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Dolly.

Dolly's College Experiences

BY
MABEL CRONISE JONES



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DOLLY'S
COLLEGE
EXPERIENCES

Dolly's College Experiences

CHAPTER I

SITTING down on the edge of the bed, Dolly looked around forlornly enough.

Of course, she wanted to go to college, but for the first time she realized how dreadful it was, to be away from all the home-folks. In all those great buildings, with their hundreds of students, there was not a soul that Dolly knew.

Outside the door she could hear the old girls talking and chattering together. But she was not an old girl. She was just an insignificant little Freshman. No one took the least notice of her.

Her father had put her on the train and had even come part way with her. But the real loneliness commenced after she reached Westover.

The college bus was there, and there was a good-natured man whom the girls all hailed as Patrick, and who seemed to belong to the college. He was evidently an expert at picking out the students, for when he caught sight of Dolly, he had walked up to her respectfully, and had inquired if she were not going to Westover College.

Then he put her safely into the bus, took her checks and looked after her bundles. A few moments later the bus was filled to overflowing with girls, the most of them apparently old students, for they seemed well acquainted with each other and were chattering like magpies. Some of them had been on the same train as Dolly, and our poor little Freshman had looked at them then with wistful, speculative eyes. But she had been too shy to attempt any conversation with them.

When they reached the college, all too soon for Dolly, she had hung back irresolutely, while the rest rushed up and embraced the teachers who stood in the reception room, ready to receive the newcomers.

She was feeling quite left out in the cold, and wishing heartily that she was back in the home-nest. Only for a moment, though. Her hand was cordially taken, and she turned to find herself addressed by a sweet-faced little woman, much shorter than Dolly herself, with gray hair and kindly eyes.

"I think this must be Miss Alden. Am I right?"

"Quite right, but I do not see how you knew."

"Your father telegraphed that you would come by this train, and you see, my dear, that you are the only Freshman in the crowd, so that it did not require much shrewdness on my part to pick you out. Now let me introduce you to some of the girls. You will soon feel acquainted here, I know. Margery," and as a tall, rather handsome girl turned around, she added; "I want you to meet Miss Alden, one of our new girls. Miss Ainsworth--and here are Miss Rummel, Miss Paterson and Miss Graves. Margery, will you show Miss Alden to 77? Your room-mate will not be here for several days yet. She is detained by her sister's marriage, which will occur this week. I hope you will like her; we tried to do our best in the arrangement of room-mates; next year, you can select your own. Excuse me now." And she turned to another newcomer, and Dolly followed Miss Ainsworth down the long corridor.

"You will like Westover, I'm sure," Miss Ainsworth remarked sedately; she evidently thought it her duty to make small talk, and act as Dolly's temporary guardian. "Of course, you'll feel lonesome at first until you get fitted in; all the girls do, but that soon wears off."

"Are you a Senior?" queried Dolly innocently. Miss Ainsworth seemed so very old and so very superior, that Dolly could only think of her as a Senior.

Her companion's cheeks flushed perceptibly as she answered stiffly; "No, I am not a Senior yet. Here is your room, Miss Alden. The bedroom on the right will be yours, I suppose, as I see that they have put your trunk there. The one on the left will be your room-mate's, and you will use this sitting-room in common."

After a few more words Dolly's companion passed on, and the unfortunate Freshman wandered dolefully into her bedroom and sat down on the edge of the bed where we first saw her.

As a rule, Dolly and tears were strangers, but just now poor Dolly felt unutterably miserable. Not only was she homesick, but she felt outside all the college fun and good camaraderie of the place.

"I ought to unpack that trunk and take off my things," she told herself, but she felt more inclined to run out of the door, back to the depot and on board the first train bound for her home.

"Well, of all the forlorn damsels I ever saw, you certainly are the worst, and I thought you looked so full of fun when I noticed you downstairs."

Dolly glanced up in surprise, to see a merry face regarding her from the doorway. The newcomer was much below medium height, with a very freckled face, very red, curly hair, and a very good-natured expression.

"Didn't you feel forlorn yourself last year?" retorted Dolly. "Or, if you are a dignified Junior or Senior, I suppose you have forgotten how poor little Freshmen feel, when they are dumped in with a lot of strangers. I am just like a cat in a strange garret." 6

"You are no stranger than I," and the newcomer ensconced herself in the only rocking-chair that the room afforded. "I'm a Freshman like yourself, only I got here last evening. I'm Elizabeth Newby, at your service," and she made a sweeping bow. "I saw you come in and I thought I'd make an early call, but I *did* suppose you would have your things off by this time."

"It was awfully good of you to come," said Dolly gratefully. "I'll get my things off and brush up a bit." She turned and looked suddenly at her new acquaintance. "How does it come that you are not homesick? Everything must be as strange to you as it is to me, but you look jolly and happy."

"I am," returned the other emphatically. "You may not know it, but homesickness is a luxury in which only the fortunate can indulge. I'm not troubled with it. Now tell me, can I help you with your trunk? My things are all in order. When you have fixed up your room and had Patrick put your trunk away, you will feel that you are here to stay, and you will begin to be more comfortable in your mind." 7

"If you don't mind helping me then," and Dolly commenced to tug at her straps energetically.

"I want to do it. I like to be poking into other people's affairs, it keeps one from thinking."

"Then you are homesick, after all?" and Dolly glanced up with twinkling eyes.

"No, I am not. I am only homesick because I am *not* homesick, and that is Greek or worse to you."

Dolly gave her companion a keen look, but said no more. There was evidently something in the background, and Dolly surmised that Elizabeth's home-life, for some reason or other, was not as happy as it should be.

"What lovely, dainty things you have for your sitting-room!" and Elizabeth held up an armful of pretty articles with honest admiration. "My room looks as prim as an old maid's. I never thought of these little accessories."

"Those are what I had in my room at home, and Mother thought that I had better bring them. They *will* make these rooms look quite natural." 8

"They just will. I wish we were room-mates, for I haven't an earthly thing to trim up with, and neither has my room-mate."

"Who is your room-mate? Do you know her? Is she nice?"

"I don't know her. Her name is Margaret Ainsworth. She's a Sophomore, and between ourselves I don't believe that we shall have much to do with each other."

"Then it was your room-mate who brought me here. I thought that she was a Junior at least."

"Only a Sophomore, my dear, and a conditioned one at that, though to hear her talk you would suppose that she was taking a post-graduate course."

"Isn't it funny that she hasn't any little decorations for your sitting-room, as she is an old student?"



“My brother says that I can heat water splendidly.”

Elizabeth shrugged her shoulders. “I found out that she expected to room with Charlotte Graves. They roomed together last year, you know, just by chance. The Faculty put them together just as they are giving us room-mates now, for I didn’t know anyone with whom I wished to room this year, and I suppose you didn’t. Well, Miss Graves is the richest girl here, and she had loads of beautiful things, so that their suite was just a dream of beauty, according to my room-mate’s account. It seems that she was not as anxious to room with Miss Ainsworth again as Miss Ainsworth was to room with her, and she quietly made arrangements to have a room all to herself, and that is how it all happened. She was put in with me at the last moment, to our mutual disgust, I expect.”

Dolly stopped in her unpacking. “I didn’t know that anyone could room alone.”

“You have to pay a steep price for the privilege, but Miss Graves can afford it. What a dear chafing-dish. Can you cook with it?”

“My brother says that I can heat water splendidly,” and Dolly laughed. “I don’t think any girl with a brother is apt to grow conceited, though Fred is a dear and would do anything in the world for me. I really *can* make lovely fudge, though, and very good tea. Mother was a little afraid of fire because of the alcohol lamp, but I have promised to be dreadfully careful. I have some chocolate in that box.”

“Let’s make fudge tonight,” said Elizabeth, enthusiastically. “That will keep you from getting homesick. You can make it and I will eat it.”

“Can we do it? I don’t know anything about the rules here yet.”

“There will not be many rules enforced this week. Professor Graydon told me that much. She is the teacher to whom you were talking when you first came in. I know I shall like her. I haven’t made up my mind about the others yet.”

“There, that is the last thing!” and Dolly drew a breath of relief, “the trunks are empty anyway. What shall I do with them now, Miss Newby?”

“In the name of goodness, don’t call me Miss Newby. I’m Elizabeth. I’ll let Patrick know that they are ready, and he will carry them off to the trunk-room at once. I’ve only been here twenty-four hours, but I’ve found out that this college would never run without Patrick. And Patrick knows it.”

She started from the room on her self-appointed errand, but put her head back to call out; “If you have any specially stunning gown, just get it out. Tonight will be a good time to wear it. Hustle the rest of your things away and dress.”

“Now, why-,” commenced Dolly. But Elizabeth had vanished and Dolly was questioning the empty air.

“I suppose I had better do as she says,” Dolly soliloquized. “I like her immensely. I should be sitting on the bed dissolved in tears if she had not come in. I wonder where she lives. Here I have told her all about home, and Mother and Father and Fred, and she has not said a word about herself. How long she is getting back.”

In fact, before Elizabeth returned, Dolly had put away all of her belongings, and had donned a pretty white dress which the warm day rendered appropriate.

She was giving a last pat to her hair, when a knock came at the door, and a moment later

Elizabeth's face peered into the bedroom.

"Oh, I see why you were so long returning. I concluded that you had forgotten me and had gone off to help some other Freshman unpack." 12

"No, thanks," and Elizabeth gave a little shrug that Dolly soon learned to be characteristic. "I'm not in the missionary business. I just took a fancy to you, and I saw that you had no friends here any more than I did. We were two of a kind. Do you like my dress?"

"Immensely. That shade of blue is just your color. But why are we dressing up, please? Is this a daily performance?"

"Hardly. The Sophomores are going to pay their respects to the new girls tonight, and while there is nothing like hazing allowed here, there are all sorts of tricks played that the Faculty never takes any notice of. I thought that we might feel more ready for them if we had the moral support of our best clothes."

"How do you know so much? and what shall we do?"

"I spent last evening in Professor Graydon's room, and she told me everything that she thought a Freshman ought to know. If you want me to, I will come over here and we can receive together. Your room is stunning and we can certainly hold our own." 13

"I thought we were going to make fudge."

"So we shall, but we'll hide it when they come. Don't waste candy on Sophomores, my dear."

Dolly looked up with a sparkle in her eye. "What will they do?"

"There's no telling. Nothing dreadful. Make us sing for them or recite, or go through some absurdity."

"If we refuse?"

"They will simply let us alone, not only tonight, but during the rest of the year. The best thing is to meet them good-naturedly, do what they require, and turn the tables on them, if we can."

"You must come here, of course. 'Tis a pity if a few Sophomores can frighten us with their jokes. I know one thing that we can do, Elizabeth. You see there is some advantage in having a brother."

CHAPTER II 14

"WHAT? Tell me quickly. I would give almost anything to get ahead of Margaret Ainsworth. I know that she will be one of those to come. You must have done something, Dolly, to offend her, for she seems to meditate vengeance on you."

Dolly drew her brows together in a perplexed frown. "I asked if she were a Senior, and she did—"

Elizabeth shouted: "Of course she did. She doubtless supposed you were trying to be sarcastic. Well, never mind. Hear that awful gong? Dinner will be ready in five minutes now. Come down to the veranda, and I will tell you who some of the people are."

Dolly was quite ready to go, and as they ran lightly down the steps, she confided in a whisper to Elizabeth her plan for the Sophomores' discomfiture.

"You are a genius; I am sure that will work! Hurrah! Oh, Miss Randall, I want you to meet Miss Alden. Can't we sit at your table tonight?"

"Of course you can, I shall be very glad to have you. Miss Alden, I know that you are going to do fine work here, your entrance examinations were most excellent." 15

Then she passed on, leaving Dolly happy and Elizabeth surprised. "I hadn't supposed that you were a bookworm and a student, and all that. You don't look it."

"Mother has always helped me and been so interested in my lessons. It will be hard to study without her. She has always explained and encouraged me. I shall miss her fearfully."

"I suppose you will," said Elizabeth slowly, with a hard look on her face that prevented further conversation on that point.

The girls took whatever seats they wished at the table for the first few days. The next week they would be given permanent places.

With her new friend beside her, Dolly found the meal pleasant enough.

Afterward, they hurried to Dolly's sitting-room and began their preparations for making fudge. There was lots of fun and laughter over it.

"How many do you think will come? I want just about enough pieces on this plate to go around. If any should be left over, they might want us to finish it, and I think that we may have had enough by that time." 16

"I am sure that we shall," and Elizabeth nibbled away voraciously. "How small you are making the pieces, Dolly."

"No need of wasting anything. I want each one to have a piece small enough so that she will put it all in her mouth at once. See? You did not tell me how many guests we might expect."

"About fifteen, I think. They go out in squads. All of them cannot visit every Freshman, so they divide up. I heard them talking in our sitting-room while I was dressing. They didn't know that I was there, fortunately."

"I'm going to shove that plate half under the paper, so—" suiting the action to the word, "they will think we are hiding it from them. Here are some pieces for us to nibble. Quick, sit down; take the candy in your hand, I hear them coming."

A knock at the door.

"Come in."

"Arise and open the door."

Dolly smothered a giggle and glanced inquiringly at Elizabeth, who nodded her head. So she crossed to the door and swung it wide. Fifteen Sophomores in fantastic kimonos and stately head-dresses stood outside. 17

"Freshies, we have come to inspect your premises. Stand aside while we enter and examine you as regards your worthiness to remain within these sacred precincts. Stand in front of us, so!"

There was a moment's pause while the fifteen uninvited guests took possession of the few chairs, window-seats and stools which the room afforded.

"Miss Alden, you may answer first. What is the chief duty of every Freshman?"

"To squelch the Sophomores," returned Dolly promptly.

A deep groan sounded from all fifteen. "Wrong! Wrong! You have not the first idea of your fundamental duties. We shall be obliged to send you home, I fear. Miss Newby, answer!"

"Most potent, grave and reverend Sophomores, the great duty of every Freshman is to try and become a Sophomore herself, so that she may try to impress unsophisticated Freshies with a sense of her own importance and make everyone forget that she herself was nothing but a Freshman one short year—" 18

"Stop! Wrong! Wrong!" and a chorus of groans again broke forth. "The obvious duty of every Freshie is to run errands for the Sophomores and make life as pleasant as possible for them. Miss Alden, I see a banjo on the table there. Sing something to us."

Dolly picked up the instrument with a mock-humble bow and touched the strings, a little uncertainly for a moment, but her touch soon became firmer, and a malicious little twinkle appeared in her eye.

"Oh, these Sophomores, vain Sophomores,
In all their swelling pride,
I would to them the giftie gie,
To see—"

"Stop!" The fifteen rose majestically to their feet as Dolly, with assumed meekness, dropped her instrument at her side. "You may expect to hear from the faculty tomorrow. I regret that it is impossible for you to be retained at this hall of learning. Your influence would doubtless corrupt the other Freshmen, and teach them insubordination. You have also been guilty of greediness. I see the remains of a repast which you tried to conceal as we entered. You are ordered to pass that plate to your superiors." 19

Elizabeth demurely obeyed the command. The bits of fudge were small, and there were just enough to go around. They were taken with great stateliness and dignity, but a moment later the room was filled with groans, coughs, shrieks and wrathful exclamations.

"They would poison us!" "Let us be avenged!" "Choke them!" "Perish the Freshmen!" "Water, minions! water!"

But Dolly and Elizabeth had taken good care that there should be no water at hand, so the unlucky Sophomores rushed away to their own rooms, followed by the taunting laughter of the two Freshmen and many gratuitous pieces of advice.

"I wonder if they will try to pay us back," Dolly said, with sudden gravity.

"No, tonight ends it all; Professor Graydon told me so. The Sophomores are allowed to air their new dignity this one evening, but nothing is tolerated after tonight. I do not think they came out much ahead of us. I must go now, Dolly, I wish I were your room-mate, but I presume that you will have a much more congenial one than I would be." 20

"I do not think so," Dolly said, with evident sincerity. "I have a dreadful feeling whenever you mention her. Good-night, and thank you a thousand times."

The next few days were busy ones. Dolly had new studies planned out for the term, and she found to her delight that she and Elizabeth had elected the same courses. The two were congenial, though Elizabeth was as reticent as Dolly was frank and open. Dolly had begun to hope that her unknown room-mate would not arrive at all, but on Tuesday, when she returned from her recitation in history, she found that Miss Sutherland had appeared.

In fact there was no doubt that she was there, and had been there for a couple of hours at least.

Dolly's dainty pink pillows, banners, and other trifles, had been summarily displaced. She could see no vestige of them. The room was now ornamented in a stiff sort of fashion with brilliant red tidies, afghans, and other things which Dolly considered quite antediluvian. The room had lost all of its dainty personality and prettiness. It certainly looked very unattractive, and it was not much wonder that Dolly drew a deep breath of disgust.

21

The sound reached the ears of the newcomer, and she turned quickly. Dolly's bright eyes took in every detail, the thick hair drawn back so tightly and unbecomingly, the heavy brown dress, just the shade that the girl with such a dark, sallow complexion should never have worn, the cheap jewelry and the clumsy shoes. And she must room with this girl instead of with Elizabeth—it was too bad, it was—and Dolly's whole soul rose up in rebellion.

"You are Miss Alden, aren't you? I am Mary Sutherland. I just came, and I have been trying to get my things in order."

"I see." Dolly glanced dryly around the room. "Where are my belongings?"

"I put them carefully on your bed, they were so pretty that it seemed a shame to have them get soiled; red is more substantial than pink, and of course, the two colors would not go well together—at least, I thought not"—looking a little timidly at Dolly's unresponsive face.

22

"No! I quite agree that pink and red don't harmonize, at least these particular shades," and Dolly passed on to her bedroom and closed the door. She sat down on her bed while angry tears rose in her eyes. She was just beginning to make some pleasant acquaintances among the girls. They liked to come to her pretty room and eat her fudge and drink her tea. There had been several gay evenings. But how could she ever bring them into such a room as this was now? It was worse than a nightmare.

The clang of the gong reminded her that she must hurry to the lecture on Roman art.

She picked up her note-book and pencil, and rushed down the corridor.

"Wait, oh, wait, my bonny maid," and Elizabeth caught her arm. "Why, Dolly, you have been crying!"

"Yes, I am an awful goose. But you see my room-mate has come, and—"

"I saw her, she hardly strikes me as being your style, but she will be quiet and inoffensive, I imagine."

23

"Quiet and inoffensive?" Dolly gave a hysterical laugh. "Just wait until you see my room; all of my pretty things are reposing on my bed now, and that sitting-room is too awful to contemplate."

"Dorothy Alden, are you in earnest?"

"Yes, I am. Of course, I suppose I had taken possession of it rather coolly, but at least it is half mine."

"Didn't you give her to understand that?"

"No, I didn't. I was very angry, and I remembered that Mother made me promise to think twice before I acted, when I got furious. I shall propose something, though, when I go back. We might take the room by alternate weeks, or each of us trim a half of it. Which do you think would be the better plan?"

"Either is bad," Elizabeth said decisively. "Why, oh, why, were we not put together? You could have had your things then in peace, and it would have saved me all the bother I am having now. I didn't think about my room before I came, and now that Miss Ainsworth has nothing to liven us up with either, we look as prim as a Quaker meeting-house. I have ordered some things, however, that will make us gorgeous. What do you say to a yellow room?"

24

"I say that it will be handsome if your room-mate leaves the arrangement in your hands."

"I made sure of that before I ordered anything," Elizabeth said, with a wise nod. "She was very willing that I should do all I wished, and on that understanding I went ahead."

The girls had reached the lecture-room by this time, and further discussion was impossible; but all through Professor Randall's talk, Dolly's thoughts roamed to the room she had left. How could she stand it? Dolly was exceedingly susceptible by nature to all artistic effects, and anything inharmonious grated on her.

She acknowledged to herself that Miss Sutherland did not seem aggressive, and apparently she had not acted as she had done through any petty spirit. As far as Dolly could judge, she was merely tactless and tasteless.

She and Elizabeth talked the matter over a little more as they walked back to their rooms, but Elizabeth abstained from offering any advice. "I'll go in and see how the place looks. I'm curious to meet Miss Sutherland anyway."

25

They found her sitting on the easiest rocking-chair, studying the college catalogue. She rose quickly as the girls came in, and Dolly introduced her friend. They tried to make the conversation general, but it was no easy matter. Mary Sutherland would answer questions, and occasionally ask one herself, but when the conversation took a wider range, she sat by, looking out of place and constrained.

There was a knock at the door, and Charlotte Graves entered, followed by Winifred Paterson and Ada Rummel. They were all Sophomores, and had been among the fifteen who had called on Dolly

the first evening.

They had swallowed the red pepper which Dolly had hid in the fudge as best they could, and none of them bore any malice. "All things were fair in love and college," as Charlotte Graves tersely remarked.

The trio halted now on the threshold in open astonishment.

"What have you been doing to your room, Miss Alden?" Winifred demanded abruptly. "For a Freshman you showed most unusual taste, and you had about the prettiest den out, but now—pardon me if I ask why this thusness? It is quite too awful."

Dolly carefully refrained from looking at her room-mate. Miss Paterson was certainly frank to the verge of rudeness.

"Pray have some seats, most august Sophomores. You see that red is more serviceable than pink, and in view of the fact that we are liable to have numerous visits from those who were Freshmen last year, and who of course do not know how to treat delicate things with proper respect—"

"Well, let me tell you one thing," Miss Graves interrupted, "you will be troubled with precious few calls from anyone if you intend to make this a permanent thing."

Dolly's cheeks flushed. She must stop them at any cost. Despite her own annoyance, she could not help feeling sorry for Miss Sutherland, who evidently thought that she had made the room charming. She turned to introduce her, but she was only in time to see her vanish into her own bedroom. Dolly's quick ears caught the sound of a sob as the door closed.

She forgot her own anger of an hour before and turned wrathfully on her guests. "Commend me to Sophomores for superlative rudeness and a total disregard of the feelings of others. These articles belong to my room-mate. She just came. She hasn't met any of the girls yet, and you have given her a beautiful welcome, haven't you?" Dolly's cheeks burned like coals of fire. She spoke in a low tone so that her words should not be heard in the adjoining room, but every syllable was vibrant with feeling.

The Sophomores looked ashamed. "Bring her out and let me apologize," begged Winifred.

"And make a bad matter worse? Not much. We will all go out for a walk until dinner-time. I hope," added Dolly, severely, "that when I become a Sophomore I shall not forget all my manners."

"Come, my dear, cool down," Charlotte Graves said languidly, putting her own arm through Dolly's. "It strikes me that you have forgotten your manners already to talk so to your own guests."

There was a ripple of laughter at this, and Dolly looked a trifle shamefaced. "I was making general remarks," she said loftily.

"Come on, we shall forgive you this once, and Winifred shall eat humble-pie for your room-mate's benefit at the first opportunity. As class president I decree it."

There by tacit consent, the subject dropped. The girls had a pleasant walk, and when the dinner-gong sounded, Dolly hurried up to her room; she knew that she would not find her room-mate very congenial, but at least she would not be so selfish as to let Miss Sutherland go down to the dining-room alone, on this first night.

As she opened the door of their common sitting-room she stopped in amazement.

CHAPTER III

SHE looked around with a gasp of surprise, and then rubbed her eyes to make sure she was not dreaming. All of her own dainty trifles were back in place. Every vestige of the obnoxious red decorations had vanished.

Dolly felt a sudden moisture in her eyes. The poor girl! She knocked lightly on Miss Sutherland's door. There was a faint stir inside, but no response. Dolly hesitated, and then boldly opened the door.

"Excuse me, please, for coming in when you did not ask me to, but I was sure you were here, and you must come down to dinner at once."

"I am not going down tonight."

"Indeed you are," Dolly said, after one comprehensive look at the mottled, tear-stained face before her. "The students must all be on hand promptly for meals. I cannot take you to my table, for that is full now, and we have been given our permanent places for the term, but I will introduce you to Professor Newton; there is a vacant place at her table, I know. You will like her, I am sure."

Miss Sutherland gave her room-mate a curious look, started to say something, changed her mind, and then got up from the bed and commenced to brush her hair back with nervous, impatient fingers.

"Don't do that," Dolly ejaculated suddenly, "can't you see how much better you look when your hair lies loosely, so as to soften the outlines of your face? Here, give me the brush."

She took the brush and comb from Miss Sutherland's hand, pushed her down into a chair, and worked rapidly for two or three minutes. "There, the last bell will ring in a second and there is no time to fuss with it longer tonight, but can't you see how much better it looks? You have such lovely hair that it is too bad to spoil it."

"Mother always liked it combed straight back," was all Miss Sutherland vouchsafed, speaking in a very distant tone.

Dolly flushed. Would she never learn to be less impetuous, she wondered, and to mind her own business? She felt like a child of three, whose ears had been soundly boxed.

"There was no need, Miss Sutherland, for you to change the arrangement of the sitting-room. Of course you have rights there as well as I." The matter had better be settled now, Dolly thought, at once and forever. "I suppose red and pink would hardly answer in the same room at the same time, but we might agree on some third color together, and you fix part of the room and I part, or else you could have charge of the sitting-room one month and I the next. Which plan would you prefer?"

Dolly listened anxiously for the reply. It did not seem probable that her room-mate would feel that she could afford to buy new furnishings, and how could Dolly ever stand the red atrocities for five months, even if her beloved belongings were to be used for the other five?

There was no hesitancy in Miss Sutherland's answer. "I can't afford to waste any more money on things for my room, and I shan't put up my mother's work for those fools to laugh at, so I guess the sitting-room, as you call it, will likely stay as it is."

Dolly felt uncomfortable. Miss Sutherland had a way of putting things that made one seem very small. It was clear, from the tone of her voice, that she worshiped her mother, and Dolly could see how the ridicule of her mother's handiwork had hurt the girl's feelings.

"You must remember," she said gently, "that the sitting-room is as much yours as mine. Forgive me if I had seemed to take complete possession of it before you came."

"That won't matter, I guess; I don't suppose I shall be in it much, anyway. I don't seem to belong there."

The dinner-gong sounded at that moment, and Miss Sutherland went into the hall, Dolly following in a very perturbed frame of mind. "I will take you to Professor Newton now," she remarked as they reached the dining-room door.

"I don't reckon that you need to, I know Professor Newton," Miss Sutherland returned, with the queer little smile that Dolly again failed to note.

"Oh, you met her when you came, did you? Good-bye, then, for a few minutes," and Dolly crossed the room to Miss Randall's table, where Elizabeth was waiting for her. Their seats were next each other, and after the meal had fairly commenced, Dolly told her all that had transpired up in her room.

Elizabeth gave a soft whistle. "I pity you, my dear; you see you have a tender conscience, and you are going to bother yourself about Miss Sutherland all of the time. Now, if I were you, I should never give her another thought, especially as your room has returned to its normal condition."

"You slander yourself," Dolly retorted, "didn't you act the part of a good Samaritan to me?"

"Oh, you-you are different! Don't you know that you are going to be one of the most popular girls here? You are pretty and bright, and friendly with everyone."

"Hush up, Beth."

"How came you to call me that?"

Elizabeth's tone was queer, and Dolly turned to look at her.

"'Beth,' do you mean? It is often a nickname of Elizabeth, you know, and I have always loved the name since the days of Miss Alcott's 'Little Women.' Don't you like it?"

"Yes, I like it, but no one has called me by it for years, and when you said it just now, I felt absolutely startled."

"I will not use it again if you would rather I did not."

"I would rather that you did, however," and then Elizabeth joined in the general conversation around the table. Dolly wondered if she did it to avoid further questioning.

The college soon settled down to the regular routine of work. Before a month had passed, the Freshmen knew who their best students were, and who stood a chance of being elected class officers. The other three classes had held their elections at the end of the first fortnight, their old officers holding over until that time.

It was an unwritten law, however, that the Freshmen should wait for their class elections until Thanksgiving time; that would afford opportunity for them to get acquainted with each other, and to determine who were the most suitable candidates.



Beth and Dolly were discussing it one day as they took their usual walk.

It was an all-important subject in the eyes of the Freshmen, and so, not unnaturally, Beth and Dolly were discussing it one day as they took their usual walk. 35

"I believe that Margaret Hamilton will be elected president," predicted Dolly. "She is so tall and handsome, she would be such a magnificent president."

"She knows it," returned Beth dryly. "She has been posing for it ever since the term opened. She dresses for it, talks for it, and is always working for it—not openly, but in a hundred little subtle ways."

"You don't like Margaret."

"Not to any great extent, I'll confess. I would much rather see you class president."

"Me? I haven't any dignity, and you know it."

"Well, you have other qualifications that are quite as desirable."

"I'm out of the question, so stop talking about it. There goes Miss Hamilton now. I wonder why she always turns down that lane? It is a private one, you know, and I'm sure she has no permission to go to the house every day."

"I'm positive she doesn't even know the people," Beth said, staring after her classmate. "I am consumed with curiosity. What do you suppose she does want, anyway?" 36

"I have not the faintest idea, and I really do not suppose that it concerns us, anyway. What do you think?"

"Don't be snubby! Margaret Hamilton is queer in some ways, though none of you seem to have discovered it but myself."

"That simply shows what an imagination you have. I must go into the library now and scribble a note to Fred. I don't see when you get your home letters written, Beth. I must send one to Father and Mother twice a week, or they would think that I was sick and rush on here: and Fred, off at Harvard, demands one just as often. I told him that I would write as long as he did, but that when he commenced to shirk on his letters to me, I would stop. So far he has done remarkably well, and Mother likes me to write him often, not mere notes, you know, but long, chatty letters; she thinks that home-letters help to keep boys out of temptation."

"I presume they do," said Beth soberly, as if struck by a new thought. "Possibly it would not hurt me to write to Roy, he is off at a preparatory school." 37

"Have you a brother? I didn't know it."

"I have not been much more communicative than Margaret Hamilton, have I? But I hardly imagine that our reasons are the same for keeping so quiet: If there is time after our letters are finished, I'll give you a biographical sketch of our family. Roy is my half brother, I have no own brothers or sisters."

And then Beth commenced to talk of something else as if she repented her momentary confidence, and the girls went in to write their letters.

Beth finished first. "There, the surprise that will strike Roy when he reads that letter may bring on an apoplectic fit. 'Twill be the very first letter he ever had from me."

"Has he been away from home long?"

"This is his second year. I believe that you are aware of the fact that I live in Philadelphia. Father is a lawyer, and he isn't a poor one, either. He makes considerable money, but I have my own money that was my mother's."

"Have you any other brothers beside Roy?"

"As I said, I haven't any brothers or sisters really. Roy is ten, Hugh is eight, and Nell is three. I think Roy is far too young to send away to school, and I know that his mother is of the same opinion. But Father seemed to think that it was best."

"What do you call your stepmother, Beth?"

"I do not think I ever called her anything in speaking to her. Of course, I call her Mrs. Newby when I allude to her, but that is very seldom."

"Isn't she nice, Beth? I don't mean to be impertinent, but you know that I care for you a great deal, and I cannot help feeling concerned about everything regarding you."

"You couldn't be impertinent if you tried, Dolly, and I would answer your question if I could. I really don't know how she would appear to an outsider. You must go home with me sometime and judge for yourself. She is a perfect lady, and that is about all that I feel qualified to say."

Beth had talked all that she cared to on the subject, and Dolly wisely let the matter drop. Beth had told her no more than any mere acquaintance of the family's could have repeated. She had let Dolly know something about her family, but nothing about her feelings. It was months before the subject ever came up again.

As Thanksgiving time approached, the Freshmen became very much excited over the approaching election. Several girls were mentioned in connection with the class presidency, notably Margaret Hamilton and Dolly herself. Abby Dunbar and Grace Chisholm would also be candidates in all probability.

Beth was intensely interested over the affair, and Dolly suspected her of doing considerable electioneering. It became more and more evident, as the time drew nearer, that Miss Hamilton and Dolly Alden would poll the most votes. Dolly tried to keep cool and unconcerned. It was a great surprise to her that her name should even be mentioned in this connection.

"But you would like it—you know you would like it!" insisted Beth as they went over the question for the final time in Dolly's room. That was at noon on Monday, the election would be held that evening.

"Why, yes," said Dolly honestly, "I would like it if it comes to me naturally, but I will not beg any of the girls to vote for me. That would spoil it all. If the girls prefer Miss Hamilton, she ought to be elected. She would make a much better presiding officer than I."

"I don't think so, do you, Miss Sutherland?" and Beth turned to Dolly's room-mate who was the only other person present.

Dolly broke in impetuously. "Don't ask Mary embarrassing questions. She doesn't have to vote for me just because we chance to room together, and, of course, she knows that Miss Hamilton would make a better president than I. By the way, why don't you two drop formality and say 'Elizabeth' and 'Mary?' It is quite time you did so."

"I shall be very glad to do so, if I may be permitted," Beth said. Then as she caught a slight smile on Mary's face, she added, "Very well, that weighty matter is settled for the remainder of the college course. You see, I did not dare to say 'Mary' so familiarly to one who is such a wonderful scholar in biology as you."

"That is the only thing I *do* know, so please do not make fun of me."

"Gracious, I would never dare to make fun of you! We all hold our breath with awe when you recite. Really, Mary, don't look so hurt and annoyed. We do admire you tremendously. That is such an unusual branch for a girl to fancy."

"You had better talk about the class election, I think," said Mary decidedly.

"Why? do you think it will be close?"

"Miss Hamilton's friends are working hard. Lots of the girls had no special preferences, but I think all of those will vote for Miss Hamilton now."

Beth groaned. "I am an idiot to sit still here. I shall go right out in the highways and byways of this building, and see if I cannot accomplish something myself."

"You will stay here, Beth."

"I will not."

In the midst of the good-humored scrimmage that followed, the lunch-gong sounded, and the girls hurried to their rooms to freshen up a wee bit before going to the dining-room.

It was apparent early in the evening that Miss Hamilton's friends felt confident of victory. Their plans were well laid, and one of their number was promptly elected chairman.

The preliminary business was gotten out of the way very speedily. Margaret Hamilton was nominated for the class president by Florence Smith. Beth nominated Dolly, and then Abby

Dunbar, Grace Chisholm and Bessie Worth were quickly nominated by their friends. The tellers distributed papers and pencils and the balloting commenced.

Dolly found herself actually trembling with excitement. What fun it would be if she could telegraph to Fred and sign her name, "Dorothy Alden, President, Class '09."

"I wish I were one of those tellers," murmured Beth. "It is simply maddening to sit here and do nothing. Hush, there they come, Dolly. Oh, I do hope that you were elected."

CHAPTER IV

THE faces of the tellers told nothing as they entered the room, carrying the little slip of paper that meant so much to these Freshmen. The chairman rapped loudly for order, and a pin could have been heard drop while the result was read:

Miss Hamilton	145	votes
Miss Alden	145	"
Miss Dunbar	10	"
Miss Chisholm	9	"
Miss Worth	6	"

"We'll have to take another ballot," Beth said in a low tone excitedly. "How close it is! Oh, Dolly, I do hope that you will get it."

The tension was growing too much. Sharp things were said in undertones, and a little bitterness was evident in the remarks that were made and the suggestions that were offered. Dolly sat back quietly, a troubled look on her face. Even if she were elected, half of the class would be more or less opposed to her. There would certainly be two factions. What could she do? What was the *right* thing to do? What would her mother advise?

"I wonder if I ought to withdraw my name?" Dolly said to herself, as another acrimonious remark was made by one of Margaret Hamilton's admirers. "I have just as much right to run as she has, and, if she is elected I shall not be hateful to her. I shall congratulate her, and do all that I can to help her. I would like to be president, and yet--"

The tellers had returned again. The result was announced amid a breathless silence.

"Miss Hamilton, 157; Miss Alden, 157," announced the chairman of the tellers. "As there are 315 present, it is quite evident that someone did not vote."

Obeying a sudden impulse, Dolly rose to her feet.

"Madam Chairman, I did not cast any vote, and while it may be a little irregular for me to do so now, after the result has been announced, I hope that I may be accorded that privilege. If so, I cast my vote for Miss Hamilton."

For a moment no one spoke or seemed to take in the full meaning of Dolly's generous speech. Then there was a deafening uproar, and the room was filled with wild cheers. Dolly had done a fine thing, and the girls were quick to show their appreciation of it.

As soon as the hubbub had partially subsided, Dolly was nominated for the vice-presidency and unanimously elected. The rest of the meeting went off smoothly. Something in Dolly's action had touched the better nature of the girls, and they all felt secretly ashamed of their momentary bitterness and injustice. Beth was elected recording secretary, and the other offices were filled without ill feeling or jealousy.

After the meeting Margaret Hamilton went straight to Dolly. "I want to thank you for my election," she said, with outstretched hand. "You are the most generous girl I ever knew. I was glad to be elected," with a look in her eyes that Beth noted, but could not understand. "But I do hope that sometime I can help make *you* president. I shall certainly not forget what you did."

They talked it over afterward in Dolly's room, girl-fashion. "There was no sense in your doing that," Beth said bluntly. "Of course Margaret Hamilton voted for herself; if you had voted for yourself at first, you would have been elected. Don't you see?"

"And don't you see how much feeling there would have been in the class? I would much rather be vice-president and be elected unanimously the way I was, than to be president twenty times over. We can't afford to start our Freshman year with factional feelings, can we, Mary?"

Dolly was in the habit of appealing to Mary whenever she was present. She had discovered that Mary Sutherland had a great fund of common sense, and then, too, she did not like her room-mate to feel ignored. She noticed that of late Mary was trying to do her hair up as Dolly had done it for her that first night. She had not yet become expert in the process, but the result was much more satisfactory than before. Dolly noted, too, little changes in dress that softened the harsh outlines and lent a little color to her face. She longed to offer advice sometimes, but the remembrance of the first night restrained her. She would not invite any snubs. If Mary Sutherland wished her help, Dolly would give it willingly, but she was not going to make any advances again. And yet that was just what her shy, diffident room-mate was longing to have her do. She had not meant to

repulse Dolly that first night, but she had been feeling hurt and grieved then, her ideals were all shattered, and out of the depths of a heart loyal to her poor hardworking mother, had come the remark that made Dolly draw back, and that kept her from ever proffering assistance or suggestions now.

She and Mary saw comparatively little of each other, considering that they were room-mates. Both were Freshmen, but while Dolly and Beth were taking the classical course, Mary was taking the scientific. Mary's recitations, for the most part, came during Dolly's study hours. Of course there were the evenings, but some way Mary was very seldom in the room during the evening. Dolly often wondered where she spent the time, for she had no intimate friend. She was careful, however, not to question her. They had never reached a degree of intimacy that would permit that.

Today Mary seemed more companionable than usual, and Dolly found, to her astonishment, that her taciturn room-mate had been quite as disappointed as Beth over the outcome of the elections. However, she was more ready than Beth to acknowledge that Dolly had done the only thing that could have secured class harmony and good fellowship.

On Wednesday noon college would close for the balance of the week. Those students who lived near enough could go home to eat their Thanksgiving dinners, the rest would stay at the Hall and get up such impromptu entertainments as the occasion suggested and their genius could devise. Dolly was one of the fortunate ones who could go home. Mary lived west of the Rocky Mountains, and Beth seemed to have no desire to go home. Dolly was wild over the prospect. Fred was coming home from Harvard, and she could stay until the early morning train on Monday. "It is worth getting up at four o'clock," she announced decidedly. "Oh, by the way, I'll send Fred a telegram signed 'Vice-President Class '09.' That doesn't sound as big as 'President' would, of course, but it will do. Patrick will take it down to the office for me. Blessed Patrick." She scratched off her message humming gaily:

"Hurrah! hurrah! oh, jubilation!
Two more days and then vacation;
No more Latin, no more French,
No more sitting on a hard wooden bench."

She turned suddenly and caught an expression of utter homesickness and loneliness on her roommate's face. Beth was looking hard and bitter, a look that Dolly had come to know and dread. She mentally anathematized herself for talking of home before these two girls. Then a brilliant thought struck her.

"I have a bit of news for you," she announced briefly. "It may be of interest to you. The fact is, you are both going home with me on Wednesday."

Her companions stared at her. "Don't be a goose, Dolly. 'Tis very good of you to propose it, but your father and mother, to say nothing of that brother of yours, will want all of your time. They will not care to have strangers there whom they must entertain."

"They will not entertain you, my dear. I am taking you to entertain a couple of boys whom Fred proposes taking home. Don't you see how useful you can make yourselves?"

"Elizabeth could," Mary Sutherland replied quietly, but with a certain wistfulness. "I would be no help at all. I never could talk to boys; then, I have no clothes to wear, and you would be ashamed of me."

"If you cannot entertain boys, you must learn to do it before you are a week older. No one expects college girls to have many clothes, so that part of the question is disposed of. I am going to send an extra telegram to Mother now, so that she will be sure to get a large turkey. I don't want you to go hungry when you eat your Thanksgiving dinner with me."

"But, Dolly--"

"Oh, will you please be still? Both of you? You interrupt me."

"You are wasting your money by sending that telegram, and your strength in writing it," said Beth coolly, "for I, at least, am not going."

But Dolly had a very persuasive way of her own, and in the end both Beth and Mary Sutherland succumbed, the latter, however, not without sundry misgivings. "You know that my dresses are old-fashioned and I cannot afford any new ones. Will you not be ashamed of me?"

"Of course not," and while that was perfectly true, Dolly knew that she could not take the same pride in introducing Mary that she could in introducing stylish, winning Beth; for Beth, despite her red hair, was strikingly pretty. Her freckles had disappeared with the summer, and her gowns always fitted to perfection. She could play and sing and act. There was no doubt, at all, but that she would prove very popular with Fred's chums. Beth was small and slender, her eyes were a marvelously deep blue and her complexion fair. Mary was tall, dark and awkward. Her hair was thick, and, properly arranged, showed its full beauty. But Mary knew nothing of the art of dressing. She felt it, and did not want her friend to be ashamed of her. She went to the point directly, which was characteristic of her, when she had once made up her mind on a point.

"Will you tell me what dresses to take, and can you give me any hints about fixing my things up? Of course, I have not the clothes that you and Elizabeth have, but if you will help me, I will try to do the best I can with my limited wardrobe."

Dolly studied a moment in silence. "White always looks well, even if it is simple. You have a couple of white dresses. They are laundered, I know. Take both of them along, you will need them for dinner dresses. Father always likes us to dress a little for dinner. He says it rests him to come home and see Mother and me with something pretty on, and we are quite ready to humor him. Then-I think-yes-I am sure that you had better wear your blue for a travelling dress. You'll not need anything else, for we shall be gone such a little time. Have you bright ribbons? Never mind if you haven't. We shall all draw on Mother's stock, she is used to that sort of thing, and doesn't mind a bit."

"I must go down town today to buy a hat. Would you very much mind going with me to help?"

"Not at all. I just love to buy things, but Beth and I have been down town so often lately that Miss Newton may refuse permission."

"I'll fix that part," Mary said quietly.

"You will? How confidently you say that. Professor Newton is very nice, my dear, and I adore her, but I don't imagine that she is very easily 'fixed.'"

Miss Sutherland looked amused. "I will go and speak to her now," was all she said.

She came back with the desired permission, and the two went off gaily, while Beth went to her room to write to Roy. To Beth's great surprise, Roy had answered that first letter of hers very promptly, and though his letter had been the short, unsatisfactory kind that boys always write, especially boys as young as Roy, Beth had been touched and pleased at his evident delight over the fact that she had written to him. Since then her missives went regularly. She felt sorry for the homesick lad. "I wonder if Dolly's father would have sent Fred off at that age," she said to herself. "I am anxious to see Dolly's people. Shall I like them? Well, the vacation is not long, anyway."

No, it would not be long, and yet there would be plenty of time in it for the happening of various things of more or less importance to the college lassies.

CHAPTER V

WHEN the train on Wednesday evening halted for a moment at the first suburban station outside Dolly's city home, she gave a little shriek of surprise and delight. A moment later three young men entered the Pullman where Dolly and her friends were seated.

One of the young men was instantly pounced upon by Dolly and given an enthusiastic reception; meanwhile his two companions stood back smilingly, and proceeded to scrutinize Dolly's companions very closely.

"Oh, dear, where shall we begin with the introductions? We have all got to be introduced, I see. Well, this is my brother, Fred, Miss Newby and Miss Sutherland. He is really very nice, girls. I have brought him up quite properly."

"The bringing up was altogether the other way, as I chance to be a couple of years my sister's senior. Now, boys, come forward." A moment later and the girls had formally made the acquaintance of "Mr. Martin" and "Mr. Steele."

"I told the mater to let us meet you, and she finally consented, though she made us promise not to loiter on the way. We got here this morning, you know."

"How jolly, Fred, and oh! how good it is to be at home once more," Dolly said, as the train came to a standstill in the great station. "Let us walk up, we can get there in ten minutes and we can talk so much better that way. Tell me about your friends, Fred."

"There's not time to tell you very much, but I'll give you the main points. Steele is working his way through college. He is one of the most popular men there. He hasn't a near relation in the world. He was born somewhere out West. His father took a claim; dry seasons, big mortgage and prairie fires killed the mother and the father, too. There wasn't a cent left for Bob. He has done about everything that a boy could do, I guess, and he has lived in every large city between here and Kansas. He was three years in Chicago, and managed to graduate from the High School there. Did jobs for some millionaire night and morning for his board and a dollar a week. Wherever he lived he went to school. That's how he managed to prepare for college."

"But how does he do now?"

"He won a scholarship, and then he is steward of our club. He does private tutoring and half a dozen other things. He'll get along. He had more invitations for Thanksgiving, I'll wager, than any other fellow in college."

"And Mr. Martin? Talk fast. We are almost home. You know all about the girls, for I told you all that I could think of in my letters."

"There isn't so much to tell about Martin, Dolly. He comes from one of the oldest families in Boston, has lots of money, and plenty of brains, but he is fearfully lazy. What he needs--"

But Fred's sentence was destined to remain unfinished, for just then the sextette came in sight of

Dolly's home, and Dolly spied in the doorway the person whom she most loved on earth. With one spring she vanished up the walk and darted into her mother's arms.

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It was all a merry hubbub for a time. Dolly's mother seemed to Beth just an older and more mature type of Dolly herself. Dolly's father was there, too, and the greeting given the two strange girls was cordial enough to make them feel at home and to dispel all restraint.

"You boys must try to amuse yourselves without us for a little while," said Mrs. Alden, her arm still around Dolly. "I am going to take the girls upstairs now, and by the time we come down, dinner will be served."

"Your old room is ready for you, Dolly, just as you left it; I have put your friends in the two little rooms across the hall. I supposed that you would want to be near each other."

"You are correct, as usual, Motherdie. Come in and help me dress now. You always used to put the finishing touches on for me, you know. Leave your doors open, girls, so that we can talk to one another."

"I like your friends," Dolly's mother said quietly, when the two found themselves alone later. "Miss Newby doesn't look very happy, and there is an expression on her face that I do not like to see on so young a girl. I think that Miss Sutherland has latent possibilities about her."

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"Yes, and they are almost all latent as yet, but you can help to bring them out, I know. By the way, Mother, I want to brighten her up a bit. She must make a good impression on the boys this first night. Have you any rose-colored ribbons? Just put them on her, won't you? There's a dear. She cannot tie a bow any more than a sparrow can."

"You do not need me any more?"

"No, thanks. Oh, it is so blessed to be home, Mother. I'm going to your room at bedtime for a long talk. Will I do?"

"Very well," and Mrs. Alden looked with pardonable pride on the tall, graceful figure of her daughter, straight as an arrow; the fair, happy face, sunny and sweet, the light curling hair, the dainty white dress and the knots of blue ribbon scattered over it, made a picture of which any mother might well feel proud.

When Dolly went into Mary's room, she stopped in genuine surprise. "How pretty you do look, Mary. I am proud of you." And yet "pretty" was hardly the correct adjective to apply to her roommate. Mary's face was fine, and now that she was dressed with some taste, the possibilities of future beauty became apparent. But it was by no means a handsome face, though it might become so in later years.

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Beth came in trailing a white cashmere behind her. Dolly laughed mischievously. "Beth thinks that she can add several inches to her height by wearing long dresses. She does it on every possible occasion."

Beth retorted merrily, and the four went downstairs, where they found the three boys as well as Dolly's father awaiting them rather impatiently.

There was plenty of lively conversation, in which everyone took part. It was easy to see that Dolly was the light of the house, and that she was woefully missed by her home people.

Rob Steele proved to be a good talker. He had been through so much in the course of his short life, that he had an endless fund of stories on hand for almost any occasion. He was not at all conceited, but he talked well and easily.

61

"You must have acquaintances all over the United States," Beth exclaimed at last. "Aren't you always seeing people that you know?"

"Not often; you see, I was hardly in a position to make acquaintances, Miss Newby. I was doing all sorts of odd jobs, and while I will doubtless remember the faces of the persons for whom I worked, they will not recall me, and would certainly not claim acquaintanceship. However, I did see a young lady on your train whose face was so familiar to me that I bowed involuntarily."

"I noticed you speaking to that stunning girl all dressed in brown. Who is she, Bob?"

"Her name is Hamilton—Miss Margaret Hamilton. I knew her just casually in Chicago, where I stayed longer than I ever did in any other place after Father died. We were in the same class, that is, we graduated the same year. I saw nothing much of her at school, but I frequently caught glimpses of her when I was sent to old Worthington's on some errand."

"Was she a relation of that rich old Worthington who died two years ago?"

62

"No relation, she was the daughter of his housekeeper, a very nice girl, too. Rather proud, I fancied, but thoroughly free from nonsense and silly sentimentalism."

It was some moments before Dolly dared to glance at her friends.

There were significant glances interchanged, but no comments were made, and Dolly's people did not surmise then, that the young woman under discussion had been Dolly's successful rival for the class presidency.

There were music and singing later in the evening, and Beth felt that she knew for the first time, perhaps, what home-life might really mean.

After the girls had slipped into their dressing-gowns that night, they ran over to Dolly's room to

discuss the subject that was just then uppermost in the minds of them all—Margaret Hamilton. They halted at the door, however, for there was Dolly enjoying a comfortable chat with her mother.



There were music and singing later in the evening.

“Come in, girls, I’ve just been telling Mother all about Margaret. I always tell her everything, you know, and she has just asked if Margaret ever made any statements at variance with the real truth about herself. It is no disgrace to be poor, and I hope that we are not snobs enough to care for that part of it; but has she been trying to pass herself off for something that she is not?”

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There was a little silence. Mary Sutherland was the first to speak. “I never saw much of Miss Hamilton, and so I do not know what she is in the habit of saying about herself. The only time that I ever heard her mention the past, was when Miss Raymond asked her where she lived. She replied that her home had been in Chicago, but that death had broken it up. There was nothing more said.”

“Very possibly all of that was strictly true,” Mrs. Alden said thoughtfully, “and she certainly was under no special obligation to tell every student at Westover her private affairs. But how does she have the means to go through college? Dolly tells me that she dresses very nicely, although not extravagantly. I can see how she would prefer to keep some facts to herself. Girls are not as tolerant as boys in some particulars. Mr. Steele is popular at Harvard, despite his poverty and struggles; but you know very well that a girl, with similar experiences, would be unmercifully snubbed at Westover.”

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“And you think—”

“I do not know your friend, or perhaps I should say your classmate, as I see Miss Newby frowning over the word ‘friend’ so it is not easy for me to draw conclusions, but if she has merely kept still, and been reticent on her past life, I do not see that she is open to censure. Of course, if she has been pretending to be what she is not, that is a totally different affair.”

“She has always been very careful, Mrs. Alden, to say as little as possible about herself. I noticed it, and commented on the fact to Dolly, but I do not imagine that anyone else noticed it. As far as my observation has gone, she has told no untruths. But she certainly did seem accustomed to all the little luxuries that rich people have. One could notice it at table and in a hundred little ways.”

“Doubtless she was accustomed to many of those things, if her mother was housekeeper for Mr. Worthington. He was one of the richest men in the West, and Miss Hamilton would have had an opportunity in his house, if she were at all adaptable, of becoming thoroughly familiar with all such little niceties. Even at the housekeeper’s table there was certainly plenty of opportunity for Miss Hamilton to grow perfectly familiar with the ways of the rich.”

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“But where is her mother, and where did her money come from?”

“Those are questions that we can’t answer, so we might as well drop them. I wonder where she was going?”

“Oh, didn’t you know? Helen Raymond asked her to spend the Thanksgiving vacation at her home.”

Mrs. Alden leaned forward, a serious look on her face. “Girls, if I were you, I should not mention this subject at school. Miss Hamilton is your class president, she will be your president for a year to come. You want everything smooth and harmonious, don’t you?”

"Of course we do, Mrs. Alden, and we will keep perfectly mum, but if Dolly had only been sensible and voted for herself, there would not be any such situation as there is at present."

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Dolly laughed. "Beth never will learn to recognize some facts; now, for instance, that subject was finally settled long, long ago."

"I don't see—" began Beth.

But Mrs. Alden rose hastily to her feet. "You girls must all get to bed and to sleep as soon as possible. The boys have plans for every moment of the day, and you will want to feel fresh tomorrow. Dolly, you may come over to my room for just a few minutes."

The next morning there was a drive through the lovely suburbs of the city, then they came back to the Thanksgiving dinner; in the evening there was a fine concert to which Mr. Alden took them all. Friday and Saturday were full of fun and pleasure. Sunday evening came all too soon. Dolly was having a quiet chat in the library with Fred and her mother. The rest were all in the drawing-room.

"I have been very much astonished at the way our guests paired off. Naturally, one would think that Mr. Steele would care to talk to Mary rather than to Beth. Mary knows what hard work and life on a farm mean. She would not be at college now, if some aunt were not paying her tuition; she told me so. I supposed that she and Mr. Steele would have ever so many things in common, but I never see them talking together at all. Mr. Martin seems really to find Mary very attractive, and Mr. Steele devotes most of his time to Beth, who is certainly his opposite in every particular."

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"That is just the reason Steele likes her, I presume," Fred rejoined with an air of superior wisdom. "The attraction of opposites, you know; though, for that matter, Steele quite approves of you. He thinks you are a remarkably nice little girl, for he told me so."

"How horribly condescending of him," Dolly said, tilting her chin upward.

Fred laughed. It was great fun to tease Dolly. "He thinks you did a remarkably fine thing in throwing the class presidency to that classmate of yours who voted for herself. By the way, her name was Hamilton, I remember; she wasn't that girl of whom Bob was talking the other night, was she?"

Dolly flushed. "Tell Fred the whole story, dear, you can trust your brother."

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So Dolly told it, and whatever Fred thought, he kept to himself, merely promising not to mention the affair to anyone. Mrs. Alden sent the girls off to bed at an early hour, for, as Beth said, they must be awake at a most unearthly time. The boys set their alarm clock in order to be up to see the girls off. They, themselves, were not obliged to go until a later train.

"We have had just a beautiful time, Mrs. Alden," Beth declared that evening. "I can't tell how much it has meant to me. I want Dolly to go home with me as soon as you can spare her, but I suppose you will want her at Christmas?"

"Perhaps we could arrange a compromise," Mrs. Alden returned smilingly; "you might stop here for a week, and then we *might* agree to loan you Dolly for the remaining time."

"I do wish you would. I would be more glad than I can tell you. I am going to consider that point settled, and I thank you a thousand times. Dolly, I want to tell you something about that roommate of mine when we get upstairs. I've meant to do it all vacation, and our jolly times have just crowded it out of my head."

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CHAPTER VI

70

BUT it was not until they were on the train the next day, that an opportunity came for Beth to tell her story. There had been a jolly, sleepy crowd that had eaten the early breakfast and then gone down to the station. The boys had supplied them well with magazines, flowers and boxes of candy. To Mary Sutherland it was all like a new world—the handsome house, the elegant furnishings, the plenty and comfort that pervaded the whole atmosphere, and while that part was nothing at all new to Beth, she, too, felt as if she were in a new world, for it was a world in which the home-atmosphere was sweet and wholesome, blessed as it was with love and mutual forbearance.

The good-byes were all said at last, and Dolly had to wink hard to keep back the tears. "Do you remember how homesick I was in September, Beth, and how you came to the rescue like a good angel? What should I have done without you? It will be only a month now until the Christmas holidays, and I certainly ought to be able to stand it four weeks without getting lonesome."

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"You should have seen what a forlorn object she was, Mary," interrupted Beth. "She sat on the edge of her bed looking as if she had not a friend in all the world."

"In all the college, you mean, and I had not, either, until you walked in. I shall bless you forever for that deed of humanity. Even my room-mate was missing then; you stayed for the marriage of a sister, did you not, Mary?"

"Yes, and I am afraid that I was not much comfort to you after I *did* appear. I didn't mean to be dictatorial and horrid, but I am afraid that—"

"You were nothing but what was all right, Mary," Dolly interrupted. "We were not acquainted at first, that was all."

"I was not nice, but I meant to be, and I'll try to fit in better hereafter. You should have had Beth for a room-mate, though I'm too selfish to propose any change this year."

"We can all three be good friends, Mary, so far as that goes, but I certainly wish that some other room-mate had been allotted to me than Margery Ainsworth."

"You were going to tell us something about her, Beth; now is a good opportunity."

"Very well, only you girls must understand that I am telling this in confidence, because I want your advice. I don't know whether it is my duty to say anything or not. Of course, girls don't like to be tell-tales any more than boys do, but it seems to me that the good name of the college is more or less concerned in this, and we cannot afford to have any girl do things which would bring us into disrepute."

"Of course not," Dolly said energetically. "Well, what is it?"

"In the first place, she systematically breaks all of the rules. I cannot room with her, of course, and not know that. She probably depends upon my good nature or sense of honor not to give her away. She never reports any broken rule, and she goes downtown whenever she feels inclined, and only once a month or so gets permission. I imagine that she goes for some reason instead of shopping, for she never has any bundles sent home. The worst thing, in my mind, was a couple of Sundays ago. She pretended to go to church with the rest of us, but she did not; she went off some place else and appeared again just as church was over. She went back to the college with the rest of us. I did ask her what she had been doing that time."

"What did she say?"

"Nothing very satisfactory. She wanted to know if I would like an outline of the sermon, and she proceeded to give me the text and some of the leading points. Of course, she heard all of the girls discussing it at the table, for it was the day that Dr. Hyde preached, and we were all intensely interested."

"Where do you suppose she was?" It was Mary Sutherland who asked the question.

"I really have not the faintest idea. I know, though, that she was some place where, of course, she could not have gotten permission to go, had she asked, for otherwise she would never have run the risk she ran. The faculty do not overlook that sort of thing readily."

"She would certainly be suspended at the least."

"Well, I cannot go and tell any one of the professors what she does, but I wish something would happen to make her more careful. I don't like to have the college girls talked about. I feel jealous of our good name."

Beth looked perplexed and worried. All three of the girls knew that Margery Ainsworth had violated one of the strictest rules, and she could only have done it in order to achieve some end which the faculty would never have countenanced. It was not pleasant for Beth to room with a girl as utterly devoid of principle as Margery Ainsworth daily proved herself to be. It was inevitable that they should be thrown more or less together. Margery was no student at all, and she and Beth really had no ideas in common.

"This is the second secret that has come our way this vacation," Dolly said. "Such secrets are not nice. I hope we shall not be compelled to hear any more. First, we learned more about our president's life than she would probably care to have us know, and now comes this, which is, of course, a thousand times worse. As far as I am concerned, I have no suggestions to offer."

"As I understand the matter, you want her forced to obey the rules, but at the same time you are not going to tell any member of the faculty about her."

"Of course I am not," Beth said indignantly. "That is simply out of the question."

"And yet, for her own sake, it would be much better if the faculty knew something of her doings. She cannot go into town so often for any good purpose. She may be getting into mischief that she will repent all of her after-life."

"Very true, still I can say nothing."

"Will you let me see what I can do?"

"That would be the same as doing it myself, Mary, and then trying to sneak out of a mean act by putting it on your shoulders."

"If you are willing to trust me, I will not tell anything definite. I will not mention your name, or tell what Miss Ainsworth has done. I shall merely make sure that she will be so warned and hedged in hereafter, that she will not dare to break the rules again. And this ought to be done, Elizabeth, both for her own sake and the sake of the college."

"My dear infant, do you suppose for a moment that you could make the indefinite statement which you propose, to any member of the faculty, and not have a full explanation demanded at once of everything that has been done?"

"That would be true, usually, I know--"

"But--" Beth's voice sounded a trifle impatient--"do you think you could manage the professors

better than the rest of us?"

"Not all of them," Mary returned serenely, "but I probably can Professor Newton, because, you see, she is my aunt."

"What!" The amazement in her companions' voices made Mary leap back and burst into laughter.

"It is true. She is Mother's sister. I really do not know why I told no one at first. I took a notion that I didn't want the girls to know, and Aunt Mary humored me. I am her namesake."

"And that is where you have been evenings when I wondered so where you were," Dolly broke out a trifle incoherently.

"Yes, I was up in her room. I can go there any time I wish. I thought that I would leave you and Beth an opportunity to talk and study in our sitting-room."

"Professor Newton must have a high opinion of me," Dolly interjected discontentedly, "if she thinks that I drive you away."

"You needn't worry about Aunt Mary. She knows how lovely you have been to an awkward, green girl from the western prairies, and she is very grateful. Now you see, don't you, that I can say just enough to her confidentially to warrant her in warning Miss Ainsworth that the faculty will expect different behavior from her in the future? That is all that will be necessary, I am sure, only, of course, she will be watched after this. I will not mention a single name, and I will not tell anything that she has done in the past. If she behaves herself after the warning, she will be all right. There will be no harm done, but lots of good will have been accomplished. If she doesn't choose to take heed—"

"She will deserve to suffer the full consequences," declared Beth. "Yes, go ahead, that is the best plan. Truly, I am not thinking entirely of the college either, when I say it. While I care nothing, personally, for Margery Ainsworth, I do not want her to ruin her whole life by some piece of folly."

The girls talked the subject over more fully, and the matter was finally left entirely in Mary's hands.

A sudden recollection struck Dolly. "No wonder that you did not care to have me introduce you to Professor Newton that first evening; do you remember? And of course she had saved a place at her table purposely for you. Mary Sutherland, if I supposed you repeated to her all the nonsense that you have heard me talk about her, I should never let you return to college alive."

Mary smiled, not very much overcome by the threat. "You always say nice things about her; now, if it had been Professor Arnold—you really don't like her at all."

"Of course I don't. An angel from heaven couldn't suit Professor Arnold when it comes to a Latin translation. But just to think how I have gushed over Professor Newton. Mary Sutherland, have you ever told her the silly things I have said?"

"You might know that I would not repeat anything that would displease Aunt Mary."

Dolly looked at her sharply. "You are evading my questions, Mary Sutherland. I just know that you have told Professor Newton how I have gushed over her, and how deeply in love with her I am. Don't try to fool me. I will never, never tell anything to you again. Don't talk to me about unsophisticated girls from the country, they are deeper than any city girl I ever saw."

And Dolly settled back in her seat with a look of vengeance in her eyes, that did not disturb Mary in the least. It was very true that Dolly had fallen deeply in love with Professor Newton, after the harmless fashion that students have. Her lessons for Professor Newton were faultlessly prepared, and while she was a good student in all her chosen studies, she absolutely shone in Professor Newton's classes. There was something very attractive about this teacher. She understood girls and knew how to deal with them.

She had written a couple of textbooks herself, and it was generally understood among the students that she had supported herself when attending college. Yet she had not become hard or bitter. Her face was strong, but sweet, and her own experience made her very tender toward those girls who were trying to win an education against great odds. It was to this aunt that Mary Sutherland went, knowing that she could trust her implicitly to do the very best for all concerned.

Beth knew that her room-mate was summoned to the president's room the following Wednesday, and that she came back looking very angry and half frightened as well. Evidently, whatever had been said to her was of such a nature that she did not suspect Beth in the least. In fact, the president (alluding, of course, to Professor Newton) had said that "one of the members of the faculty had told her that Miss Ainsworth was proving herself untrustworthy." Then there had followed a serious talk in which Margery said as little as she could. She surmised that she had probably been seen by some one of the professors on one of her many escapades; on which one it might have been, she had no means of knowing, and she was afraid of saying too much in extenuation or excuse, lest she might inadvertently admit some misdemeanor of which the president was ignorant up to this time. Therefore, she returned to her room both wrathful and alarmed.

Beth reported later to Dolly, that her room-mate was doing more studying and paying more attention to the rules, than she ever had before.

"Will it last, do you think?" queried Dolly anxiously.

"I have my doubts. In my humble opinion, she is simply trying to throw them off their guard now, and to induce them to believe that she does not need watching. From several little things that have happened, however, I am perfectly positive that the faculty is keeping a very wide-awake eye on her. We have not many rules here, you know, but it goes hard with any girl who attempts to break those few."

"Yes, the mere fact that we are on our honor to a great extent, ought to make the girls behave. I feel like being doubly careful."

"My dear, you are hardly the same type of girl as Margery Ainsworth. She is the sort to take advantage of any privilege. She is so very quiet now, that I cannot help thinking there is some special reason why she is endeavoring to throw them off their guard before the Christmas holidays."

"They are only a week distant. Remember that you are going to eat Christmas dinner with me, Beth. Mary will go, too, and Fred has invited Mr. Martin and Mr. Steele for the holidays, so that we shall have the same crowd we did at Thanksgiving time."

"That will be jolly, but you must go home with me after Christmas. I don't pretend that you will have as good a time in Philadelphia with me, as I did at your home, but I want you to come. I asked Mary to go, too, because I knew she could not afford to go way out to her own home, but she said that she was to take a little trip with her aunt, and so I shall have you all to myself. I'm rather glad of it, to tell the truth."

"Yet you like Mary?"

"More than I ever imagined that I could. I am getting to know her better, for one thing. Of course, I shall never care for her as much as I do for you, but she is thoroughly genuine. There is nothing mean or underhanded about her."

"No, there certainly is not, and hasn't she improved wonderfully in personal appearance since she came?"

"You are responsible for that. Since she allows you to superintend her purchases, and tell her what colors to wear, she looks more like a girl, and less like a relic of some former geological era."

"Poor child, she had no opportunity to learn on the farm, and very little money to spend for anything, I fancy."

"All very true, and Professor Newton is a trump for giving her forlorn namesake this chance. Of course, she pays all Mary's expenses."

"Yes, and Mary is going to be a credit in the end to all her relatives and friends. I wish I could say as much of your room-mate."

"You can't. The most I dare hope in that direction is that Margaret will not do anything to make us ashamed of her."

But the next week proved that this hope would not be realized.

CHAPTER VII

ON Thursday the girls would leave for their Christmas vacation. Dolly, as well as Beth and Mary Sutherland, had passed their examinations in a very satisfactory manner, and could enjoy the holidays with clear consciences. The freshmen had been getting up a musical extravaganza under the energetic direction of their president. There was no denying the fact that Margaret Hamilton made a fine class president. She had insisted upon Dolly's having a prominent part. Margaret, herself, had a fine contralto voice, and by common vote, another of the principal parts was given to her. Beth had a minor part, and Mary appeared only in the choruses.

A number of the other girls had remarkably fine voices, and all of the leading parts were well carried. The class president seemed unusually elated and happy. The entertainment would be given by the freshmen in the College Hall on Wednesday evening. The faculty was invited, of course, as well as the sophomores, juniors and seniors. It was the first entertainment that the freshmen had given, and everyone was eager to see what they could do.

Professor Newton had been admitted to the last rehearsal, and she assured the girls that it was the best thing that she had ever seen done by any freshman class. "There wasn't a flaw in it. The idea is unique, the costuming fine and the solo work was absolutely superb. You must have worked hard. It will be something for all the classes to talk about for years to come. Just do as well as you did at this rehearsal, and you will find yourselves covered with glory, if you do not attempt anything else in your entire college course."

"It is all due to our president," said one of the group who surrounded Professor Newton. "It was her idea in the first place; she adapted the extravaganza to our class, and it is she who has made us work so hard at it."

"You have every reason to be proud of your work, Miss Hamilton," Professor Newton said cordially.

"I am tremendously proud of the girls, Professor Newton. Of course, I could have done nothing at all if they had not been so willing."

Just then the ringing of the gong summoned the majority of the girls to a recitation, and Margaret added in a lower tone, "I am only afraid of Ada Willing's last solo."

"But why, Miss Hamilton? That is one of the best things in the entire entertainment. It is so full of good-natured hits at the other classes and the faculty. It is sheer, pure fun; everyone will enjoy it, and Miss Willing has a magnificent voice."

"But it is so uncertain. That solo should be sung well, for it is the most unique thing that we have. Sometimes Miss Willing does it superbly, and sometimes she does it miserably. Once or twice she has actually forgotten the opening words, they are pure nonsense, you know, and not very easy to remember, if a person be nervous."

"Don't worry about it," Professor Newton advised kindly. "I am sure you will come out all right this evening. You should rest the balance of the day."

"I want to go out for a little while, Professor Newton; then I shall surely take your advice."

Dolly and Beth had been almost the only ones who had heard this conversation. As the two walked down the corridor, Beth said thoughtfully: "I would be willing to wager a peanut that our president has gone out merely to walk up Murray's lane. She goes there every single day at this hour."

"I don't believe it is for any wrong purpose, Beth. The lane is within the limits that we are allowed to go. Some way I have faith in Miss Hamilton."

"I am not saying that I have not. But certainly she is secretive. Of course, that is no sin, as we decided long ago; at the same time one cannot help speculating about her, more or less."

"I have watched her rather closely ever since Thanksgiving, and she really has never said a word in my hearing that was untrue or false. Last week, in Miss Dunbar's room, the subject of wealth and aristocracy came up in some way. Miss Hamilton was appealed to. I do not think you were present, but Miss Dunbar asked if Miss Hamilton did not consider good breeding and refinement inseparable from wealth and family position."

"What a snob she is."

"We all know that. I was rather curious to hear what our president would say. She did not say much. She is like Grant. She knows the wisdom of silence. She told Miss Dunbar that she did not agree with her at all. Then she made the first personal remark that I ever heard her make. She said that as far as she was concerned, she had no wealth, and while she was proud of her family, herself, she had no idea that Ward McAllister would ever have admitted them to his sacred list of four hundred."

"Good for her. She told the truth, and yet the girls did not realize just how true it was, I presume. She has an air about her that seems to betoken wealth and distinction. How misleading appearances are."

"Yes, aren't they? Well, the facts will be sure to come out some day, for this world is small, after all, and what we learned, others will be sure to learn, too. There is no harm at all in it, but Miss Dunbar and that set of girls who fawn so around her, would never speak to her again. You'll see."

"I don't like to think that you are a true prophet, Dolly, for the sake of our sex. Why should we be more ungenerous to Margaret Hamilton than the Harvard boys are to Mr. Steele?"

"There is no reason at all why we should be, and if the test ever comes, I, for one, shall stand by her."

"And I, too," said Beth. "Though I hope the necessity will never arise." It did, however, and the two girls proved true to their promises.

College Hall was crowded that evening. Friends from the town had been invited, and everyone was anxious to see what the freshmen class could do. Whispers of something a little beyond the ordinary had gotten out, and all were expectant.

There was a spontaneous burst of applause when the curtain went up, and showed the picturesque setting of the first scene, representative of the grove in the college grounds. The girls were at their best, and everything went smoothly during the first three acts. The fourth act was the last, and the most difficult singing and acting came in it. All had gone perfectly so far, and the class president's face began to look serene and confident.

Miss Willing's solo was near the end. There had been no flaw up to that point, but when it came time for her to break in with the merry, half-saucy characterization of the other classes, there was an ominous silence. Dolly and Beth, glancing at her, and recalling what Margaret Hamilton had said, realized that the girl's memory had failed her entirely, just through sheer nervousness. The president's face turned pale. She had so wished this to be a most notable success; it seemed imperative to her, for many reasons. She wished to please one most dear to her, and then, too, if she could win these laurels for her class, no matter what might happen in the future, the girls could not be utterly ungrateful to her.

And now Ada Willing was turning her wonderful success in to a most disastrous defeat. It all meant so much to Margaret Hamilton. She recalled the words perfectly herself, and longed to take the solo into her own hands, but this was a soprano solo which she could not hope to

compass with a contralto voice. She was tasting the full bitterness of defeat, when a voice broke out with the solo, clear, sweet, piquant—not Ada Willing’s voice, but Beth’s. And Beth put a verve and daring into the words which Miss Willing was perfectly incompetent to do.

Verse after verse flowed on, smoothly, triumphantly. The whole hall was shaking with unrestrained laughter. The president’s color came back to cheeks and lips. Beth had saved the day; she was doing better than Ada Willing could have done, for she was an inimitable actress, and in her song she rapidly personified sophomores, juniors and seniors, as well as professors, in a manner that was perfectly unmistakable.

The applause was so generous and long-continued, that Beth was forced to repeat some portions several times. When the curtain went down shortly after that, for the last time, Beth was surrounded by rapturous classmates who were ready to fall on her neck or carry her around the grounds, for thus saving their reputation.

“Come and meet my mother, will you not—you and Miss Alden?” Margaret Hamilton said after she had tried in a somewhat tremulous tone to thank Beth for her ready wit. “I would like to have you both meet her.”

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“I did not know that she was here,” Dolly said in surprise. “I thought your home was in the West.”

“We did live in Chicago until recently. Now we have no home exactly. Mother and I are all there are in the family, and she will board here in town so as to be near me. She might as well, there is no reason why we should be separated by several hundred miles now.”

With much silent bewilderment, Beth and Dolly followed Miss Hamilton to one corner of the room, where they found Mrs. Hamilton engaged in conversation with Professor Newton.

“Thank you so much for looking after Mother a little, Professor Newton,” Margaret said gratefully. “I was in such haste that I did not have time to introduce her to anyone else before our entertainment,” and then she presented Beth and Dolly.

The girls scrutinized her closely. She was dressed in black, but with a certain quiet style that convinced Dolly that Margaret had supervised the making of the gown. The face was not handsome, but it was good-natured, and denoted a large amount of practical common sense. The girls sat down on either side of her. They had their own reasons for wanting to know more of their class president’s mother. She was evidently brimming over with pride and love for Margaret. In the course of their conversation it became very evident that she knew nothing of “society’s small talk,” or of the subjects that college girls often bring up naturally in connection with their studies. Nevertheless, she could talk well and interestingly on many commonplace themes, especially when her subject of conversation related more or less closely to her daughter. Her grammar was good, and her language quite as choice as one usually meets with in a casual acquaintance.

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Dolly and Beth, watching their classmate closely, noticed with secret relief that she introduced her mother to all the members of the faculty, as well as to Miss Dunbar and to the most exclusive girls of the class. She did it with a quiet, unassuming dignity which her two close critics could not but admire.

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The evening was over, the entertainment was universally conceded to have been the most unique and successful affair ever given by any freshman class, and even the seniors owned frankly that they would be compelled to look to their laurels next term, or they would be quite outdone by the insignificant freshies.

Beth and Dolly had gone upstairs, the visitors had all departed, at least, so the girls thought. Dolly remembered a book which she needed from the library. They turned into the wing to get it, and Dolly ran on before to switch on the electric light which had just been turned off. Margaret’s voice, low but penetrating, reached them distinctly.

“I told several of the girls, Mother, that you were going to board in town so as to be near me.”

There was a startled exclamation from Mrs. Hamilton. “Indeed, Mother, I had to do it. Of course you want to see me, and I want to see you. If it is clearly known that you are boarding in town, I can readily get permission to go and see you as often as I have time. And you can come and see me every evening. As it is, I feel as if I were guilty all the time of doing something wrong.”

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“You haven’t broken a single rule, Margaret. I would be just as careful about that, as you would, yourself.”

“I know, but why should I sneak off up Murray’s lane to meet my mother, and why should you have to go there every day through the woods, when one might just as well meet openly? It has often been almost impossible for me to get off alone at the time you go there. Believe me, Mother, my way is the best. I am not ashamed of you. I should not deserve any success in life if I were.”

“I know all that, Margaret; at the same time, would you have been elected class president or invited to your friend’s house at Thanksgiving, if it were generally known that your mother had been a servant nearly all her life, and that your father had been merely a coachman? Of course, he had a good education, and if it had not been for that accident, we would have had our own little home. But when that happened, we just had to do the best we could, and he took a coachman’s position with Mr. Worthington because that was the first thing that offered. And he kept it all his life. But would your fine friends feel the same toward you if they knew that?”

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“No, they would not, Mother,” Margaret answered in a low and rather sad tone. “It hardly seems

fair, does it? I know that many of them would never speak to me again. I do not consider my affairs any business of theirs, and I promise you not to volunteer any information. On the other hand, Mother, I cannot meet you secretly any more. If you are really afraid that someone will recognize you here, you can stay in the town as quietly as you wish. I know that you are ambitious for me, Mother, and I will do the very best I can for us both. I want to succeed, too. If I am absolutely cornered, I shall tell no lies, though. I have not done it so far, and I shall not hereafter. I suppose the truth may naturally be known some day, but I am not going to be ashamed of either of my parents, and you would be ashamed of me if I were, Mother."

"Yes, I suppose I would, Margaret, but if you can only get your education, now that Mr. Worthington made it possible, I shall be willing to stand in the background for four years. You were slighted all through the public schools as soon as anyone knew that you were just the daughter of Mr. Worthington's housekeeper, and it would be worse here."

"Well, never mind, Mother, if--"

And there, to the girls' relief Mrs. Hamilton and her daughter passed out of hearing.

"*She* is true blue, no matter whether her blood is blue or not," said Dolly softly. "Confess now, Beth dear, that you are glad she is our president."

"She makes a good one," Beth acknowledged, and then they separated, each going to her own room.

A moment later, however, there was a quick tap at Dolly's door, and Beth's excited face appeared.

"What do you think has happened, Dolly?"

CHAPTER VIII

"WHAT is it, and has it anything to do with Mary? She isn't here, and I haven't the faintest idea where she is."

"It has nothing to do with Mary, but I hope Mary may be able to explain to us. Professor Arnold is in our room, and Margery is packing up everything she owns. They are going to take the five o'clock train tomorrow morning for New York. You know Professor Arnold lives there, too. She called me into my room, and spoke to me privately. She asked if I would object to rooming with you tonight, as she would like to sleep in my room herself."

"Just as if Margery were a prisoner and she the jailer," said Dolly, in an awe-struck tone.

"That is just about the size of it, my dear. Of course, I said I was sure you would take me in. Evidently Margery tried to slip off tonight, thinking that amid all the excitement she would not be missed. I wonder what she did!"

"And they go on the five o'clock train? No Latin for us then. Professor Arnold did not intend to go, I know, until Friday. We were to have all of our regular lessons tomorrow morning."

"We had better get to bed, or someone will be after us, even if today is an exceptional time."

"That's true, but where *is* Mary?"

"Here," answered Mary's own voice, as the sitting-room door opened.

"Where have you been? Give an account of yourself."

"I have been hearing the true story of Elizabeth's room-mate. I suppose you know by this time that she is to go home early tomorrow?"

Both girls nodded.

"After our entertainment I went upstairs to Aunt Mary's room. We were talking, when Professor Arnold came to the door. She called Aunt Mary into the hall, and stood there for some time. I could not help hearing a part of what was said, so, when aunty came back, she told me the full story, and said that I might tell you. We are not to repeat it to the other girls, but, of course, they will be told in chapel that Miss Ainsworth has been sent home."

"Yes, well?"

"It seems that Professor Graydon has noticed how very restless Margery has seemed this week. From several little things, she decided that Miss Ainsworth would try to slip away when we were all in the College Hall, and so she kept a careful watch on her. Patrick knew about it, too, and when he saw her slip out of the side gate and run off toward the city, he went after her. He met one of the maids and sent word back to Professor Graydon. Mrs. Carruther's carriage was at the college, and Professor Graydon got into it and soon overtook Patrick. He was standing outside a boarding-house on Summit Avenue, looking as perplexed as he well could look. He didn't like to go in and order Margery out; he had no right or business to do that, and, of course, it never would have done. So he just stood outside and wondered what was the right thing for him to do. I reckon" (Mary still lapsed into her favorite idioms at times) "that he was mighty glad when he saw Professor Graydon in the carriage. She rang the bell at once and asked for Miss Ainsworth. I

imagine that there was a very stormy scene inside, but of course Professor Arnold was in too great a hurry to tell Aunt Mary all the details. Presently Professor Graydon came out with Margery and took her to the president's room. They managed to get the full story out of Margery at last. It seems that there is a young lady at the boarding-house, a Miss Lampton, very proud and flashy and fast; Margery knew her in New York, and the two became quite intimate before Margery's parents found out about it. The girl has been mixed up in several scandals. She went to Boston once in a smoking-car and smoked cigarettes all the way. You can imagine what sort of a girl she is from that."

"I wouldn't want to imagine," broke in Dolly disgustedly. "How could Miss Ainsworth ever tolerate her?"

"Birds of a feather," said Beth wisely. "But we must let Mary tell her story and then get to bed."

"Yes, it is horribly late. Well, as soon as the Ainsworths found out the sort of girl she was, they tried to break off the intimacy, but Margery kept contriving to meet her places, and there was a brother who was just as bad-worse, in fact. So, finally, Margery was sent here to college to get her away from them. She was told not to correspond with either, but there is no surveillance on the letters here, and Margery corresponded all last year with them both, though her parents never knew it. This fall Miss Lampton decided to come here and board for a while. She had just gotten into a scrape that was a little worse than usual in New York, and I suppose she thought she had better go away till the talk blew over."

"Has the girl no parents?"

"No, only an aunt, who acts as sort of a figurehead, and who has no control over either Miss Lampton or her brother. So she came here to board last fall, and of course wrote to Miss Ainsworth as soon as she came. That is where Beth's room-mate has gone whenever she has disappeared in town."

"That is certainly bad enough, but it is not as bad as I feared it might be."

"You haven't heard the worst yet, Elizabeth. Every little while the brother came down, and at last he and Margery decided that they were in love with each other, and do you know that they had planned an elopement for this very night?"

The girls gave a cry of horror.

"Yes, that is absolutely true. If Elizabeth had not let me tell Aunt Mary, so that the faculty was on guard, you see what a dreadful thing would have happened. Now they have telegraphed to Mr. Ainsworth, and Professor Arnold will not leave Margery until she is safe with her father."

"How dreadful it all is," and then, despite the lateness of the hour, the girls talked the matter over until there came a light tap at their door.

Professor Arnold looked in. "We are not going to be very strict tonight with you freshmen, after you have just achieved such a triumph at your entertainment, but there is really reason in all things, and I advise you to have your light out and to be in bed within five minutes."

"Yes'm," three voices responded meekly, and then there was hurried scrambling and the freshmen settled down for the night.

The next afternoon saw the three girls at Dolly's home. The following day brought Fred and his two friends, and there was a lively time until Christmas.

Christmas morning found them all down in the library, bright and early. The subject of Christmas gifts had troubled Dolly a little, because she feared lest Mary and Mr. Steele might feel that they had no part in the good times.

"You see, mamma, that I want to give Mary something as nice as I do Beth, but I know that Mary has hardly any money to spend for presents, and I do not want her to feel mean or awkward about it. And then there is Mr. Steele; he certainly cannot afford to do much in that line, either, and yet, of course, we want to remember him. What shall we do?"

"Just get what your good sense dictates, without thinking of their presents at all. You do not give for what will be given to you. You give for the pleasure of giving. Don't think of that phase of the question. As for Mr. Steele, I feel that we owe him more than we can ever repay."

"How so, mamma?"

"He has great influence over Fred, and he has certainly helped him to keep steady at college."

"Oh, mamma, you do not mistrust Fred?"

"I know how much Fred likes a good time, dear. Sometimes he takes it without thinking of consequences. I rather dreaded college for him; but he is growing much more independent and self-reliant."

"Fred is a darling, and you know it, mamma."

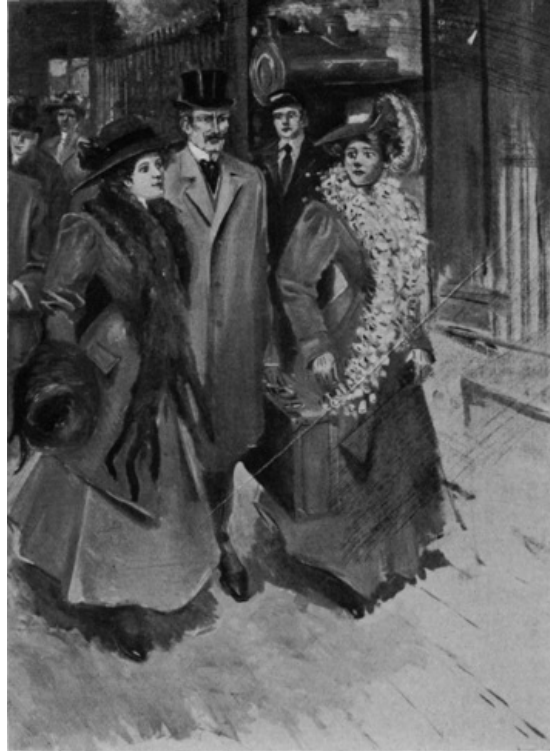
"Of course, but I can see his weaknesses, and so I am glad that he has taken a liking to Robert Steele. I intend to do my best to have this Christmas one that he will like to remember."

There could be no doubt at all but that she succeeded. There was a load of pretty remembrances for everyone. Rob Steele had been bothered somewhat, too, over the question of gifts. Fortunately, while not an artist, he had some skill with brush and pencil, and after considerable cogitating, he devoted his few spare moments to painting some dainty marine views in water

colors; he had these inexpensively framed, and told himself that he would not worry; he had done the best he could, though, of course, his trifles were not to be mentioned in the same breath as the elegant presents which Martin would buy.

But on Christmas morning, Bob Steele found that his little gifts received much more attention than the handsome ones that Dick Martin had given. And even Mary Sutherland, with all her supersensitiveness, never thought of comparing the relative value of the inexpensive books she had given, with the very beautiful muff, handkerchiefs, ribbons and laces which she found in her Christmas corner.

There were no heart-burnings and no jealousies. The only drawback to the day, as Fred declared, was the thought that the party would be partially broken up on the morrow. Dick Martin was going back to Boston. Mary would join her aunt at college for a little trip, and Dolly and Beth would leave for Philadelphia. Fred grumbled considerably at such a scattering of the congenial party, but there was no help for it. Rob Steele would stay with him until Harvard reopened, and Dolly and Beth might be able to stay over night on their way back to Westover.



A moment later Dolly had been introduced to Beth's father

When Dolly found herself actually on the train next day, bound for Philadelphia, she wondered more and more to what kind of a home she was going. Beth grew more quiet and sedate as they neared the city, and the reserved, rather hard expression which she had partially lost of late, was intensified.

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As they entered the main gate at the Broad Street Station, a tall, handsome man took Beth's valise from her hand and bent to kiss her. A moment later Dolly had been introduced to Beth's father. A carriage was waiting for them outside the station, and as they drove to Beth's home, Dolly scrutinized Mr. Newby's features closely, trying hard to find therein the explanation of much that had mystified her in Beth.

He was evidently a man of culture and brains. Dolly could not imagine him in a temper or exhibiting any lack of self-control. Why did he and Beth not chatter more familiarly, though? He was asking questions about the college in the same fashion that he might have asked them of Dolly herself, and Beth was replying in the same formal, courteous way. Even Mr. Newby's kiss of welcome at the station had seemed a perfunctory duty-kiss, not at all like the spontaneous ones given by Dolly's father.

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And Beth could chatter fast enough! Why wasn't she doing it now? Though, if Dolly had only known it, both Beth and her father were making a great effort to have the conversation lively and animated.

Dolly had gained no light when they reached the pleasant suburban home where the Newbys lived. On the broad veranda she could see a lovely, gracious woman and three children.

They must be Roy, Hugh and Nell, she knew. The carriage drove rapidly up the lawn along the smooth driveway. Mrs. Newby hastened to meet them. She kissed Beth a little wistfully, Dolly thought, and gave Dolly herself a very cordial, hearty welcome. The children were well-mannered and decidedly attractive. Dolly fancied that Roy did not look very strong. Mrs. Newby took them upstairs presently. She had given the girls adjoining rooms, and went in with them to see that everything was in perfect readiness. The house was roomy and delightful, and Dolly drew in a deep breath of surprise and enjoyment. "How nice your home is, Beth. You funny child, never to have told me anything about it."

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"I'm glad you like it. How about the people in it?"

"How do I like them, do you mean? Why, I have hardly seen them yet, you know, but I think that you must feel proud of your father; and Mrs. Newby has one of the sweetest faces I ever saw. The children seem very nice, and you know how I love children."

"Yes, I know—well, I am glad if you like us and our home."

That was all Beth said. Dolly watched quietly and shrewdly. Something was ajar, and she longed to know if it were not something that could be adjusted. Whatever it was, it was spoiling Beth's life. But she could see nothing. Beth was as reserved as ever, even in her own home. Both of her parents seemed to treat her more as a guest than as a daughter of the house. Her wishes were consulted, and she was deferred to more as a stranger would be, Dolly thought, than as a daughter whose preferences they were supposed to know. 110

Everyone was polite and courteous. It was not a household that would ever tolerate quarreling or strife. Yet there was something lacking. They all seemed anxious that Dolly should have a good time, and there were many pleasant little plans for her entertainment. Dolly grew to like them all, but she was especially fond of Mrs. Newby. She often wondered why Beth did not adore her stepmother, she was so gracious and kind, so just and generous.

The vacation days passed all too rapidly for the girls. They would go back the next day, and Dolly was no nearer discovering the "rift within the lute" that served to make the music mute, than she had been on the day of her arrival. She concluded that she would never be any wiser, but that evening an incident happened that gave her a glimpse of Beth's hidden life.

CHAPTER IX

111

It was Nell's fourth birthday anniversary, and the child was to have a little party in the afternoon; in the evening Mrs. Newby had arranged for a small farewell party for Beth and Dolly. Both affairs would be more or less informal, but they would be none the less enjoyable for that reason. Nell was wild with delight.

Fifteen of her small friends had been sent pretty invitations, and she told everyone of the wonderful birthday cake that Bridget had made, and that would have four little wax candles on it for her to blow out.

"I don't like that part of the program myself," Mrs. Newby remarked in a low tone to the two girls. "I am always so afraid of some accident; but I really believe that Nell would feel she had not been given a party at all, if she did not have her birthday cake and her four candles."

"Don't worry, Mrs. Newby," Dolly said comfortingly. "If you chance to be out of the room when the wonderful cake comes in, Beth and I will watch Nell carefully until the candles are extinguished." 112

"Thank you, Dolly. I presume I am foolish, but such dreadful things do happen, you know."

Dolly assented, and then in the bustle of preparations for the two parties, which unfortunately came on the same day, she forgot all about her promise. Afterward, she reproached herself bitterly for her neglect.

The day was bright and sunny. The small folks had had a glorious time, and were now sitting around the table enjoying Nell's birthday feast. The sandwiches and other substantial had been passed, and Mrs. Newby had gone into the kitchen a moment to see about the ices. Dolly and Beth had been waiting on the little people and enjoying the fun as much as they. The butler brought in the grand birthday cake and put it in front of the small hostess. Then he, too, went into the kitchen. Nell looked at her cake for a few moments in silent rapture, enjoying the exclamations of admiration which she heard from all her little guests. Suddenly it seemed to her, that one of the candles leaned a little to one side. She stretched out her hand to straighten it. Instantly a flame leaped up from the thin white fabric of her sleeves. In a second it had sprung to her curls and the children were shrieking in horror and affright. 113

In another second Beth had pulled the child from her chair, wrapped a rug around her, and crushed the flames from the pretty curls with her own unprotected hands.

It was all over before Peter had reappeared with the ices, but the cries had reached Mrs. Newby, and with a dreadful premonition she had rushed to the dining-room with her husband, who had returned early from his office, in honor of Nell's birthday.

As they entered, Beth was unwrapping the rug from Nell. The flames were extinguished and the child was safe, though the fright had completely unnerved her, and she was sobbing hysterically.

Her dainty dress was burned, and her curls were singed in front, but that was the extent of the damage.

Mrs. Newby caught her child to her arms in a gush of unspeakable thankfulness, while Dolly poured out her remorse and sorrow with a flood of tears. 114

Mr. Newby stood by, looking more shaken than Dolly had ever believed possible for so self-contained a man. He questioned Dolly and Beth closely, and when the full particulars of the

accident had been told, he put his arms around Beth and called her his "brave, sensible daughter;" but his voice trembled and Dolly was sure there were tears in his eyes.

Peter waited on the little folks for the remainder of the meal, while Mrs. Newby carried Nell off to change her dress and to look after Beth's hands. They were badly burned; not seriously, however, and while Beth might suffer considerably from them for two or three weeks, there would probably be no permanent scars. Mr. Newby had insisted on summoning a physician at once, despite Beth's protests. Her hands had been dressed, and she had been told that she must consent to be waited upon for the next week or two like a baby.

"But I must go back to college tomorrow, Doctor, that is a positive fact."

Dr. Thornton looked rather grave. "If you are careless, Miss Newby, your hands will be permanently scarred. They should be dressed every day, and you should use them as little as possible." 115

"I do not think that I can consent to your going, Beth," said her father gravely.

"And I cannot consent to staying at home, Father," Beth returned decidedly. "Dr. Randolph, our college physician, will dress my hands for me every day. I promise to be very careful."

"If you are willing to have her go," Dolly said anxiously, "I will do everything that I can for her during the next two or three weeks. I feel as if this were all my fault, anyway, for I had promised Mrs. Newby that I would look after the birthday cake. Then I was attending to something else when it came in and I forgot all about it. If it had not been for Beth—" She stopped shudderingly.

"I know that you would do all you possibly could for Beth," Mr. Newby said slowly. "Still I do not feel that she ought to go."

"I must, Father," and Beth turned away with an air of finality, as if the matter were settled once for all. Mr. Newby said nothing more at the moment, but he looked far from satisfied. He followed Beth from the room presently, leaving Dolly and his wife alone, for Baby Nell had fallen asleep and the tiny guests had all gone home. 116

Mrs. Newby turned to Dolly with tears in her eyes. "Elizabeth has saved me from a lifetime of sorrow, but she will not even let me thank her. If she only loved me—" She broke off as if afraid to trust her voice.

Dolly broke in impetuously: "I do not see how anyone can help loving you, Mrs. Newby."

Mrs. Newby smiled rather sadly. "I cannot blame Beth at all, nor myself, either, for that matter. I believe I will tell you about it, Dolly, if you care to hear. I have never discussed the subject with anyone before, but Elizabeth's coldness and want of affection have been very hard to bear."

"Yet you said that you did not blame her, Mrs. Newby?" Dolly said, a little wonderingly.

"And I do not. It is rather strange that I should be mentioning this subject to you at all, when you are such a mere child yet; but you understand Elizabeth, and she seems more like a girl with you than I ever saw her before. I have tried to give her everything that I have fancied she wanted, but there were some things that I could not give her—that she would not let me give her. I do not know whether Elizabeth has ever talked to you about her own mother or not. She must have been a very beautiful woman; she and Elizabeth were passionately devoted to each other. They were always together, and I have been told by the old servants here in the family, that they seldom saw such absolute love as Elizabeth gave her mother. She deserved it, for she was an ideal mother in every respect." Mrs. Newby stopped and caught her breath. The hardest part of her story was still to be told. 117

"She caught a cold the fall that Elizabeth was nine years old, and it developed into pneumonia. In a week she was dead. They feared at first that the child, too, would die; but her mother had had a long, loving talk with her after she knew that there was no hope of her recovery. Exactly what she said to Elizabeth, of course, no one ever knew, but her Christian faith was one of her most marked characteristics, and she must have succeeded in imparting it to her child in a very vivid manner, for while Elizabeth grieved intensely, her grief was more like one who sorrowed for a person gone on a long journey, than like one bereft by death. Of course, everything that her mother had said or done was sacred in her eyes. She did not like anyone to touch her room, her chair, or any of her belongings. That was all perfectly right and natural. And now, Dolly, comes the hard part of my story. I cannot tell it without seeming to censure my husband, and yet I presume that he thought he was doing all for the best. He and I have never discussed the subject since the first night when I came to this house. I learned the truth then, and I know that I spoke to him very bitterly and harshly. Since then the subject has not been mentioned between us; nevertheless, it has been a cloud on all our married life. I would not be telling you all this so frankly, Dolly, if I did not want you to understand Elizabeth fully, and to help her. She is honest as the day. I often feel hungry for her affection. I shall never be satisfied without it, but the manner in which I came here rendered it impossible for me to win her love." 118

Mrs. Newby paused again, and Dolly waited in growing bewilderment. 119

"The winter after Elizabeth's mother died, Mr. Newby went west on business. He met me there. He was lonesome, and we were congenial in many ways. He came west several times, and we became engaged. We were married quietly the next summer. There were no invitations because of my mother's recent death; we sent announcement cards, but that was all. Of course, I knew that John had been married before, and that he had a daughter. What I did not know was that his wife had been dead less than a year, and that Elizabeth knew nothing of his marriage. Dolly, I

believe that many men are cowards in their own families. I cannot imagine why my husband acted as he did. I can see Elizabeth's startled, shocked face yet, as her father took me into the house and told her that he had brought her a new mother."

"Hadn't the servants told her?"

"They did not know of it either, Dolly, as I learned later. The child then was shocked and stunned. She said very little, but I heard her cry herself to sleep that night and countless nights afterward. A little tact would have saved all the trouble. If she had been told kindly and tenderly beforehand, that her father was lonely, and that he was going to bring me here—not to be a mother to Elizabeth—but to be a friend and helper to them both, there would have been no trouble. As it was, the child was too hurt ever to care for me. My chance of winning her affection had been lost. Had things been different, there would have been no trouble. Had she been old enough then to understand matters, I should have told her the truth. But she was too young then. Can you wonder, Dolly, that I felt bitter and heartsick that night? I spoke very angrily to John, and that did not mend matters in the least."

Dolly slipped her hand into Mrs. Newby's. "I am so dreadfully sorry, for it all seems to me to have been so needless. I hardly see why Mr. Newby did not tell both you and Beth everything."

"He was afraid to tell Elizabeth, my dear, for he felt at a disadvantage with her. He did not want to take the time and patience necessary to make her see the subject from his standpoint. In fact, he meant to have his own way, and he did not mean to run any chance of obstacles being placed in his path. He was afraid to tell me the truth for fear I would insist upon delaying our marriage, and I certainly should have done so. Had we waited a little, and had Elizabeth come to visit me first, my married life would have been a very different thing. John had his own way, but I think that he found that it hardly paid in the end. Selfishness does not pay in the long run, Dolly."

"I wonder, Mrs. Newby, that you never explained things to Beth when she grew older."

"As I said, Dolly, she was too young at first to tell her the facts of the case. She was merely hurt and heartbroken then. As she grew older and comprehended the situation better, she judged me more harshly. How could she believe I had married her father in less than a year from the time of her mother's death without knowing that fact, and how could she know, too, that I had supposed her to be a mere baby, not older than Nell, at most, whose love could be won after our marriage instead of before, as should have been the case with her? There has never been a time when I felt that I could tell her, and yet, in justice to myself, I wish that she knew."

"Won't you tell her now, Mrs. Newby? I do wish you would."

"It is too late," Mrs. Newby said despairingly. "One cannot alter the habits and feelings of years at a moment's notice."

"But still—"

"Never mind, Dolly, I understand now—for I was guilty of listening. I did it purposely, Mother—I couldn't help it. Will you forgive me? When I came back, you had commenced to talk to Dolly, and I heard my name. I stopped, for I wanted to hear what you were saying; it was a dreadful thing for me to do, of course, but I'm not a bit sorry. I am awfully stupid to have lived with you all these years, and yet to have supposed you were such a person as I have always pictured you in my thoughts. I wonder if you are going to forgive me at this late day—"

And then Dolly slipped out of the room, glad to the inmost depths of her heart that things were getting "straightened out" as she phrased it.

Mr. Newby had had two sensitive natures with which to deal in the days gone by, and he had not appreciated the fact in the least. One of the persons had been only a child, and he had not counted on her as being a definite influence at all. *There* he had made a great mistake.

Even after his marriage, however, if he could have had the courage to tell his story frankly to Beth, and confess his loneliness to her, she would have viewed the matter in a different light. Mrs. Newby knew that in his so doing, lay her only hope of winning the child's heart; but she was proud, too, and if he would not do this voluntarily, she would not beg him to do it. And so, during all these years, for lack of the word never spoken, she and Beth had missed the mutual love and helpfulness which they might have given each other, and which would have made their lives so much sweeter and brighter.

Despite the accident of the afternoon, the evening party was a great success, and Beth, much to her open disgust, found herself regarded as something of a heroine.

Once during the course of the evening, Mr. Newby heard Beth address his wife as "Mother." A new light had come into his eyes at the time, and a look of quiet determination. The look was still there when he sought his wife in the library after their young guests had gone.

CHAPTER X

SHE was putting the room in order, and he stepped to her side as she stood by the table. "Christine, are matters all right at last between you and Elizabeth?"

"Yes, John, I think that they are."

"It is all my fault that they have ever been any other way. I was selfish, at first, in my fear lest you would ask me to postpone our wedding day; then, afterward, when I saw what a grave mistake I had made, I was too cowardly to take the blame myself and explain matters to the child as I should have done. There was a sort of tacit deceit on my part, Christine, for which I have paid very bitterly. You have made our home beautiful, but, because of my folly, there has been that one jarring note in it."

"It is all right now."

"But no thanks to me. However, I am going to have a talk with Beth yet tonight. I shall not excuse myself; what is the worst thing in my own eyes, Christine, has been my cowardice in not facing the subject fairly long ago and telling Elizabeth that you were not in the least open to censure. The fault was all mine, but I have left you to bear the blame."

126

This was so absolutely true that Mrs. Newby made no reply, but she looked at her husband with a very forgiving smile as she laid her hand on his.

"You are an angel, Christine. Some women would never forgive me."

She laughed a little tremulously. "I know better, my dear, than to expect perfection from a poor, frail man. I am not an angel myself, as you know very well."

"I don't know it at all," he retorted, bending to kiss her. "I hear Elizabeth in the drawing-room. I shall see her before she goes upstairs. Christine, you are perfectly happy now?"

"No," she replied promptly, and evidently to his surprise.

"Then tell me the trouble at once."

"I am worried about Roy. He is too young to be sent away to school. I presume it answers very well with some children, but he needs me."

"But the public schools are so far away from us, dear, and I thought that he was hardly strong enough to stand the strain of the two sessions there. I did not know that you objected to his going. You said nothing, you know, to that effect."

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"You seemed so very sure that it was the right thing to do, and I did not know but it might turn out better than I feared. But he dreads the going back unspeakably. I found him crying about it last night, and I cannot consent to his return."

"Then he certainly shall not go," Mr. Newby returned promptly. "But what do you propose to do with him?"

"He can have some private lessons here at home. I shall see that he has enough to do, but not too much. Boys of that age need a mother, John."

"I presume so," Mr. Newby returned ruefully. "So far as I can see, I have made a mess of about everything that I have attempted to manage."

"Don't slander yourself; I would not let anyone else say that of you, most assuredly, and, besides, it is not true, John."

"I am not at all sure of that, Christine." Then he kissed her again, and went in search of Beth, with whom he had a long talk, despite the fact that it was then after midnight.

128

After all, Beth did not return with Dolly. Mrs. Newby frankly owned that she should feel very anxious if Beth went off to college before her hands had healed, and Beth found herself the next morning watching her stepmother unpack her trunk, while she herself was quite rejoiced over the fact that she should have another week or two at home. So Dolly went back alone.

Beth came ten days later, and Dolly knew, from the expression of contentment and happiness on her face, that she was now enjoying the blessing which a real home and home-love can give.

The term was a busy one for all the girls. They had come to college, for the most part, at least, because they were inspired by a genuine love for knowledge. They had their times of recreation, of course, and their merry evenings in Dolly's room when they again made fudge and tea. Nevertheless, there was plenty of good, hard work done, and the Easter holidays found them all ready for a brief rest again. Mary went home with Dolly, and Beth would stop for one night on her return to college; but now, strangely enough, as it seemed to Beth herself, she could scarcely wait to get home.

129

Beth had roomed alone since Margery Ainsworth's expulsion, and while Dolly often longed to get permission to move her possessions across the hall, and become Beth's room-mate, she was too truly fond of Mary by this time, to wish to hurt her feelings. So, while the girls often wished that they could room together, it did not seem possible, for the freshmen year at least.

As commencement time drew near, the other students began to make arrangements for the next year. Rooms and room-mates were chosen, and everything gotten into readiness for the ensuing term. Dolly and Beth were talking it over one day, rather lugubriously, in Beth's room.

"All the other girls have settled their plans, and I have been hoping that Mary would say something to me. She must know that we want to room together. Of course, I like her, but not as much as I like you. I am going to speak to her today, Beth."

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"I really think that that is the only thing left to be done; but we don't want to hurt her feelings,

Dolly."

"I'll try not to do that, Beth, but we must settle affairs."

However, Mary herself introduced the weighty topic that evening, when the three were making tea.

"Of course, I know that you two girls want to room together next year, but I hope that you have not spoken for a room yet."

Dolly flushed a little. "We would not be very apt to make any arrangements without telling you, Mary. You ought to know that we don't do underhanded things."

"Why, Dolly, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings at all, but I supposed you would room together. That was settled long ago, wasn't it? But I have a little scheme, too, that I trust you will like."

"Tell us about it," and Dolly looked a trifle ashamed of her unnecessary heat.

"Aunt Mary has her bedroom and sitting-room, of course, to herself, but opening onto her sitting-room from the other side is a small storeroom. The president says that I may have that as a bedroom if I wish, and I can use Aunt Mary's sitting-room. They will fit it up this summer. The college needs more rooms, anyway. Now beyond my room are some lovely rooms for you girls, if you want them. What do you say? I don't want to be selfish, but it did seem to me that it might be a lovely plan." 131

"Lovely? It is grand! Superb! You are a duck and a darling, Mary, to have thought of it."

"Dolly thinks that she will be near Professor Newton now, and she would be willing to room on the roof to effect that," said Beth mischievously.

But Dolly was too elated to mind Beth's teasing. "We'll make all sorts of pretty things this summer. By the way, Beth, where do you intend to spend the summer, anyway?"

"Father says that Mother and I may decide that weighty matter. We have been in the habit of going to the seashore, but he fancies that some other place would be better for Roy, although the child is very much stronger since Mother has had him at home under her eye." 132

"Then, Elizabeth Newby, I will tell you what to do. Mother writes that Father has taken the same cottage at the Thousand Isles that we had last year. You must come there, too. We can have an ideal time. Fred likes fishing and yachting. He will be away part of the summer, but will be with us at first, and a crowd of his friends, too. We can have glorious times! Hurrah!"

"Hurrah!" echoed Beth, for the idea caught her fancy. "We shall certainly do it! Mother will agree to whatever I propose. I wish you were to be there, too, Mary."

But Mary shook her head contentedly. "I know it is much more beautiful than our farm, but I don't believe that even a sight of the Alps would induce me to miss my visit home."

"Of course not. But you see, fortunately, Dolly and I mean to take our families along. What a good time we shall have! I wonder if Professor Newton wouldn't like to make us a little visit? It is beautiful there, and the ride on the steamers, out and in among the islands on a moonlight night, is as lovely as anything in fairyland." 133

"Go and ask her, Dolly, run right off! Someone else may get her promise first!"

"Be still, Beth! Do you think that she would like to go, Mary?"

"I should certainly suppose that she would be delighted. By the way, as we are only insignificant freshies still, and have no receptions or other grand functions on hand like the other classes, she wanted to know if we would spend Tuesday evening with her."

"Will we? Of course we will! When did she ask us? Why didn't you tell us before?"

"She gave me the message this afternoon, and you have really not given me a chance to tell it before."

"What a libel. Say to her that we will go; no doubt of that, is there, Dolly? Let us put on our best gowns and do justice to the occasion. Is anyone else invited, Mary?"

"We are to go immediately after dinner, and a couple of hours later, Miss Hamilton and some fifteen others will arrive. We must help entertain them. You know there is nothing special on hand for Tuesday evening." 134

"We should go, anyway, no matter where else we were invited," declared Dolly with decision. "By the way, girls, the year is practically over, and our president still goes on her way serenely, and the very snobbiest girls in the class adore her."

"I am glad. We don't want any class rows, and you know very well how Abby Dunbar and Helen Raymond would act, if they knew the truth. Though, after all, I cannot see what difference it makes."

"Where is she going this summer? Do either of you know?"

"I asked her yesterday. She is going home for three or four weeks with Abby Dunbar. After that, she and her mother are going to some quiet country place."

Beth gave a sudden laugh. "You know, Mrs. Hamilton never comes to the college, but Margaret goes to see her almost daily. Abby Dunbar must have seen her on the evening of our entertainment, for she told me that she admired Mrs. Hamilton *so* much; it was such a pity that

she was an invalid! Margaret has never said that she was an invalid, you know. I suppose Abby just concluded that she must be, because she leads such a quiet life."

"She does it entirely for Margaret's sake, I'm sure. Not that Margaret asks her to do it, but she fears to meet people who knew her when she was a servant. Abby approves of her, because she dresses well, and is at the most aristocratic boarding-place in Westover."

"There is just one thing that I should not do, were I Margaret," said Beth slowly. "Knowing Abby Dunbar as well as she does, she must be confident that Abby would not take her home, did she know that both of Margaret's parents had been servants the greater part of their lives. Knowing that, I think that Margaret does wrong to go."

"Isn't that a matter of standpoints? Margaret may reason that *she* is the one invited, and that who or what her parents were, need not concern any person save herself. She would not deny the truth if questioned, but she sees no use in advertising it. I must say," concluded Mary, energetically, "that I agree with her."

"Well, in her place, my dear, I should accept no invitations except such as I were sure would be given, even if all the facts were known."

"I hope they will not be known for the next three years, at least. By the way, do you both thoroughly realize that when we return this fall, we shall not be insignificant freshmen, but lofty sophomores? That we shall not be lonely and homesick and have no one to whom to talk, and that we can haze the newcomers?"

The girls laughed.

"What bliss awaits us! By the way, Dolly, you must be our president next year."

"I don't know," began Dolly, but Beth broke in;

"No, she can't be. Don't look so surprised; I am wiser now than formerly, and I want Dolly to be president in our senior year. I find that it is an unwritten law that the same person cannot be president during two years. It seems to be the opinion that there is plenty of good material for officers in the class, and that it would be piggish for one person to be president twice. It doesn't make any difference about the other officers, for they are not so important. I am glad, now, that Margaret Hamilton was elected last fall."

"And I am glad that you confess it at last, Beth. Listen a moment! Let us go and see what all that hubbub in the hall means. Even for the last week of college, it seems to me there is a dreadful amount of noise."

"There certainly is, and it behooves us to investigate."

A louder scream from the hallway made the girls rush out unceremoniously.

CHAPTER XI

At the farther end of the corridor, a crowd had gathered, and the three girls hurrying there, found that the commotion issued from Charlotte Graves's room.

Charlotte was explaining; "It was my exasperating lamp. It has always been wobbly, and tonight, when I chanced to hit the table, it went over. I might have known enough to pull a blanket off the bed, and smother it; but, of course, I just stood here and screamed. Then Margaret Hamilton came in and put it out. That's what it is to have presence of mind! I always was a fool when there was anything to be done. I tell you what, Miss Hamilton, those freshmen knew what they were doing when they elected you class president. If I'm not brilliant myself, I can recognize a good thing when I see it."

"Miss Graves, I tell you what you must do in sheer gratitude to the freshmen—invite us all in and get out those delicious cakes and pickles of yours. You ought to treat."

"That is certainly so, come along, all of you. Sit on the floor if you can't find any other place to sit," and after the girls had properly bestowed themselves, she got out her jars and boxes, for Charlotte was fond of good things and always kept an unlimited supply on hand.

"I trust you understand," she said severely, "that the rest of you freshmen are only here out of compliment to your president. I don't for a moment consider the rest of you her equal in anything. As she has the misfortune, however, to belong to the class of '09 instead of '08, we must put up with the rest of you, I suppose, for her sake."

There was a chorus of groans from the freshmen, and Charlotte's voice was drowned in an outburst of animated retorts. Under cover of the fun, Abby Dunbar said to Dolly, who chanced to be sitting next to her on the window ledge; "One can see that Margaret is a true aristocrat. It shows in every move she makes, and every word she says."

"Do you think so?"

"Why, yes, indeed. Surely you have noticed it? Mamma is always so careful about my associates, but she cannot help being perfectly delighted with Margaret. Don't you like her?"

"I certainly do."

"I thought you must, for you were so good last fall at the time of our class elections. Margaret has made an ideal president."

Then the conversation became general again, much to Dolly's relief. In some way the subject branched off to military men, and Margaret was appealed to.

"Were any of your relatives army men, Miss Hamilton? And don't you think that they are the finest men in the world?"

"I have not been blessed with many relations, Miss Fox, and so I have not had the chance to have military men in my own family and to know them intimately, as some of you have done. Of course, I admire them. Some of my ancestors were in the wars of 1776 and 1812, but I never saw them. My own father was anxious to be a military man and he entered West Point. He had a splendid record there, and was in love with the life, when he met with an accident out yachting that ruined his health, left him a trifle lame, and forced him to give up all thoughts of a military life. He never got over the disappointment."

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There was a general expression of sympathy, and Margaret found herself the target for more questions than she cared to answer. In such a babel of voices, however, it was easy to disregard any which she did not choose to hear, so that she extricated herself serenely from a position which Dolly knew to be rather trying.

It was late, and as Charlotte's cakes and pickles had been demolished, the girls separated presently.

"You think that Margaret's story was quite true?" Beth asked as they slowly paced the corridor on the way back to their rooms.

"I'm sure of it. Of course, her ancestors may have been privates in the wars of 1776 and 1812, but still they would have been soldiers all the same."

"But about her father?"

"I imagine that he won his West Point cadetship by a competitive examination. You know those appointments are given in that way. He may have been very poor, indeed, but if he stood highest in the examination, he would certainly receive the appointment. When he left West Point he evidently had no friends to help him to a good position, and so he took the first honest work that he could find, at least, I imagine that such was the case."

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"You are about right, I'm sure. Poor Margaret. I don't know why I pity her, though. She seems quite capable of holding her own. She is worth a score of Abby Dunbars."

"Miss Dunbar will either be a freshman next year, again, or else become a special student. I understand that the stupid ones who fail in their examinations, usually linger on for a year or two as 'specials,' so that they can say they have been at Westover."

"And Miss Dunbar has failed?"

"Flatly."

"I'm glad that we got through, Beth, and Mary is all right, too. I was rather worried about Mary's mathematics, to tell the truth, but her aunt gave her some coaching at the last. She is so thankful that she will not have to take them next year."

"And I like mathematics better than anything else. I shall take an extra course in it."

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"You will be sure to win the senior prize for that branch, Beth. I am a little like Mary, however. I shall not take more mathematics than I absolutely must."

"We'll not take mathematics, or anything else, for three blessed months."

"We shall have jolly times, my dear, see if we don't."

And they certainly did. In Dolly's eyes, at least, the evening spent in Professor Newton's room was more important than the commencement exercises themselves. Professor Newton had taken a quiet moment to thank Dolly for her real kindness to Mary during the year, and Dolly thereupon had summoned courage to beg Professor Newton to visit her during the summer at the Thousand Isles. The invitation had been accepted, and Dolly felt that her cup of happiness was running over.

Mrs. Newby was very glad to accede to Beth's wishes for the summer; and the girls had a delightful time, for Mr. Newby was fortunate enough to secure the cottage adjoining the one which Dolly's father had taken.

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Fred brought a crowd of college chums again, and there was plenty of yachting and fishing. In the evenings there were lovely rows on the St. Lawrence, and music and singing.

The girls were provided with kodak cameras, and every week they sent a group of pictures to Mary. She had started for her home on the day that college closed, but she wrote regularly, and her letters, which seemed at first quite stiff and formal, grew toward the end of the vacation to be as chatty and bright as those sent her by Beth and Dolly.

Professor Newton's visit had been postponed until the last fortnight, and when she came, she found a comparatively small crowd at the Alden cottage. All of Fred's former visitors had left, but Dick Martin and Bob Steele had come down for the last part of the vacation. The former had

spent his time in the woods of Maine, while Robert Steele had been doing hard work in a law office in Boston; for he had fully made up his mind that he would be a lawyer. He would have a hard time, but he was becoming accustomed to hard times, and his innate grit and indomitable pluck would doubtless carry him triumphantly through.

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Roy had grown brown and healthy during the summer outing, and Mrs. Newby declared every day, that she was under infinite obligations to Dolly for suggesting their coming to the place.

Beth and her stepmother had grown to know each other well, and Beth was devoted to Mrs. Newby. It seemed as if she were anxious to make up in some way, for those miserable years that were lost to them through a wretched misunderstanding. Mr. Newby seemed younger and brighter than Beth had ever known him before. While he said but little, his wife realized that he, too, had paid a heavy penalty during those years, and that now he was rejoicing in the real family love and good fellowship that pervaded his home.

Professor Newton looked at them all with interested eyes. It seemed strange enough to her that Robert Steele, whose history she knew, should find Beth so congenial. While there was plenty of depth to Beth, she usually showed strangers only the froth and sparkle of her character. However, the two seemed to understand each well, and to be the best of friends. One day Professor Newton heard Mr. Newby suggesting that Rob spend the next summer in Philadelphia and read law in his office. Naturally enough, the young man grasped the opportunity eagerly. It was a chance which many young men of wealth and social position coveted, and it had come to him unsolicited. Professor Newton could not help wondering if Mr. Newby quite realized what he was doing, but she had no right to interfere, and she was not even sure that she would have interfered if she had had the right.

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Despite the happy summer-time, the girls were not sorry to return to college. They were sophomores now, and could afford to look down on the green freshmen who seemed so forlorn and lonesome. Beth and Dolly fixed up their rooms in a gorgeous and artistic manner. Dolly's chafing-dish still held a conspicuous place. Beth had one, too, this year, and their room bade fair to be one of the most popular in the building.

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Mary was next door, and just beyond was Professor Newton's sitting-room; for the girls had been able to carry out the plan that Mary had proposed at the close of the freshmen year.

Margaret Hamilton looked into their room as they were giving the finishing touches.

"May I come in, or are you too busy to talk?"

"As if we were ever too busy to talk to our president," said Dolly promptly, pushing her guest down into an easy chair.

"I shall not be president after this week, you know, and that is what brought me here. Who is your candidate for the place?"

"Not Dolly," said Beth promptly. "I have set my heart on her being president during our senior year."

Margaret's brow cleared. "She would make a capital president for our last year, and I pledge myself to work for her. Now, as she is out of the question, for the present, I want to tell you that my candidate is Elizabeth Newby."

"How perfectly absurd!" That was Beth's exclamation, of course.

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"It is not absurd, and I want you, please, to listen to me. She can be elected, for the girls have not forgotten how grateful they were to her for saving our reputation at the entertainment last fall. There is no other strong candidate. Of course, ever so many names will be proposed in as large a class as ours, but the only one who will carry many votes is Hazel Fox."

"Hazel Fox!" the girls both exclaimed aghast.

"Yes, and you see what I mean. She is not the person for the place. We could not feel proud of her in any way. She barely escaped conditions this year, and I don't suppose she will ever get through the sophomore year with a clean record. The class is so grateful to Elizabeth, that she could be elected almost unanimously. What do you say?"

"Never mind what Beth says, I say that it is a 'go.' I'll work for her with all my might and main. I'm sure she will be elected! Of course, you will be made chairman of the executive committee." This was a position which the classes had uniformly given the retiring president.

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"I do not know. The girls may want someone else elected." And Dolly told herself that Margaret never felt sure of her hold on her classmates. She felt that Margaret would feel more secure if every bit of her history were known; probably, too, she would be happier.

They talked over the coming elections at some length, and had just decided upon the list of candidates whom they would favor when Mary entered. The news was told to her, and she endorsed Beth's candidacy very heartily, despite the fact that Beth herself persisted in regarding the whole matter as a huge joke.

It was impossible, seemingly, for Beth to realize that she was actually popular with the girls, that her many little deeds of quiet kindness, and her bright ways, had won her a warm corner in every heart. The matter was talked over again after Mary's entrance, and then Mary announced a bit of news herself.

"We have an addition to our class. Did you know it? Miss Van Gerder was a freshman two years

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ago, and was a fine student, I believe; but she was not here last year because her mother's health was poor, and they went to Europe. We shall have one of the largest sophomore classes ever enrolled here. I am glad that she is to be one of us, aren't you?"

"Do you know her first name and in what city she lives?" Margaret asked, ignoring Mary's question.

"She lives in New York, and her first name is Constance."

Something in Margaret Hamilton's tone had caused all three of the girls to look at her intently. There was no disguising the fact that she was startled and dismayed. All of them realized that Miss Van Gerder must have known Margaret in the old days in Chicago, and all three felt sorry for her now. Her position was not enviable. She showed little of what she felt, however, and soon after returned to her own room.

Dolly and Beth were passing along the lower corridor to the dining-room that evening, when they heard someone exclaim; "Why, Margaret, how glad I am to see you! I did not know what had become of you after you left Chicago!"

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The speaker was a tall, stylish girl, whom they knew to be Miss Van Gerder. At least, she appeared to like Margaret, and Dolly saw Abby Dunbar's eyes sparkle at this unmistakable proof of her friend's "aristocracy," for Constance Van Gerder was the daughter of one of the richest men in the country, and neither Miss Dunbar, nor anyone else at the college could claim the wealth or social distinction of the Van Gerders. Her face was not handsome, but Dolly liked it; it was fine and clear-cut. A face that was too noble for petty motives or mean ambitions.

Margaret had no time to say more than a few words in reply, when the second gong hurried them to the dining-room. Dolly tried to gain Miss Van Gerder's side and sit beside her at the table, for as yet the permanent places had not been assigned, and the students took whatever seats they wished.

Dolly found herself foiled, however, in this attempt, by Abby Dunbar, who had evidently determined to make the most of the opportunity, and who kept beside her new classmate until they took their seats at table. Beth and Dolly were opposite them, but Margaret was at another table at the far end of the room.

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"Miss Van Gerder looks kind," whispered Beth to Dolly. "If we only sat next to her, so as to prevent her saying anything during this meal, there would be no further danger. After dinner I shall carry her off to our room and tell her the whole story. Oh, yes! you needn't look so surprised. I'm not acquainted with her, but I shall do it anyway. You must mount guard outside, during the scene, and not let anyone else come in."

"If only she does not say something, all unconsciously, during the dinner! I feel on pins and needles myself. What must Margaret feel?"

CHAPTER XII

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"MARGARET has pluck and pride. She will hold her head as high as ever, no matter what Miss Van Gerder may choose to say, and if there be any snubbing to be done, she will do it as effectually as Abby Dunbar."

"Very true, but to think that the two are rooming together!"

"Yes, I confess that, in my opinion, Margaret made a mistake there. I should not have accepted any favors or any invitations from that girl had I been Margaret, but that is her affair, after all."

"Look! Look quickly, at Abby Dunbar's face," whispered Dolly excitedly. "The murder is out! I would give a dime to hear what she is saying. There! Miss Van Gerder realizes that she has said something she will regret. I suppose Abby was pumping in the very persistent way she has, and Miss Van Gerder merely answered her questions. Oh, how could she have been so thoughtless, though? She might have known that Westover is one of the snobbiest colleges in the world."

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"There is no use trying to head her off now," Beth declared disconsolately. "Still, I mean to have my talk with her anyway. If it be possible to repair the mischief, she will do it. Miss Dunbar is glaring at Margaret as if she would like to murder her!"

"Do you suppose that she remembers all the speeches she has made about Margaret's aristocratic bearing? If she acts as contemptibly as I expect she will, I shall repeat some of those speeches for her benefit. I've been treasuring them in my memory."

"I wish this meal would come to an end."

To the two impatient girls, anxious to find out just what Miss Van Gerder had said, and what she would do in amends, dinner seemed a most interminable meal. It came to an end at last, however, and Beth, with her usual directness, walked at once to Miss Van Gerder. "Will you please come to my room a few moments? I wish very particularly to see you. I am Elizabeth Newby, and I am very fond of Margaret Hamilton," and Beth was speaking the truth when she made that assertion, for she had come to like Margaret as she had not expected that she ever would.

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Miss Van Gerder rose instantly, despite Abby Dunbar's exclamation of annoyance. She had not

been able to hear what Beth said, but she was not at all ready to resign her claim on the new arrival.

"Please don't go, Miss Newby. Miss Van Gerder has just been telling me the most awful thing about Margaret Hamilton, and to think I begged her to room with me, and took her home with me this summer, and that we made her class president, it is too awful-and--"

Miss Van Gerder paused a moment, a rather dangerous light in her eyes. "I shall be glad if I can persuade you to relinquish your claims on Margaret, for I want her as a room-mate myself." Then she passed on.

Beth squeezed her arm ecstatically, regardless of the fact that they had never been even introduced. "You are a darling, but, oh, what possessed you to tell that girl anything about Margaret?"

"How do you know I did? Oh, I suppose you were watching us. I noticed your eyes on us all through the meal. How do you happen to know anything more about Margaret than her room-mate?"

"That is what I want to tell you. Will you come in, please? This is my room. Let me introduce you to two more of your classmates--my room-mate, Miss Alden, and Miss Sutherland, our star student in biology. No, don't go, girls."

"I thought that I was to keep intruders out."

"We will just lock the doors, and pay no attention to any knocks. Now, Miss Van Gerder, if you please, we will tell you first, what we know about Margaret and how we learned it; we are the only ones in the college who do know anything more than she has seen fit to tell. But don't imagine that she has said that she was anything that she really wasn't."

"I am glad of that, now tell me your story."

So Beth told it, with various interpolations by Dolly and Mary; she repeated both Rob Steele's story and the conversation which she and Dolly had chanced to overhear on the night of the freshman entertainment.



"Let me introduce you to two more of your classmates."

Miss Van Gerder drew a deep breath. "I shall never forgive myself for the mischief I have done, but I will do my best to repair it. Let me tell you what I know of Margaret's family. In the first place, Mr. Worthington was my great-uncle, and I visited at his Chicago home very often, so that is the way I came to know Margaret. I never saw very much of her, for she was in school or busy helping her mother, and, of course, I was going to teas and receptions, and such things, when I was there, although I wasn't much more than a child. Mrs. Hamilton was uncle's housekeeper for years, and after his wife died, he depended on her entirely for things not often entrusted to a servant. He had no children. Mrs. Hamilton was a farmer's daughter; she is a good, sensible, honest woman. She has always been very ambitious for Margaret, and that is not strange, for Margaret has a fine intellect. She inherits it from her father. He was a farmer's boy and came from the same locality as Mrs. Hamilton. They knew each other as children, and went to the same district school. There Mrs. Hamilton's education stopped. Mr. Hamilton, however, had made up his mind, as a boy, to go to West Point. He had no political influence to help him, so he studied with all his energy and might. He finally went to the city, obtained employment at a boarding-house to do work out of schooltime, and so he managed to gain a thorough foundation. He knew

that his only chance of getting to West Point at all, lay in his ability to outdistance other boys in a competitive examination. So I suppose no boy ever studied harder than did he.”

She stopped a moment to look at the interested faces of her auditors. “His chance finally came and he was ready for it. A congressional appointment was offered the boy who stood highest. Mr. Hamilton won it. He went to West Point, and for nearly three years he did fine work. While he was there, his father died. His mother had died long before. His father was ill for months before his death, and Mr. Hamilton sent home every cent that he could spare. At Easter time in his third year he was invited, with some other West Pointers, to spend the day with an acquaintance up the Hudson. They got permission and went. I do not know who their host was, but he was not a West Pointer. During the afternoon he took the cadets out in a sailboat. I presume he knew enough of boats ordinarily, but he was drunk that day; he would not let any of the other young men take charge, and so, when a little gust of wind came up, the boat went over. The others escaped with a ducking—even the drunken fellow who was solely responsible for the accident; but Mr. Hamilton struck on a rock, on the boat, or on something—no one ever knew just how it happened; anyway, the boys had hard work saving him, though he was a fine swimmer. When they pulled him into the boat, he was insensible. For weeks they thought that he would not recover, and when he did get well, it was only to learn that he must resign his cadetship. There had been an accident to his spine which rendered him totally unfit for a cadet’s life.”

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“How horribly, horribly sad.”

“It was sad, and he wished thousands of times that his companions had let him drown. He would not give up hope until he had spent every cent of money he possessed in consulting specialists. But they could do nothing for him. He drifted to Chicago, perfectly unfit for any heavy work. He tried several things and had to give them up. Then uncle chanced to advertise for a coachman. Mr. Hamilton answered the advertisement, told uncle his story, and stayed with him from that time until his death about six years ago.”

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“And Mrs. Hamilton?”

“He had very few friends, and all the time that he was at West Point he had corresponded with Mrs. Hamilton. They had always been good friends; she must have been very pretty as a girl. When uncle heard that they were to be married, he fitted up a tiny coachman’s house in the rear of his grounds. He liked them both very much. Afterward, he induced Mrs. Hamilton to come up to the house and act as his housekeeper. He came to depend upon her more and more.”

“But where do you suppose their money came from?”

“Uncle left Mrs. Hamilton seven thousand dollars. He knew that Margaret wished to fit herself for a teacher in the higher grades, and he always meant to help her through college. The money was intended partly for that purpose, I am sure. Margaret probably refused to come unless her mother would stop working. After she has graduated here, she can easily secure a position, and support them both. They will have plenty of money to last until then, for Mrs. Hamilton must have saved considerable, too. Uncle paid her generously.”

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“I think that your story of her father is very sad. With his education it does seem as if he could have secured some clerical work or some position in a bank.”

“There are eight hundred applicants for every such place; besides, Mr. Hamilton could not sit in a cramped position, writing; he had to have a certain amount of outdoor life, though he could not walk far. Really, his work at my uncle’s, suited his health admirably, though it was hard for him to take a servant’s position; there is no doubt of that. Uncle was kind to him, and made the position as easy as possible, still there was no denying the fact that he was a coachman. One day a young man came to visit uncle while I was there. It turned out that he had been at West Point while Mr. Hamilton was a cadet. Margaret’s father felt horribly disgraced, though there was no reason why he should. He had to meet Lieutenant Maynard, and it hurt his pride fearfully to act the part of a servant toward his former classmate. He always felt rebellious and bitter. He wasn’t big enough to realize that ‘a man’s a man for a’ that.’ I suppose it is hard to keep that fact in mind under all circumstances, and I have no business to be preaching, for I would probably feel more bitter than did he, if I should ever be similarly placed. As long as his own ambitions had been defeated, he became ambitious for Margaret. She was to have a fine education, and to be a professor in some college. She had a few school friends, but not many intimates. Her mother felt that she was slighted at school.”

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“And yet,” Beth could not resist saying reproachfully, “you have made it even worse for her here.”

“Yes, but you must believe that I did it all unwittingly. I never gave a thought to what I was saying. I shall never forgive myself for my carelessness. It came about naturally enough, though. Miss Dunbar seemed intensely interested in Margaret, and kept asking questions until I was rather out of patience, particularly as I was trying to listen to a story which Professor Newton was telling. She wanted to know where I had met Margaret and if I knew her very well. I said that I met her at my uncle’s home in Chicago. Was Margaret visiting there? No, she lived there. Oh, then she was some relative of my uncle’s? And I carelessly said no, that her mother had charge of uncle’s house. I should have thought twice before speaking, if I had not been giving my main attention to Professor Newton. As soon as I had made the remark, there seemed to be a volcanic eruption at my side, and I thought that Miss Dunbar would have hysterics on the spot. She said that she regretted the fact that Margaret was her room-mate; that she was not accustomed to rooming with servants, and, of course, she will be awfully disagreeable to her. I

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took a double room, but I intended to be alone. Now, however, I shall ask one of the professors to allow Margaret to come in with me. The sooner that is done, the better for all concerned. I wonder to whom I had better go?"

"Go to Professor Newton," said Dolly promptly, "and take Miss Sutherland with you. She is Professor Newton's niece, and can help you out, if you need any assistance, but I do not suppose you will."

"Thanks for the suggestion. I shall get the permission first, but possibly Margaret will not care to room with me after the hornet's nest I have raised. I wonder, Miss Alden, if you would ask her to come here while Miss Sutherland and I are interviewing Professor Newton?"

"I shall be very glad to do so. It will be much better to have your talk here, than in her room, where Abby Dunbar would be liable to interrupt you at any moment. And, Miss Van Gerder, do not feel too conscience-stricken over your inadvertence. For my part, I believe that Margaret will be glad, after the first fuss is over. No one, then, can accuse her of sailing under false colors. Everything will be perfectly open and aboveboard."

"It is good of you to say so, but I am sure that your room-mate does not hold that opinion. At least, I made no mention of her father. I presume that would be a still harder thing for Miss Dunbar to overlook."

"I think," said Dolly persistently, "that it would have been better for all concerned, if you had said that Mr. Hamilton was your uncle's coachman. Then everything would have been told at once, and Margaret would have no future disclosures to dread."

"I think I was sufficiently stupid as it was;" and then Mary and Miss Van Gerder went off to see Professor Newton, while Dolly went in search of Miss Hamilton.

She did not fancy the errand much, for she had a premonition that Miss Dunbar might also be in the room, and that a scene would be inevitable. And she was not wrong.

CHAPTER XIII

As she drew near Margaret's room, she caught the sound of excited voices. Abby Dunbar's tones reached her, high-pitched and shrill.

"You have been a fraud, nothing but a fraud, from beginning to end. You have imposed upon us all. There is no use trying to carry it off with such a high hand! You led us all to suppose that your people were respectable, and so we took you in, and now it seems that your mother was nothing but a servant, and--"

"And perhaps you would also like to know (as you evidently are not aware of the fact as yet), that my father was a coachman. I am exceedingly proud of them both, and--"

"I don't see how you dare to stand there and face us! Let me tell you one thing, though--"

Dolly ran hastily down the hall. She could stand it no longer. Her indignation burned hotly for Margaret. Why were girls so much narrower than boys? Rob Steele had been a coachman and errand-boy, and even a bootblack. He did not hesitate to say so; and yet, with possibly a very few exceptions, none of the students at Harvard treated him with any the less respect for it. But Margaret--

Dolly paused in the doorway, almost breathless. "Oh, Margaret, we are going to have a little impromptu tea in my room--Miss Van Gerder, and a couple of others. I have been sent for you. Please come!"

"You do not know that you are inviting the daughter of a coachman and a housekeeper, Miss Alden. It is time for people to know exactly who and what our class president is. She has been sailing under false colors long enough."

Margaret stood pale and cold during this tirade. The room was full of sophomores--Abby Dunbar's sympathizers, as was very evident.

"Oh, yes," said Dolly carelessly, "of course I've known all about Miss Hamilton's parents since early in our freshman year, but I didn't see what difference it made. Are you going to ask us all to write out our ancestral history for your benefit? I'm afraid that we are too good republicans here to do that for you. By the way, Margaret, Miss Van Gerder is going to beg permission of Professor Newton for you to room with her. In fact, she has gone to her now, and she wants to coax you into the plan."

Dolly threw this little bombshell with secret glee. If Miss Van Gerder intended taking Margaret up, how could these girls, with not a tithe of her wealth or standing, urge their petty reasons for snubbing Margaret?

She carried her off before there was time for further controversy. There should be no more ill words said than she could help. It is hard to unsay harsh things. It is much better to prevent their being uttered at all. There would doubtless be enough said at best, but Dolly felt that her prompt action had probably prevented a few bitter flings anyway. At the door of her room Margaret detained her. Dolly had chattered all of the way down the hall. Margaret had not uttered a word.

Now she looked steadily at Dolly.

"Are you not laboring under some delusion or excitement? I had better give you the details of our family history before I go in." 169

"Nonsense! I have known your history, as I said, since the Christmas holidays. What does it matter? Come in, and Beth shall make tea for us."

"But do tell me how you knew."

"I will tell you everything, only come in," and Dolly gave her a good-natured push into the room where the others were waiting for them, for Mary and Miss Van Gerder had already returned with permission for Margaret to change rooms, if she desired.

"I sincerely hope that you do desire, for I really want you, Margaret."

"You are very good, Miss Van Gerder."

"Now stop right there, Margaret. Whether you room with me or not, you shall not be formal. My name is Constance, and you know it very well."

"I never called you by it," said Margaret steadily.

"I hope you will now. Please don't spoil the entire year for me. If you will consent to share my rooms, and let me make up for my thoughtlessness in so far as I may, you will be doing me a great favor." 170

"I do not see why you should not have said what you did; it was the truth, and there was no reason why it should not have been told. You must not feel that you owe me any reparation. That is not true. So far as I am concerned, while the present moment may be a little disagreeable in many respects, I cannot altogether regret what has occurred. Mother, naturally, will feel sorry, but there cannot be further disclosures, for I filled in, for Miss Dunbar's benefit, all the details that you had omitted. She knows that Father was your uncle's coachman, and—"

"And he was a good one, and we all liked him. What a tempest in a teapot this is! Now be sensible. You are going to be my room-mate as a favor to me. I beg it. That is settled. I shall see that Patrick comes and moves your trunks this afternoon, and as soon as we have had some of Miss Newby's tea, we are all going over to your room to help you carry the lighter things. There is no need to bother packing those."

"Of course not," said Beth readily. "We shall be delighted to help you. With five of us at work, we shall have everything moved in half an hour." 171

Margaret looked only half-satisfied. She had pride, too. If Constance Van Gerder was taking her in a spirit of self-sacrifice, she had no intention of becoming her room-mate. Things would not be pleasant, but she could stand it, even if she *were* ostracized.

But Constance read her easily, and without referring again to the subject, she soothed her wounded pride and contrived to let her know that she was actually wanted.

A little later they all started for Margaret's room to aid her in the "moving process." The room was still filled with Abby Dunbar's friends, and they were evidently much excited.

Constance included them all in the cool little nod that she gave on entering. "You must not bear malice against me, Miss Dunbar, for stealing your room-mate. I did not know that she was at Westover, so I made arrangements to room alone, but now I must put in my claim. My right is the prior one, for I have known her so much longer."

Constance had been talking against time. She wanted Margaret to leave the room with her load of small articles. There was just one word that she intended saying to these girls on the subject they were discussing; then she intended to have the matter closed forever, so far as she was concerned. 172

Abby Dunbar herself gave the opportunity for the desired remark, just as Margaret passed from the room.

"Are you actually in earnest? I did not believe you could mean it! Have you asked her to room with you? Of course, we understand that you did it in a charitable spirit, and because you are sorry for her position here, since she has been found out, but—"

"Excuse my interrupting you. I have asked Miss Hamilton to room with me because her companionship will be a pleasure. I had to coax rather hard before she would consent. There is just one other thing to be said. Our sitting-room is common property, and I shall never care to see anyone there who is at all discourteous to Margaret!"

With that she turned away and picked up a pile of Margaret's books. She had made a telling speech and she knew it. Constance could not be unaware of the influence she exerted socially, by means of her mere name. The girls would not wish to shut themselves out from all the privileges of her room, and there would be no more open acts of aggression so far as Margaret was concerned. Of that Constance felt assured. At the same time it was certain that Margaret would be subjected to many petty slights and snubs and wounds. But she would have to endure those, and her nature was too fine to allow of her growing bitter because of them. 173

There was gossip and much quiet talk, but Constance Van Gerder's determined stand put an end to open insults and recriminations. Two days later, there was another subject for gossip, also, for Margery Ainsworth had been readmitted to college on "probation." Such a thing had rarely been

known before, and the stigma of disgrace attaching to such students as were on "probation" was great. It was understood that they were under special surveillance, and the many privileges accorded other students were withheld from them. Of course, Margery had come back as a freshman. The girls had heard that Mr. Ainsworth was intensely angry with Margery, and had declared that she must stay at Westover until she graduated, if it took a hundred years. She was to room with a freshman, and, judging from her expression, she had come back reluctantly and rebelliously. Dolly and Beth talked it over, and wondered what good end Mr. Ainsworth could hope to effect by sending her to college, when she was in such an obstinate frame of mind.

174

"At least, she has diverted the attention of the girls from Margaret, and, Beth, I like her more than I ever supposed I could. Didn't she preside with dignity at our class meeting last evening, though? No one would ever have guessed how some of the girls stormed at her only a few days ago."

"'Tis fortunate that she has Constance Van Gerder as a loyal friend. To tell the truth, I think that she is relieved now. There is nothing for her to hide or cover up. We must see Constance about the class elections, though. They will come in two days, and I am positive that Abby Dunbar will try to prevent Margaret's being elected chairman of the executive committee. That is a position which has always been given to the retiring president, and certainly Margaret has done enough for our class to deserve the honor. It would be a shame to slight her."

175

"Yes, it would. Constance is in her room now, I think, and Margaret will be at the literature lecture. Come, we will see her at once."

Constance was very glad to promise her help to the girls, and the work commenced that day in earnest. They soon found that Abby and her particular coterie had been hard at work for some little time, but Margaret's supporters labored with a will, and went to their class meeting with hopeful hearts.

"I am anxious about two offices," Dolly confessed to Miss Van Gerder as she walked down the hall toward the room in which the meeting would be held. "I want to see Beth elected president, and I want Margaret made chairman of the executive committee." Some way, rather to their own astonishment, Beth and Dolly found themselves on very intimate terms with Miss Van Gerder. The three, with Margaret, made a very congenial quartette.

176

Mary Sutherland felt at a disadvantage before this girl, whose father's name was a world-wide synonym for wealth. She was never at her best when Constance was present. She utterly refused to go to her room, and Dolly finally lost all patience with her.

"You must have a very low opinion of yourself, Mary Sutherland, if you think that a few dollars are worth more than you are. Can't you see what kind of a girl Constance Van Gerder is? Of course, she knows that she is immensely rich, but she is not silly. She doesn't dress extravagantly, or load herself with jewelry. In fact, there are a dozen girls here, who spend more on dress in the course of a year than she does. Her gowns fit to perfection, and they are always made in good taste, but she doesn't care for such things. She is forever doing quiet, lovely things for other people. Your aunt told me that she thought Miss Van Gerder would take up college settlement work. Whether she does or not, she will not be a useless butterfly of fashion."

"There is no use my trying to know her better. We have nothing in common. I am poor and she is tremendously rich."

177

"You mean that you are vilely proud, Mary Sutherland. If you were not so proud, you would see how gracious and lovely Constance Van Gerder is. It is just as much a crime for a poor person to be proud as for a rich one. Why can't you be yourself, and enjoy Constance and her bright ways as Beth and I do?"

But Mary refused to listen to reason, and drew more and more into her shell. College had only been in session a short time now, but it was evident that Mary was going to isolate herself, despite all that Dolly and Beth could say, and despite Dolly's exasperated appeals to Professor Newton. There was a strong vein of stubbornness in Mary, and much as she loved her aunt, she declined to argue this matter with her. "The girls had been good to her last year, because Dolly had been compelled to room with her, but she was not their kind, anyway, and she wasn't going to force herself in where she was not wanted."

Professor Newton and the girls had given up the effort in despair, and Mary was left to gang her ain gait. The sophomore elections had been deferred a little for one reason and another, and it was now the end of the third week.

178

If Margaret's friends had worked hard in her behalf, the opposition had been working hard, also, and before the meeting had advanced far, Dolly began to lose heart.

CHAPTER XIV

179

WHEN things were fairly under way, Dolly nominated Beth for the presidency. Half a dozen other nominations were made, but the result was very satisfactory to Beth's friends, as she was elected by a large majority.

Constance was made vice-president without opposition, and the rest of the balloting went

smoothly enough until the executive committee was reached. Then Constance made her first little speech, nominating Margaret for the chairmanship, and putting forcibly before the class, the good work that she had done as president, and "for which," Constance concluded with significant emphasis, "we want, most assuredly, to show our gratitude now, in the only way possible."

Abby Dunbar was immediately nominated by Grace Chisholm, and then, as no other names were mentioned, the balloting proceeded.

Beth felt more nervous over this, than she had when her own name was up for the presidency. Constance had done her best, and there was no doubting her influence; still, the balloting was secret, and might not some of the girls leave Constance under the impression that they would vote for Margaret, and now, when the time had come for the voting, cast their ballots for Abby Dunbar? Constance would not be able to tell what girls had kept faith with her, and what ones had not.

"I would never do for a politician," Beth confided to Dolly in a whisper. "I am too nervous and excitable; see how cool Constance is, and Margaret, too."

"Yet Margaret will feel it bitterly, if she is defeated under these circumstances; and as a class we ought to be ashamed of it if she *be* defeated, for it will be an open acknowledgment of the fact that we care more for dollars and cents, than we do for genuine worth and ability. I shall be ashamed of the sophomores if Margaret is not elected."

The class had lost some of its members, and had gained several new ones, so that at this time it numbered an even three hundred. Even Margaret, with all her self-control, began to show the strain before the tellers appeared.

The chairman was an enthusiastic admirer of Margaret, and her voice vibrated triumphantly as she tried to announce in a perfectly calm tone, the result of the voting:

Margaret Hamilton	153 votes.
Abby Dunbar	147 votes.

There was a moment of utter silence, then Constance started the applause which grew and grew until it became an actual uproar. Even those who had voted against Margaret, now, with few exceptions, joined in the applause, for Constance's keen eyes were sweeping the room, and not a girl present wished to be ranged in open opposition to her. It was she, and she alone, who had carried the day for Margaret.

Margaret realized the fact, and, while she was grateful, she felt stung and hurt. Constance found her in tears when she went to their room sometime after the meeting had dispersed. Tears, with Margaret, were a rare thing. Constance knew what they meant this time, although she affected not to.

"You see, Margaret, that you were elected, despite your declaration that you would not be. Aren't you ashamed of the little faith you had in your friends?"

"It was your friends who elected me, Constance, not mine. I am in no danger of making any mistake on that point. Do you suppose that I do not know how you have been working for me?"

"What of that?"

"If you had been as poor as I, how much influence would you have had? I am not ungrateful to you—please do not think that—but I have been treated to such a succession of slights all of my life, that I cannot help feeling a wee bit bitter. I was not elected tonight because of any gratitude or liking that the girls have for me, but merely because you—Constance Van Gerder, who will one day be one of the richest women in this country—have chosen to befriend me, and so asked those girls to vote for me. If it were not a cowardly thing to do, I should go away from here to some other college. I would take care to proclaim my full history the very first day I was there, and I would not attempt to make a single friend."

"That would be a cowardly thing to do. Next year neither Abby Dunbar nor Grace Chisholm will be here. They will never manage to get through the sophomore work. They are the only ones who are your active enemies, and they are such, merely through spite and jealousy. You are a good student, Meg; do your best for your mother's sake and for mine, too. I want you to carry off some honors on Commencement Day."

"I will do my best for you; you have done so much for me that I could not refuse to try, at least. I think I shall get permission to run down and see my mother for an hour. Professor Newton may think it too late to go, but I would like to tell Mother that I was elected. I should not have let you propose my name at all, if it had not been for her."

"Then you would have been a big simpleton. I am positive, Meg, that Professor Newton will not listen to your going out tonight, but you can telephone to your mother. Will not that do?"

"And have Abby Dunbar and all the other girls hear me? I couldn't possibly. If the telephone were not just inside the reception room where the entire college can hear what is said, I might do that."

"I see. Don't trouble yourself. It is out of the question for you to go to town tonight at this hour. Professor Newton would consider you crazy to ask, but I can appreciate your mother's anxiety, and I am going to telephone to her. It will give me great pleasure to do this, and the more of Abby's friends that are within hearing, the better."

"You are very kind, but—"

Constance had gone unceremoniously, and Margaret's expostulation was cut short.

As Constance had predicted, the little tempest created by the revelation of Margaret's family history soon died down. Of course, it was only Constance's strong influence which brought about this result; none of the girls wished to cut themselves off absolutely from her acquaintance, and Constance made it very plain that those who showed the least discourtesy to Margaret were no friends of hers.

Poor Mrs. Hamilton had been almost heartbroken when she first learned of Margaret's troubles, but Margaret herself had made as light as possible of them, and the fact that she was now Constance's room-mate, reconciled Mrs. Hamilton to everything.

185

The sophomore year was generally conceded by both the students and the faculty, to be the hardest year at Westover College. While the girls whom we know managed to have some good times in a quiet way, they found themselves, for the most part, kept very busy.

Mary Sutherland drew more and more into her shell, as Beth and Dolly grew more intimate with Margaret and Constance. Dolly complained of it repeatedly to Professor Newton. "Mary acts as if we did not have love enough to go around. Just as if Beth and I couldn't care for her now, because we like Margaret and Constance Van Gerder. I wonder if she thinks that love is measured out by the quart, Professor Newton, and that Beth and I have exhausted our supply?"

"You must be patient with my stubborn little niece, Dolly dear; she is her own worst enemy. Neither you nor I can say anything to her now. She is wilfully losing lots of enjoyment out of these college days. She has made no new friendships, for she thinks too much of you and Beth to do that. In truth, she is jealous and unreasonable, but she fails to see it. She might as well demand that God's blessed sunshine shall illumine only a few places. Some things grow by the using. Our power of loving is one of those things, Dolly. God's love reaches all the infinity of His creatures, and yet its depths are boundless. It is immeasurable. Sometime Mary will learn this."

186

At Thanksgiving time Dolly carried Mary off to her own home. Beth could not be persuaded to stop this time. She thought of last year, when she had had no desire to go home at all, and could not but marvel at the difference in her feelings now. In truth, Beth was making up for all those years of repression and coldness, by the wealth of love which she lavished upon her own people. And they returned it a thousandfold. Dearly as Mrs. Newby loved her own dainty little Nell, she knew that this child was no dearer to her than was Beth.

Mary had gone home with Dolly half under protest, but Dolly would listen to no excuses, and Professor Newton urged her so strongly to accept the invitation, that Mary finally went. Dolly felt confident that this brief visit would serve to clear away the clouds that had come between them; but in this she was disappointed. Some way she saw little of Mary, after all. Did Fred monopolize Mary's society—the two were certainly together a great deal—or, had she enjoyed Dick Martin's indolent witticisms and quiet humor so much that she had neglected Mary? She felt rather uneasy about it, and promised herself to atone at the Christmas holidays. But when the Christmas holidays came, there were new plans for all.

187

Margaret was to go home with Constance for the entire vacation. She had demurred about leaving her mother, but Mrs. Hamilton had insisted strongly that she should go for the whole time. "It is not as if you were where I could not see you every day, dear. Of course, I would love to have you with me, but just now I would much rather have you visit Miss Van Gerder." And Margaret, seeing that her mother really meant what she said, yielded the point, and went home with Constance.

188

There was to be a house party at Constance's for the last week of the vacation. Dolly and Beth were invited as well as Hope Brereton and Hazel Browne.

"I don't know Miss Sutherland well enough to ask her to be of our party," Constance said to Dolly. "She is so far away from home that I would like to ask her if I felt better acquainted. I don't see how you ever came to know her. She absolutely repels all advances."

Dolly laughed, although she was inwardly provoked with Mary. What good times she was cheating herself of! Could she not recognize genuine goodness when she saw it? What made Mary so blind and obtuse in these days? "Mary is just like a chestnut-burr on the outside," she replied now to Constance. "Sometime she will get tired of pricking all of her friends, and then everyone will see what a genuine heart of gold she has."

"I hope she will shed the burr soon, for her own sake. People do not like to get stung and pricked when they approach her in a friendly manner."

189

"I have preached until I am tired. We must leave her alone now. I am going to take her home with me, and Mother intends keeping her after I go on to your house. She is quite in love with Mother, and is as nearly demonstrative with her, as it is possible for Mary to be with anyone. We shall be a very congenial party at your house, Constance. You always do manage to get together people that suit."

"I am afraid that you will take back that remark when you know of one more invitation that I want to give today."

"What in the world do you mean?"

"Don't be stunned, but I want to have Margery Ainsworth. Shall I?"

"The idea of asking us whom you shall invite to your own home! How absurd!"

"But you don't like Margery."

"I hadn't known that you did either," Dolly said frankly.

"I have felt a little sorry for her lately. We have seen more or less of each other all our lives; we both live in New York, and as children we went to the same kindergarten, and we have seen each other with some frequency during all the in-between years. Just now Margery is not having an easy time. Instead of being a junior, as she would have been in the ordinary course of events, she is only a freshman, but I have learned that she is doing extra work and has taken some extra examinations. She hopes to come into our class as a full sophomore after Christmas."

"I wonder what has roused her so. She was never a student in any sense of the word, last year."

"She knows that her father is earnest in his determination to have her complete her course here, and so she is resolved to get through as quickly as possible. She has lost one year, but there is no reason why she should lose two. She is discovering unsuspected capabilities for study in herself; you must have noticed that she takes no recreation and has no friends. She is settling down into a mere 'grind.'"

"Margery Ainsworth, of all people!"

"It is strange. She does not love study any better than she once did, but she has an indomitable perseverance when her will is aroused. Just now she is determined to get through college as soon as possible, and to maintain a good standing. I cannot see why Mr. Ainsworth is so resolved that she shall graduate from here. She is an only child, and her mother is an invalid. He must have some weighty reason for sending her off, when she would be such a comfort to her mother."

"It must hurt her pride fearfully to be under constant supervision, not to be able to go where other girls go, and to feel that she is not trusted."

"It is hard, most certainly, but Margery brought all that on herself. One cannot do wrong without meeting the penalties for it, in some way or other, even in this life. But if she succeeds in making the sophomore class, she will come into it with a clean page turned. I happen to know that the faculty means to give her a chance to wipe out old scores."

"And you want to help the girl? Well, you don't suppose that any of the rest of us would be so mean-spirited as to make objections? If you think that, you had better withdraw our invitations."

"Don't talk nonsense, my dearest Dolly," Constance said indolently. "I am too fatigued to argue with you."

"Then come and have a walk, Con. Beth is working away at some problem in her advanced trigonometry that it would make me ill even to read over. I have come to have an added respect for Beth this year, when I see how deliberately she picks out all the mathematical courses. It would not be possible for me to do that. It tasks all of my mathematical resources just to keep account of my own allowance."

Con laughed. "You excel Beth in some other things, so that you may consider yourself even. By the way where is Margaret? I would like her to go with us."

"We might look into the library. She may be there," and Dolly made a mental note of Constance's unflinching watchfulness and care for her room-mate.

As they drew near to the library, it became evident that Margaret *was* there. The other occupants of the room were Abby Dunbar and her immediate coterie of half a dozen friends. For the most part, Abby had preserved a haughty coldness toward Margaret, although she indulged in petty meannesses and flings at her, whenever she imagined that she could do it without Constance's knowledge. She had no intention of cutting herself off absolutely from Miss Van Gerder's acquaintance.

Today, however, she had just chanced to learn of the house-party at Constance's home. She was not invited, and Margaret was! She was so full of wrath and indignation, that she forgot her usual caution. She commenced talking to her friends in a tone which would easily reach Margaret, and she contrived to put all the bottled up venom of the past term into her words. To all appearances Margaret heard not a syllable.

Just as Constance and Dolly approached the library, Abby turned, not seeing them, addressing a remark directly to Margaret.

Margaret turned toward her, a quiet scorn in her brown eyes. "Miss Dunbar, if you were unaware of some things when you invited me to your house, we are certainly quits, for I have since learned facts concerning your family which would have prevented my ever putting a foot inside your house had I known them before."

CHAPTER XV

SHE looked steadily at her classmate for a moment. Constance and Dolly had paused in the doorway. Margaret did not need their assistance. Something in Margaret's tone made Abby recoil with a sudden, inexplicable apprehension. Yet, after all, what could that girl say to hurt her—Abby Dunbar?

"I believe that by this time you are all rather well posted on my family history. Consequently you know that my father was a West Point cadet, and but for a useless accident, caused by a drunken acquaintance, he would, in all probability, be alive today, and be an officer in the regular army. His health was ruined, his hopes in life destroyed, and himself and my mother forced into menial positions, because an acquaintance to whose home he had been invited, was too drunk to manage a yacht, and too drunk, also, to let anyone else take the management in his place. The boat capsized, as you know. The only person injured was my father. I had rather today," and Margaret's voice rang out clear and strong, "be his daughter—the daughter of an honest servant—than be what you are—the daughter of a man whose drunken folly wrecked the life of as good and noble a father as ever lived."

196

There was a silence that made itself felt. "How dare you? It is not true! you know it is not true!"

"I am not in the habit of telling falsehoods or of making statements about which I am not sure. Suppose you ask your father about the matter? He will, perhaps, enjoy telling you of it. Until a week ago, neither my mother nor I knew who your father was. You may be sure that, if I had known, there would have been no inducement strong enough to take me inside your home."

Margaret turned to leave the library, and all her auditors became aware then, that Constance and Dolly had been standing in the doorway. Constance spoke a few low words to Margaret, took her arm, and, with Dolly following, walked down the hall.

Abby watched them a moment, and then burst into a flood of tears. In her heart she had a terrible conviction that Margaret's story was true. She must write and ask, not her father, of course, but her older brother.

197

She remembered what a dread her father had of yachts, and how fearful he had been lest her brother should come to use liquor as freely and as carelessly as many college boys do. He was a charitable man—very charitable, and what was it that she had once heard him say, when her mother had mildly remonstrated against a piece of benevolence that seemed actually prodigal in its lavishness? Surely he had said something to the effect that there was one debt which he could never hope to pay, now, in this life, and that he must atone, if possible, in other directions. Her mother had seemed to understand, and had said no more.

She must write to her brother that night, and tell him the whole story; no, not quite all. She need not say anything about her recent treatment of Margaret, for she had an instinctive feeling that Raymond would disapprove her conduct in emphatic terms.

She hurried to her room with a few petulant words to her friends, and scribbled off a lengthy and not over-coherent letter to her brother.

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She waited for the reply anxiously. It came in an unexpected form. There was a note from her brother, to be sure, but her own letter he had handed directly to their father, and the answer was from Mr. Dunbar. Margaret's story was true. Hamilton was not an uncommon name by any means, and he had never surmised, when he talked with his daughter's friend during the past summer, that she was in any way related to the man whose life he had practically ruined.

Hamilton had disappeared from West Point; he had tried to trace him in vain, for he had been told by the congressman to whom Hamilton owed his appointment, that the lad was friendless and penniless. He had left no stone unturned in his search, but the result had been fruitless. It was his fault, alone, that Margaret's father had been forced into such a humble position in life. Hamilton had possessed the brains and power to make himself a name in the army; but all of his tastes ran in that one direction, and when he found himself forced to leave West Point, there was practically nothing to which he could turn. He was glad to learn that Mr. Worthington had been generous to the Hamiltons in his will, and he was also glad that his own daughter had acted the part of a friend toward Margaret. It was something for which he felt peculiarly grateful. He wanted Abby to be sure and bring both Margaret and her mother home for the coming holidays. He was writing to them by the same post, and Abby must add her persuasions to his.

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The letter made Abby most uncomfortable. Why had she written home anything about Margaret? During the last days of school, she watched anxiously to see if either Margaret or Constance would broach the subject. Nothing was said, and Abby was compelled to wait until she reached home to learn that her father's invitation had been briefly declined, Margaret stating that she had already accepted an invitation for the holiday season, and that her mother did not feel equal to going among strangers alone. No word of comment was offered further, though Abby knew that her father had written a long letter full of remorse and grief.

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They discussed it the evening after Abby's return. "I am going to see Miss Hamilton in New York next week," Ray announced decidedly. "That letter does not sound like her one bit. You can't go, Pater, because of that unlucky fall you got on Wednesday, but you may trust me not to make a botch of the affair. I was charmed with Miss Hamilton last summer, but that letter is evidently written under some sort of constraint. It is no reply to yours."

"I cannot blame her in the least, Ray, for feeling bitter toward me."

"Perhaps not," Raymond said regretfully. "Still I intend to see her. You have no objections, Father?"

"No. The matter cannot drop here, and for the present I am unfortunately tied to the house."

"I would not go if I were you, Raymond," Abby interposed. "It will give her a chance to snub us."

"I don't understand you, Abby; I thought that you and Miss Hamilton were warm friends. You

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haven't gushed about her as much this term as formerly, but I did not know that you had quarreled."

"We are not as good friends as we were. I am dreadfully disappointed in her. She is not the girl I had supposed her."

"It is rather odd that you didn't tell us something about this in your letters. Miss Hamilton seems to be good enough for Miss Van Gerder, even if she is not for you. I intend to see her, Abby, and that is all there is to the matter."

It was with no comfortable feelings that Abby saw him depart for New York on the next Tuesday. Thursday brought her a short note from him.

I don't wonder in the least that you objected to my coming here. Miss Van Gerder has given me the history of the past term. I do not feel proud of the part my sister played. Father and I will have hard work undoing the mischief you have wrought. R. D.

That was all that Abby heard directly, but she knew that her father and Ray had vainly tried to get Margaret's promise to spend the Easter recess with them. No allusion was made to the matter when the girls were back at school once more. Abby heard Constance's friends talking of the gay time they had had, and she more than half envied them. Dolly seemed brimming over with fun and spirits. She had had a thoroughly enjoyable time at home and afterward in New York. Dick Martin had run down for several days, and Fred had called on New Year's. Constance was an ideal hostess. Mary had spent the time at Dolly's home, and had joined Dolly on her return to college. Mrs. Alden had vainly tried to accomplish some good by ridiculing Mary's feeling toward Constance Van Gerder. She owned to Dolly that she had effected nothing. "I think that one or two caustic remarks Fred made did more good than all my lengthy talks."

But, to all appearances, Fred had not accomplished much, either, for Mary refused to go walking with the girls when Constance was to be of the party, and she would not visit in their rooms save at times when she knew that Constance had a recitation. She was not going to be patronized, she declared, and Dolly vowed in disgust that she would never mention the subject again.

Nothing of any special interest happened through the next two terms. The four girls were growing to be extremely popular. Beth made a capital president, and the little quartette composed of herself, Dolly, Margaret and Constance were coming to be generally known as the "diggers." There were students more bright than they, perhaps, in some particular branches, but there were no harder workers, and none who were more reliable.

Beth, to her extreme disappointment, had not been allowed to go home at Easter time, for Nell was suffering from an attack of scarlet fever. She had implored her mother to let her go anyway, but Mrs. Newby had written a most decided and positive negative. "I am anxious and troubled about one daughter now, dear, I cannot stand the thought that another one is exposed to danger, too. We are strictly quarantined, and if you came, you could not return to college for several weeks. We have a good trained nurse, and Nell's case is not severe. Be patient, Beth, and do not ask to come. It is such a relief to know that you are safe."

Beth had resolved to stay at the college during the short Easter recess—she was not good company for anyone, she declared—but Dolly carried her off despite her protests. Mary stayed with her aunt, and Constance took both Margaret and her mother home this time. Mr. Dunbar had come, himself, to see Margaret, but she would make no promises. Raymond had told his father something of Abby's treatment of her room-mate, after she had become aware of Margaret's lack of social position.

Mr. Dunbar rarely exercised any parental authority; Abby had always found him indulgent and kind. On this occasion he had been more stern than Abby had believed it possible for him to be. He had insisted upon an apology being made to Margaret, and Abby dared not refuse. It had been a farce, however, for she had offered her apologies under compulsion. At present the relations between her and the "diggers" were coldly civil. Abby would not return to college the next year. She was a poor student, and had cared more for the fun of college life than for the knowledge that she might acquire. It was already arranged that she should travel abroad with a maiden aunt of her mother's.

Nell had recovered from her attack of scarlet fever, but Hugh and Roy had both come down with it. They were all convalescent by Commencement time, but the family physician was anxious for a change of air for them all. So, it had been decided that they should again spend the hot weather among the Thousand Isles, as all three of the children were eager to go there.

Mr. Alden had talked of going to the seashore, but he found both Fred and Dolly so energetically opposed to the project, that they, too, went back to their cottage at the Thousand Isles. Dick Martin spent a couple of weeks with Fred, and Rob Steele was occasionally sent there on some important errand by Mr. Newby, in whose office he was now reading law. Mr. Newby vibrated between his office and the Islands, and Rob Steele was sent back and forth with papers that needed signing or personal revision.

"Father could really get the papers by mail quite as well, I think, Mother," Beth said one evening when the two were having a comfortable talk.

"I think so myself, but he probably wants to give the boy a little breathing space. 'Tis rather hot in the city, and a few days here will do him good."

"Father is very kind," Beth said demurely, and her stepmother, well as she had come to know Beth, could not tell whether she was particularly pleased or not at Rob's coming.

The children gained strength slowly during the summer, but when September came at last, they were brown as nuts and as healthy as country children.

Fred and his friends were seniors at Harvard now. Their plans for the future were well formulated. To his father's disappointment, Fred evinced no liking for the law. His tastes ran toward electrical engineering, and with a sigh Mr. Alden resigned all hopes of having his son succeed him in business.



"Father could really get the papers by mail quite as well, I think, Mother."

Dick Martin had determined to be a doctor; there was no special need for him to work at all, but despite his surface indolence, there was no actual laziness about him, and he wanted to do a man's work in the world. He told Dolly of his plans that summer. He was rich enough not to need any income from his profession, and while he would not turn away rich patients, he intended to practice among the poor almost exclusively. He would charge as little as possible; less even than the medicines would cost; but, except in cases of really abject poverty, he thought it best to charge a mite, so as not to pauperize his patients and make them lose their self-respect.

"I've thought about this matter considerably. It seems to me that the physicians who do the most among the poor, are the ones who are not well off themselves, and who cannot afford either the time or the means for such a practice. The rich fellows generally have a practice among their own class, and they do not need the fees at all. I do not like to give money outright, except in rare cases, but I can give my services when I become qualified; if I do not charge them the same fees that I shall my richer patients, they will never know the difference. I mean to provide the medicines myself, and to fill my own prescriptions. I can do it more cheaply, and then I shall be sure that they get the stuff. Half of the time the poor have no money with which to have prescriptions filled. What do you think of the plan?"

Dolly considered it a noble plan and was not backward in saying so. Beth thought that Dick seemed much more gratified by Dolly's approbation than by her own, which was quite as frankly expressed. But she was careful not to say so to Dolly.

The girls were juniors now, a fact that they found it hard to realize. College seemed like a second home to them when they returned, and they went over every nook and corner of it with real affection. Several girls had dropped out of the class, as was only to be expected, but they had gained some new members also, so that they were still the largest junior class ever enrolled at Westover. They numbered 291, but Abby Dunbar and three of her most intimate friends had dropped out.

Mary kept her old room. Constance and Margaret were room-mates again, so were Dolly and Beth. Even Mary was inveigled into the little reunion which they held in Dolly's room on the night after they all returned.

CHAPTER XVI

THEY had talked over the summer holidays quite thoroughly, when Beth brought up the subject of class elections.

"We want Dolly for president next year; we shall want Margaret as editor-in-chief of the *Chronicle* (the *Chronicle* was a college monthly managed entirely by the senior class, although contributions were frequently accepted from members of the other classes), we want Constance for class historian, too, and Mary ought to be on the executive committee; as we shall want so much then, I think that we had better keep in the background this year, don't you?"

"Is that all you want, Beth?" Dolly questioned dryly.

Beth ignored the protests that Constance and Mary both were making regarding their fitness for the positions to which Beth wished them elected.

"I do not want too much, and I do not want more than I mean to get either! If we work for the other girls this year, they can afford to help us next. I was president last year, and of course I am still president for a few days yet. After I go out we will all keep in the background during this junior year, for really we are not pigs." 211

"So glad you told us that; some people might think we were," murmured Dolly. Beth gave her a vigorous pinch and went on calmly. "You girls are just the ones for the places I named, and we want our best material to the fore during our senior year. None of you have any special candidates at heart this year, have you?"

"I do not want to interfere with any of your plans for Dolly's election next year, Beth, but I would be glad if Margery Ainsworth could be elected to one of the minor committees this year."

"Now, in the name of common sense, why do you care about her?"

"I feel sorry for the girl, Beth. She is studying well now, she has no special friends, and a little honor like that would do her an immense amount of good."

"Do you really like her, Con?"

"I am not sure that her character is enough settled yet for me to say. Of course, I do not care for her as I do for you girls here, but I feel immensely sorry for her. Her pride is hurt continually. She will either develop into something strong and good, or else grow unlovable and unloving. Let us help her this wee bit, girls. Her pride is being wounded all of the time now, and a little recognition by her classmates may come at just the right time." 212

"Oh, if you want us to do missionary work, Con, and put it on high moral grounds—"

"Be still. I just ask you to do a nice little thing for a girl who feels that she has no friends. And you will do it, too."

"Will I?" and Beth looked mutinous. Constance smiled serenely. She was sure of Beth's help when the time should come.

The girls all felt that the one who was made president, during this, their junior year, should be both capable and popular. Either Constance or Dolly could have been elected, had they so chosen, but Constance utterly refused to consider the matter, and Beth would not hear to Dolly's being nominated. It ended with the election of Hope Brereton, and the "diggers" were not represented at all in the offices, with the exception of Beth, who was made chairman of the executive committee since she was the retiring president. Margery Ainsworth, to her own intense surprise and gratification, was put on the entertainment committee. 213

It did not take long for the girls to settle into their former grooves again. The old friendships were cemented, and some new ones were formed. Mary retreated again into her shell, and Dolly felt more than once like shaking her. In other ways Mary had improved materially. She could not afford handsome dresses, but those that she had, were becoming in color and soft in texture. Her hair was arranged to show its real beauty, and while she was far from being a pretty girl, she had a fine, intelligent face, and the promise of future beauty. She was looking forward to the time when she could teach, and earn money to lighten the burdens on that western farm.

Just before Thanksgiving time, the sophomores gave a little entertainment to the juniors. Mary came into Dolly's room one day with a wry face. "I fear that I shall not be able to attend that entertainment which the sophomores are giving us." 214

"I would like to know why?"

"We shall have to wear some sort of evening dress, I suppose, and the only thing that I have is my white."

"That would be just the thing," said Constance, who chanced to be present.

"It's not very elegant, but it would do, only I have not got it. I sent it to Mrs. O'Flaherty three weeks ago to be laundered, and it hasn't been sent back yet."

"Write to her."

"I have. I've sent her a dozen missives. But she does not answer."

"Go and see her."

"She lives too far away."

"Then try one more note; make it pathetic and appealing and stern and threatening all in one. That will surely bring the dress."

"Very well, I will."

But as she was about to commence the note, Mary decided, that after all, she had better go herself. She dressed rapidly, and started out alone. Either Dolly or Beth would have gone with her willingly, but she would not ask them. Mrs. O'Flaherty lived at the farther side of Westover. Mary found herself out of breath and impatient when she reached there. She was about to knock when the door opened, and Constance came out, Mary's dress in her arms.

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"I was going to take the liberty of carrying your dress to a woman whom I know. She will do it up beautifully for you, even on this short notice. Mrs. O'Flaherty is ill—too ill to answer your notes or to think about your dress at all."

"Then I had better go in and see her a moment."

"You can do no good, I am sure."

"Perhaps not, but still I will go in; if you can wait for me just a moment, I will relieve you of that bundle."

"There is really nothing to be done, Mary, and Mrs. O'Flaherty is just falling asleep."

Mary made no comment, but went directly in, taking care, however, to move more gently than usual. Mary was not a quiet person ordinarily, being the last one that an invalid would care to have in a sick room. She wondered angrily why Constance had tried to prevent her from entering. If she were as rich as Constance Van Gerder, she would do something for poor Mrs. O'Flaherty. She was too poor to do anything herself, but at least she could show a little sympathy! Full of indignation against Constance, Mary was pushing into the tiny house, when her way was suddenly barred.

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Looking up, she recognized Dr. Leonard, the leading physician in Westover. "I cannot let you in, Miss Sutherland. Mrs. O'Flaherty has some kind of a low fever. I cannot tell just what it will develop into yet, but I could not allow you to run the risk of going in there."

"But is there nothing I can do? The woman is so horribly poor. I'm not rich myself, but—"

"She will be all right now. Miss Van Gerder has gotten hold of her. She just chanced to learn today, that Mrs. O'Flaherty was ill, or she would have had me here before. You need not worry, Miss Sutherland. Miss Van Gerder will do all that is necessary. She has given me money for food, fuel and nurse. I can call upon her for as much more as I need. I wonder if you girls up at the college know half the good that Miss Van Gerder is doing with her wealth?"

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"No, we don't," Mary said shortly, and then, ashamed of her curtness, she lingered to make some more inquiries.

Constance was waiting for her by the gate. Mary took the bundle from her arms, despite Constance's remonstrances. "You are not going to carry my bundles, when I am along, at least. If you will tell me where that other woman lives of whom you were speaking just now, I will try to hunt her up."

"I can take you there, but she lives on such a funny back street that I cannot well give you any directions."

"How do you know all these people? I have never been to Mrs. O'Flaherty's house before, and I should not have gone this time, if my dress had been sent home on time. Did you go because of what I said today? I would really like to know." And Mary meant it.

"Yes, I suppose I did, but there is nothing very wonderful about that. I concluded that she must be sick or in trouble, when you failed to hear from her, so I looked her up."

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"And you, probably, had never heard of her before, while she has been doing my laundry work ever since I came to Westover. It strikes me that I have been both thoughtless and selfish."

"You have been busy," Constance said gently, "and then, in a certain sense, I feel as if these cases were my work just as much as Greek and History. Mother does not believe in indiscriminate giving. She believes in personal investigation as far as possible. That takes longer, of course, and is much more bother, but she has made me feel that I have no right to waste my money (even if I do have more than most girls), by a lazy way of giving. What I give carelessly to some unworthy person who asks aid, may really belong by right to someone else who is deserving and whom I would have found, had I investigated personally. Do you see what I mean? I cannot help everyone, and so where I *do* help, I want my money to do good, not harm."

"Your way must cost a great amount of time and trouble."

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"It often does, and that is my real, personal part of the giving. I cannot take credit to myself for giving the money which comes to me with no exertion on my part."

"What shall you do when you are out of college and in society?"

"I never expect to be in society, as I suppose you understand that term. I have no particular fondness for receptions and gowns and balls. One tires of it all fearfully soon. I shall do some sort of college settlement work, but I shall not undertake it until I feel better prepared than at present."

"Dolly always said that I never knew anything about you, and she was right. In your place I know that I should just be getting all of the good times that I could for myself. I'm afraid that I should not care for much except the frivolous part of life. It is well that I am poor, and not likely to see much gaiety, because it has an irresistible attraction for me. You would not imagine it, would you?"

But Constance could understand perfectly how Mary's hard, prosaic life on the western farm had caused her to think with deep longing of the bright, fashionable world in which she had no part or lot. Constance's comprehension was so perfect, and her sympathy so delicate, that Mary grew bitterly ashamed of the narrow feelings and jealousy which had marred all her sophomore year. There should be no more of it, she told herself sharply. Mary was not afraid to face facts when she once met them.

She owned, now, that she had been jealous of Dolly's open admiration for Constance. Then she had called Constance proud and unfeeling. Who had stood Margaret Hamilton's friend? Who was helping Margery Ainsworth to regain her self-respect? Who had gone to Mrs. O'Flaherty on the first hint of sickness? And had not the doctor declared that the college girls were ignorant of the greater part of her charitable deeds?

"I believe that I have been a big snob," Mary told herself. "We can only be measured by our inclinations and our deeds. Certainly, even in proportion to my limited means, I have done far less good than Constance. It never occurred to me, for instance, to look up Mrs. O'Flaherty for her own sake, because she might be ill. I only thought of getting my dress."

Mary never resorted to half-way measures. She now gave as frank and open admiration to Constance as did any of the "diggers;" Dolly and Beth rejoiced over her conversion.

But Beth said, "If she felt at all toward Constance as I now feel toward Margery Ainsworth, when I see Constance wasting her sweetness in that direction, I can sympathize with her. Mary was rather jealous of your affection for Constance, Dolly, and while I do not think that I myself am jealous, I surely hate to see Con lavishing time and patience on Margery."

"You are sure it is wasted?"

"Yes, I am. Don't forget that I was Margery's room-mate. I flatter myself that I know about all that there is to know concerning that young lady."

"Yet I think that Constance is a tolerably good judge of character. There must be latent possibilities in Margery which you have never discovered."

Beth shook her head obstinately, but that very day proved the correctness of Dolly's conclusions and made Beth resolve to be more charitable in her judgments.

CHAPTER XVII

THAT evening Dolly was wishing for some one's note-book on Greek art, that she might make up a lecture she had lost because of a headache. Beth noted rather anxiously that Dolly had many headaches in these days. This was something new. Until very lately, Dolly and headaches had been strangers.

The junior year was conceded by everyone to be the easiest year in the entire course, so Beth did not believe that Dolly was working too hard. Yet she seemed tired so much of the time! She had been so anxious that athletics at Westover should be revived, but now, when an effort was being made in that direction, Dolly took only a languid interest in the matter. Beth helped her in many little ways, and hid her increasing anxiety, although she was fully determined to write to Mrs. Alden, if Dolly did not grow stronger within a short time.

Beth looked up as Dolly was expressing her wish for the notes on Greek art. She, herself, was not taking that course, for she preferred logarithms and abstruse calculations, to the marvels of the Parthenon.

"I'll get you Margery Ainsworth's note-book, Dolly; she has full notes on everything, the girls say."

"Yes, her book would do splendidly, if she will loan it, but I ought to get it myself. There is no reason in the world why you should be running my errands in this fashion."

"I like it, so don't talk nonsense," and Beth went off briskly.

She gave a little tap at Margery's door, then entered, thinking that she had heard Margery speak. When she was fairly in the room, however, she saw Margery lying on her couch, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"Why, Margery, what is the trouble? have you had bad news? Do tell me."

Margery sat up hastily. Beth was not the person whom she would have selected as her confidant. "I have just received a letter from Father. He has been crippled in business for some time by the recent bank failures, and now he has lost everything."

"Oh, Margery, I am dreadfully sorry."

"Mother is such an invalid that it will be hard on her. She has a little money of her own, not much, but enough, Father says, to pay up every cent he owes and to keep me here until I graduate."

"It must be a comfort, Margery, to feel that he will not owe any person a cent."

"Yes, it is," with an irrepressible sob, "but, oh, I want to be at home helping, but Father says that I can help best by going through and graduating. He was afraid of this, and that was the reason he was so determined that I should graduate here and be prepared to teach. Mother may need to depend upon me entirely some day, for, of course, Father is not young any more, and we have no near relatives; no one, at least, upon whom we would ever call for help."

"You must be proud of the fact that your father can depend upon you, dear."

"There is not much to be proud of. Just think, Beth, if I had not wasted so much of my time, I should be graduating this year. Now I cannot be of any help for nearly two years. That is the bitterest part of all. We have never been rich people, but Father made a comfortable living for us. I ought to have realized that it cost a great deal for him to send me here, and I should have made the most of my time—but I didn't."

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"No one could have done better than you have been doing lately, Margery."

"But I cannot make up that lost year. That is the dreadful part of it. Repentance doesn't take away the consequences of one's folly, does it? We have to pay for it all. Just now, when I ought to be in a position to help at home, I am only an added burden. Father has seen this coming for years, but I did not know it. He lost many thousands of dollars in a great bank failure four years ago. He has never quite recovered from that blow. If there had not been several failures lately, though, among people who owed him money, he would have managed to pull through."

"But you knew nothing of all this, Margery, so do not blame yourself too severely."

"I knew that Father was not rich, and I ought not to have wasted my time. I know that I must graduate now, if I would teach, but it is dreadfully hard to think that I must use up my mother's little pittance for it."

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"But she wants you to take it, dear, and I am sure that the best thing you can do for your parents, now, is to be cheerful and happy. You will probably have many long years in which to work for them both; and really, Margery, you are working for them now just as truly as if you were earning money for them."

But even Beth's bright reasoning failed to console the girl, and Beth went back to Dolly feeling quite downcast.

"There, if I didn't forget your book! Let me tell you the news and then I will go back and get it."

"Never mind the book," said Dolly when Beth had told the story. "I feel too wretched to use it tonight. I wish you would tell Constance, though. She may know how to comfort Margery a little, and perhaps she can devise some plan for helping her."

But while Constance was sympathetic and kind, she could think of no way for assisting Margery just then. "When she is ready to teach, I can help her, I am sure. I think it likely that she may be able to get a good position in one of the fashionable boarding-schools in New York; then she will not be obliged to leave home."

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So Margery's friends did all that they could for her in a quiet way, but, after all, they could not carry her burden, and Margery felt in those days as if life were a hard thing.

Dolly's headaches had grown no better; they had become perpetual, until Beth, in frightened desperation, wrote to Mrs. Alden. Before her mother reached the college, however, Dolly had been removed to the hospital, and several of the other students were developing symptoms of the same malarial fever that had attacked Dolly.

"There is much of this disease in the lower portion of the city. I have been attributing the trouble there to bad drinking water, but that hardly seems to account for the outbreak here, because your drinking water is wonderfully clear and pure."

"We are often in that part of the city, though," Beth said, "and we almost always get a drink at the fountain."

"That accounts for it, then. How often have you been in the habit of going to that part of Westover?"

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"Nearly every day. You know that we are required to take outdoor exercise."

"We must see that no more mischief is done," the Doctor said, with a grave face.

But although the fountain was removed and a new system of drainage introduced, the mischief was already wrought, so far as Dolly was concerned. All of the girls liked her, and were ready to do all in their power to make things easier for her when she returned once more to her classes. Her illness was not serious, but it was tedious and wearisome. Constance copied her own literature notes into Dolly's book, and Margery copied the Greek art. The professors did everything in their power to smooth things, but Christmas found Dolly pale and thin, and utterly aghast at the work she must take up; for the half-yearly examinations to which the juniors were treated would come at the end of January and she was far from being prepared.

"I wonder if I hadn't better give up college altogether, Mother? It will break my heart to do it, but, honestly, I do not see how I can ever make up all this work. I lack the energy to attack it. It is not merely the work that I have missed, either, during these three weeks since I have been in the hospital. I could not do good work for several weeks before that. To think of Beth's graduating, and my not even being in college then," and Dolly tried to wink away the tears which would come, for Dolly was not strong yet.

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Mrs. Alden had stayed throughout Dolly's sickness, and now she looked at her daughter thoughtfully. "I want to do the best thing for you, Dolly, and, as far as I am concerned, I feel like bundling you up and taking you home for good. I wrote Fred to that effect, but he says that you will not forgive me in after years if I do it. He has a plan of his own, and you shall hear it. Then you can decide for yourself what to do. You are old enough to make the decision unaided. Fred wants to bring home Rob Steele for the holidays. There will be nearly three weeks. He says that Rob has been overworking fearfully, and is in danger of breaking down. Rob refuses to come, because he says that he is already under so many obligations to Fred. He is as obstinate as a mule, your brother declares. So Fred proposes that you take home your note-books and whatever else you need, and let Rob coach you up in the mornings. He can make him come under those circumstances. He wants me to tell you that Rob is a splendid coach, and that he will fix you up so that you can go back in January with a free mind. You can give your mornings to study, and have plenty of time for fun beside. What shall I tell him, Dolly, dear? I must write at once."

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"I believe, I actually believe, that I could do it in that way. Beth wanted to help me, but we do not have the same studies, and I knew how anxious she was to be at home, too. This plan will help Mr. Steele, and Fred will like that."

"Yes, Fred will like that, for he is fond of Rob, but, most of all, he will like helping you, Dolly. Fred is proud of his sister. Can you do this without overtasking yourself? Health must come first."

"I know I can. It was mostly the thought of sitting down to the horrid old books all alone; I merely didn't have the courage to face the prospect. This will improve matters. I would rather do it than not-much rather. I am considerable of a baby since I have been sick, Motherdie, and I dreaded going at the work that will have to be done. At the same time, I couldn't bear to fall behind the class. Fred is a jewel."

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And so the matter was settled, to the delight of all. Beth's face looked brighter than it had since Dolly's illness. "I just could not stand it to have you drop out, Dolly. Tell Fred that he is the nicest young man I know, to think of this solution of the difficulty. You will get through all right, I know!"

And Dolly did get through, for she worked faithfully during the holidays. Rob Steele was about the best person she could have had to help her, and, as Fred surmised, he agreed to go willingly enough, when he found that there was work for him to do. When vacation was over, and Mr. Alden tried to pay him, however, he bluntly refused to take a cent. He was so positive in his refusal, and so hurt that the offer was even made, that the subject was dropped.

Margaret and Mary had gone home with Constance. Several of the other girls had joined the party later and Margery Ainsworth had been with them for a couple of days. Beth and Dolly had been invited, but Dolly could not spare the time from her studies, and Beth would not go without her. Besides, as she told Mrs. Newby: "I like home better than any other place, so what is the use of running off the moment I get here?"

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"We like to have you with us, dearie, but we must not be selfish. If you are really happy here at home, we shall be glad to keep you. Nell and the boys have been looking forward to vacation time very eagerly. You know, though, that you would have a gay round of pleasure if you should go to Constance."

"But I am not going, Mother, and that is positively settled. You need not say another word unless you want to get rid of me."

"That is so likely!"

So Beth and Dolly spent their holidays this time in their own homes, and while they would have enjoyed the good times which Constance gave her friends, they doubtless went back to their studies all the fresher for the quiet rest they had had.

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Dick Martin had run down to see Fred on New Year's Day. He pretended to feel much hurt and slighted when he found that Rob Steele had been coaching Dolly all vacation.

"Why didn't you ask me? I was in need of such a job, and I would have done it for much less than Steele! Next time you want help, don't forget me."

"Have you any references from former pupils?" Dolly asked maliciously.

"Now, I call that a very unkind speech. If you are going to doubt my ability, I have nothing more to say, of course; still, next time you need help I do hope that you will give me a chance. I mean it, Miss Dolly."

"I trust that there will be no 'next time.' A few such setbacks as this, and I should be obliged to leave college."

"I sincerely hope there will not be, either. Now I would like a promise from you, and I hope you will not refuse to grant it. I have been intending to speak about it for some time."

CHAPTER XVIII

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"WELL?"

"You want to see your brother graduate?"

"Of course I do. We have not made any definite plans as yet, but I have been counting on being at Harvard for all of commencement week, if I can manage to get permission. Fred wants me to bring Mary and Beth, too."

"That will be fine, but don't you see that Fred cannot do justice to three young ladies? Let me do the honors of Harvard as far as you are concerned. Come, now, promise!"

Dolly shook her head. "Fred is a model brother, and I am sure that he would be utterly disgusted if I should make any such promise as that. I think that he will be equal to the three of us, but I shall be glad if you will assist him in his onerous duties."

"You are not very generous to me, but when you find Fred engrossed with Miss Sutherland, and entirely oblivious to the fact that he has a sister, I will forgive you, and take you under my protecting care."

"Fred will not forget me."

Her companion laughed mischievously. "I would like to make a wager on that point, but I know that you never bet—so all I can do is to wait for the future to prove me a true prophet."

During the busy weeks that followed, Dolly thought of his words more than once. Was it possible that Fred cared particularly for Mary? She did not think so. She hoped not, too, for she knew Mary well enough to be sure that that young lady wasted no thoughts upon Fred, or upon any other young man.

"All Mary cares for," she told herself half-angrily, "is biology, and her own family. She has her future mapped out, and she expects to teach forever and forever. Fred need not waste a single thought on her, and I do not believe that he does, either."

But when commencement time approached, and Fred was so plainly cast down over Mary's refusal to go to Harvard, Dolly began to think that she might be wrong in her conclusions. Fred had the matter so much at heart that he bespoke his mother's influence, and Mary at length gave a reluctant consent.

"But I have nothing to wear that is new and pretty, Dolly, and you will be ashamed of me."

The conversation took place in Professor Newton's room, and she interposed at this point. "You must have a new white dress, Mary, and it shall be my present to you. We will get a very pretty one, and with what you have already, Dolly need not be ashamed of you."

"As if I would be, anyway," Dolly protested reproachfully.

But Professor Newton realized that a new dress may give a girl a certain self-possession and ease, so she was determined that her niece should have at least one gown that would be becoming and suitable. Mary grumbled, over the waste of money, as she termed it, but her aunt quietly silenced her, and sent her off to Harvard, hoping that, for once in her life, Mary would act like a young girl instead of an old woman, and would get as much pleasure out of the week as Beth and Dolly did.

Probably, to the majority of visitors, the Commencement that year was like other Commencements, but Dolly was sure that it was much more brilliant than anything ever before held at old Harvard.

Rob Steele had won substantial honors, and both Fred and Dick Martin had earned their degrees. The boys saw that the girls had a share in all the fun that was going on.

Westover would not close for another fortnight, but examinations were over, and the girls could enjoy themselves with an easy mind. Dolly found herself depending upon Dick Martin rather more than she had expected to do.

"Am I not a better prophet than you thought?" he asked one day when Fred and Mary had disappeared.

"I am afraid that you are."

"Afraid! I beg your pardon, but I do not understand you. I imagined that you would be quite pleased to find that Fred appreciated Miss Sutherland."

"But she does not appreciate him!"

"You are sure?"

"Positive."

Dick gave a low whistle. "I never thought of that phase of the subject, I'll confess. Fred is such a good fellow that I supposed anyone would like him."

"Mary likes him, but that is all. He certainly cannot vie in interest in her mind with biology."

"Poor Fred."

Dolly sprang up. "I am not going to worry about Fred. Mary and he are good friends, and Fred is far too young yet to think of anything else."

Martin indulged in a long laugh. "Don't let him hear you, or he will think that you do not appreciate his years and new dignities. As a matter of fact, more than fifty per cent. of the students here are engaged."

"How unutterably foolish."

"Why, pray?"

"Because they are too young to know what they want, or what kind of women they really like. If they studied harder, they would not be getting into so much mischief."

"Then you think the boys should wait until—"

"Until they are not boys," finished Dolly abruptly. "Come and let us hunt up the others."

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And for the remaining days of the visit, Dolly was unapproachable, though why she acted just so, was a matter which she herself could not have explained very satisfactorily.

There had been considerable discussion over the summer plans. The Aldens and Newbys went to the Thousand Isles finally, though Mr. Alden insisted that another year they must try the seashore.

Rob Steele had gone directly from Harvard to Philadelphia, and was working hard in Mr. Newby's office. He had not broken down during his senior year, but he had been very near doing so. Later in the summer he and Fred might go camping for a fortnight in the Adirondacks, but he refused all invitations to the Islands. "He could afford neither the time nor the money, for such a delightful outing."

Constance and her mother had gone to England for the summer. Margaret Hamilton and her mother were spending the warm weather at a pleasant farmhouse near Westover. Dolly and Beth heard from both the girls frequently.

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Margery Ainsworth had found tutoring to do—and was perfectly happy in consequence. She begged her father to let her try and find some work the next year; she was sure that she could find something which she was capable of doing, but her father would not listen.

"My health is none too good, Margery, and when I am gone, I want to know that you will be able to take care of your mother well. You cannot do that now. You are not fitted for any special thing. You would be compelled to work for a low salary, and when hard times came, you might find yourself without any position at all. I should like to give you a couple of years of post-graduate study, too, but that is impossible now."

So Margery yielded, knowing in her heart that her father's plan was really the wisest, and promising herself to utilize every moment. Yet she hated the thought of drawing upon their small reserve fund for her college expenses.

It was Professor Arnold who finally came to her assistance. College had opened and the work of the year had fairly commenced. Professor Arnold was none too popular with the girls, principally for the reason that none of them understood her well. She was exacting in the classroom, and indolent students received small mercy at her hands. Yet when people once penetrated beneath her reserve, they found her lovable, charming and sincere.

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She knew Margery Ainsworth's circumstances well, and since the girl's second entrance at college had watched her keenly. Now she went to her with a proposition that filled Margery with the keenest gratitude. "Miss Ainsworth, could you manage to take the Latin classes in the preparatory department? You are perfectly competent to do the work, and if you think that you can find the time and if you care to undertake it, what you do there will balance your expenses here."

There was no doubt that Margery would find the time. What wouldn't she do for the sake of paying her own way? So she undertook the work eagerly, and wrote a joyful letter home. Mr. Ainsworth shook his head rather dubiously over it. He feared that his daughter was undertaking more than her strength would permit, but he did not like to forbid the plan definitely, and so Margery went on with the work. There were many times when she was so tired that it did seem as if she could not prepare her own recitations for the next day, but she never quite gave way, and she never once regretted the fact that she had undertaken the extra duties.

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Professor Arnold kept a watchful eye on her, although Margery was not aware of it, and she became more and more certain, as the year went by, that Margery was just the person that Madame Deveaux would want the next year, at her exceedingly fashionable school in New York. One of the teachers would leave at the close of the present year, and Madame had already asked Professor Arnold to secure someone for her. So, although Margery did not know it, her way was being made plain and easy. Constance, too, had been thinking of Margery, but when she found out, accidentally, what Professor Arnold's plan was, she said nothing more, merely resolving to make Margery's holidays as pleasant as possible. And Margery would be happy in her work, knowing that she was helping her home folks and was making the best atonement possible for her former folly.

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Class elections passed off smoothly. As Beth said, she had not planned things for two long years just to fail at the last moment. Beth's "ticket," as Dolly insisted on calling it, was carried through triumphantly, and without any hard feelings on the part of any one.

So Dolly was elected president, Margaret was editor-in-chief of the *Chronicle*, Constance was historian, and both Mary and Beth were on the executive committee. Beth had objected decidedly when her name was proposed, but she was so capable and energetic, that her classmates really wanted her in that all-important place.

The majority of the girls had their plans more or less well defined for the next year. Margaret had

already given her name to the faculty as an applicant for a school, and it was hardly to be doubted that she would get what she wished. Westover ranked so high among colleges, that its graduates were in demand every place, and each year brought the faculty scores of letters, from both public and private schools, asking that one of Westover's graduates be sent them.

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Constance would take a couple of years of post-graduate work before going into the College Settlement. Several of the others expected to be back for one year at least, Hope Brereton, Hazel Browne, Ada Willing and Florence Smith. Some of the others, too, perhaps, but neither Dolly nor Beth felt that they could be spared longer from home. Beth knew how much her stepmother and the children looked forward to the next year, and so, although she did wish at times that she might be back at Westover for some special work in mathematics, she did not entertain the thought seriously, for the boys really needed her, and her father said that they were lonesome at home without her. She would help to make her home as pleasant as she could, and she would do some earnest work with her music. Without doubt there would be enough to keep her busy! She would find plenty of duties when she came to look for them.

Dolly knew that her father and mother felt that they had spared her as long as they could. Fred would still be away for several years, for he had decided to take a thorough course in electrical engineering in Boston. Dick Martin was studying medicine there, so that the two saw considerable of each other.

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Mary Sutherland was hoping for a place in the preparatory department the next year, so that she could teach, and yet do extra work in the line of biology.

"Why, Mary Sutherland," Dolly exclaimed, when Mary first confided this plan to her, "I should think that you knew all there was to be known about that subject now."

Mary stared at her friend in honest horror. "I could never know all about it, Dolly, if I should live as long as Methuselah and study day and night. I don't know enough to try and teach anything about it yet, but sometime I hope I may."

"Fred can't hope to compete with biology, so far as Mary is concerned," Dolly told herself emphatically, for by this time she acknowledged that Dick Martin had been correct, and that Fred's interest in Mary was more than a friendly one. It seemed strange enough to Dolly that this was so, for Mary was not pretty, and she had none of the little accomplishments which usually attract young men. Now, if it had only been Beth! and Dolly sighed dismally. It would have been so lovely to have Beth for a sister; of course, she liked Mary, but she could never care as much for her, or for anyone else, as for Beth.

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While all of the girls were anxious to be at home, they dreaded the leaving of college and the breaking up of the ties which had bound them so closely for four years. It seemed as if time had never rushed on as swiftly as during those last months. Class Day and Commencement were upon them almost before they realized it. Dolly had made a very dignified, impartial president, and the class was delighted at its own good judgment in selecting her.

The *Chronicle* had flourished under Margaret's management; it had contained more bright and witty things than ever before, and Beth heard some of the juniors groaning over their patent inability to keep the magazine, during the ensuing year, up to its present standard of merit.

Beth repeated the remark with much delight to Margaret. "It has been a great success, girls, and we owe it all to Margaret. She has put soul and life into it. In fact, I think we can be proud of our record all the way through college; we have the largest class ever graduated; we certainly have some of the brightest students that were ever within these walls, we have the most unique entertainments of any class, and the *Chronicle* has never been as good as it is this year."

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"How we apples do swim!" said Dolly mockingly.

"You are as proud of this class as I am, and you know it, Dolly Alden! Professor Newton told me the other day that the faculty was perfectly satisfied with us. We have some actually brilliant students here. Look at Amy Norton, for instance! She is a phenomenon. Our choir is fine, and altogether," Beth wound up emphatically, "we are just about as nice a class as you can find any place."

"We are nice," Dolly conceded, "but, Beth, let me tell you that our pride is going to have a fearful fall in one particular."

"I don't understand you."

CHAPTER XIX

249

"I AM talking about the athletic contests that come off the first of Commencement week. We simply shan't be in it. Vassar, Wellesley, Smith, and all the others, seem to be in great shape, but we shall disgrace ourselves."

"But, Dolly dear, we must do tolerably well, or we should never be in the contests at all. There were scores of colleges that tried for a place and we were one of the six successful ones, so we must certainly be able to do something."

"You would not be feeling so confident if you took more interest in athletics. We should never

have won a place at all except for Ruth Armstrong. She was superb at everything; running, jumping, throwing—everything. It was she, and she alone, who won us our place on the list. She was simply phenomenal, but, as you know, she isn't here this year, and there is no one at all on whom we can count. Vassar is sure now of one event, and the Cornell girls will get another, that is positive. I had hoped that we could do something in the running contests, but Rose Wilson has twisted her ankle, so the only thing in which we stood the least show is out of the question."

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"Well, Dolly dear, with six colleges represented, and only three events to come off, everyone could not win."

"Of course not, and now Westover will not be one of the lucky three. We shall not even win second place in anything! In short, we are in such bad shape that I wish we had never tried to revive athletics here at Westover. The other colleges have been working in this direction for years, and it was absurd for us to compete with them."

"Don't worry; I think that we have won honor enough simply by being admitted to the competition. Lots of colleges are envious of us."

"They will not be very long," said Dolly soberly.

There was really nothing to be said that could comfort Dolly. All that she asserted was only too true. None of the quartette were on the athletic teams, but all of the students had been discussing the coming contests with grave faces.

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"If we had not made the absurd rule that only Seniors could be in these contests, we might do something even yet. There is rather good material among the freshmen and sophomores."

"But the other colleges only admit the seniors, so we could not be allowed to pick from all the classes. If only Ruth Armstrong were here!"

But Ruth, just then, was climbing the Alps, with no thought of her former classmates who stood in such dire need of her.

"Tell me once more on what contests you have finally decided." Of course, it was Mary who asked the question; any other girl would have known.

"The idea of your not knowing!"

"Well, you have changed your minds so often, and I have been so busy with my new experiments, that I do not think it wonderful that I am not posted. Tell me, Dolly."

"The faculties limited us to three contests. I felt indignant at the time, for I wanted a dozen, at least, but now I am ready to bow to their superior wisdom. The more contests there are, the more defeats there would be for us."

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"But how have you finally settled it?"

"We have settled and unsettled matters a dozen times, but our last decision is really final; there will be running and jumping, and, last of all, a boat race."

"And we do not stand a show?"

"Not a ghost of a show for even second place," and Dolly sighed. Being president, she felt as if the honor or disgrace of the college rested on her.

Mary broke the silence at last. "I have not gone in for athletics since I have been here, because I don't care for such things, but I can do considerable in the running and jumping line. I can't row at all, and I would be no good there, but if you want me to try and help you out in the other things, I will."

"Why, Mary Sutherland, and you never said a word before! But you must be awfully out of practice. Do you actually think that you can save us from total disgrace?"

"I don't know what the girls at the other colleges can do, so I am hardly prepared to say how much I can aid you, dear. I am not so fearfully out of practice, either. Every summer I have been kept in trim by my brothers, and really I can beat them both at running and jumping, when I am in good condition."

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"But that was nearly a year ago, Mary."

"I know, but I have been to the gymnasium every night after my experiments. I have done all sorts of running and jumping there just to tire myself out so that I could sleep. No one has ever seen me at that time, and I never thought of your really needing my services. I expect that I have been horribly selfish."

"You are just angelic now, for I know that you were planning to do a lot of extra work with Professor Reimer during these last days of college, and you would rather be with him than helping us out of a hole."

That was so very true that Mary blushed. She had felt reluctant to even mention her prowess, but a second thought had made her ashamed of her hesitancy. What had not Dolly and these other friends of hers done to make college life pleasant for her during the past four years? Mary herself could not get up much enthusiasm with regard to the athletics. If there were a scientific contest now!

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"Come up to the gymnasium, girls, and I will get into my suit and show you what I can do. As I said, I practice almost every evening, for after the laboratory work I am so wide awake that I

could never go to sleep at all. I found that out long ago. I would just lie in bed and think out different experiments. Of course, the next day my head felt like lead, and I was as stupid as an owl. So I resorted to the gymnasium. There is no trouble any more about my sleeping, for I tire myself out physically before I stop. Now, just wait a moment. I hope you will not be disappointed after all my boasting. I really do not know whether I am better than the rest of the girls you have picked out or not. I suppose I must be pretty good at running and jumping, because the boys think so, and they are usually very chary of their praise where sisters are concerned."

But after the first five minutes there was no doubt in anyone's mind as to Mary's superiority over all the other girls. She was really fine. Dolly's drooping spirits rose with a bound.

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"I shall love you forever for saving the day for us, Mary. You are not out of practice a bit, but still you will let Mr. Thornbury have all your extra leisure until the games come off, won't you? I hate to ask it," Dolly went on hurriedly, for she knew that this would involve the giving up of all the extra laboratory work which Mary was doing. "But you will do it for the sake of the college, will you not?"

"Oh, yes. If I am going to go into this thing at all, I want to do my best. I didn't see the trial competitions last year, but you and Beth did. How do I compare with the girls from the other colleges?"

"You do better than they did then, but I hear that they have been practicing hard ever since."

"I will do my very best, Dolly; perhaps we can win a 'second' after all. Mr. Thornbury shall give me all the drilling and training that he wishes to. My examinations are all over, and I really do not have to do a single thing more. I was doing the extra work with Professor Reimer just because it was such a wonderfully good chance."

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And Mary, true to her word, gave up all her time to gymnasium work. All of their friends came flocking to Westover for Commencement week. In fact, the closing ceremonies occupied nearly ten days.

All of the "diggers" had won their degrees, and also, rather to their astonishment, a place on the "honor" roll. Beth, as everyone expected, had taken the mathematical prize, Mary had been awarded the special prize given occasionally for exceptionally fine work along scientific lines, Margaret had won a year's study abroad for the highest average throughout the entire course. Margery received an honorable mention for her work, but she was not eligible for any prize, as those were open only to students who went straight through the four years' course, and Margery had not done that. There was an archaeological prize that went to Helen Stetson, and several other prizes or scholarships in post-graduate work that went to girls who had excelled in some special line.

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The friends of the "diggers" were more than satisfied with the work that had been done by them. It seemed to Dolly as if everyone had come to Westover that she had ever known. All of Beth's relatives and hers, even to the third and fourth cousins. Constance's people were there, of course, and they did not fail to exert themselves to make Mrs. Hamilton comfortable and at ease. Her delight and pride in Margaret were something beautiful to see. The prize which she had so unexpectedly won, changed Margaret's plans somewhat. She would go to Girton for a year's study; her mother was also to go; there was money enough for that, for neither of them had been extravagant during these four years just past. A fine position was already promised Margaret on her return.

Mary had secured the coveted place in the preparatory school at Westover, and had arranged to do special work at the college next year. She had been very sober when the other girls had been talking about Commencement and their friends who were coming. It seemed hard to Mary that her father and mother could not be there. But she knew that such an expense was simply out of the question, and she tried to be content.

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Then a most wonderful thing happened, just a fortnight before Commencement. Some one (Mary suspected Constance, though she never knew surely) had sent Mr. and Mrs. Sutherland two railroad tickets to Westover and return; there were Pullman seats enclosed, too, for the day on which they should depart, and so, after all, Mary's father and mother were present. And if their hands were toilworn and their clothes very old-fashioned, Mary did not care. After all, in the great throng no one's garments were noticed very particularly. It was only the graduating class that was especially scrutinized, and it was hard to tell whether the girls looked more enchanting in their white, filmy dresses or in their caps and gowns.

Class Day, with all its gayety, passed off brilliantly. Constance made a fine historian; Hazel Browne read the class poem, and it was very generally conceded, even among the old graduates, to be one of the best things that had ever been read in the old Westover Hall. It was pungent and witty, without being at all bitter or malicious.

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Dolly presided on all the numerous occasions necessitated by Commencement week, with a pretty dignity and grace that more than one person found very fascinating.

The weather was perfect, sunshiny and bright, but not overpoweringly hot, and the exercises went off with a smoothness that made Dolly wild with satisfaction and delight.

"You are getting altogether too proud, sister mine," asserted Fred. "If Westover should actually happen to win something in tomorrow's contest, there will be no living with you."

"I am proud of the girls and of the college, and of everything connected with it."

"To tell the truth, I am rather proud of you! I don't wish to make you conceited and all puffed up with vanity, but really, Dolly, you make a first-class president. We are just brimming over with pride. Can't you see how satisfied Father and Mother are looking? You owe me something for getting Rob to coach you last year. I verily believe that you were just about ready to give up then."

"I was, for a fact, and I shall be grateful to you all my life, Fred, for what you planned. Just think of missing this," and Dolly drew a deep breath.

"It would have been too bad, that's sure," affirmed Dick Martin, who chanced to be present. "I never saw a more ideal Commencement. Perfect weather, lovely girls and original programs. How did you ever manage it all so smoothly, Miss Dolly? I see that your special friends captured the choicest prizes and scholarships. Was it all a prearranged plan? Things went your way—you could hardly ask anything more than you and your friends got."

"Yes, I could," and Dolly sobered down. "The athletic contests come tomorrow, the very last thing on our program. We could not get them in before, and perhaps it is just as well, for I do not expect that we shall win any glory."

"I thought Fred said that Miss Sutherland was to save the day for you?"

"She is our only hope; the rest of the girls do not amount to anything. But Vassar and Smith, to say nothing of Cornell and Wellesley and Mount Holyoke, have been boasting so securely since they arrived that our hopes are now below zero."

"You are anxious to win?"

"Very. Westover has been out of all athletic contests for so long that we want to get our place again, and if our own particular class could achieve that, we should feel that we had nothing more to ask."

"I should say you wouldn't have, for your class is leaving a great record here, that is sure. I have faith in your friend. I believe that she will help you out, despite all the boasting of the others."

"I hope you are right. I do hope it. I shall be so glad, so glad—"

"So glad, that you will grant all sorts of favors?" her companion asked, as they sauntered slowly over the lawn. Fred had disappeared in search of Mary.

"Yes, quite glad enough to do anything for anyone," asserted Dolly recklessly. A moment later she caught her breath, and wished she had not said just that.

CHAPTER XX

"I AM going to remind you of that tomorrow evening," Dick said quietly. "I am confident now that Miss Sutherland will come off victorious."

Dolly was glad that a bevy of girls surrounded them just then, demanding all the latest information with regard to the contests on tomorrow. She slipped away from her companion soon, and managed to hold him at a distance until the next afternoon, when the great events came off. The best places for seeing had been reserved for the seniors and their friends, so when Dolly took her place by her mother, it was not at all strange that Dick Martin should be seated on the other side of her.

On the opposite benches were the friends of the other competitors, and college flags and college cries were much in evidence. Cornell and Vassar seemed particularly confident, and as Dolly heard their shouts and noticed their jubilant flags, she grew despondent.

Beth was sitting just back of her. "Don't give up before we fairly commence, Dolly. We have just as much right to shout as they have. Mary did magnificently this morning."

"And don't forget that you are to take a walk with me this evening, and I'll tell you then what I want you to do for me." That was Dick Martin.

"Oh, don't you know that tonight we give a supper to the visitors from the other colleges? I can't go with you possibly."

"I mean to have my walk either before or after; you shall not snub me in that fashion."

But Dolly pretended not to hear. Her eyes were on the smooth stretch of road in front of her. They were jumping, yes—Mary was not as good at that as she was at running.

Dolly slipped her hand into her mother's.

"It is a very good thing that such events as this come only once in a lifetime. I am too excitable to stand the strain equably like Constance."

"Once in a lifetime is quite enough, I'll agree," said Mrs. Alden, looking rather anxiously at Dolly's flushed cheeks. "I shall be glad to have you safely at home, where I can keep you quiet and have you rest."

"Yes, Mother," said Dolly, not really hearing a word of what Mrs. Alden was saying. "Oh, look!

Wasn't that splendid of Mary? Do cheer her, Mr. Martin. Louder! Louder yet! Mary has gone farther than any of them, but I am afraid of Miss Smith of Vassar. That is she now! Oh!" A despairing note in her tone as Miss Smith made a better record than Mary had done. "How dreadful! But Mary has won us a second at least, and that is really more than I dared hope."

"Cheer up, then. There are two more chances for you."

"We do not stand the slightest chance in the boat race, and I am afraid that Mary cannot do any better in the running. Still I am grateful for what she has won for us. We shall not be disgraced, at least."

"Now watch!" as the runners lined up in position. "I have a presentiment that you will feel jubilant when this race is over."

And it became evident, almost from the first second, that Westover would win. Mary's pride was fully roused. She knew how anxious her class was to come off victorious in one of the contests at least, and she did her very best, but her best was needed, for Cornell was very close behind her.

The cheering and yelling were almost deafening. Really, Mr. Alden said, it was quite as bad as one of the Harvard football games. He didn't see to what the girls' colleges were coming, if this sort of thing continued.

But Dolly and Beth, to whom his words were addressed, heard not a syllable of his raillery. They were too intent on waving their flags and cheering Mary. Westover had covered herself with glory, and Dolly could go home tomorrow with not a wish ungratified.

Fred hurried up to his people. "Mary saved the day for you, didn't she? She is having a regular ovation down by the Oaks. Shall I take you to her, Dolly?"

"Yes, yes, I am wild to see her and thank her. The idea of Mary's being the one to come to the rescue so nobly. I always knew she was a dear! You need not save my seat for me, Mother, I would rather not see the boat race at all, we stand no show there."

And Dolly whisked down from her high seat of honor as president of the class, and ran in search of Mary, whose father and mother could not comprehend the importance of all the athletic contests, but who were nevertheless filled with very pardonable pride at their daughter's triumph.

When Dolly reached the Oaks, Mary had disappeared, and the most diligent search in grounds and rooms failed to reveal her.

Dolly wandered back disconsolately just in time to hear the crowd cheering for Wellesley, who had won the boat race, with Vassar a close second.

"They can have their victory, and welcome," Dolly said contentedly to Dick Martin, who joined her just then. "We have all we want. I must go now and see if the tables are all in readiness for tonight."

"I just heard Miss Newby declare that everything had been done, so I hope you will walk down to the end of the grounds with me. Can't you do that, Dolly? I have been trying to get a moment with you for a long time. I must go back to Boston at eight o'clock, and this is my last opportunity to talk with you."



"Aren't you going to say anything to me, Dolly?"

"Well," with an unaccountable hesitation in her manner. "I suppose that a class president ought

not to run away like this, but if you will not take me far—”

“I want to take you all along life’s journey, Dolly. Is that too much to ask? You know what I hope to do, what my plans are and how I am longing to do a little good in the world. Will you help me? I think I have cared for you ever since the first time we met. Aren’t you going to say anything to me, Dolly?”

Dolly’s brain was in a whirl. How could she tell? Yet, did she want him to go off and never come back? No, no, she knew she could hardly endure that. And Dick, not knowing what her silence meant, and fearing that a bitter disappointment was in store for him, leaned down to look in her face. Dolly smiled up at him tremulously, and Dick had the answer he wished, although no words were spoken.

* * * * *

Late that night Dolly sought out her mother for a word. “I could not go to sleep tonight without telling you, Mother, but—”

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“I understand, Dolly, Dick has spoken, hasn’t he? I knew that he would, for he wished to do so a year ago, but I think he feared a refusal then. We have known his feeling for you for a long time, Dolly dearest, and I know that he will make your life very happy. But he must let you stay with us for a long time yet.”

“Of course,” said Dolly hastily. “Of course, why, I would never, never go off from you now. Dick will not be through with his medical studies for two or three years yet. You will have me at home a long time, Motherdie.”

“We can’t have you too long, Dolly; we would like to keep you always, but that is impossible, evidently.”

And then Dolly turned consoler, and there was a long, long talk, despite the fact that it was in the wee small hours, and that they were all to take a railroad journey that day.

Dolly got up at last reluctantly enough, but she stopped even then when she reached the door.

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“Mother, did you notice Fred late last evening? What was the matter with him? He looked so grave and sober.”

“He has not told me anything at all, Dolly, but I imagine that he has spoken to Mary.”

“Oh, Mother, couldn’t he see for himself that Mary cares nothing for him? The poor boy!”

“I am sorry for him, dear; I feared that he would speak too soon, but it was best to say nothing. Fred will not give up easily, and in time Mary may come to appreciate him. Now she does not give a thought to anything beyond her plans and her work.”

“I do not believe that she will ever change,” and Dolly went to her room with her own new joy tinged with sadness as she thought of Fred’s disappointment.

* * * * *

It is more than two years later. The class of ’09 had been holding a reunion in New York. A number of the members lived in that city, and others were within easy access of it. So Constance had proposed that there should be semi-annual reunions at her home for as many as could come. Several of these reunions had been held now, and the girls enjoyed them, perhaps even more than the yearly gatherings at Westover during Commencement week, when they did not really have time to compare notes and gossip, as they liked to do, over all the little happenings of the past year.

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This time there seemed even more news than usual to be talked over and discussed. Sarah Weston would sail the next week for India as a missionary, Grace Egle was studying medicine, Ellen Terence and Kate Seaton were doing work on New York newspapers, and were doing it well, too. Margaret had run off for a day from the well-known college in which she had a good position; Mary was there, too, but after the holidays she would go west, for she had accepted the chair of Biology in a new woman’s college just started there. One of the girls was singing in a fashionable church, though, when she used that adjective, Beth protested vigorously.

“I think that it is horrible to speak of a fashionable church. I know that it is often done, but a church that merits such an adjective cannot be a church in the true sense of the term.”

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There had been some lively talk on the subject after Beth’s remark, and the girls had enjoyed it, for it seemed like the old days at Westover, when they were constantly picking each other up and holding conversational tilts.

Another of the class was doing lyceum work as a public reader. Still another had opened a kindergarten, and many more, like Beth and Dolly, were filling quietly and efficiently the little niches at home which sadly needed them.

For the most part, college life had broadened all of the girls, so that none of them were entirely content to lead a perfectly useless life of fashion and gayety. Constance herself had gone into college settlement work, just as she had planned to do long before.

After the rest of their classmates had gone, Mary and the “diggers” (for the old name seemed still to cling to them) stayed for a cosy chat with Constance. Beth and Dolly, indeed, would stay for a couple of days longer.

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They were sipping tea, which Constance had insisted on making, when her sharp eyes caught the

gleam of a new ring on Margaret's finger. "Who gave you that, Meg? Are you keeping secrets from your crowd? I wouldn't have believed it of you."

Margaret flushed richly. "I truly meant to tell you girls before I left tonight, but it was not easy to tell someway. It is absurd to think of it, but really, I am going, if nothing happens, to be Abby Dunbar's sister some day."

"Margaret! how lovely! no, not that you will be her sister, but that you will be Raymond Dunbar's wife, for he is as broad and generous and fine as she is petty and narrow."

"I congratulate you with all my heart, Meg, and I am so glad that Abby married that Englishman and will live abroad. Raymond is just the one man in all the world that you should marry."

"Thank you a thousand times, girls," Margaret said heartily when she had been duly kissed and hugged. "But you know really, that he is much better and nobler than I. It is so, and you need not try to contradict me. I thought at first that he was trying in this way to atone for his father's youthful faults, but--" 273

"But you do not think so any more," Dolly said shrewdly, looking at her friend's changing face.

"No, I do not," Margaret owned softly.

Constance looked around on the other faces. "Now I wonder if any more of you are hiding weighty secrets. If so, confess!"

"How about our hostess, herself?" retorted Beth quickly.

Constance smiled serenely. "I have absolutely nothing to confess. I feel like a grandmother, with all this talk of engagements and marriage going on around me. I am outside of it all. Margery Ainsworth and I will probably be the old, staid spinsters of the class; we have found work enough to fill all our lives. By the way, Dolly, how long is Mr. Martin going to consent to wait for you? You have been engaged a couple of years now."

"More than that, and his patience seems about exhausted," Dolly acknowledged with a frank blush. "So I presume that you will receive our cards immediately after Christmas." 274

"It is your turn, now, Mary. What have you to say for yourself?" Constance continued mercilessly.

"Absolutely nothing beyond what you already know. I have the position which I have coveted all my life, so, of course, I am quite satisfied." Despite Mary's words, however, there was a new tone in her voice, which made Dolly resolve to catechise her later. Something had happened, but Dolly could not make out what.

"Your turn now, Elizabeth," commanded Constance.

Dolly laughed mischievously. She alone knew that Beth really had some news to tell. "Shall I spare your blushes and help you out, dear? She has only been engaged two days now, so that she cannot carry her new honors as sedately as--"

"As some people who have worn an engagement ring for two years and a half," Beth interposed. "I'll tell my own story, Dolly Alden. Father has offered to take Mr. Steele into partnership this summer, and--" 275

"And the daughter thought it such a good scheme that she is going to do likewise," Dolly interjected, and then after the first burst of astonishment was over, the girls had a long talk over their plans and hopes.

It was a couple of hours later before Dolly found the quiet opportunity that she wanted for speaking to Mary.

"Aren't you ever going to be good to Fred, Mary? He is one of the very best boys in the world."

"I know it, and it doesn't seem fair to him that he should be wasting his time and thoughts on me."

Dolly looked at her friend keenly. "You and Fred have some new understanding. Aren't you going to tell me what it is?"

Mary looked troubled. "It is not an understanding at all, and I cannot have you think that, or Fred either. I have promised to write to him, and he says he will not take my final answer for a couple of years. It does not seem fair to him--"

Dolly interrupted her with a kiss. "Don't worry your tender conscience. Just leave it all to time, and to Fred. If he is contented, you can afford to be." 276

And to herself Dolly added: "Fred has the wisdom of the serpent; Mary cares more for him than she realizes, and he will win her in the end."

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