathless afternoon, trying vainly to get rid of a headache; and the next day's lessons were still to be learned.

"Ouch, how I hate June-bugs," she muttered, stopping for the fifth time in as many minutes to drive out a buzzing intruder. She had just gotten one out when another flew straight at her unperceived and tangled himself in her hair. That was the limit of endurance. With one swift movement Eleanor turned off the gas, with another she pulled down her hair and released the prisoned beetle. Then she twisted up the soft coil again in the dark and went out into the sweet spring dusk.

At the next corner she gave an angry little exclamation and turned back toward the house. The girls had deserted the piazza before she came down, and now the only light seemed to be in Betty's room. Every window there was shut, so it was no use to call. Eleanor climbed the stairs and knocked. Katherine and Betty were just starting for a trolley ride, to cool off the champion, Katherine explained; but Helen was going to be in all the evening.

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"I pity you from the bottom of my heart," said Eleanor, "but if you are really going to be here would you tell Lil Day when she comes that I have an awful headache and have gone off—that I'll see her to-morrow. I could go down there, but if she's in, her room will be fuller of June-bugs than mine. Hear them slam against that glass!" She turned to Betty stiffly. "I congratulate you on your victory," she said.

"Oh thank you!" answered Betty eagerly. "Christy did most of it. Would-won't you come out with us?"

"No, thank you. I feel like being all alone. I'm going down for a twilight row on Paradise."

"You'll get malaria," said Katherine.

"You'll catch cold, too, in that thin dress," added Helen.

"I don't mind, if only I don't see any June-bugs," answered Eleanor, "or any girls," she added under her breath, when she had gained the lower hall.

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The quickest way to Paradise was through the campus, but Eleanor chose an unfrequented back street, too ugly to attract the parties of girls who swarmed over the college grounds, looking like huge white moths as they flitted about under the trees. She walked rapidly, trying to escape thought in activity; but the thoughts ill-naturedly kept pace with her. As everybody who came in contact with Eleanor Watson was sure to remark, she was a girl brimful of strong possibilities both for good and evil; and to-night these were all awake and warring. Her year of bondage at college was nearly over. Only the day before she had received a letter from Judge Watson, coldly courteous, like all his epistles to his rebellious daughter, inquiring if it was her wish to return to Harding another year, and in the same mail had come an invitation from her aunt, asking her to spend the following winter in New York. Eleanor shrewdly guessed that in spite of her father's disapproval of his sister's careless frivolity, he would allow her to accept this invitation, for the obvious relief it would bring to himself and the second Mrs. Watson. He was fond of her, that she did not for a moment question, and he honestly wished her best good; but he did not want her in his house in her present mood.

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"For which I don't in the least blame him," thought Eleanor.

She had started to answer his letter immediately, as he had wished, and then had hesitated and delayed, so that the decision involved in her reply was still before her. And yet why should she hesitate? She did not like Harding college; she had kept the letter of her agreement to stay there for one year; surely she was free now to do as she pleased—indeed, her father had said as much. But what did she please—that was a point that, unaccountably, she could not settle. Lately something had changed her attitude toward the life at Harding. Perhaps it was the afternoon with Miss Ferris, with the perception it had brought of aims and ideals as foreign to the ambitious schemes with which she had begun the year as to the angry indifference in which she was finishing it. Perhaps, as poor Helen had suggested, it was the melting loveliness of spring term. At any rate, as she heard the girls making their plans for the next year, squabbling amiably over the merits of the various campus houses, choosing roommates, bargaining for furniture, even securing partners for the commencement festivities still three years off, an unexplainable

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longing to stay on and finish the four years' drama with the rest had seized upon Eleanor. But each time it came she had stifled it, reminding herself sternly that for her the four years held no pleasant possibilities; she had thrown away her chance—had neglected her work, alienated her friends, disappointed every one, and most of all herself. There was nothing left for her now but to go away beaten—not outwardly, for she still flattered herself that she had proved both to students and faculty her ability to make a very brilliant record at Harding had she been so inclined, and even her superiority to the drudgery of the routine work and the childish recreations. But in her heart of hearts Eleanor knew that this very disinclination to make the most of her opportunities, this fancied superiority to requirements that jarred on her undisciplined, haphazard training, was failure far more absolute and inexcusable than if dulness or any other sort of real inability to meet the requirements of the college life had been at the bottom of it. Her father would know it too, if the matter ever came to his notice; and her brother Jim, who was making such a splendid record at Cornell—he would know that, as Betty Wales had said once, quoting her sister's friend, "Every nice girl likes college, though each has a different reason." Well, Jim had thought for two years that she was a failure. Eleanor gulped hard to keep back the tears; she had meant to be everything to Jim, and she was only an annoyance.

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It was almost dark by the time she reached the landing. A noisy crowd of girls, who had evidently been out with their supper, were just coming in. They exclaimed in astonishment when her canoe shot out from the boat-house.

"It's awfully hard to see your way," called one officious damsel.

"I can see in the dark like an owl," sang back Eleanor, her good-humor restored the instant her paddle touched water,—for boating was her one passion.

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Ah, but it was lovely on the river! She glided around the point of an island and was alone at last, with the stars, the soft, grape-scented breezes, and the dark water. She pulled up the stream with long, swift strokes, and then, where the trees hung low over the still water, she dropped the paddle, and slipping into the bottom of the canoe, leaned back against a cushioned seat and drank in the beauty of the darkness and solitude. She had never been out on Paradise River at night. "And I shall never come again except at night," she resolved, breathing deep of the damp, soft air. Malaria—who cared for that? And when she was cold she could paddle a little and be warm again in a moment.

Suddenly she heard voices and saw two shapes moving slowly along the path on the bank.

"Oh, do hurry, Margaret," said one. "I told her I'd be there by eight. Besides, it's awfully dark and creepy here."

"I tell you I can't hurry, Lil," returned the other. "I turned my ankle terribly back there, and I must sit down and rest, creeps or no creeps."

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"Oh, very well," agreed the other voice grudgingly, and the shapes sank down on a knoll close to the water's edge.

Eleanor had recognized them instantly; they were her sophomore friend, Lilian Day, and Margaret Payson, a junior whom Eleanor greatly admired. Her first impulse was to call out and offer to take the girls back in her canoe. Then she remembered that the little craft would hold only two with safety, that the girls would perhaps be startled if she spoke to them, and also that she had come down to Paradise largely to escape Lil's importunate demands that she spend a month of her vacation at the Day camp in the Adirondacks. So, certain that they would never notice her in the darkness and the thick shadows, she lay still in the bottom of her boat and waited for them to go on.

"It's a pity about her, isn't it?" said Miss Payson, after she had rubbed her ankle for a while in silence.

"About whom?" inquired Lilian crossly.

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"Why, Eleanor Watson; you just spoke of having an engagement with her. She seems to have been a general failure here."

Eleanor started at the sound of her own name, then lay tense and rigid, waiting for Lilian's answer. She knew it was not honorable to listen, and she certainly did not care to do so; but if she cried out now, after having kept silent so long, Lilian, who was absurdly nervous in the dark, might be seriously frightened. Perhaps she would disagree and change the subject. But no—

"Yes, a complete failure," repeated Lilian distinctly. "Isn't it queer? She's really very clever, you know, and awfully amusing, besides being so amazingly beautiful. But there is a little footless streak of contrariness in her—we noticed it at boarding-school,—and it seems to have completely spoiled her."

"It is queer, if she is all that you say. Perhaps next year she'll be—"

"Oh, she isn't coming back next year," broke in Lilian. "She hates it here, you know, and she sees that she's made a mess of it, too, though she wouldn't admit it in a torture chamber. She thinks she has shown that college is beneath her talents, I suppose."

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"Little goose! Is she so talented?"

"Yes, indeed. She sings beautifully and plays the guitar rather well—she'd surely have made one of the musical clubs next year—and she can act, and write clever little stories. Oh, she'd have walked into everything going all right, if she hadn't been such a goose—muddled her work and been

generally offish and horrid.”

“Too bad,” said Miss Payson, rising with a groan. “Who do you think are the bright and shining stars among the freshmen, Lil?”

“Why Marion Lustig for literary ability, of course, and Emily Davis for stunts and Christy Mason for general all-around fineness, and socially—oh, let me think—the B’s, I should say, and—I forget her name—the little girl that Dottie King is so fond of. Here, take my arm, Margaret. You’ve got to get home some way, you know.”

Their voices trailed off into murmurs that grew fainter and fainter until the silence of the river and the wood was again unbroken. Eleanor sat up stiffly and stretched her arms above her head in sheer physical relief after the strain of utter stillness. Then, with a little sobbing cry, she leaned forward, bowing her head in her hands. Paradise—had they named it so because one ate there of the fruit of the tree of knowledge?

“A little footless streak!”

“An utter failure!”

What did it matter? She had known it all before. She had said those very words herself. But she had thought—she had been sure that other people did not understand it that way. Well, perhaps most people did not. No, that was nonsense. Lilian Day had achieved a position of prominence in her class purely through a remarkable alertness to public sentiment. Margaret Payson, a girl of a very different and much finer type, stood for the best of that sentiment. Eleanor had often admired her for her clear-sightedness and good judgment. They had said unhesitatingly that she was a failure; then the college thought so. Well, it was Jean Eastman’s fault then, and Caroline’s, and Betty Wales’s. Nonsense! it was her own. Should she go off in June and leave her name spelling failure behind her? Or should she come back and somehow change the failure to success? Could she?

She had no idea how long she sat there, turning the matter over in her mind, viewing it this way and that, considering what she could do if she came back, veering between a desire to go away and forget it all in the gay bustle of a New York winter, and the fierce revolt of the famous Watson pride, that found any amount of effort preferable to open and acknowledged defeat. But it must have been a long time, for when she pulled herself on to her seat and caught up the paddle, she was shivering with cold and her thin dress was dripping wet with the mist that lay thick over the river. Slowly she felt her way down-stream, pushing through the bank of fog, often running in shore in spite of her caution, and fearful every moment of striking a hidden rock or snag. Soft rustlings in the wood, strange plashings in the stream startled her. Lower down was the bewildering net-work of islands. Surely there were never so many before. Was the boat-house straight across from the last island, or a little down-stream? Which was straight across? And where was the last island? She had missed it somehow in the mist. She was below it, out in the wide mill-pond. Somewhere on the other side was the boat-house, and further down was a dam. Down-stream must be straight to the left. All at once the roar of the descending water sounded in Eleanor’s ears, and to her horror it did not come from the left. But when she tried to tell from which direction it did come, she could not decide; it seemed to reverberate from all sides at once; it was perilously near and it grew louder and more terrible every moment.

Suddenly a fierce, unreasoning fear took possession of Eleanor. She told herself sternly that there was no danger; the current in Paradise River was not so strong but that a good paddler could stem it with ease. In a moment the mist would lift and she could see the outline of one shore or the other. But the mist did not lift; instead it grew denser and more stifling, and although she turned her canoe this way and that and paddled with all her strength, the roar from the dam grew steadily to an ominous thunder. Then she remembered a gruesome legend that hung about the dam and the foaming pool in the shadow of the old mill far below, and dropped her paddle in an agony of fear. She might hurry herself over the dam in striving to escape it!

And still the deafening torrent pounded in her ears. If only she could get away from it—somewhere—anywhere just to be quiet. Would it be quiet in the pool by the mill? Eleanor slipped unsteadily into the bottom of her boat and tried to peer through the darkness at the black water, and to feel about with her hands for the current. As she did so, a bell rang up on the campus. It must be twenty minutes to ten. Eleanor gave a harsh, mirthless laugh. How stupid she had been! She would call, of course. If she could hear their bell, they could hear her voice and come for her. There would be an awkward moment of explanation, but what of that?

“Hallo! Hallo—o-o!” she called. Only the boom of the water answered.

“Hallo! Hallo—o-o!”

Again the boom of the water swallowed her cry and drowned it.

It was no use to call,—only a waste of strength.

Eleanor caught up her paddle and began to back water with all her might. That was what she should have done from the first, of course. She was cold all at once and very tired, but she would not give up yet.

She had quite forgotten that only a little while before it had not seemed to matter much what became of her. “But if I can’t keep at it all night—” she said to the mist and the river.

Helen's choice of closed windows in preference to invading companies of moths and June-bugs had made the room so insufferably warm that between heat and excitement Betty could not get to sleep. Instead she tossed restlessly about on her narrow couch, listening to the banging of the trolleys at the next corner and wishing she were still sitting on the breezy front seat, as the car dashed down the long hill toward the station. At length she slipped softly out of bed and opened the door. Perhaps the breeze would come in better then. As she stood for a moment testing the result of her experiment, she noticed with surprise that Eleanor's door was likewise open. This simple fact astonished her, because she remembered that on the hottest nights last fall Eleanor had persisted in shutting and locking her door. She had acquired the habit from living so much in hotels, she said; she could never go to sleep at all so long as her door was unfastened. "Perhaps it's all right," thought Betty, "but it looks queer. I believe I'll just see if she's in bed." So she crept softly across the hall and looked into Eleanor's room. It was empty, and the couch was in its daytime dress, covered with an oriental spread and piled high with pillows. "I suppose she stopped on the campus and got belated," was Betty's first idea. "But no, she couldn't stay down there all night, and it's long after ten. It must be half past eleven. I'll-I'd better consult-Katherine."

She chose Katherine instead of Rachel, because she had heard Eleanor speak about going to Paradise, and so could best help to decide whether it was reasonable to suppose that she was still there. Rachel was steadier and more dependable, but Katherine was resourceful and quick-witted. Besides, she was not a bit afraid of the dark.

She was sound asleep, but Betty managed to wake her and get her into the hall without disturbing any one else.

"Goodness!" exclaimed Katherine, when she heard the news. "You don't think—"

"I think she's lost in Paradise. It must have been pitch dark down there under the trees even before she got started, and you know she hasn't any sense of direction. Don't you remember her laughing about getting turned around every time she went to New York?"

"Yes, but it doesn't seem possible to get lost on that little pond."

"It's bigger than it looks," said Betty, "and there is the mist, too, to confuse her."

"I hadn't thought of that. Does she know how to manage a boat?"

"Yes, capitally," said Betty in so frightened a voice that Katherine dropped the subject.

"She's lost up stream somewhere and afraid to move for fear of hitting a rock," she said easily. "Or perhaps she's right out in the pond by the boat-house and doesn't dare to cross because she might go too far down toward the dam. We can find her all right, I guess."

"Then you'll come?" said Betty eagerly.

"Why, of course. You weren't thinking of going alone, were you?"

"I thought maybe you'd think it was silly for any one to go. I suppose she might be at one of the campus houses."

"She might, but I doubt it," said Katherine. "She was painfully intent on solitude when she left here. Now don't fuss too long about dressing."

Without a word Betty sped off to her room. She was just pulling a rain-coat over a very meagre toilet when Katherine put her head in at the door. "Bring matches," she said in a sepulchral whisper. Betty emptied the contents of her match-box into her ulster pocket, threw a cape over her arm for Eleanor, and followed Katherine cat-footed down the stairs. In the lower hall they stopped for a brief consultation.

"Ought we to tell Mrs. Chapin?" asked Betty doubtfully.

"Eleanor will hate us forever if we do," said Katherine, "and I don't see any special advantage in it. If we don't find her, Mrs. Chapin can't. We might tell Rachel though, in case we were missed."

"Or we might leave a note where she would find it," suggested Betty. "Then if we weren't missed no one need know."

"All right. You can go more quietly; I'll wait here." Katherine sank down on the lowest stair, while Betty flew back to scribble a note which she laid on Rachel's pillow. Then the relief expedition started.

It was very strange being out so late. Before ten o'clock a girl may go anywhere in Harding, but after ten the streets are deserted and dreadful. Betty shivered and clung close to Katherine, who marched boldly along, declaring that it was much nicer outdoors than in, and that midnight was certainly the top of the evening for a walk.

"And if we find her way up the river we can all camp out for the night," she suggested jovially.

"But if we don't find her?"

Katherine, who had noticed Betty's growing nervousness, refused to entertain the possibility.

"We shall," she said.

"But if we don't?" persisted Betty.

"Then I suppose we shall have to tell somebody who—who could—why, hunt for her more thoroughly," stammered Katherine. "Or possibly we'd better wait till morning and make sure that she didn't stay all night with Miss Day. But if we don't find her, there will be plenty of time to discuss that."

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At the campus gateway the girls hesitated.

"Suppose we should meet the night-watchman?" said Betty anxiously. "Would he arrest us?"

Katherine laughed at her fears. "I was only wondering if we hadn't better take the path through the orchard. If we go down by the dwelling-houses we might meet him, of course, and it would be awkward getting rid of him if he has an ordinary amount of curiosity."

"But that path is spooky dark," objected Betty.

"Not so dark as the street behind the campus," said Katherine decidedly, "and that's the only alternative. Come on."

When they had almost reached the back limit of the campus Katherine halted suddenly. Betty clutched her in terror. "Do you see any one?" she whispered. Katherine put an arm around her frightened little comrade. "Not a person," she said reassuringly, "not even the ghost of my grandmother. I was just wondering, Betty, if you'd care to go ahead down to the landing and call, while I waited up by the road. Eleanor is such a proud thing; she'll hate dreadfully to be caught in this fix, and I know she'd rather have you come to find her than me or both of us. But perhaps you'd rather not go ahead. It is pretty dark down there."

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Betty lifted her face from Katherine's shoulder and looked at the black darkness that was the road and the river bank, and below it to the pond that glistened here and there where the starlight fell on its cloak of mist.

"Of course," said Katherine after a moment's silence, "we can keep together just as well as not, as far as I am concerned. I only thought that perhaps, since this was your plan and you are so fond of Eleanor—oh well, I just thought you might like to have the fun of rescuing her," finished Katherine desperately.

"Do you mean for me to go ahead and call, and if Eleanor answers not to say anything to her about your having come?"

"Yes."

"Then how would you get home?"

"Oh, walk along behind you, just out of sight."

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"Wouldn't you be afraid?"

"Hardly."

"But I should be taking the credit for something I hadn't done."

"And Eleanor would be the happier thereby and none of the rest of the world would be affected either way."

Betty looked at the pond again and then gave Katherine a soft little hug. "Katherine Kittredge, you're an old dear," she said, "and if you really don't mind, I'll go ahead; but if she asks me how I dared to come alone or says anything about how I got here, I shall tell her that you were with me."

"All right, but I fancy she won't be thinking about that. The matches are so she can see her way to you. It's awfully hard to follow a sound across the water, but if you light one match after another she can get to you before the supply gives out, if she's anywhere near. Don't light any till she answers. If she doesn't answer, I'll come down to you and we'll walk on up the river a little way and find her there."

"Yes," said Betty. "Where shall you stay?"

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"Oh, right under this tree, I guess," answered Katherine carelessly.

"Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

When Betty had fairly gone, doubts began to assail Katherine, as they have a habit of assailing impulsive people, after it is too late to pay heed to them. It occurred to her that she was cooperating in what might easily turn out to be a desperate adventure, and that it would have been the part of wisdom to enlist the services of more competent and better equipped searchers at once, without risking delay on the slender chance of finding Eleanor near the wharf. "Eleanor would have hated the publicity, but if she wants to come up here in the dark and frighten us all into hysteria she must take the consequences. And I'd have let her too, if it hadn't been for Betty."

An owl hooted, and Katherine jumped as nervously as Betty would have done. Poor Betty! She must be almost at the landing by this time. At that very moment a little quavering voice rang out over the water.

"Eleanor! Eleanor Watson! Eleanor! Oh, Eleanor, where are you?"

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For a long moment there was silence. Then the owl hooted again. That was too much. Katherine jumped up with a bound and started down the bank toward Betty. She did not stop to find the path, and at the second step caught her foot and fell headlong. Apparently Betty did not hear her. She had not yet given up hope, for she was calling again, pausing each time to listen for the answer that did not come.

"Oh, Eleanor, Eleanor, aren't you there?" she cried and stopped, even the courage of despair gone at last. Katherine, nursing a bruised knee on the hill above, had opened her mouth to call encouragement, when a low "Who is it?" floated across the water.

"Eleanor, is that you? It's I-Betty Wales!" shrieked Betty.

Katherine nodded her head in silent token of "I told you so," and slid back among the bushes to recuperate and await developments.

For the end was not yet. Eleanor was evidently far down toward the dam, close to the opposite bank. It was hard for her to hear Betty, and still harder for Betty to hear her. Her voice sounded faint and far off, and she seemed to be paralyzed with fear and quite incapable of further effort. When Betty begged her to paddle right across and began lighting matches in reckless profusion to show her the way, Eleanor simply repeated, "I can't, I can't," in dull, dispirited monotone.

"Shall-I-come-for-you?" shouted Betty.

"You can't," returned Eleanor again.

"Non-sense!" shrieked Betty and then stood still on the wharf, apparently weighing Eleanor's last opinion.

"Go ahead," called Katherine in muffled tones from above.

Betty did not answer.

"Thinks I'm another owl, I suppose," muttered Katherine, and limped down the bank to the wharf, frightening the nervous, overwrought Betty almost out of her wits at first, and then vastly relieving her by taking the entire direction of affairs into her own competent hands.

"You go right ahead. It's the only way, and it's perfectly easy in a heavy boat. That canoe might possibly go down with the current, but a big boat wouldn't. Rachel and I tried it last week, when the river was higher. Now cross straight over and feel along the bank until you get to her. Then beach the canoe and come back the same way. Give me some matches. I'll manage that part of it and then retire,—unless you'd rather be the one to wait here."

"No, I'll go," answered Betty eagerly, vanishing into the boat-house after a pair of oars.

"She must be hanging on to something on shore," went on Katherine, when Betty reappeared, "and she's lost her nerve and doesn't dare to let go. If you can't get her into your boat, I'll come; but somebody really ought to stay here. I had no idea the fog was so thick. Hurry now and cross straight over. You're sure you're not afraid?"

"Quite sure." Betty was off, splashing her oars nervously through the still water, wrapped in the mist, whispering over and over Katherine's last words, "Hurry and go straight. Hurry, hurry, go straight across."

When she reached the other shore she called again to Eleanor, and the sobbing cry of relief that answered her made all the strain and effort seem as nothing. Cautiously creeping along the bank where the river was comparatively quiet, backing water now and then to test her strength with the current, she finally reached Eleanor, who had happened quite by chance to run near the bank and now sat in the frail canoe hanging by both hands to a branch that swept low over the water, exactly as Katherine had guessed.

"Why didn't you beach the canoe, and stay on shore?" asked Betty, who had tied her own boat just above and was now up to her knees in the water, pulling Eleanor in.

"I tried to, but I lost my paddle, and so I was afraid to let go the tree again, and the water looked so deep. Oh, Betty, Betty!"

Eleanor sank down on the bank, sobbing as if her heart would break. Betty patted her arm in silence, and in a few moments she stood up, quieted. "You're going to take me back?" she asked.

"Of course," said Betty, cheerfully, leading the way to her boat.

"Please wait a minute," commanded Eleanor.

Betty trembled. "She's going to say she won't go back with me," she thought. "Please let me do it, Eleanor," she begged.

"Yes," said Eleanor, quickly, "but first I want to say something. I've been a hateful, horrid thing, Betty. I've believed unkind stories and done no end of mean things, and I deserve all that I've had to-night, except your coming after me. I've been ashamed of myself for months, only I wouldn't say so. I know you can never want me for a friend again, after all my meanness; but Betty, say that you won't let it hurt you—that you'll try to forget all about it."

Betty put a wet arm around Eleanor's neck and kissed her cheek softly. "You weren't to blame," she said. "It was all a mistake and my horrid carelessness. Of course I want you for a friend. I want it more than anything else. And now don't say another word about it, but just get into the boat and come home."

They hardly spoke during the return passage; Eleanor was worn out with all she had gone through, and Betty was busy rowing and watching for Katherine's matches, which made tiny, glimmering dots of light in the gloom. Eleanor did not seem to notice them, nor the shadowy figure that vanished around the boat-house just before they reached the wharf.

From her appointed station under the pine-tree Katherine heard the grinding of the boat on the gravel, the rattle of oars thrown down on the wharf, and then a low murmur of conversation that did not start up the hill toward her, as she had expected.

"Innocents!" sighed Katherine. "They're actually stopping to talk it out down there in the wet. I'm glad they've made it up, and I'd do anything in reason for Betty Wales, but I certainly am sleepy," and she yawned so loud that a blue jay that was roosting in the tree above her head fluttered up to a higher branch, screaming angrily.

"The note of the nestle," laughed Katherine, and yawned again.

Down on the wharf Betty and Eleanor were curled up close together in an indiscriminate, happy tangle of rain-coat, golf-cape, and very drabbed muslin, holding a conversation that neither would ever forget. Yet it was perfectly commonplace; Harding girls are not given to the expression of their deeper emotions, though it must not therefore be inferred that they do not have any to express.

"Oh, Betty, you can't imagine how dreadful it was out there!" Eleanor was saying. "And I thought I should have to stay all night, of course. How did you know I hadn't come in?"

Betty explained.

"I don't see why you bothered," said Eleanor. "I'm sure I shouldn't have, for any one as horrid as I've been. Oh, Betty, will you truly forgive me?"

"Don't say that. I've wanted to do something that would make you forgive me."

"Oh, I know you have," broke in Eleanor quickly. "Miss Ferris told me."

"She did!" interrupted Betty in her turn. "Why, she promised not to."

"Yes, but I asked her. It seemed to me queer that she should have taken such an interest in me, and all of a sudden it flashed over me, as I sat talking to her, that you were at the bottom of it. So I said, 'Miss Ferris, Betty Wales asked you to say this to me,' and she said, 'Yes, but she also asked me not to mention her having done so.' I was ashamed enough then, for she'd made me see pretty plainly how badly I needed looking after, but I was bound I wouldn't give in. Oh, Betty, haven't I been silly!"

"I didn't mean to hurt your feelings by what I said at that class meeting, Eleanor," said Betty shyly.

"You didn't hurt them. I was just cross at things in general—at myself, I suppose that means,—and angry at you because I'd made you despise me, which certainly wasn't your fault."

"Eleanor, what nonsense! I despise you?"

A rustling on the bank reminded Betty that Katherine was waiting. "We must go home," she said. "It's after midnight."

"So it is," agreed Eleanor, getting up stiffly. "Oh, Betty, I am glad I'm not out there hanging on to that branch and shivering and wondering how soon I should have to let go and end it all. Oh, I shall never forget the feel of that stifling mist."

They walked home almost in silence. Katherine, missing the murmur of conversation, wondered if this last effort at reconciliation had failed after all; but near Mrs. Chapin's the talk began again.

"I'm only sorry there isn't more of spring term left to have a good time in. Why, Eleanor, there's only two weeks."

"But there's all next year," answered Eleanor.

"I thought you weren't coming back."

"I wasn't, but I am now. I've got to—I can't go off letting people think that I'm only a miserable failure. The Watson pride won't let me, Betty."

"Oh, people don't think anything of that kind," objected Betty consolingly.

"I know one person who does," said Eleanor with decision, "and her name is Eleanor Watson. I decided while I was out there waiting for you that one's honest opinion of herself is about as important as any outsider's. Don't you think so?"

"Perhaps," said Betty gaily. "But the thing that interests me is that you're coming back next year. Why, it's just grand! Shall you go on the campus?"

Betty Wales had to leave her trunk half packed and her room in indescribable confusion in order to obey a sudden summons from the registrar. She had secured a room on the campus at last, so the brief note said; but the registrar wished her to report at the office and decide which of two possible assignments she preferred.

"It's funny," said Betty to Helen, as she extracted her hat from behind the bookcase, where she had stored it for safe keeping, "because I put in my application for the Hilton house way back last fall."

"Perhaps she means two different rooms."

"No, Mary says they never give you a choice about rooms, unless you're an invalid and can't be on the fourth floor or something of that kind."

"Well, it's nice that you're on," said Helen wistfully. "I don't suppose I have the least chance for next year."

"Oh, there's all summer," said Betty hopefully. "Lots of people drop out at the last minute. Which house did you choose?"

"I didn't choose any because Miss Stuart told me I would probably have to wait till junior year, and I thought I might change my mind before then."

"It's too bad," said Betty, picking her way between trunk trays and piles of miscellaneous débris to the door. "I think I shall stop on my way home and get a man to move my furniture right over to the Hilton."

"Oh, wouldn't it be lovely if I'd got into the Hilton house too!" said Helen with a sigh of resignation. "Then perhaps we could room together."

"Yes," said Betty politely, closing the door after her. Under the circumstances it was not necessary to explain that Alice Waite and she had other plans for the next year.

It was a relief to stop trying to circumvent the laws of nature by forcing two objects into the space that one will fill—which is the cardinal principle of the college girl's June packing—and Betty strolled slowly along under the elm-trees, in no haste to finish her errand. On Main Street, Emily Davis, carrying an ungainly bundle, overtook her.

"I was afraid I wasn't going to see you to say good-bye," she said. "Everybody wants skirt braids put on just now, and between that and examinations I've been very busy."

"Are those skirts?" asked Betty.

"Yes, two of Babbie's and one of Babe's. I was going up to the campus, so I thought I'd bring them along and save the girls trouble, since they're my best patrons, as well as being my good friends."

"It's nice to have them both."

"Only you hate to take money for doing things for your friends."

"Where are you going to be this summer?" inquired Betty. "You never told me where you live."

"I live up in northern New York, but I'm not going home this summer. I'm going to Rockport—"

"Why, so am I!" exclaimed Betty. "We're going to stay at The Breakers."

"Oh, dear!" said Emily sadly, "I was hoping that none of my particular friends would be there. I'm going to have charge of the linen-room at The Breakers, Betty."

"What difference does that make?" demanded Betty eagerly. "You have hours off, don't you? We'll have the gayest sort of a time. Can you swim?"

"No, I've never seen the ocean."

"Well, Will and Nan will teach you. They're going to teach me."

Emily shook her head. "Now, Betty, you must not expect your family to see me in the same light that you do. Here those things don't make any difference, but outside they do; and it's perfectly right that they should, too."

"Nonsense! My family has some sense, I hope," said Betty gaily, stopping at the entrance to the Main Building. "Then I'll see you next week."

"Yes, but remember you are not to bother your family with me. Good-bye."

"Good-bye. You just wait and see!" called Betty, climbing the steps. Half-way up she frowned. Nan and mother would understand, but Will was an awful snob. "He'll have to get used to it," she decided, "and he will, too, after he's heard her do 'the temperance lecture by a female from Boston.' But it will certainly seem funny to him at first. Why, I guess it would have seemed funny to me last year."

The registrar looked up wearily from the litter on her desk, as Betty entered. "Good-afternoon, Miss Wales. I sent for you because I was sure that, however busy you might be you had more time than I, and I can talk to you much quicker than I could write. As I wrote you, I have reached your name on the list of the campus applicants, and you can go into the Hilton if you choose. But owing to an unlooked-for falling out of names just below yours, Miss Helen C. Adams comes next to you on the list. You hadn't mentioned the matter of roommates, and noticing that you two girls live in the same house, I thought I would ask you if you preferred a room in the Belden house

with Miss Adams. There are two vacancies there, and she will get one of them in any case."

"Oh!" said Betty.

"I shall be very glad to know your decision to-night if possible, so that I can make the other assignment in the morning, before the next applicant leaves town."

"Yes," said Betty.

"You will probably wish to consult Miss Adams," went on the registrar. "I ought to have sent for her too—I don't know why I was so stupid."

"Oh, that's all right," said Betty hastily. "I will come back in about an hour, Miss Stuart. I suppose there isn't any hope that we could both go into the Hilton."

"No, I'm afraid not. Any time before six o'clock will do. I shan't be here much longer, but you can leave the message with my assistant. And you understand of course that it was purely on your account that I spoke to you. I thought that under the circumstances—" The registrar was deep in her letters again.

But as Betty was opening the door, she looked up to say with a merry twinkle in her keen gray eyes, "Give my regards to your father, Miss Wales, and tell him he underrates his daughter's ability to take care of herself."

"Oh, Miss Stuart, I hoped you didn't know I was that girl," cried Betty blushing prettily.

Miss Stuart shook her head. "I couldn't come to meet you, but I didn't forget. I've kept an eye on you."

"I hope you haven't seen anything very dreadful," laughed Betty.

"I'll let you know when I do," said Miss Stuart. "Good-bye."

Betty went out on to the campus, where the shadows were beginning to grow long on the freshly mown turf, and took her favorite path back to the edge of the hill, where she sat down on her favorite seat to consider this new problem. On the slope below her a bed of rhododendrons that had been quite hidden under the snow in winter, and inconspicuous through the spring, had burst into a sudden glory of rainbow blossoms—pink and white and purple and flaming orange.

"Every day is different here," thought Betty, "and the horrid things and the lovely ones always come together."

Helen would be pleased, of course; as she had hinted to the registrar, there was really no need of consulting Helen; the only person to be considered was Betty Wales. If only Miss Stuart had assigned her to the Hilton house and said nothing!

From her seat Betty could look over to Dorothy King's windows. It would have been such fun to be in the house with Dorothy. Clara Madison was going to leave the campus and go to a place where they would make her bed and bring her hot water in the morning. Alice's room was a lovely big one on the same floor as Dorothy's, and she had delayed making arrangements to share it with a freshman who was already in the house, until she was sure that Betty did not get her assignment. Eleanor had applied for an extra-priced single there, too, to be near Betty.

Helen was a dear little thing and a very considerate roommate, but she was "different." She didn't fit in somehow, and it was a bother always to be planning to have her have a good time. She would be lonely in the Belden; she loved college and was very happy now, but she needed to have somebody who understood her and could appreciate her efforts, to encourage her and keep her in touch with the lighter side of college life. She didn't know a soul in the Belden—but then neither did lots of other freshmen when they moved on to the campus. She need never hear anything about the registrar's plan, and she could come over to the Hilton as much as she liked.

Nita Reese would be at the Belden, and Marion Lawrence; and Mary Brooks was going there if she could get an assignment. It was a splendid house, the next best to the Hilton. But those girls were not Dorothy King, and Miss Andrews was not Miss Ferris. It would have been lovely to be in the house with Miss Ferris.

Would have been! Betty caught herself suddenly. It wasn't settled yet. Then she got up from her seat with quick determination. "I'll stop in and see Miss Ferris for just a minute, and then I shall go back and tell Miss Stuart right off, for I must finish packing to-night, whatever happens."

Miss Ferris was in, and she and her darkened, flower-scented room wore an air of coolness and settled repose that was a poignant relief after the glaring sunshine outside and the confusion of "last days."

"So you go to-morrow," said Miss Ferris pleasantly. "I don't get off till next week, of course. Are you satisfied?"

"Satisfied?" repeated Betty. She had heard of Miss Ferris's habit of flashing irrelevant questions at her puzzled auditors, but this was her first experience of it.

"With your first year at Harding," explained Miss Ferris.

"Oh!" said Betty, relieved that it was no worse. "Why, y-es-no, I'm not. I've had a splendid time, but I haven't accomplished half that I ought. Next year I'm going to work harder from the very beginning, and—" Betty stopped abruptly, realizing that all this could not possibly interest Miss Ferris.

"And what?"

"I didn't want to bore you," apologized Betty. "Why, I'm going to try to—I don't know how to say it—try not scatter my thoughts so. Nan says that I am so awfully interested in every one's else business that I haven't any business of my own."

"I see," said Miss Ferris musingly. "That's quite a possible point of view. Still, I'm inclined to think that on the whole we have just as much orange left and it tastes far better, if we give a good deal of it away. If we try to hang on to it all, it's likely to spoil in the pantry before we get around to squeeze it dry."

Betty looked puzzled again.

"You don't like figures of speech, do you?" said Miss Ferris. "You must learn to like them next year. What I mean is that it seems to me far better in the long run to be interested in too many people than not to be interested in people enough. Of course, though, we mustn't neglect to be sufficiently interested in ourselves; and how to divide ourselves fairly between ourselves and the rest of the world is the hardest question we ever have to answer. You'll be getting new ideas about it all through your course—and all through your life."

There was a moment of silence, and then Betty rose to go. "I have to pack and I know you are busy. Miss Ferris, I'm going to be at the Belden next year."

"I'm sorry you're not coming here," said Miss Ferris kindly. "Couldn't you manage it?"

"Yes, but the—the orange seems to cut better the other way," said Betty. "That isn't a good figure, but perhaps you can see what it means."

It was worth most of what it had cost to see Helen's face when she heard the news. "Oh Betty, it's too good to be true," she cried, "but are you sure you want me?"

"Haven't I given up the Hilton to be with you?" said Betty, with her face turned the other way.

Alice was disappointed, but she would be just as happy with Constance Fayles. She found more "queer" things to like at Harding every day, and she considered Betty Wales one of the queerest and one of the nicest.

Eleanor pleased Betty by offering no objection to the change of plan. "Only you needn't think that you can get rid of me as easily as all this," she said. "I shall camp down in the registrar's office until she says that 'under the circumstances,' which is her pet phrase, she will let me change my application to the Belden. By the way, Betty, Jean Eastman wants to see you after chapel tomorrow. She said she'd be in number five."

After "last chapel," with its farewell greetings, that for all but the seniors invariably ended with a cheerful "See you next September," and the interview with Jean, in which the class president offered rather unintelligible apologies for "the stupid misunderstanding that we all got into," Betty went back to the house to get her bags and meet Katherine, who was going on the same train. Some of the girls had already gone, and none of them were in but Rachel, who was perched in a front window watching anxiously for a dilatory expressman, and Katherine, who was frantically stowing the things that would not go in her trunk into an already well-filled suit-case.

"Well, it's all over," said Betty, sitting down on the window seat beside Rachel.

"Wish it were," muttered Katherine, shutting the case and sitting down on it with a thud.

"No, it's only well begun," corrected Rachel.

"A lot of things are over anyway," persisted Betty. "Just think how much has happened since last September!"

"Jolly nice things too," said Katherine cheerfully. She had quite unexpectedly succeeded in fastening the lock.

"Weren't they!" agreed Betty heartily. "But I guess the nicest thing about it is what you said, Rachel—that it's 'to be continued in our next.' Won't it be fun to see how everything turns out?"

"I wish that expressman would turn up," said Rachel ruefully.

"We'll tell him so if we meet him," said Betty, shouldering her bag and her golf clubs, while Katherine staggered along with the bursting suit-case.

As they boarded a car at the corner, Mary Brooks and the faithful Roberta waved to them energetically from the other side of Main Street.

"Good-bye! Good-bye!" shrieked Katherine.

"See you next September," called Betty, who had said good-bye to them once already.

"Katherine Kittredge has grown older this year," said Mary critically, "but Betty hasn't changed a bit. I remember the night she came up the walk, carrying those bags."

"She has changed inside," said Roberta.

As the car whizzed by the Main Building, Betty wanted to wave her hand to that too, but she didn't until Dorothy King, appearing on the front steps, gave her an excuse.

"Well," she said with a little sigh, as the campus disappeared below the crest of the hill, "you and Rachel may talk all you like, but I feel as if something was over, and it makes me sad. Just think!

We can never be freshmen at Harding again as long as we live.”

“Quite true,” said Katherine calmly, “but we can be sophomores—that is, unless the office sees fit to interfere.”

“Yes, we can be sophomores; and perhaps that’s just as nice,” said Betty optimistically. “Perhaps it’s even nicer.”

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