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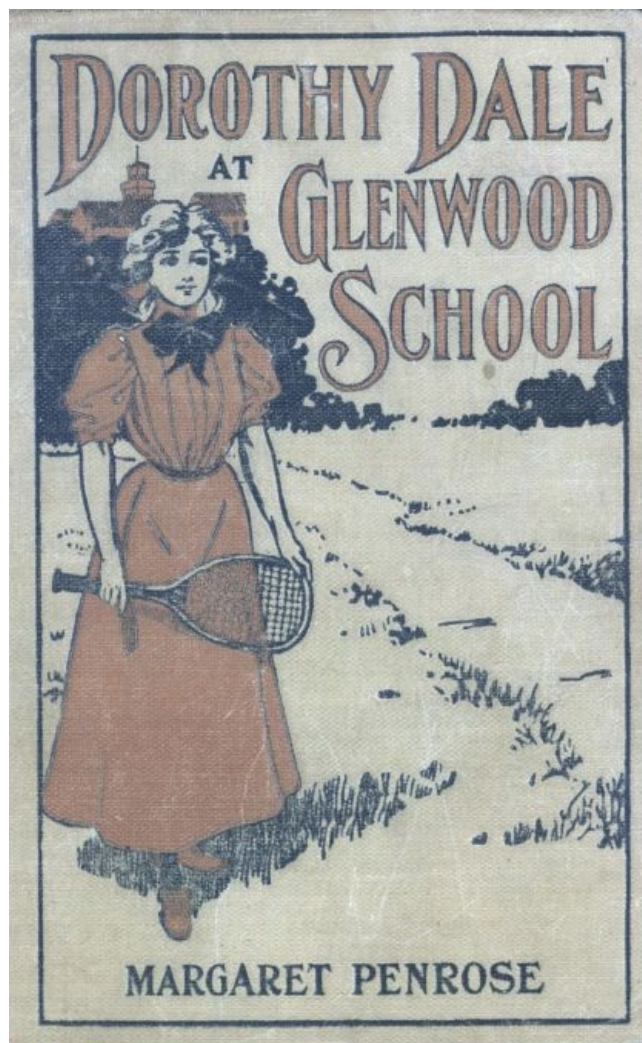
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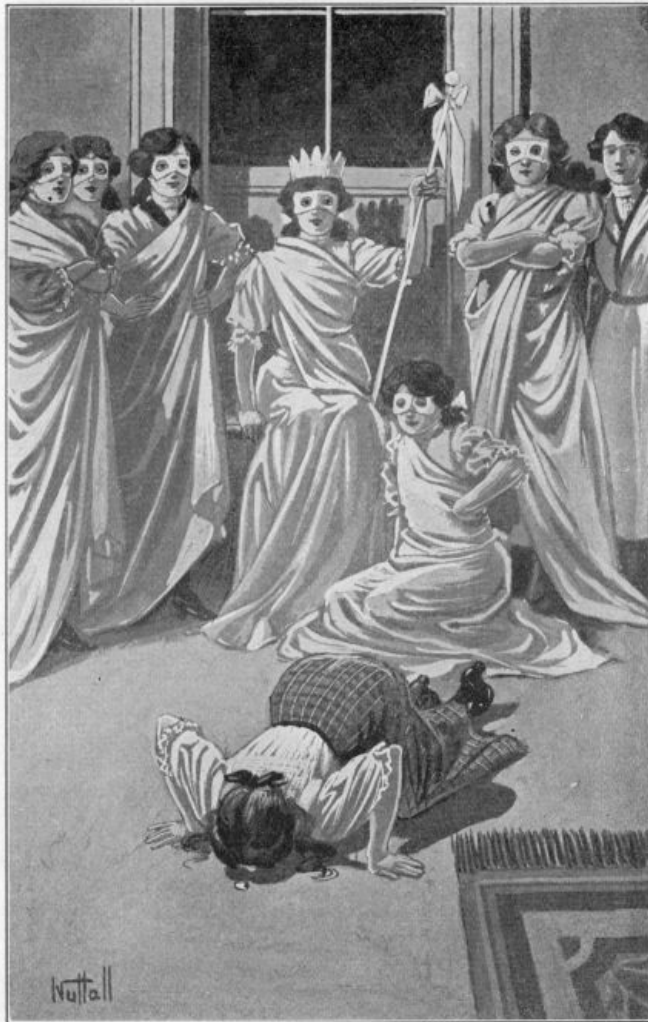
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150**

DOROTHY DALE AT GLENWOOD SCHOOL

BY

MARGARET PENROSE

AUTHOR OF "DOROTHY DALE: A GIRL OF TO-DAY."

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK

CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY

THE DOROTHY DALE SERIES

BY MARGARET PENROSE

Cloth. Illustrated.

DOROTHY DALE: A GIRL OF TO-DAY
DOROTHY DALE AT GLENWOOD SCHOOL
(Other volumes in preparation)

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DOROTHY DALE AT GLENWOOD SCHOOL

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DOROTHY DALE AT GLENWOOD SCHOOL

CHAPTER I

TWO YOUNG GIRLS

"And you are quite sure, daddy, I am not dreaming? That I am sitting right here with my arms around your neck, and you have just told me it is all perfectly true?" And, to make still more certain that the whole matter was one of unquestionable reality, the girl gave her parent such a flesh and blood hug that a physical answer came to her question in the shape of a protest from the very wideawake man.

"Now, see here, Little Captain," he remarked, "it is all very well to make sure we are not dreaming, and that all the good news is real, but please remember I have put on a clean collar and—your tactics are quite military. You are acquiring muscle."

Major Dale kissed his daughter fondly as she relinquished her hold on him, and smoothed back a stray lock of his silvery hair.

"I'm so glad for you, daddy," she went on. "You do so need a real rest, and now we will not have to plan every day what we may spend to-morrow. I fancy I will still keep the note-book going with pounds and prices of things, and an occasional orange, and even some foreign fruit now and then. Dear me! I feel the good of that money already. We can have so many luxuries—no more scrimping and patching—"

"But, daughter dear," interrupted the major, "you must not imagine that mere money can bring happiness. It depends entirely upon the proper use of that commodity—we must always exercise good judgment, whether one dollar or one hundred dollars are involved."

"Oh, of course, I know we are not so very rich, we cannot just exactly live sumptuously, but we may live comfortably. And really, daddy, now that it is over, I may as well own up, I have longed with the longest kind of longing for a brand-new hat. May I really have one? Ribbons and all?"

"Two, one for Sunday and one for every day," promptly responded the major, laughing. "But your hats always look new—"

"They do say I have talent for hats, and that one must have originality to trim and keep old head-gear up to date. So, daddy dear, perhaps, some day, that hint of talent may develop—I may be an artist or something. Then I will bless the days when I had to make over hats to discover myself," and Dorothy promptly clapped upon her blond head such a confusion of straw and flowers, to say nothing of the dangling blue ribbons, that even the major, with his limited appreciation of "keeping old head-gear up-to-date" was forced to acknowledge that his daughter did know how to trim a hat.

"When will the money come?" she asked, tilting her head to one side to get a look in the small oval mirror, that was sufficiently large for the major's neckties, but was plainly too short for hats.

"We won't get it by the pound, like butter, you know, daughter. Nor is it a matter of so many blank checks to be filled out as we progress with penmanship—like copy-book work. As a matter of fact, I have just received the legal information that my dear old soldier uncle Ned—otherwise known as Captain Edward Dale on the retired list, resident of India, subject of Great Britain, has answered the last roll call—and left what he had to me. Uncle Ned was the hero of our family, daughter dear, and some day I will tell you why you are my Little Captain—his own successor," and the major laid his hand upon Dorothy's shoulder in a way he had of making a promise that he intended to keep.

A commotion on the side porch interrupted their confidences, and the major took advantage of it to make his escape. He kissed Dorothy good-bye, and left her to the "commotion" that presently made its way in at the door in the shape of Tavia Travers, Dorothy's warmest friend in every thing.

"Hurrah for the good news!" shouted Tavia, flinging her sailor hat up to the ceiling and catching it as promptly.

"Three cheers for the money,
When will it come?
Give a feller some
Tiddle-umtum-tum

I have to say bunny,
To make a rhyme with money!"

And Tavia swung around like a pin-wheel to bring her "verse" to an effective full stop—a way she had of punctuating her impromptu productions.

Dorothy made a comical "squat" to add more finish, and then the two girls, feeling better for having opened the safety valve of physical exertion to "let off" mental exuberance, sat down to talk it over quietly.

"Are you perfectly positive, certain, sure, that it's just you, Dorothy Dale, and no fairy or mermaid," began Tavia, settling herself among the cushions on Major Dale's sofa. "Of all the delicious, delectable things! To have a rich, old uncle die 'way off in India, where you don't even have to make your nose red at his funeral. And to leave you a million dollars—"

"Oh, not quite a million," interrupted Dorothy. "Something considerable less than that, I believe."

"But it's all kinds of money I know," went on the other. "Dear me! I do wish some kind of money would run in our family even with red noses thrown in. But no such luck! When we have a funeral we always have to pay for the coach."

"Tavia Travers! How dare you talk so, of such serious things!"

"How else would you have me talk of serious things? The most serious thing in my life is money—its scarcity. Funerals, of course, take time, and are unpleasant in many respects, but, for right at home trouble, it's money."

"It is nice to think that the dear old captain should be so good to father," said Dorothy. "Father was always his favorite relative, and he particularly liked him on account of his military honors."

"Well, he ought to, of course," put in Tavia, "for your father keeps the name Dale up for military honors. But what in the world are you going to do with all the money? Don't, for goodness' sake, go away for your health, and other things, and leave poor me to die here without nobody nor nuthin'," and the girl burst into make-believe tears.

"Indeed," said Dorothy. "We can enjoy the good fortune in no place better than in dear old Dalton, and among our own good friends," and she put her arms affectionately about Tavia. "But one thing has been definitely decided upon—"

"You are going to buy the Harvy mansion?"

"No, a new hat. Father has just this minute given his consent."

"Make it a tiara and save the expense of hat-pins," suggested Tavia.

"No, I have a hankering for a Gainsborough, the kind the lady hanging over Aunt Winnie's stairs wears—the picture queen, you know."

"Oh, yes, she looks very nice in a picture over the stairs," remarked Tavia, "but my advice to you would be to wear elastic under your chin with a thing like that—or else try Gulliver's Glue. One breeze of the Dalton kind would be enough for a Gainsborough."

"You shall help me pick it out," agreed Dorothy. "In the meantime don't sit on the only one I have. I just left it on the sofa as you came in—"

"And if it isn't the dearest, sweetest thing now," exclaimed Tavia, rescuing the mass of perishables she had unwittingly pressed into something like a funeral piece.

"Oh!" exclaimed Dorothy. "I did like that hat!"

"And so did I!" declared Tavia. "That hat was a stunner, and I deeply regret it's untimely taking away—it went to pieces without a groan. That comes of having a real Leghorn. I could sit all over my poor straw pancake and it would not as much as bend—couldn't. It would have no place to bend to."

"You could never wear anything that would become you more than a simple sailor," said Dorothy, with the air of one in authority, "and if I had your short locks I would just sport a jaunty little felt sailor all summer. But with my head—"

"Jaunty doesn't go. I quite agree with you, picture lady, your head is cut out for picture hats. Another positive evidence of money running in your family—my head was cut out for an economical pattern—lucky thing for me!" and Tavia clapped her aforesaid sailor on her bronze head at a decidedly rakish angle, while Dorothy busied herself with a thorough investigation of the wreck of her own headpiece.

As told in "Dorothy Dale: A Girl of To-Day," the first book of this series, these two girls, Dorothy Dale and Octavia Travers, were school friends, home friends and all kinds of friends, both about the same age, and both living in a little interesting town called Dalton, in New York state. Dorothy was the daughter of Major Dale, a prominent citizen of the place, while Tavia's father was Squire Travers, a man who was largely indebted to Dorothy for the office he held, inasmuch as she had managed, in a girl's way, to bring about his election.

Tavia had a brother Johnnie, quite an ordinary boy, while Dorothy had two brothers, Joe, aged nine and Roger, aged seven years.

There was one other member of the Dale household, Mrs. Martin, the housekeeper, who had cared for the children since their mother had been called away. She was that sort of responsible aged woman who seems to grow more and more particular with years, and perhaps her only fault, if it might be termed such, was her excessive care of Roger—her baby, she insisted,—for to her his seven years by no means constituted a length of time sufficient to make a boy of him. The children called Mrs. Martin, Aunt Libby, and to them she was indeed as kind and loving as any aunt could be.

Dorothy had an aunt, Mrs. Winthrop White, of North Birchland in summer, and of the city in winter, a woman of social importance, as well as being a most lovable and charming lady personally. A visit of Dorothy and Tavia to the Cedars, Mrs. White's country place, as related in "Dorothy Dale," was full of incidents, and in the present volume we shall become still better acquainted with the family, which included Mrs. White's two sons, Ned and Nat, both young men well worth knowing.

Dorothy and Tavia might well rejoice in the good news that the major had so lately been informed of, for the acquirement of means to Dorothy would undoubtedly bring good times to Tavia, and both deserved the prospects of sunshine and laughter, for alas—in all lives, even those scarcely old enough to take upon their shoulders the burden of cares, there comes some blot to mar the page: some speck to break the glorious blue of the noonday sky.

Dorothy Dale was not without her sorrow. A wicked man, Andrew Anderson by name, had come into her life in a mysterious way. Dorothy had befriended, and in her own way, helped back to a day of happiness an unfortunate man, Miles Burlock. This man had for years been in the strange power of Anderson, but before it was too late Dorothy had helped Burlock break the chains of strong drink that seemed to have bound him to the evil companion, and for this interference she had suffered—she was now the object of Anderson's hatred. Anderson was after the money that Miles Burlock had to leave at his death, but Dorothy and her father saved this for its rightful owner, a little daughter of Miles Burlock, who had for some years been kept away from her own father by Anderson.

The child, now an orphan, came into the care of Major Dale, her legal guardian and so Anderson had new cause for his hatred for Dorothy—the money and child having both been put out of his reach. So this was Dorothy's sorrow: she had been persecuted because of her goodness.

No one who knew Tavia Travers would have considered her capable of worry. She was as light-hearted as air, with a great faculty for mischief and a "hankering" for fun. But she did have a worry, a fear that some day Dorothy Dale might pass out of her life and end the attachment that came in childhood and waxed strong with girlhood. Dorothy was what might be considered a girl of the aristocratic class, while Tavia belonged to those who consider it a privilege to work for a living and have a keen appreciation of the opportunity—as Squire Travers proved when he turned in to show himself the best official, in the capacity of squire, of which Dalton ever boasted.

Now a new danger threatened Tavia: Dorothy would be almost rich. Would that help to break the ties of love and friendship between the girls?

Not that Dorothy could ever change in her sincere love for Tavia, but might not circumstances separate them, and then—?

Tavia had been first to congratulate Dorothy on the good news and the smashed hat had furnished an incident sufficiently distracting to keep Tavia from the lamentations that at first filled her heart. Hence it has been necessary to take the reader through her sentiments in a very much less interesting way than Tavia herself would have disclosed them. She had a way of saying and doing things that was inimitable, and amusing, if not entirely elevating.

"Then you think you will stay in Dalton?" asked Tavia, finally, as Dorothy succeeded in pulling the smashed hat back into some kind of shape, if not the right kind.

"Why not?" asked Dorothy. "Are there not plenty of good people in Dalton?"

"Oh, a few, perhaps. There's me and Johnnie—but we are not 'out' yet, and you will be looking for society friends. Well, here's good luck to you with your Indian millions, and don't forget that in your poorest days I used to lend you chewing gum," and at this Tavia threw her arms around Dorothy in a warm embrace, as if striving to hold to her heart and keep in her life the same old darling Dorothy—in spite of the new circumstances.

"Say, Sis!" exclaimed Dorothy. "Do you realize that this is the very day you are to go for an

automobile ride with Nat White?"

"And that you are to go in the same machine with Ned White? Course I do, you selfish girl. So taken up with common money that you never noticed my get-up. Look at this," and Tavia drew from the folds of her skirt a cloud of something. "Automobile veil," she explained, giving the flimsy stuff a turn that sent it floating through the air like a cloud of smoke.

"Splendid!" declared Dorothy.

"Gloriotious!" remarked Tavia, "the real thing. I found it in an old trunk among dear old grandma Travers' things, and grandma loved it dearly. I persuaded mother to let me inherit it, and smell," putting the gray cloud of silk to Dorothy's face, "that perfume is lavender. Grandma always used it."

"What a dear old lady she must have been," said Dorothy, looking over the dainty article critically. "You are not really going to wear it," she faltered, realizing the value of such an heirloom.

"No, I am not, but—you are! There, Doro, darling, it is a gift for you from—me. You will always keep it and—love it—"

"Indeed I will do no such thing as to take your dear grandma's things. You must always keep this yourself—"

"But I want you to, Doro. It will make me happy to know I have given you something good—something I have loved, and something you will love for me. There," and she put the scarf over Dorothy's blond head, "you look like an angel. Grandma herself will be proud all the way from heaven, to see this fall upon the shoulders of one so worthy in face and in heart," and the two stood there clasped in each other's arms, the silvery veil of love falling about the shoulders of both, and binding "all the way to heaven," in its folds of sweetest lavender the hearts of two young girls.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRE BIRD

Outside sounded the strident "honk-honk" of an automobile horn, followed by a series of explosions, like a Gatling gun in full operation, as Ned cut out the muffler, threw off the clutch, and brought the machine to a stop at the door. More "honk-honks" called Dorothy out to welcome her cousins, and presently Ned and Nat, and Dorothy and Tavia were chatting merrily on the porch, as the big machine puffed and "gasped" after its long run from North Birchland to Dalton.

"We will go right off," insisted Dorothy, "so as to get all the ride we can, it is such a beautiful day. I only have to grab up the lunch basket, and Tavia is all ready—has been waiting in fact," as Tavia readjusted her "sailor," and endeavored to look spick and span, as she had looked before the series of embraces and other disturbing activities upset her rather perishable toilette—nothing wrinkles like freshly-ironed gingham.

"Just a drink of cold water, lady," begged Ned, "before we start again. My throat is macadamized, my eyes are veritable kaleidoscopes, and I feel like a mummy generally."

"Why, of course," apologized Dorothy, "you must want a rest after that long dusty ride. Come into the sitting room, and we will try to refresh you."

"Just plain water, please," insisted Ned, "and then we will start off."

Tavia lost no time in bringing a pail of fresh water—Nat doing the bringing, while Tavia smiled approval and encouragement; it is a matter of such importance to carry the pail just so, when one really wants a perfectly fresh drink and not a glass of bubbles, and Nat was seemingly so anxious to learn all about well water—all that Tavia could tell him.

"Come on," called Ned, impatiently from the side window. "We want the water in time to get away before nightfall. Must be lovely to go fishing for water in a pail like Simple Simon. Nat, you can talk to Tavia indefinitely after we have slaked our 'Fire-Bird' thirst."

Tavia blushed prettily at the good-natured rebuke, and Dorothy playfully shook her finger at the tardy one, who seemed to have forgotten all about Ned wishing a drink.

Finally the boys were satisfied that Dalton wells did justice to their reputation, and so the "Fire-Bird" was made ready for the day's run.

"I am so glad," commented Dorothy, "that Joe and Roger are not around, it would be hard to go off and leave them."

"Plenty of time for little boys," remarked Nat, turning on the gasoline, then shoving the spark lever over, all ready to crank up.

Tavia had taken her place in front, as Nat was to drive the car, while Dorothy was on the leather cushions in the tonneau, where Ned would interest her with talk of school and other topics which the two cousins held in common.

Presently Nat cranked up, swung himself into the car and the Fire-Bird "grunted off" lazy enough at first, but soon increasing to a swift run through the streets of Dalton.

"Isn't it splendid!" Tavia could not refrain from exclaiming enthusiastically.

"Yes," answered Nat, "but I believe there is something in swift motion that unbalances human equilibrium. The madness of motoring would make a study. Dorothy would be proud of me could she hear me talk so learnedly," he said, smiling at his own seriousness, "but I do really believe half of the unaccountable accidents might be traced to the speed-madness."

"It does feel dreadfully reckless," said Tavia, realizing something of the power of speed, and taking off her sailor hat before the straw piece made away on its own account. "I think it would be just like flying to be in a real race."

"Not for mine," answered the practical Nat. "I like some kinds of a good time, but I have too much regard for the insurance company that saw fit to give me their 'promise to pay,' to trust my bones to the intelligence of a machine let loose. There is something so uncanny about a broken neck."

A toot of the horn warned passersby that the Fire-Bird was about to make a turn. Tavia bowed to those on the walk. Nat touched his cap.

"Who's the pretty one?" he asked, looking back, just a bit rudely, at Tavia's friends.

"Alice MacAllister, the nicest girl in Dalton, except—"

"Tavia Travers," finished Nat, politely. "Well, she does look nice. Better get up a lawn party or something and invite her, and incidentally ask Nat White."

Dorothy leaned forward to whisper to Tavia that Alice was going out Dighton way to play tennis, that Alice had told her she expected to win a trophy and this was the game to decide the series. Alice certainly looked capable of winning most anything, she was such an athletic girl, the kind called "tailor made," without being coarse or mannish.

Then the Fire-Bird flew on. Out over the hill that hid Dalton from its pretty suburbs, and then down into the glen that nestled so cozily in its fringe of pines and cedars. Nat slackened speed to allow the party full enjoyment of the shady road, and this gave all an opportunity of entering into lively conversation.

The boys wanted to know all about the mysterious man Anderson, who had been lodged in jail. As Dorothy and Tavia had played rather a conspicuous part in the man's capture, and all this had happened since the girls had been out to the Cedars, on their visit, naturally Ned and Nat were interested in the sensational news.

"I'm glad he's safe out of your reach, Doro," said Ned, "for you never seemed to know when or where he would turn up."

"Yes," put in Tavia, "Doro has actually gained flesh since we landed him. He was such a nuisance. Had no regard for persons or places."

"And how about the news from India?" asked Ned. "I suppose the major will sell out in Dalton and move to better accommodations now. Not but what Dalton is a first-rate place," seeing the look of reproach on Dorothy's face at the idea of anyone uttering a word against her beloved town, "but you know there are little conveniences in other places, postmen for instance, and well—something called society, you know."

"We have no thought of going away," answered Dorothy. "Father says the money is just enough to make us comfortable and there is plenty of comfort to be bought in Dalton."

"And some given away," ventured Nat, with an arch glance at Tavia.

"Which way shall we go?" asked Nat, as a forking of the road made a choice necessary.

"Through the glen," suggested Dorothy, "there is such a pretty spot there where we can lunch."

"Which spot?" asked Tavia, "I thought this was all road with deep gutters at the side, running down to the river over the hill."

"I am quite sure this is the road father took us out to picnic on," said Dorothy with some hesitation.

"Well, maybe," said Tavia, "but I think this is the old river road. It seems to me I have been out this way before, and never even found a place to gather wild flowers, all road and gutters, then a big bank to the river."

"Let's try it anyhow," decided Nat. "It looks nice and shady."

So the turn was made to the left, and presently another turn rounded, then another, until both Tavia and Dorothy lost all sense of the location.

"We will wind up somewhere," declared Nat, when the girls protested they would be lost if the machine were not turned around, and brought back to the river road.

"This is such a tangle of a place," insisted Dorothy, "and we really might not meet a person to direct us."

"Then we will keep right on, and run into the next state," joked Nat, to whom being lost was fun, and having an adventure the best part of a ride.

For some time the Fire-Bird flew along, the beautiful August day adding a wonderful charm to the tender shade of the oaks that lined the road, and through which just enough sunshine peeped to temper the balmy shadows.

"I am hungry. It must be lunch time," said Dorothy, as they reached a pretty spot, "let's stop here and eat."

"Let's," agreed Nat, slowing up the machine.

"What do you suppose this road is for?" asked Ned, as neither the rumble of a wagon wheel nor any other sound broke the stillness that surrounded the party.

"For instance," suggested Tavia.

"Or for maps," said Ned.

"For automobile parties," declared Dorothy.

"For yours truly," finished Nat, stretching himself on the soft sod, that came down to the road as beautifully as if it had been made to order on a well-kept terrace.

The girls soon had the lunch cloth spread and the basket was then produced—or rather its contents were brought forth.

"Yum, yum," exclaimed Nat, smacking his lips as Dorothy began placing the eatables on the cloth.

"Oh, but water," sighed Tavia. "We were to get some as we came in the woods. There is a fine spring there."

"Two miles back," announced Nat.

"But there must be one near here," declared Tavia, "for there are forget-me-nots in this grass."

"Is that a sign of water?" asked Ned.

"Positive—sure sign," replied Tavia. "Let's hunt for the spring."

"Too early," answered Nat, "against the game laws. Can't hunt for two whole months yet. Worse luck."

"Well, look for the spring then," Tavia corrected herself. "I fancy I smell watercress—"

"Well, of all the fanciers,—first bluebells mean spring water, then gasoline from our own tank smells like watercress. Now, Octavia Travers, I'll go you," said Nat. "Come and find spring water, bunches of watercress and a salt spring to go with the cress, or you will—walk home."

Tavia answered the challenge by skipping along through the grassy track, with Nat dragging lazily along at her heels.

"Don't get lost," cautioned Dorothy.

"And don't expect us to watch this food all afternoon," said Ned, as the two disappeared over a bank on the "still hunt" for water and perhaps watercress.

"Tavia knows everything that grows," remarked Dorothy to her cousin, "I think it is so interesting to have a practical knowledge of nature."

"And quite convenient when it comes to lemonade with water," answered the boy. "It's queer Nat is like that too. He always knows things about things when things are shy for a feed. Likely he'll bring back a small-sized patch of the vegetable kingdom."

Meanwhile the explorers were making discoveries at every glade.

"There," called Tavia, triumphantly, "that's a spring. But the announcement came a second too late to save Nat from a foot bath.

"So I have noticed," he declared, trying to shake some of the cold water out of his low cut shoes.

"Oh, that's too bad," Tavia managed to say, although her joy at finding the spring made any regret at the method of its discovery quite out of the question. Being careful of her own footing she made her way along, until the stone basin at the spring source came into view.

"Didn't I tell you?" she shouted. "And there is the watercress!"

She was on her knees now, leaning over like the goddess who saw her face reflected in the water. Tavia knew the peculiarities of a spring, and knew how to avoid the common penalty of wet feet when getting either cress or a drink "by hand."

"Let me," asked Nat, gallantly, as he saw her stooping over the brink.

"I do want some of the cress," she said.

"So do I," declared the knight. But alas; as he stepped to the brink he went down—down—down—

"Help!" he shouted, merrily, in spite of the second foot bath within a few minutes.

But Nat kept on sinking, until what seemed like a joke soon assumed a serious aspect.

"Give us a hand," he called to Tavia. "I must have struck quick-sand."

Tavia ran to the side of the pool where the boy was imbedded. He had jumped right in, instead of feeling his way as Tavia had, to make sure of his ground.

"Take my hand," said the girl anxiously, but the effort necessary in reaching toward her only served to make the unfortunate youth sink farther down.

"I guess you'll have to go for help," he admitted finally, the danger of the situation forcing itself upon him.

"But suppose you should go under while I am gone?" faltered Tavia.

"Just pull that tree branch over to me," said Nat, "and I'll cling to that. This must be a glue spring. My, but it has a grip! There goes my shoe."

"I'll run for Ned," cried Tavia, after she had given the boy in the pool a hold on the tree branch, and then she shot across the fields like a deer, leaving Nat to "say his prayers," as he described the situation.

It seemed a long time to the imprisoned boy, but as a matter of fact, Tavia was back very soon with "reinforcements."

Besides Dorothy and Ned, there came to the rescue a woman, who just happened by and heard of the danger. She knew the spring, and, depositing her basket of eggs in a safe place, pulled a fence rail from its post, and with Ned holding one end hurried on to the spring. By this time Nat was almost exhausted, for though it was an August day, standing to the waist in cold spring water was not an enjoyable position.

"I found the spring," he tried to joke, as the others came up to him.

"So we see," drawled Ned.

"Here," called the strange woman, who evidently knew exactly what to do. "Young man, you take this end of the rail to the other side. I'll hold my end here, and the boy can pull out across it."

Dorothy and Tavia looked on anxiously. They had heard of persons being swallowed up in quick-sands. Might not this be such a danger?

The pool was uncomfortably wide just where Nat chose to try its depth, so that it was difficult to span it with the fence rail.

"Easy now," called the little woman in the big sunbonnet. "Take hold first, then draw yourself up."

Nat was only too anxious to do as he was told. It did seem so good to have something solid within reach once more.

But tug as he would, he could not extricate his feet.

"Guess some Chinaman has a hold of me," he said, trying to make the best of his predicament.

"Wait a minute," called the farm woman. "There, now, you take the rail to the top of the spring and get down on it. Then you (to Nat) swing right up on it—now there, you've got it! Hold tight. Come here young girls. Quick! Pull! Pull! Altogether! There you are!" and, at that moment, a very muddy form was dragged from the spring. Nat was on dry land again.

CHAPTER III

A QUEER SPRING SUIT

"Don't stop to talk unless you want to get the chills from that spring," urged the little country woman in the big sunbonnet, "but just chase across that field as fast as you can. If we are not on the road when you get there, keep right on running. It's the only thing. Then I'll see what I can do for you in the line of clothes. Sam hasn't got much, but they're clean."

Nat stood shivering. The mud had relieved him of both shoes.

"Run along," ordered the woman, "I tell you I know all about the kind of chills that come from that spring water. Why, we don't even eat the watercress out of it this summer, so many folks that did eat it were taken down. My son Sam had a spell. The doctor stuck to it it was swimmin' but I knowed better; it was eatin' that poison watercress."

By this time Nat had followed directions and was going across the fields as fast as his uncomfortable legs would carry him. Tavia was running also; she felt it was her duty to stick by Nat, and get to the road with him, in case he should need any help.

Dorothy could not hide her dismay. Nat might get cold, he certainly had spoiled some good clothes, and the automobile ride would not be as pleasant now. How could it be with such a soaked boy at the wheel? And he was sure to stick to his post.

"Isn't it awful!" Dorothy remarked to Ned, as they hurried along after Nat and Tavia, while the country woman jogged on ahead of them.

"Nothing of the sort," he contradicted her. "It will add to his general knowledge, and what an experience it will be when it is handed out to the fellows! Nat frequently has a way of making narrow escapes. Chances are, some subterranean monster held him down in that spring. Oh, that accident will just be pie for Nat," and his brother laughed at the possible story Nat would concoct about his spring bath.

Breaking through the clump of bushes that divided the field from the road Nat and Tavia could be seen racing up and down like a pair in "training."

"That's right," called the woman, "just cut across there to that house. I'll be there almost as soon as you."

And in truth the farm woman was "no slouch," as Ned expressed it, for she tramped along at such an even pace that Dorothy found it difficult to keep up with her on the rough roads.

The farm house was of the typical old-fashioned kind; long and narrow, like a train of cars side-tracked, Ned thought. Vines that had become tired creeping clung tenaciously to window sills and broken porch rails, while clumsy old apple trees leaned lazily toward the stone house, although they were expected to keep their place, and outline a walk to the garden.

"Come right in the kitchen," invited the little woman. "I'll go upstairs and get the clothes, and then the young man can wash up a bit. Sam always keeps plenty of clean water in his room in summer time—ain't so pertic'lar about it in winter."

Nat hesitated on the door sill. Although the place presented that crowded and almost untidy scene, so common to back doors in the country, the room within was clean and orderly, and Nat had no idea of carrying his mud through the apartment.

Tavia, seeing his predicament, promptly found the broom and began such a vigorous scraping of the muddy clothes that Nat backed down to a bench and fell over it.

"There," exclaimed Tavia, "no more will come off, I'm sure."

"So am I," gasped Nat. "I wonder—well, never mind, you brushed me all right. If ever you want work just let me know."

The woman, who had introduced herself as Mrs. Hardy, was at the door now, and ordered Nat to come in at once.

"For clothes," she began, "I left out Sam's brand new pair of overalls. They hain't never been on him, and I thought they'd be better than anything else for summer. Then there's a clean soft shirt, and you won't need no coat, as it's a sight too warm to-day for coats. Them sneak shoes Sam only bought Saturday night. He likes to wear them to picnics, and there's to be one to-morrow evenin'."

Nat seemed unable to thank the woman. He really felt so miserable, physically, and so confused mentally, that his usual ready wit forsook him. But Dorothy could have hugged that dear little woman who was so kind and thoughtful. Ned was out in the motor car, so Dorothy was the one in "authority."

"You are so kind," she faltered to Mrs. Hardy, as Nat's muddy heels lost themselves from view up the box stairs. "I'm sure we cannot thank you enough."

"Tut, tut," interrupted the woman, busying herself at once about the little cook stove. "If the same thing happened to my Sam I know you'd do as much for him. He'll be in to dinner. Maybe you'll see him. I am proud of Sam. He's all I've got, of course, that makes some difference."

Ned now brought the machine up to the front of the house. He blew the horn to attract attention and Tavia ran out.

"Of all the luck," he stammered, trying to talk and laugh at the same time, "every scrap of our lunch is gone. Dogs, chickens, and maybe a boy or two took it. At any rate, they did not leave as much as the basket."

"Oh," gasped Tavia. "Isn't that mean!"

"Rather," answered the boy. "But perhaps we can get some crackers and milk here. I feel that the pangs of hunger will do something desperate presently. Nat, I suppose, will get a warm drink, and no doubt something to make him strong—homemade bread is the usual, I think. But I may starve," and he looked truly mournful—dinner hour was "flush" as he expressed it, meaning that the time had come to eat, as both hour and minute hand were hugging twelve, whistles blowing and a distant bell sounding, all of which indicated meal time was "flush."

"What's the matter?" asked Dorothy, coming around the house.

"The commissary department has been looted," said Ned. "In other words, our grub is gone."

"Gone!" echoed Dorothy, incredulously.

"The very gonest gone you ever saw. Not so much as a toothpick left."

"What shall we do," sighed the girl, who had put up such a tempting lunch, and had even partly spread it out on the paper-cloth in that "safe" place under the tree.

"Victuals gone?" asked Mrs. Hardy, from the side window. "I might have told you as much, only for hurryin' to get them wet clothes off that boy. Why, our hounds would steal the eggs from the nests, worst thieves I ever saw. Well, never mind. When I get Sam back to the hayfield I'll do what I can for you. But he has to be quick, for it's all cut and there's no telling when a thunder storm 'll come up."

"Oh, we wouldn't think of troubling you so much," demurred Dorothy.

"Is there any store around?" asked Ned, significantly.

"One a mile off that has not a morsel fit to eat in it. I'd as soon swallow poison as eat anything out of that place. Here, young girl (to Tavia), you run down to the dairy there, the door is unlocked, and bring up a pail of milk that's on the bench under the window. I'll give you a couple of glasses and you can help yourselves until Sam gets done."

Tavia hurried off, willing enough to fetch the milk, and before she reached the door on her return trip—there was Nat!

Nobody dared to laugh. What might Mrs. Hardy think?

But Nat in overalls! And a dark blue shirt! And the yellow sneaks!

"Splendid," declared Dorothy, feeling the absolute necessity of saying something grateful.

"I feel like a new man," said Nat.

"Bet you do now," spoke Mrs. Hardy, looking him over approvingly. "Nothing like clean clothes, and them is becoming."

Nat went near her so he could carry on conversation without delaying the dinner preparations.

"That spring suit," he said laughing, "I'll just throw down on the rubbish heap. The clothes are so covered with mud, I am sure they never could be cleaned, and if Sam will have time to get in town before the picnic perhaps he can sell me these things. Or, if not, I'll buy whatever he wants and send them out."

"Well, he won't need the overalls till next week," answered the mother.

"Then I can buy them?" asked Nat.

"And the shoes—"

"I'll have a pair sent out directly I reach town. I'll see that they come special so there will be no mistake."

"And the shirt—you are welcome to that."

"Now then," said Nat, "here's five dollars, whatever will be over the price of the clothes I am sure I owe you—"

"Five dollars!" exclaimed the woman with genuine surprise. "Why, bless you boy, that would buy my Sam a full, whole winter suit."

"Get him one, then," insisted Nat. "I would be glad to help him, as he certainly has helped me greatly. Just surprise him with a new suit for the picnic. We'll be off as soon as I get my share of that milk, if they have left me any, then he will know nothing of the accident. You can give him a complete surprise," seeing the look of delight on the poor woman's face.

"But you dasen't drink none of that cold milk," she protested. "Step right over here to a cup of tea, it's just fresh. But I don't feel I should take all that money."

"Oh, just to give Sam a little surprise," argued Nat, "and indeed, I owe it to you, for I might have taken an awful cold," and he drank down his "piping" hot tea.

"Well, Sam will be happy," admitted the mother fondly, "and if you can afford it—"

"Of course I can. There, they have actually stopped drinking. We are so much obliged for the invitation to take dinner, Mrs. Hardy, but we couldn't really stay," finished Nat.

"No," said Dorothy, coming in at that moment, "it is very kind of you to ask us, Mrs. Hardy, but my cousin says we must go on. Here is something for the milk—"

"No more money!" declared the woman. "I've taken more now than the Bible would say was due me."

"Oh, just this change," urged Dorothy.

"Not a penny! Not one cent!" Mrs. Hardy insisted, but as Dorothy stepped out to join the others, who by this time were getting into the car, she managed to find a place to hide the coins—where Mrs. Hardy would find them later on.

"I'm to the bat," said Ned, as Nat took up his place in front.

"Not much," shouted Nat. "I haven't been put out yet, and, in overalls and blue shirt, Nat, the good-looking and always well-dressed boy, let loose the Fire-Bird for another fly through the country."

CHAPTER IV

A DAY OF DANGERS

"What do you suppose will happen next?" asked Dorothy, as the automobile sped along the narrow road through a woodland way.

"Don't tempt the fates," cautioned Ned, "we can always get enough trouble without beckoning it."

"It was good sport, meeting the little country woman and all that," said Nat, "but I must admit I did not enjoy the mud bath. I have heard of mud baths in sanitariums. Do you suppose they are that kind?"

"Oh, no," laughed Ned. "They perfume the mud and mix it with bay rum. Then they allow it to trickle down your spinal column to the rhythm of your favorite poem—so many drops to so many feet."

"I'll never forget how you looked when you came up on that rail," declared Tavia, merrily. "I have heard of such things, but that is the first time I ever saw any one really ride a rail—"

"And my initial performance, I assure you. Well, do not be so painfully faithful as never to forget my appearance. I think you might sympathize with a fellow."

But Tavia only laughed more heartily. She declared he could not have been drowned; of course it was wet and cold and muddy—

"And he might have fallen, and not have been able to get to his feet again," remarked Dorothy, with apprehension. "I am awfully afraid of mysterious accidents; and who can tell what is at the bottom of a spring?"

"For expert testimony," replied Nat, "apply to Nathaniel White, Esquire. He is in every way qualified—Oh, I say, my knee! Ouch! Can't move it," and he winced in pain.

"Let me get there," insisted Ned, "you may take a kink somewhere and make us turn turtle. Besides you will not get so much breeze back here."

Nat was easily persuaded now, for the fact was he did not feel at all comfortable—the mud bath was getting in its work,—so the machine was stopped while he got in the tonneau and his brother took the place at the wheel.

"Put this dust robe around you," ordered Dorothy. "You may miss your coat in spite of the day, for the wind is sharp when we cut through the air this way. I do hope you will not be ill—"

"Never! That race Mrs. Hardy gave me, or made me take, saved my life. But it's pleasant to change seats. Ned will get a lot of laughs from Tavia, and I will enjoy a chance to talk with you."

So the little party dashed along, until a turn in the road brought a row of houses into view, and presently, among them, could be seen a sign that indicated eatables were for sale there. Both girls and boys went in to do the buying—so keen were their appetites now that each preferred to do his or her own selecting. Tavia wanted buns, cheese and pickles. Nat had cheese, rye bread and butter (he bought a quarter of a pound) and besides he found, on the very tip top shelf, some glass jars of boneless herring.

"Let's make a regular camp dinner," suggested Ned. "Buy some potatoes and sliced bacon, make tea or coffee—"

"In what?" asked Dorothy.

"Oh, yes, that's so. We did not bring the lunch basket. By the way, you have not seen the basket mother received for her birthday. It has everything for a lunch on the road; a lamp to cook over, tea and coffee pot, enameled cups, plates, good sharp knives—the neatest things, all in a small basket. Mother never lets us take it out, when we're alone. She thinks so much of it."

"I should think she would," remarked Dorothy. "But we were speaking of a camp lunch—"

"Yes, let's," joined in Nat. "It's no end of fun, roasting potatoes in a stone furnace."

"And toasting bacon on hat pins," suggested Tavia.

So it was agreed the camp lunch should be their meal, Dorothy and Ned doing most of the work of buying and finding things fresh enough to eat in the old-fashioned dusty store, while Tavia and Nat tasted pickles and tried buns, until Dorothy interposed, declaring if either ate another mouthful before the real meal was ready they would not be allowed a single warm morsel.

"Just one potato," pleaded Nat. "I do so love burnt potatoes."

"And a single slice of bacon," urged Tavia. "I haven't had that kind of bacon since we were out at the Cedars, and I think it is so delicious."

"Then save your appetites," insisted Dorothy, "and help with the work. No looking for fresh spring water this time. Nat, carry this bottle of milk. Ned has paid for the bottle and all, so we will not have to come back with the jar."

The paper bundles were finally put into the car, and then, turning back to the woodland road, it was not difficult to find a place suitable to build the camp-fire, and set table on a big stump of a newly-felled tree that Tavia said made her more hungry than ever, for the chips smelt like

vinegar and molasses, she declared.

So pleasant was the camp life our friends had embarked upon, they did not notice how far the afternoon was getting away from them, and before they had any inclination to start out on the road again, the sun had rolled itself up into a big red ball, and was sinking down behind the hills.

"Oh, it may be dark before we get back to Dalton," said Dorothy in alarm. "We should have started an hour ago."

"But the potatoes were not done," Tavia reminded her, "and we never could have left without eating them after carrying cords and cords of wood to the oven."

"Get aboard," called Nat, "I'll take the wheel now, Ned. I'm entirely thawed out."

It had certainly been a delightful day, even the accident at the spring was now merely an event to laugh at, while the meal on the big chestnut stump, beside the camp-fire, had been so enjoyable, and now, all that remained was the pleasant ride home. That is all that appeared to remain, but automobile rides, like chickens, should not be counted until all is over, and the machine is safely put up for the night. Chickens have the same tendency as have autos toward surprises—and disappointments.

"There's a hill," remarked Ned, quite unnecessarily, as a long stretch of brown road seemed to bound up in front of them.

"A nice climb," acquiesced Nat. "Now, Birdy, be good. Straight ahead. No flunking now—steady," and he "coaxed" the machine into a slow, even run, that became more and more irksome as the grade swelled.

"But when we get at the top?" asked Tavia.

"We will not stay there long," answered Nat, "for if there is one thing this machine likes to do it is to coast down hill."

The Fire-Bird made its way up the steep grade, and presently, as Nat predicted, turned the hill-crest and "flew" down the other side.

The swiftness of the motion made conversation impossible, for the machine was coasting, the power being off, and surely the Fire-Bird was "flying through the air."

Reaching the level stretch again, Nat threw in the clutch, but a grinding and clanking noise answered his movement of the lever.

"Hello!" called Ned from the rear. "Busted!"

"Something wrong," agreed Ned, looking at the spark and gasoline controllers.

Presently, as the boys expected, the machine slowed up, and then came to a stop.

Both were out at once, and they examined the mechanism together.

"It's the leather facings on the friction clutch," declared Ned. "See that one worn off?"

"Guess that's right," answered Ned. "Well, now for a horse."

"I sold my wheel for an automobile; Get a horse! Get a horse!" sang Tavia, while she and Dorothy climbed out to join the inspection committee.

"Is it bad?" asked Dorothy.

"Bad enough to stall us until we can get it fixed up somewhere," said Ned. "We'll have to take part of the clutch out," and he proceeded to do so.

"Yes, we cannot move until we get a new leather on here," added Nat. "I wonder how far we might be from a blacksmith shop."

"A couple of miles," answered Tavia. "I have often been through this woods."

"Then I suppose," went on Ned, rather dolefully, "there is nothing to be done but 'hike' to the shop."

"You go and I'll stay and take care of the girls," suggested Nat.

"Oh, both go," chimed in Tavia. "You will get back sooner, and you may have some trouble getting it fixed at the shop, for I have been there and I know the man is as deaf as a post and—other things," she finished vaguely. "There is a house just across the fields there and we are not the least bit afraid—"

"If it will hurry the work you had best both go," Dorothy added. "As Tavia says, there is a house in sight, and we could run there if anything came along to scare us."

"Well, trot along Nat," commanded Ned, as he took up the piece of the clutch. "This is sure your busy day. I'll race you to the bend to make good time, and I assure you, young ladies, we will not be one moment longer than necessary away from you."

"We are so very fond of you," joked Nat, "that every moment will be unto us an hour—"

"Oh, come, quit your nonsense, if you are going to run—"

But before Ned had finished, his brother had gained quite a handicap and was making tracks through the glen, and then out again into the open.

"Isn't it lonely," said Dorothy, getting into the disabled machine after the youths were out of sight.

"Not a bit," declared Tavia. "No tramps around here. But such a day! I almost feel as if one more thing must happen. Bad luck goes in threes, you know. One more will surely make up our day—"

"Oh, please don't talk so," and Dorothy shivered. "I do wish we were safely back in Dalton."

"And the boys gone back to the Cedars! Well, I would rather have the ride ahead of me, than to have it all ended. It is so nice to have good times. Sometimes I think I'll just run away, and see what there is to do and observe outside of that stupid old Dalton," exclaimed Tavia.

"Tavia!" and Dorothy's voice betrayed how shocked she was at the very thought of such a thing as "running away." "How can you talk so?"

"Oh, it's all very well for you, Doro. You can have and do as you please; but poor me! I must be content—"

"Tavia, I am sure I heard someone coming!" exclaimed Dorothy.

"Quite likely. This is a common road, you know. We have no fence around it."

"But suppose it should be some rough person—"

"If we don't like his looks when he comes up we can run," said Tavia, coolly.

"And leave the car?"

"Can't take it with us, surely."

For a few moments neither girl spoke. Dorothy had never gotten over the frights she had received when the man Anderson followed her for the purpose of getting information about the Burlock matter, and every trifling thing alarmed her now.

"It's a man," said Tavia, as the form of a heavily-built fellow could now be discerned on the path.

"Oh, and he has that same kind of hat on," sighed Dorothy, referring to the hat previously worn by Anderson.

"And it—really—does look like him! Let's run! We have just about time to get to that house. Come out this side. There, give me your hand," and Tavia, glancing back to the figure in the road, took Dorothy's hand and urged her on over the rough path, until Dorothy felt she must fall from fright and exhaustion.

The road to the farm house was on a little side path turning off from the one followed by the boys on their way to the blacksmith shop. Having once gained the spot where the roads met, Tavia stopped to look back at the car.

"I declare!" she gasped. "He is climbing into the machine."

"Oh, what shall we do?" wailed Dorothy.

"Can't do a thing but hide here until the boys come. We can see him if he gets out, but if we went over to the house we might miss the boys, and they might run right into his arms."

"Oh," cried Dorothy. "I am so dreadfully frightened. Don't you suppose we can get any help until the boys come?"

"Not unless someone happens to pass. And this is a back road: no one seems to go home from work this way."

"Oh, if someone only would!" and Dorothy was now almost in tears.

"Just see!" exclaimed Tavia, "he is examining the front now. Suppose he could start it up?"

"But he cannot," Dorothy declared, "if the car worked the boys would never have left us here

all alone," and again she was dangerously near shedding tears.

"There now, he is getting in again. Well, I hope he stays there until someone comes," said Tavia. "Isn't it getting dark?"

"And if the boys do not get back— Oh, perhaps we had better run right straight on. We may get to some town—"

"We would be running into a deeper woods, and goodness knows, it is dark enough here. No, we had better stay near the house, then, if worst comes to worst, we can ask them to keep us all night—"

"Tavia you make me shudder," cried Dorothy. "Of course we will not have to do any such thing."

But Tavia's spirit of adventure was thoroughly aroused, and, in her sensational way, she forgot for the moment the condition of Dorothy's nerves, and really enjoyed the speculation of what might happen if "the worst came to the worst."

"There he goes again," she burst out, beginning to see humor in the situation, as the figure in the car climbed from the front seat to the back. "He is like the little girl who got into the house of the 'Three Bears.' One is too high and one is too low—there now, Doro, he has found your place 'just right' and will go to sleep there, see if he doesn't."

"Hark! That's Ned's voice—"

"And that's Nat's—"

"Yes, there they come. Oh, I am so glad—"

"Me too," said Tavia, in her pardonable English.

"Had we better go and meet them?"

"No, indeed, the man in the car might take it into his head to come to. Better keep quiet."

Presently Ned and Nat reached the corner.

"Hush," called Tavia, coming out from her hiding-place.

"Well, what on earth—" began Nat.

"Listen," commanded Tavia. "There's a man in the car. He has been there ever since you went away—"

"In our car! Well, his time is up," blurted out Ned. "He must move on," and the boy's manner indicated, "I will make him move on."

"But he may be dangerous," cried Dorothy. "Oh, please Ned, don't go near him until you have someone to help you!"

"And what would I be doing?" said Nat, in that same challenging manner. "Come along, Ned. We will teach that fellow to let our girls and our property alone."

"But please!" begged Dorothy, clinging to Ned. "Call someone from that house. He did look so like—"

"Our friend Anderson," finished Tavia, for Dorothy seemed too frightened to utter the name.

"Did he though?" and Nat gave Ned a significant look. "All the more reason why I should like to make his acquaintance. You girls will have to hide here until we get rid of him, and we have no time to spare if we want to work by daylight. Come along, Ned. Girls, don't be the least alarmed. We will be down the road after you in a jiffy. It won't take two seconds to put in this clutch."

"But I feel sure it is that dreadful man," wailed Dorothy. "Oh, if some strong person would only come!"

"Now, you just sit down there," said Ned, tenderly, "and when you hear us whistle you will know it is all right. It may be only a poor farmer resting on his way home."

But the girls were too certain that no farmer would have enjoyed climbing from one seat to the other as they had seen this man doing, and they had strange misgivings about him—of course Anderson was in jail, but—

"Now, don't be a bit worried," added Nat. "We will be spinning down the road directly," and at this the boys left the girls again, and started down the road to interview the strange man in their automobile.

"Oh, I do feel as if I shall die!" cried Dorothy. "Let us pray, Tavia, that nothing will happen to

the boys!"

"You pray, but I have to watch," answered Tavia, not realizing how scriptural her words were, "for if they should need help I have got to go to that house after it."

Then, on the damp grass, poor Dorothy buried her head in prayer, such prayer as can come only from a heart in distress.

Tavia, as she had said, stood straight out in the middle of the road, watching through the dim light.

The boys were at the car now, and they were speaking to the man!

CHAPTER V

THE POLICE PATROL

For some moments neither girl spoke: Tavia stood out in the road like an officer, while Dorothy did not lift her head from her attitude of prayer. Suddenly Dorothy, in a frenzy of fear, rushed out to where Tavia stood, and threw her arms around her.

"Tavia," she exclaimed, "I must go to them. I cannot stand another moment like this—I am simply choking. Come: See, they have not been able to manage him. He is in the car yet. Oh, do let us go!" and the look on the terrified girl's face so frightened Tavia she forgot to watch, forgot everything but Dorothy—something would surely happen to her if that anxiety was not soon relieved.

But to go to the boys! Might not that make matters worse?

"Dorothy, darling," began Tavia, "don't be so frightened. Perhaps they are just talking pleasantly to him—"

"Then I must hear them. I must know what it is all about. Do come!" and she tried to drag Tavia from the spot to which she seemed riveted.

"If you would only wait here while I go down first, and then if it is all right, that is, if the boys want us to come—"

"No, no," cried Dorothy. "I must go at once! See! Oh, Nat is coming this way—"

"Yes, here comes Nat. It will be all right now," and Tavia was soothing Dorothy as if she were a baby—patting her, smoothing her hair, and even pressing her lips to her cheek. In truth Dorothy appeared as weak as a baby, and seemed to require that help which a loving human hand may impart to a nervous body, at once the sense of protection and the assurance of sympathy.

"Ned is starting up the machine," exclaimed Tavia. "Oh, I know. He is going to give the man a ride."

Little dreaming how truly she spoke, for indeed Ned was going to give the strange man a stranger ride, Tavia showed Dorothy that she believed everything was all right now, and then Nat was there—they could call to him. Yes, he was whistling lightly. How silly they were to have been frightened!

"What is it?" demanded Dorothy, as soon as her cousin could hear her voice.

"I guess it was—"

"Nat! Nat!" screamed Tavia, at the same time running to him and whispering a word in his ear. "There, now, Dorothy. Didn't I tell you. Only a poor farmer. Where did he say he lived, Nat?"

"Tavia, you told Nat not to tell me—"

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Nat. "Well, of all things. Not to tell you. Well I guess I will. Sit right down here, my little Coz, and I shall be delighted to tell you all I know," and at this he drew the almost exhausted girl down to a tree stump, to "tell her." But Tavia kept close at the other side of the young man—she could nudge him if—well, of course, just to make the story funny—perhaps!

"Wanted a ride, that was all," declared Nat. "See, here they are. We must not notice them as they pass!"

"Why?" asked Dorothy. But in answer Nat squeezed her hand so hard she knew he meant for

her to keep quiet.

The car flew past. Ned never glanced at those by the roadside. And how strange he looked—

"Oh, Nat!" almost screamed Dorothy. "That man had on striped clothes—like—"

"Queer kind of sweater. They come in all sorts of stripes," her cousin interrupted, with a side glance at Tavia.

"But his leg was out of the car, and that was—"

"Also striped. Yes, I noticed his suit was not exactly of the newest fall pattern, but there is no telling where a farmer may pick up his duds. Like as not his wife made the trousers out of some good strong bed ticking."

"Nat, you are trying to deceive me. That man is an escaped convict, and Ned is riding alone with him—Oh, what will become of us?" and tears welled to Dorothy's eyes. That outlet of the overstrained—a good cry—had come to her relief.

"Oh, there!" begged Nat. "Don't take on so. It will be all right. Ned will be back for us before you have your eyes dry," and he kissed his little cousin affectionately.

"And it was that awful man out of jail! I knew it! I could tell him before he ever got to the car! I can always tell when he is coming. Oh! suppose he should kill Ned—" and she burst into a fresh flood of hysterical tears.

Meanwhile Tavia had not yet heard what had happened to induce Ned to take the convict away—for Anderson it was. Nat had told her it was that awful rascal when she cautioned him to hide it from Dorothy. Certainly it was all very strange, and very dangerous.

"I suppose we have to sit here and wait for Ned to come back," ventured Tavia.

"Or else walk to meet him," suggested Nat, who was really anxious to do something beside sitting there listening to Dorothy cry. "Dry your tears, Dorothy," he said kindly, "and we will walk along. It is pleasant and cool, and it will do us good to have a walk."

"Can't we get back to Dalton this way?" asked Dorothy. "Isn't this the road we came out?"

"It may be the road but it is some miles from town," answered Nat. "Listen! What was that?"

"The gong of an ambulance, it sounded like," exclaimed Tavia. "Hark!"

At that moment a wagon turned a corner and came towards them. It was a black wagon—yes, it did look like an ambulance.

"Oh," shrieked Dorothy. "What ever has happened now?"

"Why, it's only the 'police patrol," answered Nat, trying to be indifferent about the matter. "Probably they're—"

"Hello there, young fellow!" called a man from the wagon. "Have you seen a fellow in stripes about these woods?"

The speaker was addressing Nat, and he wore the uniform of a police officer.

"Yes, we have," answered the young man. "And I can tell you all about him."

The wagon came to a full stop now, and the officer stepped down from the seat at front, while simultaneously, two other officers dropped from the step at the back, so that our friends suddenly became surrounded by bluecoats.

"There," said Tavia aside to Dorothy. "You are not afraid now, are you? We have enough of protection at last."

"Which way did he go?" asked the officer.

"Straight for Danvers," answered Nat, "and in my brother's custody. We had to go to a shop to get a piece of the machine fixed and left these two young ladies alone here. When we returned the fellow was in our auto—he had taken possession of it, and refused to give it up. We did everything to induce him, but he absolutely refused to leave, and demanded a ride, so, recognizing him from the description as the fellow who had escaped from Danvers, my brother decided there was nothing to do but give him a ride back to the jail."

"Well, he's a plucky lad, I must say," declared the officer spokesman. "That fellow is dangerous, he was just about to be committed to the asylum. He's a lunatic, and should never have been in jail—"

"Oh," cried Dorothy. "If he should turn on Ned—"

"Not the least danger as long as the lad humors him," said the officer.

"We saw that," said Nat, "and my brother knows how to manage him, I guess."

"And you are stalled now, can't get home until the machine comes back?" asked one of the blue-coats, looking at Dorothy's pale face.

"I might walk, but the girls never could," answered Nat.

"Then suppose you go with us?" suggested the officer. "If the young ladies would not mind riding in a patrol."

"Oh, not at all," declared Tavia, but Dorothy looked askance at the wagon, in which so many criminals had ridden from their freedom.

"The best thing we can do," said Nat, realizing how much better any kind of ride would be than the uncertainty of waiting there as night came on.

"Jump in then," invited the officer. "We must be moving. I don't know what the captain will think of our prisoner coming up in an automobile, and the wagon bringing in this party."

Up the back step sprang Tavia, while Dorothy followed with less alacrity—it did not seem pleasant to get in the big ugly black wagon; a girl of Dorothy's nature feels the mere touch of things tainted by real crime.

"All right?" asked Nat, as he stepped in last.

"Yes," answered Dorothy, timidly, taking her place on the leather seat.

"Isn't it too jolly!" burst out Tavia. "I bet on the horse every time. Of course the auto is delightful, but when night cometh on,—Get a horse! Get a horse!"

"The horse is a good old stand-by," admitted Nat. "But isn't this great, though! Riding into Dalton in the hurry-up wagon!" and he joined Tavia in the laugh over their new adventure.

"But we must watch for Ned," spoke Dorothy, "He might go back to that lonely place."

"I've told the officer at front to look out for him," remarked Nat. "He has to come this way."

"And to think," whispered Dorothy, "that the man was crazy, and the officer said he should never have been in jail!"

"Don't you worry about him," Nat told her. "That fellow has the faculty of making himself comfortable any place. Look at his nerve in the Fire-Bird."

"We were lucky to have gotten away in time," reflected Tavia. "We would scarcely have known how to entertain a lunatic."

"Oh, don't talk so!" Dorothy checked her. "I am so nervous and so anxious about Ned."

"Now, Dorothy," declared Nat, "Ned is certainly all right, and will be the first person to meet us when we alight from this chariot. Thunder, but this is fun!"

The officers outside were talking of the strange capture. A reward had been offered for the taking of the lunatic, for he had been at large for some days, and now the bluecoats had just missed the capture.

While at the blacksmith's Ned and Nat had heard of the escape of Anderson and so recognized him at once when they encountered him in their car.

"I told you we would have three adventures," Tavia reminded Dorothy.

"And we are not home yet," added Nat, laughing.

The wagon rattled on, now and then clanging its gong to warn mere "people," not to interfere with the law—to keep out of its way.

"We are in some village," said Dorothy, looking out the little glass window at front, and seeing street lights along the way.

Presently a gang of urchins discovered the patrol wagon and as the horses slowed up around a corner the youngsters tried to get on the steps to catch a glimpse of the "prisoners."

"Look at that!" exclaimed Tavia, laughing. "Wonder what they think we were taken up for?"

"Oh, I feel so queer about it," said Dorothy, plainly discomfited. "I wish we could get out."

At that moment the wagon sprang forward, the horses having been urged on, and before Nat had a chance to reply to Dorothy's wish they were rattling on, at greater speed than had been

attained during the entire trip.

To reach Danvers jail the route was through Dalton, and now Tavia could see Dalton houses, Dalton churches, and there was the postoffice block! Surely the officer would not let them out right in the center!

"Here you are!" called the man at front, while the wagon stopped and Nat saw they were in front of the bank, the most conspicuous spot in all Dalton.

There was nothing for them to do but to alight of course, and, by the time the officers had vacated the back step, and Nat put his foot on it, a crowd of people surrounded the wagon—waiting to see the "prisoners" get out.

"Girls!" exclaimed the surprised crowd in chorus.

"Tavia Travers!" declared one voice, as Tavia showed her head.

"And if that isn't Dorothy Dale! Well, they're nice girls!" came another sneer, "talk about being good and always preaching." This, was almost in Dorothy's ear. "I guess they had better begin at home!"

Tears came to Dorothy's eyes. If her father were only there to take her hand—could that be little Joe?

"Dorothy! Dorothy!" called a young voice. "Come this way! We have been down to the telegraph office," went on Joe, for Dorothy was beside him now, "and we never had any idea you were in that wagon. Ned just got back. He was going out again to look for you."

"Is Ned all right?" Dorothy managed to say, while Nat was thanking the officers who were in haste to be on their way again.

"Oh, he's all right, but I guess he had an awful time. He was too hurried to tell us about it, for he said he had to go back—There's his car now! Ned! Ned!" shouted Joe at the top of his voice, while Nat, seeing his brother at the same moment, gave his familiar whistle.

Tavia had not yet been able to extricate herself from the crowd. Many of the boys recognized her, and she was plied with all kinds of curious questions. What had happened? Had they been arrested for speeding? (Ned's presence in the automobile prompting this query), or was someone hurt? In fact, there seemed to be no limit to the quality or quantity of questions that were being poured into Tavia's ears.

But Tavia was not the sort of girl to make explanations—under the circumstances. If friends, or those who appeared to be friends, could so easily lose all sympathy, and become so annoyingly curious about her and Dorothy, why then, she declared to herself (and also made it plain to some of the boys who were at liberty to tell the others), what really did happen "was none of their business."

But unfortunately there were, in that crowd, those too willing to draw their own conclusions, especially as regarded Dorothy Dale, a girl of whom so many others had been jealous.

Dorothy was aware of some of the remarks made, but she little realized what a part the patrol wagon ride was to play in her life, nor how a girl who had observed her in the vehicle was to use that knowledge against her.

CHAPTER VI

A RIDE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Mrs. Winthrop White was talking earnestly to her brother, Major Dale. She had come in from the Cedars the morning after the memorable ride in the Fire-Bird, and was now in the major's study, discussing the situation with Dorothy's father.

"But the child has had so many shocks lately, brother," said Mrs. White. "It does seem the only practical plan is to remove her entirely from these surroundings. Of course, it will be hard for you to let her go away, but you must remember, Dorothy has always been a little overstrained with care for one of her years, and now that your means will allow it, she should have every possible advantage to make up for what she may have lost in the way of nerve force."

"Oh, I am sure you know, sister," replied the major, "I would not deprive the child of anything she should have, no matter what it cost me, in money or—the loss of her company. She has certainly been my Little Captain, for I can always depend upon her to keep the young troopers in

line—"

"But why remain here at all? You can give up business now. Do, brother, come and make your home with me. I really need you so often, when I have no one to advise with about the boys. And Joe and Roger would be so much better off with me to look after them. Mrs. Martin has done wonderfully well for her years, but she is no longer able to see to them properly. Just give up this place and come to the Cedars," urged Mrs. White.

"I would not know how to leave dear old Dalton or my newspaper," mused the major. "Of course you are very good to think of bothering with another family. Most women think one family enough to bring up."

"Indeed, I need something to do," argued the sister, "and Roger would be a perfect treat to me. He is such a darling. Joe will go to school, of course (already taking it for granted that her invitation would be accepted), but I would have Roger taught at home for this year. He is too young to mix up with all the others."

"I am sure it would be good for the children—"

"And for yourself! Why, you are not too old to enjoy your life. The idea of a man of less than fifty years, considering himself old," and Mrs. White laughed in that captivating manner of hers, that had so often won her cause when all other arguments failed. "And that school you speak of for Dorothy, the one in the mountains of New England, what did you call it?"

"The Glenwood School," replied the major. "Mrs. Pangborn, who conducts it, is an old friend of mine, and if I should trust Dorothy with anyone it would be with Louise Pangborn, for she knew Dorothy's mother and would be sure to take an interest in her daughter."

"The very thing! Capital!" exclaimed Mrs. White enthusiastically. "We must make arrangements at once. There is little time left before the term opens. Dear me, brother, some women may like to idle, but give me a girl to dress up for school! Perhaps because I have never had the joy for doing it for my own daughter, I so love to take up Dorothy and experiment on her. No girl at school shall be better equipped than Dorothy Dale—"

"Now take care, sister. We are plain folks, you know."

"Not one whit plainer than your sister Ruth. I shall only get Dorothy things that befit her station, in fact the best dressed girls do not, by any means have more clothes than others. They simply have what is needed."

"Oh, I know! I know I can depend upon you, Ruth. Only I also know you think Dorothy—"

"A wonderfully pretty and attractive girl, and one who must wear the right kind of clothes. There, I feel I am looking through the shops now. I must admit I have a weakness for pretty things, whether girls or their dresses."

"Strange I should have so lately received a letter from Mrs. Pangborn inquiring about Dorothy," remarked the major. "I have it some place," and he pulled a packet of papers from his desk, soon finding the one wanted. "There," he went on, glancing over the missive, "Louise says she has now two assistants, a Miss Crane and a Miss Higley."

"Might I see the letter?" asked Mrs. White, already assuming the mother part toward Dorothy, and feeling it her duty to know all she might be able to find out concerning the woman to whom Dorothy would be entrusted.

"Why, certainly," replied the major, handing her the letter. She glanced over the paper. "There," she said presently, smiling. "I fancy I see Miss Crane, whom Mrs. Pangborn describes as being such a favorite with the girls. And the other, Miss Higley—her name is enough. She must be the sort of teacher who does good work in classes, but seems to put a damper on the girls' pranks. Of course, such a person is always valuable in a boarding school," and she handed back the paper, "but what a lot of trouble they can make! I went to a boarding school myself, you know, and I know and remember all about the Miss Higleys."

"Then you think it would be a good plan to send Dorothy to Glenwood?" and the major's voice showed that he looked favorably upon the proposition.

"Glenwood School, in the mountains of New England! I can see the tags on Dorothy's trunks," she replied merrily. "Nothing could be better. And that splendid mountain air! Why, you won't know the child when she comes home for her holiday. But I am going to write this very morning. Or will you do it? And I will write in reply to the next. Yes, I think that would be better. And now I am going right up to Dorothy and tell her all about it. The child had such a headache from her experiences yesterday that I insisted upon her lying down. Wasn't that the most absurd thing for those children to ride to town in the police patrol? The boys will never stop talking of it. And Tavia Travers thinks it the joke of her life. But Dorothy is not keen on that sort of jokes. She does not relish the curiosity which the incident has stirred up. I could see that this morning, when those school friends were talking it over with her."

"Dorothy is a very sensitive girl."

"All fine natures are sensitive, Allen. They neither offend nor relish being offended. It is perfectly natural that the child should resent such remarks as some of those I have heard passed about the patrol ride."

"Of course they only came from children," apologized the major, "and youngsters will have their say."

"Yes, but sometimes the 'say' of jealous young girls may go a long way. A jealous girl is, I believe, even a more dangerous enemy than a woman scorned, about whom so much is written and said. But I am sure Dorothy can hold her own in spite of any girl."

Why had Mrs. White been so apprehensive about the small talk she had overheard? What could any one say against Dorothy Dale?

That afternoon a school friend called on Dorothy and brought with her a young girl who had been spending part of her vacation at the MacAllister home. She was introduced as Miss Viola Green of Dunham, and while rather a pretty girl she had something in her manner that made Dorothy feel uncomfortable. This unaccountable dislike on Dorothy's part was heightened when Tavia went over to the veranda where the girls were sitting, and upon Alice introducing Tavia to her friend the latter merely bowed stiffly, and refused to accept the hand that Tavia had offered in greeting. This was all the more strange since Alice was so splendid a girl herself.

But Viola Green had made a serious mistake in refusing to accept the honest hand of Tavia Travers, although strange to say the incident was a most fortunate happening, as far as Tavia and Dorothy were concerned—it told them the kind of girl Viola was. Alice, seeing the slight, winked slyly at Tavia, who, after flushing furiously, managed to return the secret sign of Alice by snapping her own brown eye open and shut.

"I simply thought I should die," began Alice, anxious to start conversation. "When I saw you step out of that wagon last night. Viola and I were just down to the post-office and when the crowd gathered of course, we had to see what was going on. Well, when I saw Tavia—"

A burst of laughter stopped Alice. She had a way of seeing humor in things and of enjoying the process of extracting it. Tavia joined her in the merriment, but Viola sat there with a curled lip. Dorothy was not laughing either—she was observing the stranger.

"Wasn't it great!" exclaimed Tavia. "I wish you could have been along. Dorothy was scared to death, but the very idea of any one being afraid while surrounded by four strapping policemen!"

"And when your cousin came into the post-office to send his telegram—to his mother, wasn't it? And we beheld—a dude in overalls and jumper!" and Alice laughed again. "Really," she continued, finally, "I thought I should pass away!"

"Was that your cousin?" asked Viola unpleasantly.

"Why, Ola," exclaimed Alice, the ring of something like anger in her voice, "I certainly told you the young man was Mr. Nat White from North Birchland, Dorothy's cousin."

"Oh," sniffed the other. "I am sure I thought you said he was Tavia's cousin."

"That's good," chimed in Tavia. "Wish he was; he would make all kinds of nice cousins, for he is the dandiest boy—"

"So!" almost sneered Viola.

"Yes, that's so," declared Tavia, with a challenging look at the stranger.

"Viola thinks nice boys should not be cousins," remarked Alice, trying to patch up the squabble. But Dorothy had risen from her seat and was toying with the honeysuckle. Evidently she had no intention of joining in the unpleasant argument.

"I declare, Doro," said Alice suddenly. "I have scarcely heard your voice to-day. And all the stories that I have been contradicting about you. That you were hurt in an auto accident; that your chauffeur was arrested for speeding and you were obliged to go to police court to make a statement; that some lunatic chased you, and you had to get in the wagon to save your life—Oh! I tell you, Doro, you never know how popular you are until you take a ride in the 'hurry up' wagon. I would have given my new dog (and I love him dearly) to have been in that tally-ho with you," and Alice threw her arms about Dorothy, whose face, she could not help observing, was white and strained.

"It certainly was an experience," admitted Dorothy, joining the group again.

"But what in the world makes you act like such a funeral?" Alice blurted out.

"I have just heard something that makes me serious," answered Dorothy. "I may as well tell you now. I am going away to boarding school!"

"This term?" exclaimed Viola, before either Alice or Tavia had time to speak.

"Certainly," replied Dorothy coolly. "Why not?"

"Oh, nothing, of course," returned Viola, "Only after yesterday folks might think—oh, you know country folks can never understand the trick of deciding things quickly. You had not thought of it—of going away before, had you?"

Dorothy was too indignant to speak. What ever could the girl mean by such insinuations? Even Alice seemed dumbfounded, and Tavia positively dangerous. She walked straight up to the chair Viola occupied.

"Miss Green," she called. "'After yesterday,' as you express it, is precisely the same as before yesterday, to all concerned. The experiences were unusual—"

"I should think so—" the stranger had the temerity to remark, but Alice had risen to go, while Viola stepped down from the porch, without offering a word of apology or explanation. "And where are you going, Dorothy dear?" asked Alice tenderly, trying to undo the harm that her visitor had been so successful in creating.

"To the Glenwood School, in the mountains of New England, I believe," answered Dorothy.

"Indeed?" spoke up Miss Green again. "That is where I attend. How strange we should meet just before the term opens," and she smiled that same unpleasant smile that had chilled Dorothy when Alice introduced them.

"You do!" exclaimed Tavia rather rudely. Then she added: "Dorothy Dale, who told you you could go away to school? You have not asked my permission yet. To the mountains of New England! I would like to see you run away and leave me!"

"It would be unpleasant indeed!" called back Viola. "You had better come to Glenwood too!"

"Maybe I will," snapped Tavia. "One thing is certain. Dorothy Dale will have friends wherever she goes and if I could go, I would be most happy to look on while she reaps her new conquests. Dorothy is a regular winner, Miss Green. You will have to look out if she goes to Glenwood. She will cut you out with your best friends. She always makes one fell swoop of the entire outfit!"

A look of deep scorn was the answer Viola made to Tavia's attempt at raillery. Evidently she had made up her mind that Dorothy Dale would never "cut her out" at Glenwood.

And Mrs. White had remarked to her brother, Major Dale, that a jealous girl was a dangerous enemy!

CHAPTER VII

TAVIA'S DANGER

"Whatever can that girl mean?" exclaimed Dorothy, when Alice and Viola had passed down the walk.

"Mean! The meanest thing I ever met! Did you see her refuse my hand?" asked Tavia. "Well, it's a good thing to be able to size up a girl like that at the first meeting; it saves complications. But who cares for green violets? What I want to know is, are you really going away, Doro?" and the look on Tavia's face could not be mistaken. She would be dreadfully grieved if compelled to part with Dorothy's companionship.

"Aunt Winnie thinks I should go, and father has decided it is best. Of course I shall hate to leave you, Tavia," and Dorothy wound her arm affectionately around her friend. "In fact I shall never, never, find any girl to take your place in my heart," and something very like tears came into Dorothy's voice.

"I knew it! I just knew you would go away when you got that hateful Indian money. And what in the world will I ever do in Dalton? Now I have learned how much pleasure I could have, visiting your friends and riding in automobiles, and then, just when I get to realizing what a good time we could have, you up and leave me! I might have know better than to go out of my own limits!" and here Tavia actually burst into tears, a most remarkable thing for her to do.

"I am so sorry," said Dorothy with a sigh, putting her arm around the weeping girl.

"There! What a goose I am! Of course I would not have done differently if I could do it all over

again. The good times we have had are the most precious spots in all my life. And, Doro dear, you did not drag me out of my shell—I was always running after you for that matter, so you need not think the loneliness will be any fault of yours—except that you are such a dreadfully dear girl that no one could help loving you. You really should try to curb that fault."

Tavia had dried her tears. She was that sort of girl who is both too proud and too brave to show "the white feather" as she often expressed the failing of giving away to emotion that might distress others.

"I do wish you could go along," said Dorothy.

"Well, I don't believe I would really like to go, Doro," Tavia surprised her by saying. "I should probably get into all kinds of scrapes with that Green Violet, and the scrapes would likely make it unpleasant for you. Besides I have been thinking I ought to go to work. I am old enough to do something—fifteen next month you know—and I would just like to get right out into the world—go with the tide."

"Tavia!" exclaimed Dorothy in alarm, for these rash sentiments had of late been strangely common with Tavia. "You do not know what you are talking about. Go with the tide—"

"Yes, I just mean take my chances with other girls. I had a letter from a girl in Rochester the other day. She had got work and she is no older than I am."

"At what?" asked Dorothy.

"On the stage. She is going to take part in some chorus work—"

"Tavia, dear!" cried Dorothy. "You must not get letters from such girls. On the stage! Why, that is the most dangerous work any girl could possibly get into."

"Now, Doro, I have not got the place, worse luck. And you must not take on so just because I happened to mention the matter. But you must realize there is a vast difference between poor girls like me, and those of your station in life!"

What had come over Tavia lately? Why did she so dwell upon the difference between Dorothy's means and her own? Was it a natural pride or a peculiar unrest—that unrest, perhaps, that so often leads others, who are older, stronger and wiser than Tavia Travers, into paths not the most elevating? And then they may urge the excuse that the world had been hard on them; that they could not find their place in life, when in reality they scorn to take the place offered them, and instead of trying for a better or higher mark they deliberately refuse the prospects held out, and turn backward—then they blame the world!

This condition is called "Social Unrest," and Tavia Travers, though young and inexperienced, was having a taste of its bitter moral poison.

"Promise me you will never write another letter to that girl," begged Dorothy, solemnly. "I know your father would not permit it Tavia, and I know such influence is dangerous."

"Why the idea! You should have read her letter, Doro. She says the killingest things—But mercy, I must go. I have to go to the Green before tea," and, with a reassuring kiss, Tavia darted off.

Dorothy looked after her friend as she skipped down the path, and a sense of dread, of strange misgivings, took possession of her. What if Tavia should actually run away as she had often threatened in jest! Then Dorothy remembered how well Tavia danced, how she had practiced the "stage fall" after seeing the play in Rochester, and how little Johnnie Travers had barely escaped the falling ceiling that came down with Tavia's attempt at tragedy. Then, too, Dorothy thought of the day Tavia had painted her cheeks with mullin leaves and how Dorothy then remarked in alarm: "Tavia, you look like an actress!"

How strangely bright Tavia's eyes seemed that day! How wonderfully pretty her short bronze locks fell against her unnaturally red cheeks! All this now flashed through Dorothy's dazed brain.

How could she leave Tavia? And yet she would so soon have to go away—to that far-off school

—

And that strange girl who had come with Alice. What could she have meant by those horrid insinuations about Dorothy so "suddenly making up her mind" to go to boarding school; and that it would be "too bad to leave Tavia alone in Dalton just then!" as if everyone did not know by this time just what had happened on the auto ride, and that Ned had actually been offered the reward for the capture of Anderson. Not only this but her two cousins, Ned and Nat, had received public praise for brave conduct, and the two girls, whose names were not mentioned (Major Dale had asked the reporter to omit them if possible from the report), were also spoken of as having taken part in the capture, inasmuch as they allowed Anderson to remain quietly in the car until the young owners of the machine arrived upon the scene.

Dorothy sat there thinking it all over. It was almost dusk and on the little vine-clad porch the

shadows of the honey-suckle shifted idly from Dorothy's chair to the block of sunshine that was trying so bravely to keep the lonely girl company—every other ray of sunlight had vanished, but that gleam seemed to stay with Dorothy. She did not fail to observe this, as she always noticed every kindness shown her, and she considered the "ray of light" as being very significant in the present rather gloomy situation.

"But I must not mope," Dorothy told herself presently. "I simply must talk the whole thing over with Aunt Winnie."

How much better for Tavia it would have been had she too determined to "talk the whole thing over" with someone of experience?

Dorothy found her aunt busy writing the boarding school letters, and when that task had been finished Mrs. White was entirely at the girl's service. Dorothy tried to unfold to her the situation, without putting unnecessary blame on Tavia, who was such a jolly girl and so absolutely free from dread—never had been known to be afraid of anything, Dorothy declared, and of course there was therefore, all the more reason to be worried about her risks. To Tavia, a risk was synonymous with sport.

"I had no idea she would be interested in that sort of thing," said Mrs. White, referring to the matter of going on the stage, "and, perhaps, Dorothy—"

"But I am not at all sure that she is interested in it, auntie," Dorothy interrupted. "I am only afraid she may get more letters from that girl— And besides, I will be so lonely without her, and I know she will miss me."

"Well, there, little girl," and the aunt kissed Dorothy's cheek, "you take things too seriously. We will see what can be done. I, too, like Tavia, She is an impulsive girl, but as good as gold, and I will always be interested in her welfare."

"Thank you, auntie dear. You are so kind and so generous. It would seem enough to be bothered with me, but to give you further trouble with my friends—"

"Nonsense, my dear, it is no trouble whatever. I heartily enjoy having your confidences, and you may rest assured very little harm will come to the girl who chooses a wise woman for her adviser. And I do hope, Dorothy, I am wise in girls' ways if not in points of law, as your dear father always contends."

"And auntie," went on Dorothy, rather timidly, "I want to tell you something else, Alice MacAllister brought a girl to visit me this afternoon, and she said such strange things about yesterday's accidents. She was positively disagreeable."

"You are too sensitive, child. Of course people will say strange things every time they get a chance—some people. But you must not bother your pretty head about such gossip. When you do what is right, good people will always think well of you and, after all, their opinion is all that we really care for, isn't it?"

"But why should she be so rude? She is a perfect stranger to me?"

"Some girls think it smart to be rude, Dorothy. What did she say that troubled you so?"

"That's precisely it, auntie, no one could repeat her remarks. They were merely insinuations and depended upon the entire conversation for their meaning."

"Insinuations? Perhaps that you had been arrested for stealing melons?" and the aunt laughed at the idea. "Well, my dear, I believe it will be well for you to be away from all this country gossip."

"But Viola Green goes to Glenwood School!" declared Dorothy.

"No! Really? Who is she?"

"A friend of Alice MacAllister, from Dunham. I was so surprised when she said she went to Glenwood."

"But, my dear, what will that matter? There are many girls at Glenwood. All you will have to do is to choose wisely in selecting your friends from among them."

"If Tavia were only with me I would not need other friends," demurred Dorothy.

"Does she want to go?" asked Mrs. White suddenly.

"I believe she does, but she denies it. I think she does that because she does not want me to bother about her. She is such a generous girl, auntie, and dislikes any one fussing over her."

"There's a step on the porch," and both listened. "Yes," continued Mrs. White, "that's Tavia looking for you. Run down to her and I will speak with both of you before she leaves."

CHAPTER VIII

AN INVERTED JOKE

"Dorothy! Dorothy!" called Tavia. "Come here just a minute. I want to speak to you."

"Won't you come in?" asked Dorothy, making her way to the side porch.

"No, I can't, really. But I couldn't wait to tell you. I know what the Green Violet meant by her mean remarks. And it's too killing. I am just dead laughing over it."

"I'm glad it's funny," said Dorothy.

"The funniest ever," continued Tavia. "You know when we got out of the wagon Miss Green was standing a little way off from Alice. That dude, Tom Burbank, was with her (they say she always manages to get a beau), and she was watching us alight—you know how she can watch: like a cat. Well, Tom asked Nat what was the matter, and if he had been speeding. Everybody seemed to know we had gone off in the auto, for which blessing I am duly grateful. I don't often get a ride—"

"Tavia, will you tell me the story?" asked Dorothy with some impatience.

"Coming to it! Coming to it, my dear, but I never knew you to be so keen on a common, everyday story before," answered Tavia, with provoking delay.

"The remarks?"

"Oh, yes, as I was saying, Tom asked Nat were we speeding. And Nat said no. Then, looking down at his farmer clothes, he added: 'Not speeding, just melons.' And the dude believed him,—the goose! Then Viola took it all in and she too thinks we were arrested for stealing muskmelons."

The idea seemed so absurd to Tavia that she went off into a new set of laughs, knotted together with groans—she had laughed so long that the process became actually painful.

"Who told you?" asked Dorothy, as soon as Tavia had quieted herself sufficiently to hear anything.

"May Egner. She stood by and heard the whole thing. But you must not mention it to Alice," cautioned Tavia, "for she didn't hear it, and I just want the Green Violet to think it is true, every word. It's a positive charity to give that girl something definitely mean to think about. I can see her mental picture of you and Nat and myself standing in a police court pleading 'Guilty' to being caught in a melon patch. Wish we had thought of it: there were plenty along that road, and I have not tasted a fresh muskmelon since I stole the last one from the old Garrabrant place. Ummm! but that was good!"

"Well, I am glad it is no worse," remarked Dorothy. "I had a suspicion she was trying to insinuate something like that. And the idea of her not believing that Nat was my cousin!"

"Oh, yes, and that was more of it," went on Tavia. "Tom asked Nat if I was his cousin and he said yes. Wasn't Nat funny to tease so? But who could blame him? I wish I had a chance to get my say in, I would have given Greenie a story! Not only melons, but a whole farm for mine!"

"Lucky you were otherwise engaged then. I noticed you had your hands full answering the questions of that crowd of small boys," remarked Dorothy, smiling at the remembrance of Tavia's struggle with the curious ones.

"But, Doro, are you really going away?" and Tavia's voice assumed a very different tone—it was mournful indeed.

"Yes, I think it is quite decided. I would not mind it so much if you were coming."

"Me? Poor me! No boarding school for my share. They do not run in our family," and she sighed.

"But perhaps your fairy godmother might help you," went on Dorothy. "She has granted your wishes before."

"Yes, and I promised her that time I would never trouble her again. There is a limit, you know, even to fairy godmothers."

At that moment Mrs. White appeared on the porch.

"What was that I heard about godmothers?" she asked. "You know, Dorothy, I hold that sacred position towards you, and you must not let any one malign the title," she said, laughingly.

"Oh, this was the fairy kind," replied Dorothy. "Tavia was just saying she had promised to let hers off without further requests after the last was granted."

"When Doro goes away to school," interrupted Tavia, "I shall either become a nun or—"

"Go with her! How would that do?" asked Mrs. White, convinced that the parting of Dorothy and Tavia would mean a direct loss for both.

"If I worked this year and earned the money to go next? Or do they consider the wage-earning class debarred from boarding school society?" asked Tavia.

Again the sentiment Tavia had expressed to Dorothy: the difference in the classes. This was becoming a habit to Tavia, the habit of almost sneering at those who appeared better off than herself. And yet, as Mrs. White scrutinized her, she felt it was not a sentiment in any way allied to jealousy, but rather regret, or the sense of loss that the lot of Tavia Travers had been cast in a different mold to that of Dorothy Dale. It had to do entirely with Tavia's love for Dorothy.

"Now, my dear," began Mrs. White, addressing Tavia, "you really must not speak that way. You know there is a class of people, too prominent nowadays, who believe that the rights of others should be their rights. That there should be no distinction in the ownership of property—"

"Gloriotious!" exclaimed Tavia. "Do you suppose they would let me in their club?"

"I'll tell you, girls," said Mrs. White. "Squire Travers is going to call here this evening by appointment. And if you are both very, very good little girls, perhaps I will have some very important news to give you in the morning."

At this both Tavia and Dorothy "took steps," Tavia doing some original dance while Dorothy was content to join in the swing that her partner so violently insisted upon taking at every turn.

Mrs. White laughed merrily at seeing the girls dance there in the honeysuckle-lined porch, and she was now more positive than ever that their companionship should not be broken.

"All hands around!" called Tavia, at which invitation the stately society lady could not refrain from joining in the dance herself, and she went around and around until it was Dorothy who first had to give in and beg to be let out of the ring.

"Oh!" sighed Mrs. White, quite exhausted, "that is the best real dance I have had in years—quite like our dear old German."

"They call it the Virginia Reel in Dalton," said Tavia, not meaning to deprecate the value of the society dance mentioned.

"Yes, and that is the correct name, too," agreed Mrs. White, "for almost all the good figures of the German were taken from the old time country dance. But I am warm! I must go in at once or I may check this perspiration too quickly. Dorothy, don't walk too far with Tavia," she remarked, as both girls prepared to leave the porch, "I have some little things to talk over before tea."

"Only to the turn," replied Dorothy, with her arm wound lovingly around Tavia, "I just want to finish about something very important."

"She must go with Dorothy," said Mrs. White to herself, watching the two girls make their way through the soft autumn twilight.

CHAPTER IX

COMMITTEE OF ARRANGEMENTS

"Isn't it too delicious," exclaimed Tavia, excitedly.

"Delightful," answered Dorothy. "I hope hereafter you will never doubt the goodness of your fairy godmother."

"Or that of my fairy godsister," added Tavia.

"And Aunt Winnie is to do all your shopping. Your mother asked her to get everything you will need. The money you received from the railroad company for the loss of your hair in the accident has been put aside by your father for your education. So you cannot longer boast of that romantic poverty you have been holding over my poor, innocent head," and Dorothy gave her friend a

"knowing squeeze," that kind of embrace that only girl friends understand fully.

"I can scarcely realize it," pondered Tavia, "not to have you leave me here all alone! Why, Doro, I could not sleep nights, worrying about what would become of me in this hamlet without you."

"And I was equally tortured with worries about what would become of me, when I could not tell you all my troubles. Especially when I thought of having to—"

"Fight the Green Violet alone! I don't blame you. But I am just dying to know what use she will make of the muskmelon story. I met Alice yesterday and she felt dreadfully about the way Viola acted. She is coming over to apologize to you as soon as she can do so without carting the vegetable along. Pity they did not name her cucumber instead of violet—the green would match her better. I am going to call her 'Cuke' hereafter! Short for cucumber, you know."

"Oh, that would be unkind," objected Dorothy.

"Unkind nothing," replied the impulsive one. "I wish I could think of a good rhyme for her new name. I would pass it around—"

"Now, Tavia, you must not keep me worrying about the mischievous things you intend to do at Glenwood. Remember that is one of the stipulations—you are to be very, very good."

"I feel a sore spot under my shoulder blade now," declared Tavia, putting her hand back. "Wings as sure as you live, just feel!"

"But do you realize it, we have only this week? We must be in Glenwood next Monday."

"All the better. I cannot wait. Won't it be too gloriotious?" and Tavia again indulged in "steps," her favorite outlet for pent-up sentiment.

"The boys are coming over to-morrow afternoon," announced Dorothy, "I had a note from Ned this morning."

"Goody," exclaimed Tavia, coming to a full stop with a twirl that stood for the pedal period. "Another ride?"

"No, I'm afraid not. Ned said he and Nat were going to spend the afternoon with us."

"Well, it will be fun anyway. It always is when the boys get jollying. I am afraid I do love boys—next to you, Doro, I think a real nice boy is the very nicest human possible."

"Next to me? On the other side you mean?"

"No, on the second side, the boy is on the outside of the argument. You are always first, Doro."

Meanwhile the news, that Dorothy and Tavia were to leave Dalton for a school in New England, had spread among their former school companions. Alice MacAllister, Sarah Ford, May Egner and a number of others had held a little consultation over the matter and decided that some sort of testimonial should be arranged to give their friends a parting acknowledgment of the regard and esteem in which Dalton school girls held Tavia Travers and Dorothy Dale. Of course Tavia was never as popular as Dorothy had always been—she was too antagonistic, and insisted upon having too much fun at the expense of others. But, now that she was leaving them, the girls admitted she had been a "jolly good fellow," and they would surely miss her mischief if nothing more.

May Egner wanted the committee of arrangements to make the affair a "Linen Shower" such as brides are given.

"Because," argued the practical May, "it will be so nice to have a lovely lot of handkerchiefs and collars. No one can have too many."

"Well, we can include the shower if you like," said Alice, who was chairman, "but I vote for a lawn party, with boys invited."

"A lawn party with boys!" chorused the majority, in enthusiastic approval.

"I think it would be a charity to let the Dalton boys come to something," declared Sarah Ford. "If we leave them out all the time, by and by, when we want someone to take us home on a dark night—"

"When you stay chinning too long with Roberta," interrupted a girl who knew Sarah's weakness for "dragging along the way."

"Well, you may be out in the dark some time yourself, Nettie, and it is very nice to have—"

"A very nice boy—"

"Order! Order!" called the chairman. "We have voted to invite them and—"

"It's up to them," persisted Nettie Niles, who, next to Tavia Travers, had the reputation and privilege of using more slang than any other well-bred girl in Dalton.

"It is to be a lawn party then," declared the chairman, with befitting dignity. "And we have only one day to arrange the whole thing."

"I'll collect the boys," volunteered the irrepressible Nettie.

"Then you are appointed a committee of one to invite all the nice boys in the first class," said Alice, much to the surprise of the joker.

"And not any other?" pouted Nettie. "If I should run across a real nice little fellow, with light curly hair, and pale pink cheeks, and—and—"

"New tennis suit," suggested someone, who had seen Nettie walking home with a boy of the tennis-suit description.

"Oh, yes," agreed the chairman, "I forgot to include Charlie. He is not now at Dalton school, but of course, Nettie, you may invite Charlie."

"Thanks," said Nettie, determined not to be abashed by the teasing.

"We will have cake and lemonade," proposed May Egner.

"I'm glad I only have to bring boys," said Nettie aside, "I couldn't bake a cake to save me."

"And I'll bring a whole pan of fresh taffy," volunteered Sarah.

"Put me down for two dozen lemons," offered May Egner, who seemed to think the entire success of a lawn party depended upon the refreshing lemonade.

"Where shall we have it?" asked Alice.

The girls glanced around at the splendid lawn upon which the little meeting was being held. It was the MacAllister place, and had the reputation of being well-kept besides affording a recreation ground for the family—the secret of the combination lay in the extent of the grounds: they might be walked upon, but were never trampled upon. Mr. MacAllister made it a rule that games should be kept to their restricted provinces, as the tennis court and croquet grounds: other games should never be indulged in on the range close to the house or near the paths. "Plenty of room to play tag in the orchard," he would tell the children, and this plan kept the place in an enviable condition.

"The schoolyard is awfully dry and dusty," remarked Nettie in answer to the question of a site for the party.

"You are welcome to come here," said Alice, modestly.

"Oh, that would be splendid!" declared May, whereat all the others voiced similar sentiments.

It was promptly decided that the invitation to hold the affair on the MacAllister grounds should be accepted with thanks, and as there remained not many hours of the day to attend to arrangements, as the next afternoon would bring them to the test, the girls hastily scattered to begin their respective duties in the matter.

Viola Green was present at the meeting. Alice had told her of its purpose, and as only a few days remained of the time allotted Viola to remain at Dalton, Alice was not sorry when her visitor pleaded another engagement.

That engagement consisted of a promise to walk through the Green with Tom Burbank—he, too, was a stranger in Dalton, spending a week of his holiday with the Bennet family.

Viola could boast of a well-filled trunk of stylish clothes, and in no other place, of the many she had visited during her vacation, had this wardrobe shown to such advantage as in Dalton. Even the attractive linens that Alice was invariably gowned in (except on Sundays, when she wore a simple summer silk), seemed of "back date" compared with the showy dresses Viola exhibited. They were stylish in that acceptance of the term that made them popular, but were not distinctive, and would probably be entirely out of date by the following summer.

On this particular afternoon Viola wore a deep blue crepe with shaded ribbons, a dress, according to the feminine ethics of Dalton, "fit for a party."

Tom Burbank sported white flannels, a very good summer suit indeed, but a little out of the ordinary in Dalton. It was not to be wondered at, then, that the appearance of these two strangers attracted some attention on the Green. Neither could it be doubted that such attention was flattering to Viola, a stylishly dressed girl often enjoys being credited with her efforts.

"Wasn't that the greatest," Tom was drawing to Viola, "about those folks riding in the police wagon."

"Disgraceful, I should say," replied Viola, emphatically.

"And the fellow in the—farmer's duds. Wasn't he a sight?" and the young man chuckled at the thought of Nat in the overalls and jumper.

"And those two girls are going to Glenwood—the boarding school I attend!" and Viola's lip curled in hauteur.

"The dickens they are! I—beg your pardon, but I was so surprised," said Tom.

"I don't blame you. I was equally surprised myself. In fact, I guess everyone was—they made up their minds so suddenly. I suppose—" Then Viola stopped.

"Well, what do you suppose?"

"Perhaps I shouldn't say it—"

"Why not? Can't you trust me?"

"Oh, it wasn't that. But it might seem unkind."

"Nonsense," and the young man gave Viola a reassuring look. "A thing said in good faith is never unkind."

"I'm so glad you feel that way. Alice is so different, and I have been just dying to talk to somebody—somebody who would look at things as I do. Sometimes I am almost homesick."

"I suppose you are," said the youth, falling a victim to the girl's coquetry as readily as water runs down hill. "A fellow is never that way—homesick, I mean; but for a girl—"

"Oh, yes," sighed Viola, "this visiting is not all it is supposed to be. Alice is a lovely girl, of course, but—"

"A trifle high flown," said Tom, trying to help the faltering girl with her criticism.

"And so strangely fascinated with that Dorothy." Viola toyed evasively with the stick of her parasol. "Of course she is a pretty girl—"

"Too yellow—I mean too blondy," said Tom, feeling obliged to say something against Dorothy.

"Do you know her cousin, Nat White?"

"Not very well, I only met him the other night. But he seems like a decent fellow."

"I cannot imagine any boy allowing two girls to get in such a predicament," said Viola, "feeling her way" to further criticism.

"It was rough, but then you see he was not with them, he had gone to the blacksmith shop to get something fixed, I believe."

"Oh, they were alone!" and Viola had gained one point. "Was it really melons, do you suppose?"

"So he said, but he seemed to take the whole thing as a joke. Ginger! It was funny to go out in a red flyer and come back in a Black Maria," and Tom laughed at his own attempt at a pun.

"Then, when the cousin came back the girls were in the police patrol? That accounts for it. I could not possibly see how any young fellow could allow girls to get into such a scrape," persisted Viola.

"Yes," said Tom vaguely, not being at all particular as to what was the nature of the remark he had given acquiescence to.

"But to be arrested!" went on Viola.

"Were they arrested?" asked Tom in surprise.

"Why, of course," declared Viola. "Didn't Mr. White say so?"

"Oh, I suppose he did. That is—I really had not looked at it that way. I thought it was some kind of joke."

But Tom had said, "Yes," Nat told him they had been arrested! And Tom Burbank never intended to say anything of the kind! Viola Green with her pretty clothes and pretty looks had "put the words into his mouth and had taken them out again!"

"We must be going!" said Viola, leaving her seat beside the little fish pond in the park. "I suppose I shall see you at the lawn party?"

"If I am invited?"

"Then I invite you now. You need not say you got my invitation before the others were out—but be sure to come!"

CHAPTER X

A LAWN PARTY "WITH BOYS!"

The day was perfect—an item of much importance where lawn parties are concerned. Dorothy and Tavia were kept in ignorance of the testimonial that had been arranged in their honor, and were now, at one hour before the appointed time, dressing for an afternoon with Alice. Ned and Nat were to go with them and then—

"I am going to dress in my brand new challie," Tavia announced to Dorothy, as she left for that operation. "I'll show Miss Cucumber what I can look like when I do dress up."

"I'll wear my cadet blue linen," said Dorothy, "I think that such a pretty dress."

"Splendiferous!" agreed Tavia, "and so immensely becoming. Well, let us get there on time. I am just dying to say things at, not to, Miss Cuke."

"Tavia!" but that young lady was out of reach of the admonition Dorothy was wont to administer. The Green Violet, the Green Vegetable and all the other Greens seemed sufficiently abusive to Dorothy, but she was determined not to tolerate the latest epithet Tavia had coined to take the place of that name—Viola Green.

"Of course," admitted Dorothy, reflecting upon Tavia's new word, "Viola does seem sour, and her name is Green, but that is no reason why we should make an enemy of her. She might make it very unpleasant at Glenwood School."

Ned and Nat arrived just as Dorothy finished dressing. They had been invited over the telephone by Alice, who, in taking them into the lawn party plot, had arranged that they bring Dorothy and Tavia ostensibly to spend the afternoon with her.

Scarcely had the cousins' greeting been exchanged when Tavia made her appearance. She did look well in the new challie—one of the school dresses so lately acquired through Mrs. White's good management.

"We had better go at once," said Ned, after speaking a word to Tavia. "I am really anxious to become better acquainted with Miss Alice. She seems such a jolly girl."

"And as good as gold!" declared Dorothy warmly. "We all just love Alice!"

"I am sure you do. I would to—if I had a chance," joked Ned.

Along the road Tavia was with Nat as usual, trying to find some heretofore unfound item of interest in reviewing the ride in the police wagon. But concerning the interference of the stranger, Viola Green, Tavia was silent. Nat might say something that would spoil Tavia's idea of the joke on Viola.

Reaching the MacAllister gate both boys wondered that no sign of the festivities were apparent. Even upon the very threshold of the stately old mansion not a sound betrayed the expected lawn party. Alice answered the ring and, with a pleasant greeting, showed the company into the reception room, then, as she drew back the portiers opening up the long parlor there was a wild shout:

"Surprise! Surprise on Dorothy! Surprise on Tavia!" And the next moment there was such an "outpouring," as Tavia termed the hilarity, that neither Dorothy nor Tavia could find herself, so tangled had each one become with all the others in their joyous enthusiasm.

It was a complete surprise. This fact made the affair especially enjoyable—girls do love to keep secrets in spite of all proverbial statements to the contrary.

"Didn't you even guess?" quizzed May Egnor, addressing Dorothy.

"Never suspected a thing," declared Dorothy, as she finally managed to make her way to a cozy little seat in the arch, and there ensconced, began a pleasant chat with May Egnor.

"Nettie is responsible for the boys," May began. "She was a committee of one on them. But she declares she never invited that Tom Burbank, see him over there with Viola? And Alice is a little put out about it. He is a stranger, you know, and none of the boys seem to take him up."

"I am glad there are boys here," remarked Dorothy, looking pleasantly about the room and noting how well the Dalton boys had turned out, and what a really good-looking set they were. "But surely someone must have invited Tom Burbank."

"I suspect Viola," whispered May. "She seems to have something private to say to him and insists no one else shall hear it. Just see where they are."

In a most secluded nook indeed, a very small cozy corner under the stairway, could be seen the pair in question. Viola looked particularly pretty in a light green muslin that brought out to perfection the delicate tints of her rather pale face. Her dark hair was turned up in a "bun," and it might be said, in passing, that no other girl in the room had assumed such a young lady-like effect. This, with her society manners, and Tom at her elbow, easily gave Viola a star position at the lawn party.

Tavia was still gasping over her "surprise." The boys found it a matter of ease to become at once a part of the party where Tavia was concerned. They might have felt a trifle awkward before she came, this being the social debut of most of them, but when Tavia, "got going," as they expressed it, there was an end to all embarrassment.

Like a queen she sat on the low couch, her head thrown back in mock scorn, while not less than a half dozen boys wielded palm leaf fans about her, in true oriental fashion. Someone brought a hassock for her feet, then another ran to the porch and promptly returned with a long spray of honeysuckle that was pressed into a crown for her head; Alice confiscated a Japanese parasol from the side wall for her "slave" to shade her with and then—

The couch was the kind without a back support, cartridge cushions under the rolled ends finishing the antique design. Against one of these Tavia was resting, but no sooner had all her accessories been completed than her suite fell into line, four "slaves" making hold of the couch, lifting it majestically from its place, and with the air of Roman history, "gents" solemnly marching off with the queen and her retinue in full swing.

George Mason was chief waver—that is, he had the post of honor, next the "chariot" with his fan.

"Ki-ah!" he called, "Tavy-wavy-Ki-yah!"

This was the signal for a solemn chant in which all of the twenty boys present, including Ned and Nat, but not Tom Burbank, participated.

"Ki-ah!" called the leader.

"Ki-ah!" answered the retinue.

"Loddy-Shoddy, Wack-fi-Oddy Ki-ah!" sang out the head "Yamma," while Queen Octavia smiled majestically at her subjects, and bore the honor thrust upon her as gracefully as if born heir to an Indian throne.

The girls were bending and fanning and bowing, some even endeavoring to kiss the queen's hand as she passed.

"It takes boys to find fun," remarked Alice, "But see here, Yum-kim, or Loddy-Shoddy, whoever may be in authority," called Alice, "please bring back that couch, very carefully now, when you have dumped the queen on the lawn."

At this the slaves stopped, but did not dump their queen. Instead, they slowly lowered the chariot, and even assisted her to alight.

"Thanks, awfully," said Tavia, in common English, "I suppose that honor is saved for most persons' funerals. It's something to have tried it—I think Indian funeral marches perfectly lovely. I must die in India."

"Funeral march! Well, I like that!" groaned George Mason. "Of all the frosts—"

"That, my dear queen," declared Ralph Wilson, "was your triumphant procession—all! Did you notice the procesh? Funeral indeed! You would never get off that easy with a funeral in India."

Viola was standing on the porch smiling pleasantly. Somehow she seemed very agreeable today. Dorothy noticed how cordially she had greeted her, and even Tavia felt she should certainly have to be civil to the "Green Violet" if the latter kept her "manners going."

"Introduce me to your cousins," said Viola affably, coming up to where Dorothy stood.

"Certainly," answered Dorothy. "I was waiting for an opportunity. The queen-show took all our attention."

"Wasn't it splendid," and Viola seemed to have enjoyed the fun. "I do think boys do the funniest things."

"Yes, they certainly are original. I have two small brothers and they keep me going."

"How lovely to have brothers!" remarked Viola. "I am all alone at home."

"It must be lonely," sympathized Dorothy, "but then, you can have everything your own way."

"Just like lying abed on a holiday," said Viola, "one never enjoys it. I believe we always want what we cannot get, and scarcely ever appreciate what we have."

"I find it that way sometimes," admitted Dorothy, "but to make sure I am not mistaken I often suppose myself without that which I fail to appreciate. It is a good test of one's real self, you know."

"But a lot of trouble," sighed Viola. "I take things as they come—and always want more, or to be rid of some. But I have one real love, and that's music. I was called Viola because my dear grandfather was a celebrated violinist, and perhaps that is why I have such a passion for music."

"Do you play?" asked Dorothy, interested.

"Yes, I study the piano and violin, but of course I like the violin best. There is one of your cousins—"

"Nat!" called Dorothy, as that boy ran across the lawn. "Come over here a minute, if you can spare time from that un-understandable game."

"Don't you know that game?" asked Nat, coming up to the rustic bench upon which the two girls were seated. "Why, I'm surprised. That is a genuine American game 'Follow the Leader.'"

"Let me introduce you to a friend," began Dorothy, indicating Viola. "This is Miss Green—Mr. Nat White."

Nat bowed and spoke pleasantly—he was no country boy. Viola had noticed that long ago.

"Viola has just been telling me her one hobby is music," said Dorothy, to start the small talk, "and she studies the violin. I think it so much more interesting than the piano," she commented.

"Oh, I've tried it," admitted Nat. "It is more interesting for others, but when it comes home to a fellow it is awfully scratchy and monotonous. But I suppose Miss Viola has gone past that period. I stuck there."

"That is because you did not start early enough," said Viola. "To do anything with the violin one ought to start before the squeaks and scratches can be realized."

"Good idea," agreed Nat. "That work should certainly be done in the—sub—conscious state."

"I'll leave you to settle the violin," said Dorothy, "while I pay my respects to Mrs. MacAllister. She has just come out, and wasn't it splendid of her to let us all come here?"

Dorothy made her way across the lawn to the knot of girls where Mrs. MacAllister was gracefully presiding.

But instantly Tavia saw that Nat was alone with Viola—the very thing she wanted to avoid. Nat might tell her the truth about the "chariot race," as the police patrol ride had become known. Besides, Viola could find out so many things from an unsuspecting boy.

"Come with me," said Tavia to Nettie, dragging the innocent girl along. "I want to present you to a friend of mine. Do you see that boy over there? The best looking fellow here? Well, he's a friend of mine."

"Delighted—I'm sure," agreed Nettie. "But what about the other girl? Miss Nile Green?"

"Cut her out," said Tavia, in her most business-like way, using the slang with the old as well as the newer significance.

"Certainly," responded Nettie, with a coquettish toss of her head. "I'm on the boys committee—as a matter of fact they are all here in my care," and straightforth the pair made for Viola's bench.

"Wasn't it too funny!" Viola was exclaiming as Tavia came up.

"I should think so," they heard Nat answer, "But Dorothy was ready to—"

"Hush!" whispered Viola, but the warning was just a moment too late, for Tavia heard it. Then Viola said something that Tavia did not hear.

Nat was very pleasant to Nettie. It was evident the introduction had broken in on something

interesting to Viola, if not to Nat, but he gave no sign of the interference being annoying, although the girl was not so tactful.

"Nettie is the committee on boys," declared Tavia, "so I thought it high time she had a chance to censure you—I mean to look over your credentials."

"Well, if you and the others would join me in a swallow of that lemonade I see under yonder tree, Miss Nettie,—No, not you Tavia, nor Miss Green? Then we will have to drink alone, for I am deadly thirsty," and at this he walked away with Nettie, leaving Viola on the bench with Tavia.

"Oh, there's Tom looking for me," exclaimed Viola, jumping up instantly, "won't you let me introduce you, Tavia?" (she actually said Tavia!) "He's a stranger and some out of place."

"Yes," said Tavia vaguely, probably referring to the "out of place" clause, and not exactly giving assent to the introduction.

Then came Viola's turn—she left Tavia with Tom and as promptly made her own escape!

"Of all the—clams," Tavia was saying to herself, rather rudely, it must be confessed.

But Tom evidently liked Tavia, at any rate he talked to her and showed a remarkable aptness in keeping up the tete-a-tete, "against all comers," said Nat to himself, noticing the monopoly.

"That's the time Miss Tavia was beaten at her own game," was Viola's secret comment. "How glad I am to get rid of that bore. I heartily wish I—that he had not been asked."

"What do you think of that?" inquired Alice of Dorothy, observing the girl's change of partners. "Look at Nat with Viola and Tavia with Tom!"

"I would like to hear what Tavia has to say," and Dorothy smiled at the idea of Tavia's possible conversation. "I'm just dying to tell her that Viola's name did not come from the vegetable kingdom."

"We had really better break up these little confabs," said Alice, feeling her responsibility as hostess, "or we may have reason to doubt the advisability of giving a lawn party with boys."

"The simplest games will be the most enjoyable, I think," suggested Dorothy. "I would begin with 'drop the handkerchief.'"

"Fine idea," replied Alice. "But notice how many times Tom gets a 'drop.' I'll bet the girls will be afraid he would keep the handkerchief. He looks girlie enough to fancy one with lace on," and at this Alice went forth to inaugurate the old-time game.

CHAPTER XI

OFF FOR GLENWOOD

The lawn party ended in a shower; not only a linen shower as May Egner had planned, but in a specific downpour of rain. The day, so beautifully promising, suddenly changed colors and sent, from a sky of inky blackness, one of the heaviest rainfalls of the season. But this change only added sport to the festivities, for a game of blindman's buff had to be finished in the dining-room, and the way the boys ducked under the big table actually put the "blind man" (Nettie) out of business.

It had been a splendid afternoon, every moment of the hours spent seemed to all present the best time of their gay young lives, and that Viola had contributed to the merriment and made herself particularly agreeable, left nothing to be wished for, Alice thought.

Dorothy and Tavia felt that the time had come to make their adieux, and were about to undertake that task when, at a signal from Alice, the room was suddenly filled with flying bits of linen—the other shower.

"Hurrah!" cried the boys, catching the gifts and tossing them up again and again.

"Fen!" called Tavia, using a marble game expression, but the boys would not desist. They liked the linen shower first-rate, and insisted on keeping it going.

"Then let us snowball the travelers," suggested Sarah Ford, and at this Dorothy and Tavia were forced into a corner and completely snowed under with the linen.

When the excitement had subsided, and the gifts were counted, Dorothy found she had fourteen beautiful dainty little handkerchiefs, four hand-made collars, and a darling pink and

white linen bag. This last gift was from Alice, and had Dorothy's name done in a tiny green vine, with dots of pale lavender violets peeping through. This was such a beautiful piece that Alice admitted she had worked on it sometime previous to the party, intending to keep it for Dorothy's birthday gift.

Next Tavia counted twelve handkerchiefs, and seven collars. She declared the girls knew she never had a decent collar, and, in her profuse thanks, almost wept with joy at the unexpected blessing.

"It's the collar that makes the girl," she assured those who stood about her admiring her treasures, "and I never could make the collar. So you see you have saved me from disgracing Dorothy at Glenwood. I suppose every boarding school girl sports the hand-made variety."

"And to think that I cannot give a party in Dalton to pay you back," remarked Dorothy, as she was saying good-bye to a group of girls and boys in the hall. "We are going to move to North Birchland, you know."

But the girls did not know, and the information was received with much regret—everyone would miss the Dales. The girls would miss Dorothy, the boys would miss Joe, and as for Roger, he had always been a neighborhood pet. Then Major Dale was a popular citizen, besides being especially endeared to many whom he had befriended with money and advice.

"But you will come down to see us on your holidays," insisted the boys and girls, "and perhaps we can get something up so that we may have a reunion."

Dorothy agreed to this, and then, when all the good-byes had been said, and all the earnest protestations of affection expressed, the merry-makers dispersed, making their way through the wet and muddy roads, but happy with a clear sky above—for some of the girls wore real party dresses and the shower had made them apprehensive until it stopped.

Dorothy and Tavia remained to thank Alice and Mrs. MacAllister for all the trouble they had taken. During the conversation Viola assured the girls they would be delighted with Glenwood and said it was a pity Alice had to stay longer at Dalton school to finish a special course.

"Because," said Viola, "we could have such glorious times all together."

"Do you think," said Tavia, as she took Dorothy's arm and "picked her steps," across the wet road on her way home, "that Viola really means it? That she is glad we are going to Glenwood?"

"I wouldn't like to say," hesitated Dorothy. "She has such an odd way. All afternoon she acted to me like one who had gained some point and was satisfied."

"Then I didn't get her away from Nat in time," declared Tavia. "I heard her say something suspicious as I came up to them. No use asking Nat what he told her, he would invent something to tease me and—"

"Declare you were jealous," finished Dorothy. "We will hope she was in earnest with her graciousness—perhaps she is always that way—antagonistic with strangers."

"Never," and Tavia went into a mud puddle in her attempt to speak very decidedly. "There! I'm glad that was not my canvas shoe. I was tempted to wear them. Ouch! Wet through! But I was about to say that Viola is not mean to all strangers. Did you see the way she went for Nat?"

"Well, we must not make trouble by going out of our way to meet it," preached Dorothy. "Viola may not have a chance to bother us at Glenwood, even if she cared to try."

"Chance! You can depend upon her to make all the chance she wants. But I have my defense all mapped out. I am certain she will try to disgrace us with the patrol story."

"What disgrace could she make out of that?" asked Dorothy in surprise.

"Don't know, haven't the least idea, only I fancy she will fix something up. But I'll give her 'a run for her money,' as the boys say," and Tavia displayed something of the defense she had "mapped out" in a decidedly vindictive attitude. Packing of trunks and doing up of girls' belongings made the time fly, so that when the morning of the actual departure did arrive both girls felt as if something important must have been overlooked, there was so much hurry and flurry. But the train puffed off at last, with Dorothy Dale and Octavia Travers passengers for the little place called Glenwood, situated away off in the New England mountains.

Major Dale felt lonely indeed when his Little Captain had kissed the two boys—her soldiers—good-bye, and, when she pressed her warm cheek to his own anxious face, it did seem as if a great big slice of sunshine had suddenly darted under a heavy black cloud. But it was best she should go, he reflected, and they must get along without her.

Tavia's folks were conscious of similar sentiments. The squire, her father, and her little brother Johnnie went to the station to see the girls off, and Johnnie felt so badly that he actually refused to go fishing with Joe Dale, an opportunity he would have "jumped at" under any other circumstances. Roger Dale had rubbed his pretty eyes almost sightless trying not to cry and

listening to Aunt Libby's oft-told story that had never yet failed to heal a wound of the baby's heart, but he surely did not want Doro to go, and he surely would cry every single night when she did not come to kiss him.

"I just do want her," he blubbered on the newly-ironed gingham apron that Aunt Libby buried his sweet face in, "and I don't love Auntie Winnie for taking her away."

So the Dalton home was left behind.

"I wish we did not have to change so often," said Dorothy to Tavia, when she had finally dried her eyes and looked around with the determination of being young-lady-like, and not crying for those left behind in dear old Dalton.

"Oh, that's the most fun," declared Tavia. "All new people maybe, and different conductors, besides a chance to try if our feet are asleep—mine feel drowsy now," and she jumped into the aisle just to straighten out and make people wonder if she had lost something.

"We will meet the others at the junction—Viola's folks, you know. And that reminds me,—I never had a chance to tell you why she was called Viola. Her grandfather was a great violinist and she was called after his—"

"Fiddle! Good!" interrupted Tavia, the irrepressible. "Then I'll call her 'Fiddle.' That's lots better than the vegetables."

"It's a comfort to have all our things go by express," Dorothy remarked when "Next station Junction!" was called from the front door of the car. "I feel as if I am constantly forgetting something, when I have nothing to carry, but it is a relief to find our racks empty."

"My hat is up there," Tavia remarked, taking down the straw sailor. "And our box of candy—you don't call that an empty rack, do you? Alice's best mixed—all chocolate too."

"I was quite sure you wouldn't forget the candy," answered Dorothy. "And it was awfully good of Alice."

"Junction! Junct-shon!" called the trainman.

"There's our porter," remarked Tavia; with conscious pride as the colored man, whom the major had given the girls in charge of, stepped up the aisle, secured the small satchels and, without so much as, "by your leave," or, "are you ready," handed the two girls off the train.

CHAPTER XII

VIOLA'S MOTHER

At the change of cars the Dalton girls were met by Viola and Mrs. Green. Viola and her mother soon arranged seats for four in the chair car, and Dorothy, with Tavia, joined them in such comfortable quarters as are provided for long distance passengers. Then the little party settled down for a long ride—and all the enjoyment that might be discovered therein. Viola appeared delighted to meet the Dalton girls—she inquired particularly about Dorothy's cousin Nat, but this society "stunt," as Tavia termed it, was due more to the city habit of remembering friends' friends, than a weakness on Viola's part for good looking boys.

But it was Viola's mother who interested both Dorothy and Tavia. She was a small woman, evidently of foreign extraction (Spanish, Dorothy thought) and with such a look of adoration for Viola that, to Dorothy and Tavia, observing the wonderful mother-love, it seemed like something inhuman, divine perhaps, or was it a physical weakness?

They noticed that Mrs. Green used her smelling salts freely, she often pressed her hand to her head, and seemed much like a person too delicate to travel.

"Are you all right, momsey?" Viola would ask continually. "I do wish you had not risked coming."

"But I could not allow you to travel all alone," the mother would answer with a delightful foreign accent. "And you know, my daughter, that father was too busy."

"But, momsey, do not sit up if you are tired," cautioned Viola. "Just lie back and try to be comfortable."

"I am enjoying every word you speak," declared the little woman, inhaling her salts. "You and your charming friends."

Dorothy had never seen so wonderful a mother—to actually hang on her daughter's frivolous nonsense. And the attention was a positive tonic to Tavia's chatter. She said such amusing things and saw such ridiculous comparisons—the kind little children surprise their elders with.

To Dorothy, who had never known a mother's affection (she was such a tot when her own dear mother left her), this devotion appeared to be nothing short of marvelous. Tavia thought it unusual—Viola seemed worried when it became too extreme. Then she would urge her mother to rest and not excite herself over foolish schoolgirl talk. Even such an admonition from a mere daughter did not appear to bother the strange little woman, with the almost glaring black eyes. Tavia observed this peculiarity, then made a mental observation that whatever ailed Viola might have to do with a similar affliction on the mother's part—perhaps a family weakness!

As they journeyed on Dorothy found it very pleasant to talk with Mrs. Green and so left Viola and Tavia pretty much to themselves.

Numbers of Glenwood girls were picked up at various stations, and, as each was espied, the chair car party hailed them, Viola being acquainted with the last year's girls. Before the last station—some twenty miles from the destination of the students—had been struck off the timetable, there were actually twelve "Glenwoods," aboard. Those from Dalton felt just a bit "green" Tavia admitted, never before having mingled with a boarding school "tribe," but on the whole the scholars were very sociable and agreeable, and made all sorts of promises for future good times.

"You see," explained Rose-Mary Markin, a very dear girl from somewhere in Connecticut, "we count all this side of Boston in the Knickerbocker set, 'Knicks,' we call them. The others are the Pilgrims; and isn't it dreadful to nickname them the 'Pills?'"

Tavia thought that "the best ever," and declared she would join the Knicks (spelled "Nicks" in the school paper) no matter what the initiation would cost her.

"Viola is secretary of the Nicks," volunteered Amy Brook, a girl who wore her hair parted exactly in the middle and looked classical. "We have lots of sport; plays and meetings. You will join, surely, Dorothy, won't you?"

"But I will not be secretary this year," interrupted Viola, without allowing Dorothy to answer Amy. "It's too much trouble."

"But you can't resign until the first regular meeting in November," said Amy, surprised that Viola should wish to give up the office.

"I intend to resign the very first thing," asserted Viola. "The Nicks can get along with a pro-tem until the regular meeting."

Mrs. Green now fixed her strange gaze upon her daughter, and Dorothy, who was plainly more interested in the delicate little woman than in the schoolgirls' chatter, noticed a shadow come into the pale face. Evidently Mrs. Green could stand no arguments, no confusion, and, when the girls continued to discuss the pros and cons of a secretary pro-tem, Dorothy suggested that they change the subject as it might be distressing to Mrs. Green. Quick as a flash Viola was all attention to her mother, inquiring about her head, offering to bring fresh ice water, and showing unusual anxiety, so it seemed to Dorothy's keen observation, when the lady was not really ill.

Then, at the first opportunity Viola called the girls down to the end compartment, and told them that her mother had only just recovered from a serious illness.

"She had a dreadful attack this time," said Viola, "and she should never have come on this journey."

"Then why did she?" asked Tavia, in her blunt way.

"Well, she seemed so set upon it," declared Viola, "that the doctors thought it more dangerous to cross her about it than to allow her to come. Our doctor is on the train, but mother does not know it. I do wish she could get strong!"

The tears that came to the girl's eyes seemed very pitiable—every one of the party felt like crying with Viola.

Dorothy attempted to put her arms about the sad girl, but Viola was on her feet instantly.

"We must go back," she said.

"Then we can arrange to sit in another place," suggested Dorothy. "Perhaps if she were quiet she might fall off asleep."

Viola left the compartment first. There were people in the aisle—in front of her mother. What had happened?

"Oh!" screamed the girl. "Mother! Let me go to her!" and she hurried through the car, pushing aside the trainmen who had been summoned. "Mother! Mother!" called the frightened Viola, for her mother was so pale and so still!

"Oh, she is dead!" whispered Tavia, who had succeeded in reaching the chair.

"Open the windows!" commanded Viola. "Call Dr. Reed, quick! He is in the next car!"

It seemed an eternity—but in reality was only a few minutes—before the doctor reached the spot. Dorothy could see that Mrs. Green had not fainted—her eyes were moving. But poor Viola! How could they ever have thought ill of her when this was her sorrow: this her sad burden!

Dorothy Dale resolved in her heart, at that moment, that never a care nor a sorrow should come to Viola Green if she could protect her from it. She would be her champion at school, she would try to share this secret sorrow with her; she would do anything in her power to make life brighter for a girl who had this awful grief to bear.

"It's her mind," Dorothy had heard someone whisper. Then the doctor had the porters carry the sick woman to a private compartment, and with her Viola remained, until the train reached Hanover. There Dr. Reed left the train and with him went Mrs. Green in care of an attendant. When they were gone Viola returned to her companions weeping and almost sick herself.

"The doctor would not let me go back home," she sighed, "and as soon as mother was conscious she insisted on me going on to school. Dr. Reed can always manage her so well, and if I were with him perhaps mother would fret more. But I did think she would get over those awful spells—" and the girl burst into fresh tears.

"Viola, dear," said Dorothy soothingly. "Try to be brave. Perhaps the trip may benefit her in the end."

"Oh, don't try to be kind to me," wailed the unhappy girl. "I can't stand it! I hate everybody and everything in this world only my darling little sweet mother! And I cannot have her! She can never go with me to her own country now, and we had planned it all! Oh, mother darling! Why did you inherit that awful sickness! Why can't we cure you!" and so the sad daughter wailed and wept, while her companions looked on helplessly.

"But you will let me be your friend," pleaded Dorothy. "Try to think it will all come right some day—every sorrow must unfold some blessing—"

"My friend!" and Viola looked with that same sharp glance that her mother had shown—that queer glare at Dorothy. "Dorothy Dale, you do not know what you are talking about!"

And every girl present had reason to remember this strange remark when days at Glenwood school proved their meaning.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CATEGORY

"Isn't it great!" exclaimed Tavia, shaking out her blue dress, and tying a worn handkerchief over its particular closet hook so that no hump would appear in the soft blue texture. "I never would believe boarding school was such fun. Here comes Rose-Mary with more Nicks to introduce. I hear her laughing—hasn't she got the jolliest little giggle—like our brook when it bubbles over."

"I wish, Tavia, you would confine your wardrobe to your own half of the closet," Dorothy remonstrated, as she took down several articles that had "crossed the line."

"Oh, I will, dear, only I was just listening to what those girls were saying. I thought I heard Viola's voice. Isn't it strange she does not call on us. I told her our room was Number Nineteen."

"I suppose she's busy, every one appears to be except Rose-Mary. She doesn't seem to mind whether her trunk is unpacked first day or on Christmas," said Dorothy, working diligently at her own baggage.

"I would just love to go the rounds with her," declared Tavia, "if you did not insist upon going right to work. I would rather have fun now and unpack later."

"But there is no later. We must go to bed at eight thirty, my dear, and we have no time to spare. School will begin to-morrow."

"All the more reason why we should have the fun now," persisted Tavia, who was nevertheless getting her clothes on the hooks in short order. "There! I'm all hung up," she declared, banging the closet door furiously, in spite of Dorothy's hat box trying to stop it.

"But your hats," Dorothy reminded her. "They have got to go on that shelf, and there isn't an inch of room left."

"Then I'll just stick the box under the bed," calmly remarked the new girl, making a kick at the unlucky box and following it up to the "goal."

"Against the rules," announced Dorothy, pointing to a typewritten notice on the door. "Read!"

"Haven't time. You read them and tell me about them. I'll take the box out if it says so, but if we have to keep things in such angelic order why in the world don't they give us room?"

"Room? Indeed this is a large room, given us especially, and it is quite a favor to be allowed to room together—only real sisters ever get a double."

"Heaven help the singles!" sighed Tavia in mock devotion. "But come on, Doro,—we are missing all the fun. I did think I heard the mob at our door."

Without further leave or license Tavia dragged Dorothy from her work and closed the door of Number Nineteen behind her. In the hall they found Rose-Mary, whom the girls called "Cologne," Amy Brook, Nita Brant, and Lena Berg. All were trying to talk at once, each had "the very most delicious vacation" to tell about, and to Dorothy it appeared the first requisite for boarding school ways was the coining of absurd and meaningless phrases. Tavia fell right into line, and could discount anyone of the crowd. "Splendiferous, glorioutious and scrambunctious," were plainly hard to beat, and no one seemed willing to try. Cologne had a way of saying things in a jerky little jump that suggested bumping noses, Amy Brook fairly strangled with dashes and other unexpected shorts stops, while Nita Brant "wallowed" in such exclamations as:

"Fine and dandy! Perfectly sugary! Too killingly, dear, for anything!"

It was Cologne who declared Nita "wallowed" in slang, because the Nicks had decided that no ready-made slang should be used at meetings, and Nita persisted in ignoring the rule. Each new term brought the season's current phrases back in the custody of the sandy-haired Nita and now, on the first night, her companions took precious good care to remind her of the transgression.

Altogether Dorothy found it difficult to keep track of anything like conversation, and was forced to say "yes" and "no" on suspicion. Tavia had better luck, Edna Black (christened Ebony Ned) took her in charge at once, and the two (Ned had already established her reputation as a black sheep), dashed off down the corridor, bursting in on unsuspecting "Babes" (newcomers), and managng, somehow or other, to upset half-emptied trunk trays, and do damage generally.

"Hello! Hello!" came a shout from the first turn or senior row. "Come, somebody, and fan me!"

"That's 'Dick,'" Ned told Tavia. "Molly Richards, but we call her Dick. By the way, what shall we call you? What is your full name? The very whole of it?"

"Octavia Travers! Birthday is within the octave of Christmas," declared the Dalton girl impressively.

"Oct or Ouch! That sounds too much like Auch du lieber Augustine, or like a cut finger," studied Edna. "Better take yours from Christmas—Chrissy sounds cute."

"Yes, especially since I have lately had my hair cut Christy—after our friend Columbus," agreed Tavia, tossing back her new set of tangles. "I was in a railroad accident, you know, and lost my long hair. I had the time of my life getting it cut off properly, in a real barber shop. Dorothy's cousins, two of the nicest boys, were with us—Dorothy went too. It was such fun."

"All right, it shall be Chrissy then," decided Edna. "It's funny we always turn a girl's name into a boy's name when we can. Let's go and see Dick," and at this she dragged Tavia out of the corner of the hall where they had taken refuge from a girl who was threatening them for upsetting all her ribbons and laces.

"Oh, there you are, Ned Ebony," greeted Molly as the two bolted into her room. "Where's everybody. I haven't seen Fiddle yet."

"Viola Green?" asked Tavia. "Funny I should have thought of that name for her."

"You knew she plays the fiddle adorably."

"No, but I knew she had been named after her grandfather's violin. What a queer notion."

"Queer girl, too," remarked Molly, "but a power in her way. Did she come up yet?"

"On our train," said Tavia, too prudent, for once in her life, to tell the whole story.

"She is going to cut the Nicks," announced Edna. "She told me so first thing. Then she slammed her door and no one has caught a glimpse of her since."

Tavia was fairly bursting with news at this point, but she had promised Dorothy not to interfere with Viola in any way and she wisely decided not to start in on such dangerous territory as Viola's visit to Dalton. So the matter was dropped, and the girls went forth for more fun.

Dorothy had met Miss Higley, Mrs. Pangborn's assistant. She proved to be a little woman with glasses, the stems going all the way back of her ears. She seemed snappy, Dorothy thought, and gave all sorts of orders to the girls while pretending to become acquainted with Dorothy.

"The crankiest crank," declared one girl, when the little woman had gone further down the hall with her objections. "But, really, we need a chief of police. Don't you think so?"

"Isn't Mrs. Pangborn chief?" asked Dorothy.

"Oh, she's president of the board of commissioners," replied Rose-Mary. "Miss Honorah Higley is the chief of all departments."

"And Miss Crane?" inquired Dorothy. "I have met her."

"Oh, she's all right," declared the informer. "Camille Crane is a dear—if the girls do call her Feathers."

"I thought all that nick-name business was done in colleges," remarked Dorothy. "Every one here seems to have two names."

"Couldn't possibly get along without them," declared Cologne. "I've been Cologne since my first day—what have they given you?"

"I haven't heard yet," said Dorothy, smiling. "But I do hope they won't 'Dot' me. I hate dots."

"Then make it Dashes or Specks, but you must not be Specks. We have one already."

"Glad of it," returned Dorothy. "I don't like Specks either."

"I guess we will make it 'D. D.' That's good, and means a whole lot of things. There," declared Cologne. "I've had the honor of being your sponsor. Now you must always stick by me. D. D. you are to be hereafter."

"That will tickle Tavia," declared Dorothy. "She always said I was a born parson."

"Better yet," exclaimed Cologne. "Be Parson. Now we've got it. The Little Parson," and away she flew to impart her intelligence to a waiting world of foolish schoolgirls.

CHAPTER XIV

THE INITIATION

The first days at Glenwood revolved like a magic kaleidoscope—all bits of brilliant things, nothing tangible, and nothing seemingly important. Dorothy had made her usual good friends—Tavia her usual jolly chums. But Viola Green remained a mystery.

She certainly had avoided speaking to Dorothy, and had not even taken the trouble to avoid Tavia—she "cut her dead." Edna tried to persuade Tavia that "Fiddle" was a privileged character, and that the seeming slights were not fully intended; but Tavia knew better.

"She may be as odd as she likes," insisted the matter of fact girl from Dalton, "but she must not expect me to smile at her ugliness—it is nothing else—pure ugliness."

Dorothy had sought out Viola, but it was now plain that the girl purposely avoided her.

"Perhaps she is worrying about her mother, poor dear," thought the sympathetic Dorothy. "I must insist on cheering her up. A nice walk through these lovely grounds ought to brighten her. And the leaves on these hills are perfectly glorious. I must ask her to go with me on my morning walk. I'll go to her room to-night after tea—during recreation. I have not seen her out a single morning yet."

So Dorothy mused, and so she acted according to the logical result of that musing. At recreation time that evening Dorothy tapped gently on the door of Number Twelve.

The door was slightly ajar, and Dorothy could hear the sounds of papers being hastily gathered up. Then Viola came to the entrance.

"May I come in?" asked Dorothy, surprised that Viola should have made the question

necessary.

"Oh, I am so busy—but of course—Did you want to see me?" and there was no invitation in the voice or manner.

"Just for a moment," faltered Dorothy, determined not to be turned away without a hearing.

Viola reluctantly opened the door. Then she stepped aside without offering a chair.

"I have been worried about you," began Dorothy, rather miserably. "Are you ill, Viola?"

"111? Why not at all. Can't a girl attend to her studies without exciting criticism?"

Dorothy's face burned. "Oh, of course. But I did not see you out at all—"

"Next time I leave my room I'll send the Nicks word," snapped Viola. "Then they may appoint a committee to see me out!"

Dorothy was stung by this. She had expected that Viola would resent the interference—try to keep to her chosen solitude—but the rudeness was a surprise.

"But you are getting pale, Viola," she ventured. "Couldn't you possibly take your exercise with me to-morrow? I would so like to have you. The walk over the mountains is perfectly splendid now."

"Thank you," and Viola's black eyes again looked out of their depths with that strange foreign keenness. "But I prefer to walk alone."

Dorothy was certain a tear glistened in Viola's eye.

"Alone!" repeated the visitor. "Viola, dear, if you would only let me be your friend—"

"Dorothy Dale!" and the girl's eyes flashed in anger. "I will have none of your preaching. You came here to pry into my affairs just as you did on the train, when you made me tell all about my dear, darling mother's illness, before those giggling girls. Yes, you need not play innocent. I know the kind of girl you are. 'Sugar coated!' But you may take your sympathy where strangers will be fooled by it. Try it on some of the Babes. But you must never again attempt to meddle in my affairs. If you do I'll tell Miss Higley. So there! Are you satisfied now?"

Dorothy was stunned. Was this flaming, flashing girl the same that had smiled upon her when the sick mother was present? What was that strange unnatural gleam in the black eyes? Anger or jealousy?

"I am sorry," faltered Dorothy; then she turned and left the room.

One hour later Tavia found Dorothy buried in her pillows. Tears would still come to her eyes, although she had struggled bravely to suppress them.

"Doro!" exclaimed her friend in surprise. "Are you homesick?"

"No," sobbed the miserable girl. "It isn't exactly homesick—." Then the thought came to her that she should not implicate Viola, she had promised to save her from further suffering. Surely she had enough with the sick mother.

"Then what is it?" demanded Tavia.

"Oh, I don't know, Tavia," and she tried again to check her tears, "but I just had to cry."

"Nervous," concluded the Dalton girl. "Well, we must cure that. You know we are to be initiated this evening. Aren't you scared?"

"Oh, yes," and Dorothy sat upright. "I quite forgot. Do we join the Nicks?"

"Unless you prefer the Pills. They are the stiffest set—not a bit like our crowd. And the way they talk! A cross between a brogue and Tom Burbank. 'I came hawf way uptown before I could signal a car-r'," rolled out Tavia, mocking the long A's, and rolled R's of the New England girl. "How's that for English? I call it brogue."

"It does sound queer, but they tell me it is the correct pronunciation," Dorothy managed to say, while working diligently with her handkerchief on her eyes and cheeks.

"Then, as in all things else," declared Tavia, "I am thankful not to be orthodox—I should get tonsillitis if I ever tried anything like that."

"Where is the meeting to be held?" asked Dorothy.

"Don't know—we must not know anything. Ned says it will be easy. Dick is the guide, and I know Cologne has something to do with it. I do hope you won't be sad-eyed, Doro."

"You can depend upon me to do Dalton justice," declared the girl on the bed. "I'm anxious to see what they will do to us. No hazing, I hope."

"In this Sunday school? Mercy no! No such luck. They will probably make us recite psalms," asserted the irreverent Tavia.

"But being Parson that would be appropriate for me," Dorothy declared.

"And for a Chris! That would be all right also," added Tavia. "Well, I know one or two."

"There is someone coming to call us," and Dorothy jumped to her feet. "I must bathe my stupid eyes."

A half hour later the meeting was called. It was held in a little recreation room on the third floor. To this spot the candidates were led blindfolded. Within the room the shuffling of feet could be heard, then a weird voice said in a muffled tone:

"Hear ye! Honored Nicks! Let their scales fall!"

At the word the bandages were dropped from the eyes of Dorothy and Tavia.

A glimpse around the half-lighted room showed a company of masked faces and shrouded forms—sheets and white paper arrangements. On the window seat sat the Most High Nick—the promoter. At her feet was crouched the Chief Ranger.

"Number one!" called the Ranger, and Dorothy was pressed forward.

"Chase that thimble across the room with your nose," demanded the Ranger, placing a silver thimble at Dorothy's feet.

Of course Dorothy laughed—all candidates do—at first.

"Wipe your smile off," ordered the Promoter, and at this Dorothy was obliged to "wipe the smile" on the rather uncertain rug, by brushing her mouth into the very depths of the carpet.

"Proceed!" commanded the Ranger, and Dorothy began the thimble chase.

It is all very well for the "uppers" to laugh at the Babes, but it was no easy matter to get a thimble across a room by nose effort. Yet Dorothy was "game," her nominating committee declared in the course of time, and, between many pauses, chief of which was caused by the irrepressible smiles that had to be wiped off on all parts of the floor for every offense, Dorothy did get the thimble over to the corner.

"Number two," called the Ranger, and Tavia took the floor.

"The clock," indicated the Promoter, whereupon Tavia was confined in a small closet and made to do the "Cuckoo stunt." Each hour called was responded to by the corresponding "cuckoos," and the effect was ludicrous indeed. Every break in the call meant another trial, but finally Tavia got through the ordeal.

Next Dorothy was called upon to make a speech—the subject assigned being "The Glory of the Nicks." An impromptu speech might be difficult to make under such circumstances had the subject been a word of four letters, like Snow, Love or even Hate, but to extemporize on the society which was giving her the third degree—Dorothy almost "flunked," it must be admitted.

The final test was that of singing a lesson in mathematics to the tune of America, and the try that Tavia had at that broke every paper mask in the room—no, not every one, for over in the corner was a mask that never stirred, one that left the room before the candidates had been welcomed into the society of honorable Nicks. That mask went into room twelve.

CHAPTER XV

LOST ON MOUNT GABRIEL

A full month of school life had passed at Glenwood. The beautiful autumn had come to tint the leafy New England hills, when Mrs. Pangborn announced that her classes might go on a little picnic to the top of Mount Gabriel. The day chosen proved to be of the ideal Indian summer variety, and when the crowd of happy students skipped away through the woods that led to the mount, there seemed nothing to be wished for. Miss Crane had been sent in charge, and as Edna said, that meant just one more girl to make sport.

As usual Viola did not join the merry-makers. She had the continuous excuse of her mother's

illness, which had really been a matter of great worry to her, as Mrs. Pangborn, if no other at the school, knew to be true.

"It's as warm as August," declared Nita Brant, scaling a darling little baby maple and robbing it of its most cherished pink leaves.

"Oh, Nita," sighed Tavia, "couldn't you take some other tree? That poor little thing never wore a pink dress before in all its young life!"

"Too young to wear pink," declared the gay Nita, affecting the brilliant leaves herself. "I just love baby leaves," and she planted the wreath on her fair brow.

This started the wreath brigade, which soon terminated in every one of the picnickers being adorned with a crown of autumn foliage.

At the foot of the mountain the girls made an effort to procure mountain sticks, but this was not an easy matter, and much time was taken up in the search for appropriate staffs. Those strong enough were invariably too hard to break, and those that could be procured were always too "splintery." But the matter was finally disposed of, and the procession started up the mountain.

It was growing late in the afternoon, the pilgrimage not having been taken up until after the morning session, and when the top of the mountain was finally reached, Miss Crane told her charges that they might scurry about and get such specimen of leaves or stones as they wished to bring back, as they would only remain there a short time.

The air was very heavy by this time, and the distant roll of thunder could be heard, but the gay girls never dreamed of a storm on that late October afternoon as they ran wildly about gathering bits of every procurable thing from moss to crystal rocks. Tavia wanted Jacks-in-the-pulpit, and sought diligently for them, getting away from all but Dorothy in her anxiety to find her home flower. She dearly loved Jacks—they grew just against the Dale wall in dear old Dalton, and she wanted to send one flower home to little Johnnie. It would be crushed in a letter of course, but she would put some dainty little ferns beside it and they would keep the lazy look. Then she could tell Johnnie all about the mountain top—send him some bright red maple leaves, and some yellow ones.

"Oh, Dorothy!" she exclaimed. "I see some almost-purple leaves," and down the side of a ledge she slipped. "Come on! The footing is perfectly safe."

Dorothy saw that the place was apparently safe, and she made her way eagerly after Tavia. Dorothy, too, wanted to send specimens home from Mount Gabriel, so she, too, must try to get the prettiest ones that grew there.

The roll of thunder was now heard by the pair but it was not heeded. Bit by bit they made their way along the newly-discovered slope; step by step they went farther away from their companions.

Suddenly a flash of lightning shot down a tree! The next minute there was a downpour of rain, like the dashing of a cloud burst.

"Oh!" screamed Dorothy. "What shall we do?"



"OH! WHAT SHALL WE DO?" CRIED DOROTHY—Page 155

"OH! WHAT SHALL WE DO?" CRIED DOROTHY
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"Get under the cliff!" ordered Tavia. "Quick! Before the next flash!"

Grasping wildly at stumps and brush, as they made their way down the now gloomy slope, the two frightened girls managed to get under some protection—where trees, overhanging the rocks, formed a sort of roof to a very narrow strip of ground.

"Oh! What shall we do?" cried Dorothy again. "We can never make our way back to the others."

"But we must," declared Tavia. "I'm sure we cannot stay here long. Isn't it a dreadful storm?"

Flash upon flash, and roar upon roar tumbled over the mountain with that strange rumble peculiar to hills and hollows. Then the rain—

It seemed as if the storm came to the mountain first and lost half the drops before getting farther down. It did pour with a vengeance. Several times Tavia ventured to poke her head out to make weather observations, but each time she was driven unceremoniously back into shelter.

"It must be late!" sighed Dorothy.

"That it must!" agreed her companion, "and we have got to get out of here soon. Rain or no rain, we can't stay here all night. The thunder and lightning is not so bad now. Come on! Let's go!"

Timidly the two girls crept out. But the rain had washed their path away and they could barely take a step where so short a time before they seemed to walk in safety.

"Don't give up!" Tavia urged Dorothy. "We must get to the top."

But the stones would slide away and the young trees, loosed by the heavy rain, would pull up at the roots.

"Try this way," suggested Tavia, taking another line from that which the girls knew ran to the

mountain top.

This proved to be safer in footing at least. The rocks did not fall with such force, and the trees were stronger to hold on to.

But where was that path taking them? Both girls shouted continually, hoping to make the others hear, but no welcome answer came back to them.

Then they realized the truth. They were lost!

Night was coming, and such a night!

On a mountain top, in a thunder storm, with darkness falling!

The girls never knew just what they did in that awful hour, but it seemed afterwards that a whole lifetime had been lost with them in that storm. So far from every one on earth! Not even a bird to break that dreadful black solitude!

And the others?

The storm, violent as it was, did not deter them from searching for Dorothy and Tavia. Miss Crane had shouted her throat powerless, and the others had not been less active. But by the strange circumstances that always lead the lost from their seekers, both parties had followed different directions, and at last, as night came on, Miss Crane was obliged to lead her weeping charges down Mount Gabriel and leave the two lost ones behind.

CHAPTER XVI

WHAT VIOLA DID

"When we get to the top we will surely be able to see our way down," declared Tavia. "So let us keep right on, even though this is not the path we came up."

"But the others will not find us this way," sighed Dorothy, "and isn't it getting dark!"

"Never mind. There must be some way of getting out of the woods. No mountains for mine. Good flat *terra firma* is good enough for Chrissy."

Dorothy tried to be cheerful—there were no bears surely on these peaks, and perhaps no tramps—what would they be doing up there?

"Now!" cried Tavia, "I see a way down! Keep right close to me and you will be all right! Yes, and I see a light! There's a hut at this end of the mountain."

To say that the lost Glenwood girls slid down the steep hill would hardly express the kind of speed that they indulged in—they went over the ground like human kangaroos, and made such good time that the light, seen by Tavia, actually stood before them now, in a little house against the hill.

Two ferocious dogs greeted their coming—but Tavia managed to coax them into submission, and presently a woman peered out of a dingy window and demanded to know what was wanted. She seemed a coarse creature and the place was such a hovel that the girls were sorry they had come.

"Don't answer her," cautioned Dorothy quickly. "Let's make our way to the road."

Tavia saw that this would be safest, although she was not sure the woman would allow them to pass unquestioned past her stone fence. But with a dash they did reach the highway and had made tracks along through the muddy narrow wagon road before the woman, who was now calling after them, could do anything more disagreeable. The dogs followed them up for a few paces, and then turned back while the woman continued to shout in tones that struck terror into the hearts of the miserable girls.

"We may be running away from Glenwood!" ventured Tavia, spattering along, "but this road surely goes to some place—if we can only get there."

"Oh, I'm so out of breath," panted Dorothy. "We can walk now. The woman has ceased shouting."

"Wasn't it dreadful!" exclaimed Tavia. "I was just scared stiff!"

"We do get into such awful predicaments," mused Dorothy. "But I suppose the others are

almost as frightened as we are now,—I was dreadfully afraid when the woman shouted to us."

"Wasn't she a scarecrow? Just like an old witch in a story book. Listen! I thought I heard the girls!"

"Hark!" echoed Dorothy. "I am sure that was Edna's yoddle. Answer it!"

At the top of her voice Tavia shouted the familiar call. Then she listened again.

"Yes," declared Dorothy, "that's surely Ned. Oh, do let's run! They might turn off on another road! This place seems to be all turns."

When the welcome sounds of that call were heard by both parties little time was lost in reaching the lost ones. What had seemed to be nightfall was really only the blackness of the storm, and now, on the turnpike, a golden light shot through the trees, and wrapt its glory about the happy girls, who tried all at once to embrace the two who had gone through such a reign of terror.

"Hurry! Hurry!" called Miss Crane, skipping along like a schoolgirl herself.

To tell the story of their adventures, the Dalton girls marched in the center of the middle row—everyone wanted to hear, and everyone wanted to be just as near as possible to Tavia and Dorothy.

Taking refuge under the cliff seemed exciting enough, but when Dorothy told how they had lost the trail to the mountain top, and how all the footing slipped down as they tried to make the ascent, the girls were spell-bound. Then to hear Tavia describe, in her own inimitable way, the call of "the witch"—made some shout, and the entire party ran along as if the same "witch" was at their heels.

When the report was made to Mrs. Pangborn, that dignified lady looked very seriously at Dorothy and Tavia. Miss Crane had explained the entire affair, making it clear that the girls became separated from the others by the merest accident, and that the storm did the rest.

"But you must remember, my dears," said Mrs. Pangborn kindly, "that, as boarding school girls, you should always keep near to the teacher in charge even when taking walks across the country. It is not at all safe to wander about as you would at home. Nor can a girl depend upon her own judgment in asking strangers to direct her. Sometimes thoughtless boys delight in sending the girls out of their way. I am glad the affair has ended without further trouble. You must have suffered when you found you really could not reach your companions. Let it be a lesson to all of you."

"Oh, if Miss Higley had been in charge," whispered Edna, when the girls rehearsed their interview with Mrs. Pangborn. "You would not have gotten off so easily. She would have said you ran away from us."

So the days at Glenwood gently lapped over the quiet nights, until week after week marked events of more or less importance in the lives of those who had given themselves to what learning may be obtained from books; what influence may be gained from close companionship with those who might serve as models; and what fun might be smuggled in between the lines, always against the rules, but never in actual defiance of a single principle of the old New England institution.

"Just the by-laws," the girls would declare. "We can always suspend them, as long as we do not touch the constitution."

This meant, of course, that innocent, harmless fun was always permissible when no one suffered by the pranks, and no damage was done to property or character.

Rose-Mary Markin had become Dorothy's intimate friend. She was what is termed an all-round girl, both cultured and broad minded, a rare combination of character to find in a girl still in a preparatory school. She was as quick as a flash to detect deceit and yet gentle as one of the Babes in settling all matters where there was a question of actual intention. The benefit of the doubt was her maxim, and, as president of the Glenwood Club, the membership of which included girls from all the ranks, there was plenty of opportunity for Rose-Mary to exercise her beneficence.

Viola Green had, as promised, resigned from office in the Nicks, and what was more she had organized a society in direct opposition to its principles. All the girls who had not done well in the old club readily fell in with the promises of the new order, and soon Viola had a distinct following—the girls with grievances against Rose-Mary, imagined or otherwise. Molly Richards kept her "eye peeled for bombs," she told Dorothy, and declared the "rebs" would be heard from sooner or later in the midst of smokeless powder.

"It's a conspiracy against someone," announced Molly to Rose-Mary one evening. "I heard them hatching the plot and—well I wouldn't like to be unfair, but that Viola does hate Dorothy."

"She can never hurt Dorothy Dale," answered the upright president of the Glenwood Club. "She is beyond all that sort of thing."

But little did she know how Viola Green could hurt Dorothy Dale. Less did she think how serious could be the "hurt" inflicted.

The mid-year examinations had passed off, and the Dalton girls held their own through the auspicious event. Dorothy showed a splendid fundamental education; that which fits a girl for clear study in subsequent undertakings, and that which is so often the result of the good solid training given in country schools where methods are not continually changing. Tavia surprised herself with getting through better than she had hoped, and credited her good luck to some plain facts picked up in the dear old Dalton schoolroom.

But a letter from home disturbed Tavia's pleasant Glenwood life—her father wrote of the illness of Mrs. Travers and said it was necessary that their daughter should come home. For a few weeks only, the missive read, just while the mother had time to rest up and recover her strength—the illness was nothing of a serious nature.

It did not seem possible that Tavia was packed and gone and that Dorothy was left in the school. A sense of this loneliness almost overpowered Dorothy when she realized that her sister-friend was gone—and the little bed across her room all smooth and unruffled by the careless, jolly girl who tried to make life a joke and did her best to make others share the same opinion.

It was Rose-Mary who came to cheer Dorothy in the loss of Tavia. She sat with her evenings until the very last minute, and more than once was caught in the dark halls, the lights having been turned out before the girl could reach her own quarters.

Rose-Mary and Dorothy had similar fancies. Both naturally refined, they found many things to interest them—things that most of the girls would not have bothered their pretty heads about. So their friendship grew stronger and their hearts became attuned, each to the other's rhythm, until Dorothy and Rose-Mary were the closest kind of friends.

Mrs. Pangborn had decided upon a play for mid-year. It would be a sort of trial for the big event which always marked the term's close at Glenwood and the characters would embrace students from all departments. The play was called *Lalia*, and was the story of a pilgrim on her way, intercepted by a Queen of Virtue and again sought out by the Queen of Pleasure. The pilgrim is lost in the woods of doubt, and finally brought to the haven of happiness by the Virtuous Queen Celesta. This Pilgrim's Progress required many characters for the queen's retinue, besides the stars, of course, and the lesser parts.

Dorothy was chosen for *Lalia*—the best character.

The part had been assigned by vote, and Dorothy's splendid golden hair, coupled with that "angelic face," according to her admirers, won the part for her. Rose-Mary Markin was made Celesta, the Queen of Virtue; and Viola Green, because of her dark complexion, being opposite that of Celesta, was elected to be Frivolita, the Queen of Pleasure.

Each queen was allowed to select her own retinue—a delicious task, said the ones most interested.

Mrs. Pangborn made a neat little speech at the Glenwood meeting where these details were decided upon, and in it referred to the lesson of the story, incidentally hinting that some of the pupils had lately taken it upon themselves to do things not in strict accord with the history of her school—the forming of a society, for instance, without the consent or knowledge of any of the faculty. This secret doing, she said, could not continue. Either the girls should come to her and make known the object of their club, or this club could no longer hold meetings.

This came like a thunderbolt from a clear sky—and by some Dorothy was promptly accused of tale bearing.

But in spite of it all another secret meeting was held and at it the "Rebs," as they actually called themselves, declared open rebellion. They would not submit to such tyranny, and, further, they would not take part in any play in which Dorothy Dale held an important part.

It was then the bomb was thrown by Viola, the bomb that she carried all the way from Dalton, and had kept waiting for a chance to set it off—until now—the hour of seeming triumph for Dorothy.

"I'll tell you the positive truth, girls," Viola began, first being sure that no one but those in the "club" were within reach of her voice, "I saw, with my own eyes, that girl, who pretends to be so good and who goes around with a text on her simpering smile—I saw her get out of a police patrol wagon!"

"Oh!" gasped the girls. "You really didn't."

"I most positively did. Indeed!" sneered the informer, "every one in Dalton knows it. Tavia Travers was in the same scrape, and in the same wagon. It was after that affair that they made

up their minds, in a hurry, to get out of their home town and come to Glenwood!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE STRIKE OF THE REBS

One miserable day Dorothy found all her friends, at least those who had claimed to be her friends, suddenly lost to her. Those who were not openly rude enough to deliberately turn their backs upon the astonished girl, made some pretense of avoiding conversation with her.

It all came so unexpectedly, and without any apparent explanation, that Dorothy was stunned—even the effervescent Edna only gave her a measured smile and walked down the hall to the study room without breaking her silence.

The day wore on like a dream of awful fancies that try to choke but withhold even such a mercy as a final stroke.

What had she done? Where was Rose-Mary? And why would not someone come and accuse her outright, that she might at least know the charge against her—a charge serious enough to spread in one day throughout Glenwood school!

Evening fell, but even then Rose-Mary did not come to Dorothy's room. On the following day there was to be a rehearsal for the play, and how could Lalia repeat her lines? How could Dorothy pretend to be the happy little pilgrim who starts alone on the uncertain path of life?

Mrs. Pangborn was ready in the recreation hall, some of the others were there discussing their characters and other things. The hour for the rehearsal came, and with it appeared some twenty girls, among them, but not their leader (so it seemed) being Viola Green.

They approached Mrs. Pangborn and then Adele Thomas spoke.

"Mrs. Pangborn," she began with flushed cheeks, "we have come to say that we cannot take part in the play unless another girl is selected for the character of Lalia."

"Why!" demanded the astonished principal. "What does this mean!" and she too flushed at the very idea of her pupils' insurrection.

"Because—" faltered the spokeswoman, "we do not like her. She has pretended to be what she is not, and never will be."

This was a bold speech. Dorothy Dale paled to the lips.

"Hush this instant!" ordered the surprised Mrs. Pangborn. "Let no one dare make such an assertion. If anything is wrong my office is the place to settle it. Leave the hall instantly. I shall send for you when I desire to make an investigation."

Mrs. Pangborn placed her hand tenderly on Dorothy's shoulder as she passed out.

"Do not worry, dear," she whispered. "This is some nonsense those girls with the new club idea have originated. It will be all right."

But Dorothy flew to her room and alone she cried—cried as if her heart would break! If only Tavia had not left her! If Rose-Mary would only come to her! Where was Rose-Mary? She had not even appeared at class that day. But, after all, what did it matter? Perhaps she too—no, Dorothy could not believe that. Rose-Mary would never condemn her unheard.

How long Dorothy lay there sobbing out her grief on the little white bed, she did not know. Dusk came and the supper hour, but she made no attempt to leave the room. A maid had been sent to her with some toast and tea, and a line from dear Miss Crane, but Dorothy was utterly unable to do more than murmur a word of thanks to be repeated to the thoughtful teacher.

When it grew so dark that the window shadows no longer tried to cheer her with their antics, Dorothy was startled by a sudden tap at her door, and, the next moment, Rose-Mary had her in her warm, loving arms.



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"What is it?" demanded the older girl at once. "Tell me about it. What have they said to you?"

"Oh, Rose-Mary," sobbed Dorothy, bursting into fresh tears, "why did you leave me all alone?"

"Why, I did not leave you! I had to go into Rainsville early this morning, and have just this very minute gotten back. Mrs. Pangborn knew I would be late and sent James with the cart to meet me."

"Oh, I did not know you were out of school," and the explanation afforded Dorothy at least one ray of relief.

"Didn't Nita tell you? I asked her to do so at study hour."

"Not a girl has spoken to me all day!" declared the weeping one. "Oh, Rose-Mary, what do you think it is all about?"

"I cannot find out. They seem determined not to let me know. I thought you could tell me."

"I haven't the slightest idea. If only Ned or Dick would tell you then I might have a chance—"

"I'll never sleep until I find out!" declared Rose-Mary. "The idea!" and her brown eyes flashed indignantly. "I never heard of such a thing! You poor little dear!" and she held Dorothy to her in an unmistakable embrace.

"If Tavia were here—"

"Yes, she would settle it soon enough—with her fists if necessary. And I do believe that such work deserves just such treatment. But I will do all I can for you, and perhaps our vengeance will be just as sure if not so swift!"

"It seems strange that all the girls should take the same view of it," reflected Dorothy. "I should think some of them would speak to me about it."

"No good to try guessing at such a thing," said Rose-Mary, wisely. "And now do eat up that toast. Who sent it?"

"Miss Crane."

"The dear! I hold Camille Crane the guardian angel of Glenwood. But eat her toast. There, take this sip of tea, or shall I light the lamp under it?"

"I like it cold," said Dorothy, whose lips were quite feverish. "I will take the toast—I feel so much better since I have you back."

"But if I am to see Dick and Ned I must be about it," spoke Rose-Mary, consulting her watch. "Just go to sleep and don't worry a single bit. I'll tell you all about it to-morrow," and, with a hearty kiss, the sweet girl was gone.

As if events conspired to keep Dorothy worrying, it was announced the next morning that Mrs. Pangborn had been called to Boston and this meant, of course, that the investigation would have to wait for her return.

Neither was Rose-Mary successful in gaining the desired information. Molly had not heard all about it, neither had Edna, so they said, but they did admit they had promised not to tell either Rose or Dorothy, for that would mean trouble for the tale bearer.

"It's something about Dalton," said Edna, really anxious to tell Rose, but feeling she must keep her promise, as the matter had assumed such an importance.

Molly declared that Amy Grant had told her it was about Dorothy and Tavia being in some awful scrape and that they had been arrested for it.

This seemed so ridiculous that Rose-Mary did not for a moment credit it with being the story that caused the trouble. She would not insult Dorothy with a hint of that silly gossip, and, if those girls were foolish enough, she decided, to believe in any such nonsense, why, let them go right on, they must learn their own lesson. So it happened that Dorothy did not get the hint—that which would have been enough to afford her the opportunity of making an explanation. But Edna did speak pleasantly to her after Rose-Mary's talk, and Molly actually apologized.

Mrs. Pangborn had been away two days, then a week had passed since the promise of an investigation, and Mrs. Pangborn was not at school yet. The girls in Viola's club (they still regarded themselves as being in it, although the forbidden meetings were suspended), left Rose-Mary, Dorothy, Molly and Edna entirely to themselves.

"Dick" and "Ned" were charged with telling the story to Rose-Mary, although they stoutly denied the allegation. But Adele Thomas suspected them, they had always been such friends of the Dalton girls, it seemed best to the "Rebs" to keep them out of further affairs of the kind—they should hear no more of the secrets against the despised Dorothy.

Even the play was at a standstill, nothing but lessons and sadness seemed Dorothy's share at Glenwood now. If only Mrs. Pangborn would come and give her a chance to speak for herself, she would write home immediately and ask to go back to her dear "daddy," to thoughtful, brave little Joe, and to dear, darling, baby Roger.

Yes, and Aunt Libby would love her so—it would be so good to have all love again! And they were all at North Birchland, with Aunt Winnie. Every letter brought good news of the happy home established there since Dorothy left for Glenwood.

"I will ask to go home next week," sobbed Dorothy, "whether Mrs. Pangborn comes back or not. I simply cannot stand this—I feel like—Oh, I feel like I did when I stepped out of that awful police patrol."

CHAPTER XVIII

DOROTHY'S SACRIFICE

The day had been unusually tiresome, all the little spots of jollity, club meetings, evening fudge parties and the like having suddenly been abandoned, and Dorothy, with Rose-Mary, was trying to find comfort in watching a winter sunset.

"Did you know Mrs. Pangborn had come back?" asked Rose, burying her chin in her palms, and dropping into a reclining attitude.

"No," said Dorothy, simply, still watching the floating clouds.

"Yes, and I overheard a maid ask Viola Green to go to the office after tea."

"Viola?" echoed Dorothy abstractedly.

"Of course you know it is she who made all this fuss, and I'm right glad she has been called to give an explanation at last."

"I have not been able to get the least hint of what it was all about," mused Dorothy. "I had a letter from Tavia to-day, and I'm afraid she cannot come back this term. My last lingering hope went out when I read that. Tavia would be sure to dig it out someday."

Rose-Mary thought how foolish had been the talk she had "dug out," and smiled when she imagined Tavia at work at such nonsense. But she would not pain Dorothy with the thought of that talk—too silly and too unkind to bother her with,—decided Rose, so that then, as well as on other occasions when the opportunity came to her to mention the arrest story, she let it pass.

"Let's go see Dick," suggested Rose, "we'll find Ned there and perhaps we may manage some fun. I'm positively getting musty."

"You go," said Dorothy, just as Rose had expected, "I'll do my exercises—I'm pages behind."

"Not without you," argued the other, "I have lots I ought to do, but I'm going to cut it for this night. Come along," and she took Dorothy's arm. "I'm dying to hear Ned sing a coon song."

But they found number twenty-three vacant. Edna was out, so was Molly, in fact everybody seemed to be out, for knots of girls talked in every corner of the halls and always stopped speaking when Dorothy and Rose came up to them.

"It's the investigation!" whispered Rose. "They are waiting for Viola; did you ever see such a crowd of magpies."

"I'm going in," said Dorothy, nervously. "I can't bear the way they look at me."

"All right," assented Rose, "I'll see you home since I dragged you out. And I'll promise to make known to you the words of the very first bulletin. Sorry to be so cruel, but I cannot find any sympathy in my heart for Viola Green."

"Oh, indeed I can," spoke up the kind-hearted Dorothy. "She has so much worry about her mother. And perhaps she inherits some peculiar trait—"

"Bottle Green, I suppose. Well, you can pity her if you like, but I will save mine until I know why."

So Rose-Mary kissed Dorothy good-night—she had done so regularly of late, and the two friends parted. For some time the hum of voices could be heard in the corridor outside Dorothy's door, then the lights were turned out and everything seemed as usual.

But in room twelve Viola Green was struggling—struggling with a weighty problem. What Mrs. Pangborn had said to her that evening in the office meant for Viola dismissal from school, unless—unless—

Viola was thinking of a plan. Surely she could make Dorothy agree to it, Dorothy was so easy to manage, so easy to influence.

In room nineteen Dorothy had not yet gone to her bed. She felt nervous and restless. Then too, she had fully decided to leave Glenwood and she had to think over what that meant for her, for her father and for Aunt Winnie.

What explanation could she make? She had never been a coward, why could she not face this thing and show everybody that she deserved no blame?

Surely Major Dale's Little Captain should display better courage than to let a crowd of foolish schoolgirls drive her from Glenwood!

Dorothy was thinking over the whole miserable affair when a timid knock came to her door.

It was too late for any of the girls—perhaps it was Mrs. Pangborn!

Dorothy opened the door promptly.

Viola Green stood before her—in a nightrobe, with her thick black hair falling about her like a pall.

"Viola!" whispered Dorothy, as kindly and quietly as if that girl had not stood between her and happiness.

"Oh, let me come in," begged the black-eyed girl in a wretched voice. "Quick! Some one may see me!"

"What is it?" asked Dorothy, making a chair ready and then turning up the light.

"Oh, please don't turn that up," begged the visitor. "I can't stand it! Dorothy, I feel as if I should die!"

Dorothy had felt that way herself a moment ago, but now there was someone else to look after; now she must not think of herself. How different it was with Viola! The ability to act is often a wonderful advantage. Viola made excellent use of her talent now.

"Dorothy," she began, "I have come to ask a great favor of you. And I do not know how to begin." She buried her face in her hands and left the other to draw out the interview as she might choose to. It was gaining time to lose it in that way.

"Is it about your mother?" asked the unsuspecting Dorothy.

"Yes, it is," wailed Viola. "It is really about her, although I am in it too."

"Is she worse?"

"Dreadfully bad"—and in this Viola did not deceive—. "I had a letter to-day—But Oh! Dorothy, promise you will help me!"

"I certainly will if I can!" declared Dorothy, warmly, quite anxious about Viola's grief.

"Oh, you can—and you are the only one who can! But how will I ask you?" and again Viola buried her white face in her equally white hands.

"Tell me what it is," said Dorothy, gently.

"Oh, you know that foolish story about the Dalton police wagon—"

"What about it?" asked Dorothy, perplexed.

"Oh, that nonsense about you and Tavia riding in it," and Viola tried to pass off the "nonsense" without allowing Dorothy time to realize just what she had to say.

"Well, what of that?" asked Dorothy again.

Would she ever grasp it? Viola was almost impatient, but of course she dare not show such a sentiment.

"Why, you know I told it to a couple of girls just for fun one day, and they took it up in earnest. The silly things!—and then to make all this trouble over it!"

"What trouble could that have possibly made?" and Dorothy seemed as much in the dark as ever.

Could it be that Dorothy had lived it all down and did not now consider it trouble? Viola's heart gave a jump for joy at the thought. It might after all be easier than she expected.

"I am so glad they have not said anything to you about it. I have been dreadfully worried over it," went on Viola with a sigh.

"I am sorry, I hope you haven't been worrying on my account."

"Well, I was. You did seem so sad—but I should have known you had better sense."

"I have been and am still very sad at Glenwood. In fact, I have almost made up my mind to leave."

"When?" gasped Viola. Then to hide the joy that Dorothy's words brought her, she continued, "Do you have to go? Is someone ill?"

"No, not at home. But I am afraid I'll be ill if I do not stop this worrying," and Dorothy indeed looked very pale and miserable. Even Viola could not help noticing that.

"I wouldn't blame you," spoke Viola. "It's dreadful to be homesick."

"But I am not homesick," replied Dorothy. "I would not allow that feeling to conquer me when I know what it meant for father to let me come here. I must make good use of my time, and not be foolish. But no matter how I try to be happy, it seems useless. And I know I am not strong enough to keep that up. So," and Dorothy sighed heavily, leaning her head against the blanket that covered the foot of her bed, "I feel I must go away!"

Tears rolled down her cheeks. She loved Glenwood and could not bear the thought of leaving the school which had been so pleasant before Tavia went, and before that awful afternoon in the hall.

"What I really wanted to ask you, Dorothy, is about that story."

"What story?"

"You are not listening to me, Dorothy, and I am just as miserable as I can be. Do tell me you will do what I ask."

"I certainly was listening, and I am sorry you are miserable. But what is it you want me to do?"

Viola decided instantly upon a bold strike. She would make her demand and then follow it up so closely Dorothy would not know just what she was giving her promise to.

"Mrs. Pangborn sent for me to-night, and gave me such a dreadful scolding, I just cried myself sick," said Viola, "and now when she sends for you, and asks you about that ride, I want you to promise you will not deny it!"

"Certainly I shall not deny it! Why should I?"

"Then, if she wants to know what it is all about, just don't give her any more information. Say you did ride in the patrol wagon and that I had not told a lie. She actually said she would dismiss me if—if you said I had told what was not true. And oh, Dorothy! You know that would kill mother! Just as sure as a shot from a gun would kill her, my dismissal from Glenwood would do it!"

"But why should you be dismissed? If you only told the story in fun, and it has done no harm —"

"Of course that's exactly the way to look at it. But I'm so afraid Mrs. Pangborn will take another view of it. Promise me, Dorothy! Oh, please promise me!" and Viola actually knelt before the girl on the bedside. "When Mrs. Pangborn asks for an explanation just say I told the truth, that you did ride in the police wagon. And then if she insists on hearing all the story make some excuse, but do not tell it! Oh! if you knew how worried I am! And how dreadful it would be if she took it into her head to dismiss me!"

As Viola expected, she did bewilder Dorothy. Why should Viola weep and carry on so? But of course her mother was very delicate and perhaps it might get mixed up so that Viola would be blamed!

As if anything could be more mixed than that story was at present! Dorothy arranging to leave school because she could not find out why her companions had taken a sudden dislike to her, and Viola there telling her why, and yet keeping the real truth as far from her as it had ever been hidden.

"But why should I not tell Mrs. Pangborn about the ride if she asks me?" insisted Dorothy, trying to see what was hidden from her.

"Because, don't you see, those girls may have made foolish remarks, and they will be blamed on me. Just because I was silly enough to believe they could see through a joke. And if you do not tell the story, there can be no further complications. It may be a little hard but, oh, Dorothy! do promise me!" and again Viola grasped both Dorothy's cold hands in hers.

"I certainly would not do anything that would bring trouble on you," reflected Dorothy aloud, "especially if that might worry your poor, sick mother."

"Oh, you darling! I knew you would promise. Now, no matter what Mrs. Pangborn says, promise you will not do more than admit you took the ride—be sure not to say why you took it!"

Dorothy was not suspicious by nature, else she would have seen through the thin veil that hung between Viola and that word "promise." She was using it too frequently for good taste, but she wanted and insisted on getting a real, absolute Promise.

"But it might be rude for me to refuse to tell why we were in the wagon, and at the same time to say we were in it."

"Rude!" echoed Viola. "What small account that would be compared to my dismissal from school."

Dorothy tried to think—just as Viola had planned, she was not able to reason it all out clearly—it was too complicated. The night was getting old, it was ten o'clock and every Glenwood girl was expected to be sleeping honestly, but these two were still far from reaching a satisfactory settlement of their difficulty.

"One thing is certain, Viola," said Dorothy firmly, "I cannot and will not do anything that would seem disrespectful to Mrs. Pangborn. Not only is she a grand, sweet woman, a kind, just teacher, but she was my mother's friend and is still my father's friend. So that it would be impossible for me to do, or say, anything rude to her!"

This was a declaration of principles at last. And Viola for the moment seemed beaten. But girls of her type have more than one loophole in such an emergency.

"I had no idea of asking you to do anything unlady-like," she said with a show of indignation. "It was you who made use of that word. I merely asked that you would, if possible, not make known to Mrs. Pangborn the details of the story. Of course I was foolish to think you would care about their effect upon me, or my dying mother."

Viola rose to leave. Tears were in her eyes and she did look forlorn.

"I will do all I can to save you," Dorothy assured her, "and if I can avoid the story, without being impertinent, I promise to do so."

"Oh, bless you, Dorothy Dale!" exclaimed the now truly miserable girl. "I am sure, then, that it will be all right. When you make a promise you know how to keep it!" and before Dorothy could say another word her visitor was gone.

CHAPTER XIX

THE TANGLED WEB

What happened that night seemed like a dream to Dorothy. Accustomed to think of others and to forget herself, she pondered long and earnestly over the grief that Viola had shown. Surely there was some strange influence between mother and daughter. Dorothy remembered the looks akin to adoration that Mrs. Green continually gave her daughter that day in the train. Viola had certainly done an imprudent thing in telling the story, Dorothy had no idea it was more than imprudent; neither did she know how seriously that act had affected herself. Even now, as she tried to grasp the entire situation, it never occurred to her that this was the story that stood between her and the friendship of the Glenwood girls. For the time that unpleasant affair was almost forgotten—this new problem was enough to wrestle with.

Early the next morning Mrs. Pangborn sent for Dorothy. The president's appearance immediately struck the girl as different; she was in mourning.

"I hope you have not lost a dear friend," said Dorothy, impulsively, before Mrs. Pangborn had addressed her.

"Yes, Dorothy," she replied, "I have—lost my father."

There was no show of emotion, but the girl saw that no grief could be keener.

"I am so sorry," said Dorothy.

"Yes, my dear, I am sure you are. And your father knew him well. They were very old friends."

"I have heard him speak of Mr. Stevens."

"Yes, I suppose you have. Well, his troubles are over, I hope. But, Dorothy, I sent to ask you about that story some of the young ladies have been circulating about you. Of course it is all nonsense—"

"What story have you reference to, Mrs. Pangborn?"

"You must have heard it. That you and Octavia were seen getting out of a police patrol wagon in Dalton. It is absurd, of course."

"But we did ride in a patrol wagon, Mrs. Pangborn," answered Dorothy, trying hard to keep Viola's tearful face before her mind, to guide her in her statements.

"How foolish, child. It might have been a joke—Tell me about it!"

"If you would excuse me, Mrs. Pangborn, and not think me rude, I would rather not," said Dorothy, her cheeks aflame.

"Not tell me!" and the lady raised her eyebrows. "Why, Dorothy! Is there any good reason why you do not wish to tell me?"

"Yes, I have made a promise. It may not be of much account, but, if you will excuse me, it would relieve me greatly not to go over it."

Mrs. Pangborn did not answer at once. For a girl to admit she had ridden in a police van and for that girl to be Dorothy Dale! It seemed incredible.

"Dorothy," she began, gravely, "whatever may be back of this, I am sure you have not been at fault—seriously at least. And since you prefer not to make me your confidant I cannot force you to

do so. I am sorry. I had expected something different. The young ladies will scarcely make apologies to you under the circumstances."

She made a motion as if to dismiss Dorothy. Plainly the head of Glenwood School could not be expected to plead with a pupil—certainly not to-day, when her new and poignant grief could not be hidden.

"I shall say to the young ladies," said the teacher, finally, "that they are to show you all the respect they had shown you heretofore. That you have done nothing to be ashamed of—I am sure of this, although you make the matter so mysterious. I would like to have compelled the girl who spread this report to make amends, but I cannot do that. You do not deny her story."

At that moment Dorothy saw, or at least guessed, what it all meant. That had been the story of her trouble! It was that which made the girls turn their backs on her—that which had almost broken her heart. And now she had put it out of her power to contradict their charges!

Mrs. Pangborn had said "good morning," Dorothy was alone in the corridor. She had left the office and could not now turn back!

Oh, why had she been so easily deceived? Why had Viola made her give that promise? Surely it must have been more than that! The story, to cause all the girls to shun her! And perhaps Mrs. Pangborn believed it all! No, she had refused to believe it. But what should Dorothy do now?

Oh, what a wretched girl she was! How much it had cost her to lose Tavia! Tavia would have righted this wrong long ago. But now she stood alone! She could not even speak of leaving the school without strengthening the cruel suspicion, whatever it might be.

What would she do? To whom would she turn?

Heart-sick, and all but ill, Dorothy turned into her lonely little room. She would not attempt to go to classes that morning.

CHAPTER XX

SUSPICIONS

"What did she say?" eagerly asked a knot of girls, as Viola Green made her appearance the morning after her interview with the head of Glenwood school.

"Humph!" sniffed Viola, "what could she say?"

"Did she send for Dorothy?" went on the curious ones.

"I have just seen her step out of the office this minute and she couldn't see me. Her eyes wouldn't let her."

"Then she didn't deny it!" spoke Amy Brook. "I could scarcely make myself believe that of her."

"Ask her about it, then," suggested Viola, to whom the term brazen would seem, at that moment, to be most applicable.

"Oh, excuse me," returned Amy. "I never wound where I can avoid it. The most polite way always turns out the most satisfactory."

"And do you suppose she is going to leave school?" asked Nita Brant, timidly, as if afraid of her own voice in the matter.

"She told me so last night," said Viola, meekly. "I don't blame her."

"No," said a girl with deep blue eyes, and a baby chin, "I do not see how any girl could stand such cuts, and Dorothy seemed such a sweet girl."

"Better go and hug her now," sneered Viola, "I fancy you will find her rolled up in bed, with her red nose, dying for air."

"It is the strangest thing—" demurred Amy.

"Not at all," insisted Viola, "all sweet girls have two sides to their characters. But I am sick of the whole thing. Let's drop it."

"And take up Dorothy again?" eagerly asked Nita.

"Oh, just as you like about that. If you want to associate with girls who ride in police wagons —"

"Well, I do want to!" declared Nita, suddenly. "And I don't believe one word against Dorothy Dale. It must be some mistake. I will ask her about it myself."

"If you wish to spare her you will do nothing of the kind," said Viola. "I tell you it is absolutely true. That she has just this minute admitted it to Mrs. Pangborn. Don't you think if it were a mistake I would have to correct it, when the thing has now been thoroughly investigated?"

It was plain that many of the girls were apt to take Nita's view. They had given the thing a chance to develop, and they were satisfied now that a mistake had been made somewhere. Of course the clever turns made by Viola, kept "the ball rolling."

"There's the bell!" announced Amy, reluctantly leaving the discussion unfinished. This was the signal for laying aside all topics other than those relative to the curriculum of Glenwood, and, as the girls filed into the chapel for prayers, more than one missed Dorothy, her first morning to absent herself from the exercise.

Miss Higley was in charge, Mrs. Pangborn also being out of her accustomed place.

Directly after the short devotions there was whispering.

"Young ladies!" called the teacher, in a voice unusually severe, "you must attend strictly to your work. There has been enough lax discipline in Glenwood recently. I will have no more of it."

"Humph!" sniffed Viola, aside, "since when did she buy the school!"

Miss Higley's eyes were fastened upon her. But Viola's recent experiences had the effect of making her reckless—she felt quite immune to punishment now.

"Attend to your work, Miss Green!" called Miss Higley.

"Attend to your own," answered Viola under her breath, but the teacher saw that she had spoken, and knew that the remark was not a polite one.

"What did you say?" asked the teacher.

"Nothing," retorted Viola, still using a rude tone.

"You certainly answered me, and I insist upon knowing what you said."

Viola was silent now, but her eyes spoke volumes.

"Will you please repeat that remark?" insisted Miss Higley.

"No," said Viola, sharply, "I will not!"

Miss Higley's ruddy face flashed a deep red. To have a pupil openly defy a teacher is beyond the forgiveness of many women less aggressive than Miss Higley.

"You had better leave the room," she said—"take your books with you."

"I won't require them," snapped Viola, intending to give out the impression that she would leave school if she were to be treated in that manner by Miss Higley.

"Get at your work, young ladies," finished the teacher, fastening her eyes on her own books, and thus avoiding anything further with Viola.

To reach her room Viola was obliged to pass Dorothy's. Just as she came up to number nineteen Dorothy opened the door. Her eyes were red from weeping, and she looked very unhappy indeed.

"Oh, do come in Viola," she said, surprised to see the girl before her. "I was going to you directly after class—I did not know you were out."

"I cannot come now," answered Viola. "I must go to my room!"

"Is there anything the matter?" inquired Dorothy, kindly.

"Yes," replied Viola, using her regular tactics, that of forcing Dorothy to make her own conclusions.

"Is your mother worse?"

"I, oh—my head aches so. You must excuse me Dorothy," and at this Viola burst into tears, another ruse that always worked well with the sympathetic Dorothy.

The fact was Dorothy had spent a very miserable hour that morning, after her talk with the

president, and she had finally decided to put the whole thing to Viola, to ask her for a straight-forward explanation, and to oblige her to give it. But now Viola was in trouble—Dorothy had no idea that the trouble was a matter of temper, and of course her mother must be worse, thought Dorothy. How glad she was, after all, that she did make the sacrifice! It was much easier for her to stand it than to crush Viola with any more grief!

Crush her indeed! It takes more than the mere words of a just school teacher and more than the pale face of a persecuted girl to crush such a character as that which Viola Green was lately cultivating.

And as Viola turned into her room she determined never to apologize to Miss Higley. She would leave Glenwood first.

Meanwhile what different sentiments were struggling in Dorothy's heart? She had bathed her face, and would go into the classroom. She might be in time for some work, and now there was no use in wasting time over the trouble. She would never mention it to Viola, that poor girl had enough to worry her. Neither would she try to right it in any way. After all, Mrs. Pangborn believed in her, so did Edna and Molly, and a letter from home that morning told of the recovery of Tavia's mother. Perhaps Tavia would be back to school soon. It might be hard to meet the scornful looks of the other girls, but it could not possibly be as hard as what Viola had to bear.

So thought our dear Little Captain, she who was ever ready to take upon her young and frail shoulders the burdens of others.

But such virtue plainly has its own reward—Dorothy Dale entered the classroom at eleven o'clock that morning, with peace in her heart. Viola Green was out of the school room and was fighting the greatest enemies of her life—Pride, mingled with Jealousy.

It had been that from the first, from the very first moment she set her eyes on Dorothy Dale, whose beautiful face was then framed in the ominous black lining of the police patrol.

It had been jealousy ever since. Dorothy had made friends with the best girls in Glenwood, she had been taken up by the teachers, she had been given the best part in the play (but Viola could not stand that) and now that the play had been abandoned on account of the death of Mrs. Panghorn's father, and that Dorothy had been disgraced, what more did Viola crave?

Was not her vengeance complete?

But the girls were beginning to doubt the story, and those who did not actually disbelieve it were tiring of its phases. The promised excitement did not develop. All the plans of the Rebs were dead, and to be a member of that party did not mean happiness,—it meant actual danger of discipline.

Viola was too shrewd not to notice all this, and to realize that her clientele was falling off alarmingly.

Would she really leave Glenwood? The wrong done Dorothy seemed to be righting itself in spite of all her devices, and that girl, disgraced though she stood in the eyes of many, seemed happier at the moment than Viola herself.

"I wish I had gone home when I had father's last letter," reflected the girl, looking in her mirror at the traces of grief that insisted on setting their stamp upon her olive face. "But now, of course that old cat Higley will make a fuss—Oh, I wish I never had seen these cracked walls. I wish I had gone to a fashionable school—"

She stopped suddenly. Why not get away now to that swell school near Boston? She could surely set aside her mother's foolish sentiment about Glenwood,—just because she had met Mrs. Pangborn abroad and had become interested in this particular school for girls.

Viola had enough of it. She would leave—go home. And then perhaps—she might get to the Beaumonde Academy.

CHAPTER XXI

SUNSHINE AGAIN

A sense of suppressed excitement greeted Dorothy as she entered the classroom. Edna and Molly managed to greet her personally with a pleasant little nod, and even Miss Higley raised her eyes to say good morning.

Certainly Dorothy felt heroic—and she had good reason. Having suffered so long from a

mysterious insult, she now had fortified herself against its stigma.

At the same time she was conscious of an awful weight hanging over her head—like the gloom of those who suffer without hope.

"She just looks like a sweet nun," whispered Ned to Amy.

"Doesn't she," agreed Amy. "I wish we could make her smile."

But Dorothy buried herself in her studies, with a determination born of perfect self-control.

The morning wore into mid-day, then the recreation hour brought relaxation from all mental effort. A number of the girls who had been at first conspicuous figures in the Rebs made a particular effort to speak to Dorothy. She met their advances pleasantly, but with some hesitancy—they might only mean to make an opportunity for further trouble, Dorothy thought.

"See here!" called Edna, running along the walk after Dorothy. "Have you taken the black veil? Not that such a vocation is to be made light of," seeing a frown come over Dorothy's face, "but you know we cannot spare you just yet. You may be the dear little nun of Glenwood, but you will have to keep up with the Glens and the Nicks. We are planning a reunion, you know."

"Yes, and we are going to give a play on our own account," said Molly, coming up at that moment. "Mrs. Pangborn has granted permission and we are about to select the operetta—it will be a musical affair this time."

"That ought to be lovely," responded Dorothy. "There are so many fine players among the girls."

"Yes, and you can sing," declared Molly. "We are counting on you for our prima donna."

"Oh, and we might have Viola accompany her on the violin! Wouldn't that be divine!" enthused a girl from Portland.

A hush followed this suggestion. It was the awkward kind that actually sounds louder than a yell of surprise.

"What is it?" asked Rose-Mary, joining the group and giving Dorothy a hug "on the half shell," which in the parlance of schoolgirls means a spontaneous fling of the arms around the one on the defensive.

"Cologne will be sure to suggest something from English Lit." predicted Molly. "She being a star in that line herself thinks the stuff equally pie for all of us. We might try French—I said 'try,' Ned Ebony; you need not strangle yourself with that gasp!"

"Came near it," admitted the one with her mouth open. "Fancy us doing French!"

"Then suppose we go back to the woods—try Red Riding Hood?"

"Fine and dandy!" exclaimed Nita Brant. "I'll be the wolf."

"Because he was the only party who got in on the eating," remarked Edna. "Let me be the squire—and don't all speak at once for the grandmother's fate."

"Think it over girls; think it over!" advised Nita. "Back to the woods might not suit some of our rural friends. For my part I prefer—ahem! Something tragic!"

"Beat Red Riding Hood for tragedy then," challenged one of the group. "Of all the atrocities _"

"And desperate deals—"

"To say nothing of the grandmother's night cap going in the mix up—"

And so they laughed it all off, and marveled that the mere mention of the old story should awaken such comment.

Dorothy seemed to enjoy the innocent sallies. It was pleasant to be with the jolly crowd again, and to feel something akin to the old happiness.

"What happened to Fiddle?" asked Amy Brook. "I thought she would come back to class when her pout wore off."

"Pout?" repeated Dorothy. "I met her in the hall and she seemed to be in great distress."

"Shouldn't wonder," remarked Nita. "Any one who crosses swords with Miss Higley is bound to come to grief sooner or later. If I had been Fiddle I should have apologized at once—easiest way out of it with Higley."

Dorothy was confused. She had no idea of the scene that had taken place in the schoolroom

that morning between Miss Higley and Viola. But as it was impossible for her to keep up with the run of school events lately, she ventured no more questions.

"When's Chrissy coming back?" asked Edna. "I'm almost dead without her. Haven't had a single scrap since she went. And I've got the greatest lot corked up ready to explode from spontaneous combustion."

"I hope she'll be back before the end of this term," answered Dorothy. "I heard to-day her mother is entirely recovered."

"Good for the mother! Also more power to her. I think I'll crawl up the skylight and do perfectly reckless stunts on the roof when Chrissy returns just to celebrate," and suiting her words with the jubilant mood the girl waltzed away down the path, making queer "jabs" at the inoffensive air that was doing its best to make life bright and pleasant for the girls at Glenwood.

CHAPTER XXII

MISS CRANE AND VIOLA

Viola Green was thoroughly upset. She had quarreled with Miss Higley. She had more than quarreled with Dorothy. Mrs. Pangborn had told her plainly that if her story concerning Dorothy was found to be untrue she would have to leave Glenwood, for that story had touched on the fair name of a pupil of the school, to say nothing more. Having defamed the honored name of Dale made the matter of still greater importance.

What should she do? To leave Glenwood seemed to be the only answer to that oft-repeated question. But to get into Beaumonde required a clean record from the former academy, and would Mrs. Pangborn furnish such a record under the circumstances?

It was evening, and the other girls were probably enjoying themselves, visiting about and settling wherever there was the best prospect of fudge—the only confection students were allowed to make in their rooms.

But Viola would not go out, she was in no humor for visiting. While reclining on her small white bed, thinking the situation over until her head ached from very monotony, a note was slipped under her door. She saw it instantly but did not at once attempt to pick it up—the sender might be waiting outside and notice her readiness to become acquainted with the contents.

Hearing the light step make its way down the hall Viola took and opened the note.

"Humph!" she sniffed, "from Adele Thomas." Then she glanced over the note. It read:

MY DEAR VIOLA:

We are all so worried about you. Do please come out of your room or let some of us in. We wish very much to talk to you, but if you persist in keeping us at bay won't you please make up your mind to apologize at once to Miss Higley? There are so many counts against us this month that the latest is positively dangerous in its present form. Do Viola, dear, answer, and tell us you feel better and that you will comply with the request of the committee. Lovingly yours,

LOWLY.

"Apologize!" echoed the girl. "As if my mother's daughter could ever stoop to that weak American method of crawling out of things!" and her dark eyes flashed while her olive face became as intense as if the girl were a desperate woman.

"Don't they know that the blood of the de Carlos flows in my veins?" she asked herself. "No, that's so, they do not know it—nor shall they. Let them think me Italian, French or whatever they choose—but let them not trifle with Spain. Ah, Spain! and how I have longed to see that beautiful country with mother—darling mother!"

This thought of affection never failed to soften the temper of the wily Viola. True she had seen fit always to hide her mother's nationality from the schoolgirls. Often they had questioned her about her foreign face and manners, but like many who do not admire the frankness of Americans, it had pleased her to remain simply "foreign."

A supercilious smile crept over Viola's face. She held Adele's note in her hand and read it

again.

"Worried about me!" she repeated, "as if they care for anything but excitement and nonsense. And they are aching for me to give the next spasm of excitement! Well, they may get that, sooner than they expect."

A step stopped at her door. Then a light tap sounded on the panel. Casting aside the note, Viola opened the portal and was confronted by Miss Crane. Without waiting for an invitation the pleasant little woman stepped inside.

"Good evening, Viola," she began. "Mrs. Pangborn sent me to have a talk with you."

"Yes?" replied Viola, in her most non-committal tone.

"She has been much worried of late, so many things have been going on that did not add to her peace of mind."

"That's a pity," said Viola, and this time her tone admitted of any number of interpretations. But Miss Crane expected all this and was fully prepared for it.

"Especially that matter about Dorothy Dale," went on the teacher. "She is determined that the whole thing shall be cleared up at once."

"It ought to be," said Viola coolly, without appearing to take the least interest in the conversation.

"In the first place," argued Miss Crane, "Mrs. Pangborn wished me to say to you that a full explanation on your part would in the end save you much—trouble."

"State's evidence!" almost sneered Viola.

"Not at all," contradicted her visitor. "Simply a matter of common justice."

"I believe that's what they call it," persisted the girl, tossing her head about to show a weariness of the "whole miserable thing."

"You insist that you saw Dorothy Dale and Octavia Travers alight from a police patrol wagon?" asked Miss Crane severely.

"I do!" answered Viola, as solemnly as if taking an oath.

"And that you were told they had been arrested for some theft? Garden stuff, I believe?"

"I heard Nat White, Dorothy Dale's own cousin, say so," again declared Viola.

"And you had reason to believe he was in earnest?"

"Every reason to believe and know so."

Miss Crane stopped. She had expected Viola to break down on this cross-examination, but evidently her story was not to be shaken.

"Is that all?" asked the girl with a show of hauteur.

"No," said Miss Crane. "I would like you to tell me the whole story."

"And if I refuse?"

"You surely would not risk dismissal?"

"No risk at all, my dear Miss Crane, I court it," and all the Spanish fire of Viola's nature flashed and flamed with her words.

"Viola! Do you know what you are saying?"

"Perfectly. Have you finished with the 'third degree?'"

"Refrain from slang, if you please. I never countenance such expressions."

Viola only smiled. Evidently Miss Crane had reached "the end of her rope."

"And you will make no explanation of why you told such a story to the girls of Glenwood?" and the calm voice of the teacher rang out clearly now. "No other reason to give for depriving one of the sweetest and best of these girls of her happy place among her companions? And that same girl refuses to tell her own story, because of a promise! She must bear all the shame, all the suspicion, all the wrong silently, when everybody knows she is shielding someone. Viola Green, to whom did Dorothy Dale make that promise?"

"How should I know?" replied the other with curled lip.

"Who, then, is Dorothy Dale shielding?"

"Shielding? Why, probably her dear friend, Tavia Travers. I don't know, of course. I am merely trying to help you out!"

That shot blazed home—it staggered Miss Crane. She had never thought of Octavia! And she was so close a friend of Dorothy's—besides being over reckless! It might be that Dorothy was shielding Tavia and that she would not and could not break a promise made to the absent member of Glenwood school.

Miss Crane was silent. She sat there gazing at Viola. Her pink and white cheeks assumed a red tinge.

Viola was victorious again. She had only made a suggestion and that suggestion had done all the rest.

"I will talk to Mrs. Pangborn," said Miss Crane finally, and she arose and quietly left the room.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE REAL STORY

That night before twelve o'clock a telegram was delivered at Glenwood school. It was for Viola Green and called her to the bedside of her mother. It simply read: "Come at once. Mother very ill."

So the girl who had been tempting fate, who had refused to right a wrong, who had turned a deaf ear to the pleadings of friends and the commands of superiors, was now summoned to the bedside of the one person in all the world she really loved—her mother!

Viola grasped the message from the hands of Mrs. Pangborn herself, who thought to deliver it with as little alarm as possible. But it was not possible to deceive Viola. Instantly she burst into tears and moans with such violence that the principal was obliged to plead with the girl to regard the feelings of those whose rooms adjoined hers. But this did not affect Viola. She declared her darling little mother would be dead before she could reach her, and even blamed the school that marked the distance between the frantic daughter and the dying parent.

How bitterly she moaned and sobbed! What abandon and absolute lack of self-control she displayed, Mrs. Pangborn could not help observing. This was the character Viola had fostered, and this was the character that turned upon her in her grief and refused to offer her sympathy or hope.

"You should try to control yourself, Viola," said Mrs. Pangborn gently. "You will make yourself ill, and be unfit for travel."

But all arguments were without avail. The girl wept herself into hysterics, and then finally, overcome with sheer exhaustion, fell into a troubled sleep.

On the first train the next morning Viola left Glenwood. It was Dorothy who helped her dress and pack, and Dorothy who tried to console her.

At one moment it did seem that Dorothy had finally reached the heart of the strange girl, for Viola threw her arms about the one who had made such sacrifices for an unrelenting pride, and begged she would pray that the sick mother might be spared.

"If she is only left to me a little longer," pleaded Viola, "I will try to be satisfied, and try to do what is right. Oh, I know I have done wrong," she wailed. "I know you have suffered for me, but, Dorothy, dear, you did it for my mother, and I will always bless you for it. If I had time to-day I would try—try to clear you before the girls."

"Then I will make the explanation," said Dorothy, relieved to feel that at last she might speak for herself.

"Oh, please don't," spoke up Viola again, not quite sure that she was willing to be humiliated in spite of the words she had just spoken. "Try to forgive me, and then what does it matter about the others?"

So Viola Green passed out of Glenwood, and left Dorothy Dale praying that the sick woman might be spared.

"I could not do anything against her," Dorothy reflected. "Poor girl, she has enough to bear! It must be righted some day—oh, yes, some day it must all come right. Another Power looks after that."

A long letter from home, from Major Dale, was brought to Dorothy on the early mail. This cheered her up and reflected its smiles of happiness on all the school day.

The major told how well the boys were; how they longed to see Dorothy, and how little Roger had saved all his kindergarten cards and pictures for her. Besides these a wonderful house made of toothpicks and stuck together with green peas was in imminent danger of collapse if Dorothy did not hurry up and come home. Then Aunt Winnie had planned a surprise for all her children who were away at school, the letter also stated, and on the list, for the good time promised, were Dorothy, Tavia, Nat, Ned, Joe (and of course little Roger), besides a guest that each of these mentioned would be allowed to invite home for the holiday. Easter was only a few weeks off.

The day passed quickly indeed. Spring sunshine had come, everything had that waiting look it takes on just before the buds come, and Dorothy was almost happy. If only everybody could know that she and Tavia had not done wrong and had not been in disgrace!

The classes were dismissed and Dorothy was up in her room reading her father's letter for the third time.

There was a rush through the hall! Then the girls' voices in laughter stopped exactly at her door!

The next minute Tavia bolted into the room.

"Not a soul to meet me!" she began cycloning around and winding up with crushing Dorothy. "Oh, you old honey-girl!" and Tavia kissed her friend rapturously. "I have been dead and buried without you. Run away, little girls (to those peeping in at the door). Run away—we're busy."

Dorothy was so surprised she just gazed at Tavia, but a world of love and welcome went out in the look. "If we had known you were coming," she faltered.

"Known it! Couldn't you feel my presence near! Well, James brought me up. But say, Dorothy! I ran across—whom do you think?"

"Couldn't guess!"

"Viola Green! And say, she looked like her own ghost. Her train had a long wait at noon and she saw me. And the way she bolted out of her car and made her way to my window, just to say, 'Tell Dorothy to go ahead and tell her story! It will be all right!' Now I'd like to know if Viola Green had really gone daffy?"

"Why, no, Tavia. It is all about—Oh, it is such a long story."

"The very thing for mine—a serial. There's Cologne and Ned and Dick! Come on in, everybody! I want you all to see this hat before I take it off. The milliner declared I would never get it on right again."

In rushed the "troop," all so glad to see Tavia back, and all aching for a glimpse of the new spring hat.

"Tell me about the story, Cologne," said Tavia. "You can go on admiring me just the same. What's Dorothy's serial that Viola has the copyright on?"

"That is precisely what we want you to find out," answered Rose-Mary. "We have been trying to do it for a whole month."

"And I'll wager it won't take me ten minutes!"

"But do take your things off," pleaded Dorothy.

"Not yet. I can't give up this hat so unceremoniously. Isn't it a beauty? But for the story. Go ahead, Cologne."

"Why, I couldn't tell where to begin," begged off Rose-Mary.

"Begin at the place where Dorothy Dale went to pieces, and lost all her pretty pink cheeks," suggested Tavia, noting how much Dorothy had changed during her absence.

"I'll tell you," said Rose-Mary. "We'll all run away and let you have a minute to yourselves. Perhaps the serial will leak out."

"What is it, Dorothy?" asked Tavia seriously when they were alone.

"Why, all about that police ride," sighed Dorothy. "I really never could find out just what story was told—they kept me in ignorance of it all, except that it was dreadful. Oh, Tavia! Only lately

the girls notice me. They all gave me up, all but Ned, Dick and Cologne!"

"Gave you up! And about that story! Why didn't you tell them?"

"Oh, I had promised Viola, and she was afraid she would be dismissed—"

"Promised Viola!" and Tavia stared blankly at Dorothy. "You poor little darling! And no one here to take your part!" and she held Dorothy to her heart a moment. "Who knows the story as she told it—I always knew she would tell it!"

"Perhaps some of the Pilgrims may know. They split and formed the Rebs."

"Without me? I'll bet they died an early death! I'm the only thoroughbred Reb in America!" and she brandished her hatpin wildly above her head. "But you just stay here a minute. My ten minutes allotted for clearing up the mystery is escaping," and at this Tavia flew out of the room.

It seemed she could not have gone down the corridor when she ran into Dorothy's room again.

"Well, of all the frosts!" she exclaimed. "I almost passed away when that stuttering girl from Maine tried to tell me. But I haven't seen Mrs. Pangborn yet. I'll just run into the office and show her my hat," and she was gone again.

"How good it was to have Tavia back," thought Dorothy. It seemed as if everything had been made right already. But Tavia would surely do something surprising. What would she say to Mrs. Pangborn?

But while Dorothy was thinking it over, a very lively little chat was taking place in the principal's office. At the first word about the "Story," Tavia blurted out the entire tale in such a way that even Mrs. Pangborn was obliged to admit she "knew how to string words together."

"My dear!" said that lady, when Tavia stopped, "I think this matter has gone so far it will be best to make a public explanation."

"Let me make it?" asked the girl eagerly.

"If you wish," agreed Mrs. Pangborn.

"Where? When?" asked Tavia impatiently.

"Now, if you like," consulting her watch. "We had called a meeting of the Glenwoods for five, it wants a quarter of that now. Suppose you speak to them in the hall?"

"Glorious!" exclaimed Tavia, forgetting to whom she was making the self-coined remark.

The girls were already filing into the hall. Dorothy went with Rose-Mary, Tavia preferring to go in last and so show everyone the spring hat. It certainly was pretty, no one could deny that, and, as she stepped to the platform, at the signal from Mrs. Pangborn, she looked as Dorothy had seen her look before—like an actress!

Her golden brown hair formed a halo about her face and the flowers (what she called the spring hat) made a beautiful wreath buried in the soft shining tresses.

A buzz of excitement greeted her appearance on the platform. Then she began:

"My dear teachers (they were all present), friends and acquaintances!"

"Three cheers for the acquaintances," broke in one girl, and this was the signal for a hearty cheer.

When order prevailed again, Tavia continued:

"I understand you have heard a queer story about the girls from Dalton" (there was silence now), "and with the kind permission of our dear principal, I will try to tell you all of that story. I have been informed that you were told that Dorothy Dale and myself had been arrested in a country place, taken to a lock-up and then bailed out!" (Dorothy looked more surprised than any one present; this was the part of the story she had never heard). "Well," went on Tavia, "that is so absurd that I cannot imagine the complications that could possibly have won such a story a hearing. But perhaps when I am here a few hours, I will be allowed to laugh over the details. However, I will tell you all exactly what did happen," and Tavia cleared her throat like a veteran speaker.

"One lovely day last August, Dorothy Dale and her two cousins, Ned and Nat White from North Birchland, took me for an automobile ride. We had a number of adventures during the day and towards night something happened to the machine, and the boys were obliged to leave us while they went to have something repaired. While they were away a man, who afterward turned out to be a lunatic, came along, and as we ran from the car, he got into it."

"Oh! mercy!" exclaimed Nita Brant, and similar exclamations went about the room.

"When the boys got back," went on Tavia, "and we felt they never would come in sight, we had waited so long, and were so frightened, they could not induce the man to leave the machine. He was crazy and wanted a ride. Finally one of the boys, Ned, was obliged to get into the car with him and he rode off, never stopping until he landed the lunatic in Danvers jail!"

Cheers again interrupted the speaker, and she paused a moment—long enough to look at Dorothy, then she went on:

"But we were all alone out there, it was getting dark, and how were we to get back to town, nine miles off? That was the point where the police patrol wagon came into our lives. The wagon was out looking for the escaped prisoner, at least the officers in it were, and upon questioning us, and hearing how we had lost the auto, they asked us to ride home in their patrol!"

"Three cheers for the officers!" broke out Edna, and the shouts that followed caused Miss Higley to put up her hands to protect her ears.

"Well, we did ride home in the patrol," cried Tavia, anxious now to finish, "and when Nat stood by the wagon trying to jolly those curious ones about him, a young man, in the company of—of one who has just left us, asked Nat, 'Speeding?' and Nat answered, 'No, just melons.' Now that is the entire story of our famous ride, and I thank you for your kind attention, etc., etc.," and bowing profusely Tavia managed to get down from the platform.

Then Mrs. Pangborn stood up.

"My dear pupils," she said, "I cannot tell you how glad I am to have this matter settled. It has given great sorrow to see our dear friend Dorothy suffer so. And you do not yet know the real story of her heroism. When I asked her about this report she begged me not to question her, because she had promised a girl not to tell the story if I would allow her to remain silent. That girl urged as her excuse her own possible dismissal from school should Dorothy make known the facts, not the story that has been told me, and told you, but those facts which you have just now heard for the first time. And to save the feelings of a selfish and I must say it—dishonest girl,—Dorothy Dale has willingly suffered your scorn and my possible displeasure. But I never doubted her for one moment. And now we must forgive the other."

At this every head was bowed for a moment. When Mrs. Pangborn sat down, the girls surrounded Dorothy.

Miss Higley ran to the piano and struck up the "Glenwood Reel."

"Get your partners!" shouted Molly, while there was a wild scramble for "another pair of hands," everyone trying to get Dorothy, who had already been taken possession of by Miss Crane.

Tavia actually took her hat off when Edna caught her. Then the merry dance began, and such dancing! The old hall rang with mirth broken now and then with wild cheers when Dorothy would "go down the middle," or "swing all hands around."

There seemed to be no restrictions, no restraint—everyone was enjoying herself to her heart's content.

And the meeting all ended in the uproarious and unanimous election of Dorothy Dale, as president of the Glenwoods of Glenwood School!

"What a happy ending of all our troubles," said Dorothy to Tavia that night.

"If they are all ended," responded Tavia. "Perhaps everything is not yet smoothed out." And what Tavia suspected proved true, as we shall learn in the next volume, to be called "Dorothy Dale's Great Secret." Tavia was responsible for the secret, but Dorothy kept it faithfully.

A few days later Mrs. Pangborn received a telegram that Mrs. Green was better and out of danger,—at least for the present.

"Do you imagine Viola will come back to Glenwood?" said Tavia.

"If she does, I will—I will try to do—my best by her," answered Dorothy slowly.

"You dear, forgiving Dorothy Dale!" cried her chum, and kissed her.

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