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Helen Leah Reed**

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BRENDA, HER SCHOOL AND HER CLUB ***

Brenda,
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"THE CHILD HIMSELF, SURROUNDED BY A GROUP OF CURIOUS GIRLS, CLUNG TO NORA'S HAND"

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"THE CHILD HIMSELF, SURROUNDED BY A GROUP OF CURIOUS GIRLS, CLUNG TO NORA'S HAND"

"OH, I'LL TELL YOU WHAT, GIRLS,—LET US WORK FOR—MANUEL!"

"SHE WAS ABLE TO RUSH ON AND PICK THEM UP AS THEY WERE DASHED AGAINST A LAMP-POST"

"NOW AS JULIA SAT THERE DRINKING TEA FROM THE QUAINTEST OF OLD-FASHIONED CHINA CUPS"

"WHY, BRENDA BARLOW, WHY ARE YOU LYING IN THIS DOWNCAST POSITION?"

BRENDA, HER SCHOOL AND HER CLUB

I

FOUR FRIENDS

"What do suppose she'll be like?"

"How can I tell?"

"Well, Brenda Barlow, I should think you'd have *some* idea—your own cousin."

"Oh, that doesn't make any difference. I've hardly thought about her."

"But aren't you just a little curious?" continued the questioner, a pretty girl with dark hair.

"No, Nora, I'm not. She's sixteen and a half—almost a year older than we are. She's never lived in a big city, and that's enough."

"Oh, a country girl?"

"I don't know that she's a country girl exactly, but I just wish she wasn't coming. She'll spoil all our fun."

"How?" asked a third girl, seated on the bottom step.

"Why, who ever heard of *five* girls going about together? If three's a crowd, five's a perfect regiment. I agree with Brenda that it's too bad to have her come. Now when there's four of us we can pair off and have a good time."

The last speaker had a long thin face with a determined mouth and large china blue eyes. She was the only one of the four whom the average observer would not call pretty. Yet in her little circle she had her own way more often even than Brenda, who was not only somewhat of a tyrant, but a beauty as well.

"Brenda and Belle
They carry a spell,"

the other girls were in the habit of singing, when the two *Bs* had accomplished something on which they had set their hearts. Edith, the third of the group, in spite of her auburn hair, was the most amiable of the four. I say "in spite" out of respect merely to the popular prejudice. Nobody has ever proved that auburn hair really indicates worse temper than hair of any other color. Edith almost always agreed with any of the plans made by the others, and very often with their opinions. Dark-haired Nora was the only one of the group who ever ventured to dissent from the two *Bs*. Now she spoke up briskly,

"I know that I shall like your cousin."

"Why?" the other three exclaimed in a chorus.

"I can't tell you *why*, only that I know I shall."

"You're welcome to," said Brenda, tossing her head, "but I guess if you had just begun to have your own house to yourself you wouldn't like somebody else coming that you'd have to treat exactly like a sister."

"Why, Brenda!" said Nora, with a look of surprise, and then the others remembered that Nora had had a little sister near her own age whose death was a great sorrow to her.

"Why, Brenda!" repeated Nora, "I wish that I had a sister."

Now Brenda Barlow was not nearly as heartless as her words implied. She had two sisters whom she loved very dearly. But they were both much older than Brenda, and by petting and spoiling her they had to a large extent helped to make her selfish. One of them had now been married for

four years, and had gone to California to live and the other was in Paris completing her art studies. When Janet married, Brenda had not realized the change in the family. But when Agnes went to Paris, Brenda was older, and she fully felt her own importance as "Miss Barlow."

"It's the same as being 'Miss Barlow,'" she said to her friends, "the servants call me so, and I've moved my things down into Janet's room. I can invite any one I want to luncheon without asking whether Agnes has any plans,—and I shouldn't wonder if I could have a dinner-party once in a while—of course, not a *very* late one, but with raw oysters to begin with—sure—" and the other girls laughed, for they knew that Brenda had been practising on raw oysters for a long time, and that she felt proud of her present prowess in swallowing them without winking or making a face.

Mr. Barlow was generally absorbed in business affairs, and Mrs. Barlow had so many social engagements that Brenda did as she wished in most respects. She ordered the servants about when her mother was out, and they were as ready to obey her as her friends were to follow her lead, for when Brenda wanted her own way she never seemed ill-natured. She simply insisted with a very winning smile—and nobody could refuse her.

She had found it very pleasant to rule her little world. It was even pleasanter than being the spoiled and petted child that she had been when her sisters were at home. Her father and mother had never seen how fond she was growing of her own way until they announced the coming of her cousin Julia.

"She is older than you, Brenda, and I hear that she is far advanced in her studies. I dare say that she will be able to help you sometimes."

"Oh, papa! I *hate* to have any one help me. She'll be an awful bore, I suppose, if she thinks she knows more than me——"

"Grammar, Brenda," said her mother with a smile.

"Well, then, more than *I*," repeated Brenda.

"I'm sure she won't be a bore, Brenda, but her life has been very different from yours. She has led a quiet life, for you know she was her father's constant companion until he died."

Here Mrs. Barlow sighed. Julia's mother was Mrs. Barlow's sister, and had died when the little Julia was hardly five years old.

"Uncle Richard was always delicate?" ventured Brenda.

"Yes, dear, and he spent his life trying to find a place where he could gain perfect health. Boston was too bleak for him, and that is why you have not seen Julia since she was very little. Your uncle did not care to undergo the fatigue of traveling East even in the summer, and he could not bear to be parted from Julia. But she was always a sweet little thing."

"I hope you won't be disappointed in her," cried Brenda, half in a temper. "I believe you are going to care for her more than you do for me."

"Nonsense, Brenda," exclaimed her mother in surprise.

"Well, you can't expect me to feel the same about her,—a strange girl—who knows more than I, and is just enough older to make every one expect me to look up to her. Oh, dear!"

Since Brenda had not concealed her feelings from her mother, it was hardly to be expected that she would be less frank with her three most intimate friends.

After Nora and Edith had bade Brenda good-bye that afternoon when they had talked about the unknown cousin, they walked rather slowly up the street.

"Do you suppose Brenda's jealous?" said Nora, in a half whisper.

"Oh, hush," answered Edith, to whom the word jealousy meant something dreadful. "Of course not."

"Well, don't you think it's strange for her not to feel more pleased at the prospect of having her cousin with her. I should think it would be great fun to have another girl in the house."

"Oh, well, Brenda can always have one of us. Her mother is so good about letting her invite people—and of course she can't tell how she'll get along with her cousin. No, I really shouldn't like it myself."

As Nora and Edith walked away, Brenda turned to Belle, in whom she always found a ready sympathizer.

"You know how I feel, Belle."

"Yes, indeed; I think it's too bad. I'm sure it will spoil half our fun. It's horrid anyway to have some one older than yourself ordering you round."

"Oh, I don't suppose she'll do that exactly."

"Well, it's just the same thing. If she's such a model, as your mother says, she'll make you feel uncomfortable all the time. Then if she's wearing mourning, she can't do the things that you do, and you'll have to stay at home and be polite to her. Yes, I'm really sorry for you, Brenda."

With sympathy like this, Brenda began to regard herself as almost a martyr.

"Oh, dear," she sighed, "why couldn't she have waited until next winter? Come, Belle," she continued, "you'll stay to dinner, won't you?"

Belle hesitated for a moment. "I suppose I *ought* to go home."

"Oh, why?"

Belle was silent. She knew that certain unfinished lessons awaited her, and that her grandmother objected to her dining away from home, unless she had first asked permission. She fortified herself, however, by saying to herself, "Oh, well, mother won't care." For her mother was what is commonly known as easy-going, and seldom interfered with her daughter's goings and comings.

Belle always enjoyed dining with Brenda. The dining-room was so attractive with its great blazing fire, its heavy draperies and cheerful oil-paintings on the wall. At home she sat down in a large, severely furnished room, with her solemn grandmother wrapped in a white knitted shawl at one end of the long table, her half-deaf uncle James at the other end, and her brother Jack on the side opposite her. Her delicate mother often dined upstairs. Uncle James usually had some story to tell of misdeeds that he had heard some one ascribe to Jack ("and how a deaf person can hear I don't see," Jack would say crossly to Brenda). Her grandmother generally read Belle herself a lecture on paying proper respect to one's elders, or some similar subject, while Belle and Jack exchanged glances of mischievous intelligence, which often drew strong reproofs from their grandmother, and sometimes from her mother when she was present.

No wonder, then, that Brenda's invitation was a strong temptation to Belle.

"Come, silence gives consent," laughed Brenda. Dragging Belle by the arm, she touched the door-bell, and in a moment the two girls were inside the house.

"What room is Julia going to have?" asked Belle, as they ran up the front stairs.

"Well, you *will* be surprised; that's one of the things that makes me so cross. Just *think* of it, Agnes's rooms in the L—that sweet little studio that I wanted mamma to let me have—it's all fitted up for Julia. Don't you call that mean?" Belle pressed her friend's hand.

"You poor thing!"

"Yes, it seems Agnes is sure not to come home for two years, and so mamma thought the studio would be a good place for Julia to practice in, and so there's a piano and—well—let's come and see. We've got time before dinner."

Pushing open a door on the second floor and going down a step or two, Brenda and Belle found themselves inside a little reception-room. The walls were a deep red, there was a cashmere rug on the polished floor, a clock and two bronze figures on the mantelpiece. An open bookcase in one recess, a short lounge in the other, a low wicker tea-table, and two or three small chairs made up the furnishing.

"This is just the same as it was," said Brenda, "and so is the bedchamber," pointing to a door on the left of the reception-room, "but see here!" and she turned to the right. Belle followed, and they found themselves in a long, narrow room, with a bay window at one end and a skylight overhead. On the walls were several large unframed sketches in black and white, together with water colors and a number of fine photographs and engravings in gilt or ebony frames. Against the wall near the bay window stood a small upright piano with an elephant's cloth scarf over the top. The groundwork of the scarf was of a deep yellow, harmonizing with the tint of the painted walls. There were two or three comfortable chairs covered in yellow-flowered chintz, and in the centre an inlaid library table with a baize top and an assortment of writing utensils. There were several rugs of a prevailing yellow tint on the polished yellow floor, and one side of the room was occupied by rows of low open book-shelves which held, however, only a few books.

"I believe Julia's going to have her father's library brought here," said Brenda, in explanation of the empty shelves. "Don't you *hate* book-worms?"

"Yes," responded Belle, "but how *lovely* this room is! What a *shame* that you couldn't have it yourself! Why, I thought your mother said that they were going to leave the studio just as it was until Agnes came home."

"Well, so they were, but she won't be home for two years, and then she'll probably have a studio down town, and so they've put most of her things away and fitted up this room just for Julia. *She* has to have everything."

"I know just how you feel," and Belle pressed Brenda's hand sympathetically. "But then, your own room is lovely."

"Oh, yes, of course; but it isn't the same thing as a studio. A studio is so—so artistic."

The girls were standing in the bay window, bathed in a flood of sunshine from the setting sun. They glanced across the broad river toward the roofs and spires of Cambridge. A tug-boat went puffing along the stream towing a schooner loaded with lumber.

"Oh, my, it must be late! the sun is just dropping behind those Brookline Hills. Come up to my room."

The room on the floor above the studio which had formerly been Janet's, also overlooked the river. It was in the main house and its windows looked down on the roof of the L containing the studio. In fact, the studio to a slight extent impeded the view of the river which was obtainable from this upper room. But the room itself was large and cheerful, with a carpet and paper of bluish tint, a large brass bedstead canopied with blue, comfortable lounging chairs, a dainty little sofa, dressing-table, desk, and all kinds of pretty ornaments. A half-open door showed the adjoining dressing-room with its long pier-glass, and a coal fire blazed in the open grate.

"Make yourself comfortable," said Brenda hospitably, "for if you don't mind, I'm going to write a note that I want to send out by Thomas before dinner. It won't take me ten minutes."

Brenda sat down at her little desk, while Belle sank in the depths of an easy chair near the fire.

Just as Brenda finished her note, a white-capped maid came into the room.

"Oh, Jane, just give this note to Thomas, please. I want him to take it to Mrs. Grey's and bring back my new coat. I can't go to school to-morrow without it."

"I don't hardly think Thomas can go, Miss Brenda."

"Why not?"

"Well, he's got to go to the station for your cousin."

"My cousin?"

"Yes, miss. A telegram came this afternoon that she'd be here at six-thirty, and your mother left word when she went out that they wouldn't be much later than that getting back from the train."

"Well, I never! The idea of her coming without any one's expecting her. Why didn't she write?"

"I don't know, miss. I heard something about a letter that got lost, but anyway your mother's gone to meet Miss Julia, and she left word she thought you'd better give up going to the tableaux this evening, for she wouldn't like you to leave your cousin alone."

"There, Belle, that's the way it's always going to be. Everything for 'Miss Julia.' I don't care, I'm going out just the same. The idea of losing those tableaux."

"But, Brenda," began Belle.

"No, it isn't any good arguing with me. I never *could* bear to be interfered with, and mamma knows perfectly well that I want to see 'The Succession of the Seasons.'"

"But it's to be repeated to-morrow evening. You know I'm going then."

"I don't care. I hate to go the second night to anything."

Belle did not reply, though as Jane left the room, she turned to Brenda.

"I'd better not stay to dinner to-night."

"Oh, do. I don't want to sit alone with Julia. I shan't know what to say to her. No, really you can't go home."

Then running to the stairs and calling after Jane, Brenda cried,

"See that there's an extra place at the table for Belle."

After this she began to open the drawers of her bureau, tossing their contents about, and she ran in and out of her closet to bring out one gown after another for Belle's inspection.

"Which would you wear if you wanted to make a good impression on a new cousin? I want to look as old as I can, and I believe I'll do up my hair."

"Oh, Brenda!"

"Yes, I will. Now see, if I put a string on the band of this skirt it will almost touch the floor. There, help me."

When the skirt was lengthened, Brenda regarded her reflection in the pier-glass with great satisfaction. Brushing her waving brown hair to the top of her head, she gathered it in a soft knot, and thrust a long gold pin through it.

"Tell me the truth, Belle, wouldn't you think me sixteen years old—if you didn't know," she cried to her friend, who could hardly conceal her mirth at Brenda's changed aspect.

"I don't—why, yes, of course," as she saw a frown stealing across Brenda's face.

Brenda strode around the room with all the dignity she could command, her pretty face somewhat flushed by her exertions in giving her hair just the right touch. As a matter of fact she looked rather odd, but Belle did not dare tell her that her skirt hung unevenly, and that two or three short locks of her hair stood out almost straight behind.

"Hark, I believe they've come," Brenda exclaimed.

Certainly there was a noise in the hall below.

"Where's Brenda?" she heard her mother call.

"Well, I suppose we'll have to go down," she said reluctantly to Belle, and the two girls slowly descended the stairs.

II

JULIA'S ARRIVAL

As the two girls went downstairs, Brenda politely urged Belle to go ahead of her. She, herself, lingered a moment to look over the balusters, and thus, when they reached the broad hall at the foot of the stairs, she was several steps behind her friend.

Belle, with a quick eye, before she reached the bottom of the stairs, noticed a little group near the fireplace,—an elderly woman with a shawl over her arm, who looked like a maid; Mrs. Barlow, holding the hand of a slight girl in black, and last but not least, a large Irish setter which lay at the young girl's feet. All this Belle had hardly time to notice when the young girl rushed forward and throwing her arm around her neck, cried,

"Oh, Cousin Brenda, I'm so glad to see you." Belle for a moment looked disconcerted, and Mrs. Barlow, without showing any surprise at Belle's presence, relieved the latter by saying:

"This isn't Brenda, Julia, but one of her friends."

Julia, still with her hand in Belle's, smiled pleasantly.

"I'm glad to see you," she said, and just at that moment Brenda came in sight.

Julia was hastening forward to greet her cousin as she had greeted her friend, but something in Brenda's face forbade her. Brenda could not, perhaps, have explained why she felt so annoyed at Julia's mistake. She was not unduly vain, yet it annoyed her that her cousin had mistaken Belle for her. For well as she liked Belle, she knew that all the other girls considered her not especially good-looking. Though she could not, probably would not, have put it into words, the thought flashed through her brain that Julia was stupid to have made such a mistake. The thought took form in a rather repelling glance as her eye met her cousin's.

"Come, Brenda, you should not make Julia go more than half-way to meet you," called her mother from her place near the fire.

"No'm," replied Brenda, hardly knowing what she said, for really she felt a little shy about the new cousin, who was more than a year her senior. "With her hand outstretched, she stepped toward Julia, moving with the dignity that her lengthened skirt demanded.

"Dear me! What can it be?" she thought, as she felt something hindering her progress. It could not be that the skirt was *too* long. She stooped a little to raise it from beneath her feet, and then, how mortifying! she felt a string snap. She clutched wildly at her skirt with both hands. But it was too late, and making the best of the situation, she stood before her cousin in her short ruffled petticoat, instead of her long, grown-up gown.

"There, Brenda," cried her mother, comprehending the situation at a glance, for this was not the first time that Brenda had tried to lengthen her skirts. "There, Brenda, I hope you won't be as foolish as this again. Speak to your cousin, and then go up and put on your skirt properly."

Poor Brenda! What a loss of dignity! She hardly knew what she said to Julia, or what Julia said to her. She resented Belle's offer of help, for had she not heard a decided giggle from her friend at the moment of the catastrophe? So rushing to her room, she locked the door and did not leave it until called to dinner.

Now Brenda, though by no means perfect, was not ill-natured, and she seated herself at the table with the intention of making herself agreeable to Julia.

But there are times when nothing seems to go exactly right, and this evening was one of them. In the first place it disturbed Brenda to see her father's glance of amusement as his eye fell on her new style of hair-dressing.

"Which is it now?" he laughed, "Marie Antoinette or Queen Elizabeth? Dear me, Brenda, it's a long time since we've seen you masquerading in this fashion."

Brenda reddened. In spite of the mishap to her dress, she wished her cousin to believe that she always wore her hair on the top of her head. Vague hopes were floating through her mind that she could persuade her mother to let her give up her childish pigtail altogether.

"Why does papa always say things like that?" and she reddened still more as Julia's eyes fell on her. She remembered, however, her duties as assistant hostess.

"Did you have a pleasant journey?" she asked politely.

"Yes, indeed," answered Julia. "That is, I was just a little tired, but it was so delightful to look out

of the car window and know that I was really in Massachusetts. It seemed too good to be true."

Mr. Barlow looked pleased. "Ah, Julia, it gratifies me very much to have you say this. Sometimes when people have traveled they lose their love for their early home."

"Yes, Uncle Robert, I've always loved to think of Boston as my real home. Although it's so long since we lived here."

"Why, what do you really remember of Boston?" asked Mr. Barlow.

"Well, the State-House, Uncle Robert, and the Common—of course—and—and Brenda."

"Oh, you can't remember Brenda?"

"Yes, indeed I can. She was the dearest little thing! You see when I was five years old, Brenda seemed almost a baby—a year and a half between two girls makes a good deal of difference,—when they're little."

But even this last saving clause did not prevent Brenda's heart from giving a sudden thump, especially as she caught a sympathetic glance from Belle which seemed to say,

"Ah, she's reminding you how much older she is than you."

Brenda straightened herself up. She tried to think of something to say that would show that though younger, she at least had some knowledge of the world.

"Can you eat raw oysters, Julia?" were the rather strange words that came to her lips. Julia, unable naturally to follow the train of thought leading to this question, answered brightly,

"I've never tried. You see we don't have very good oysters in the West, and some way I've never thought I'd like them raw."

"Oh, if you want to seem really grown-up you'll have to eat oysters off the shell," said Mrs. Barlow. "I believe Brenda has practised so that she can eat them without wincing."

Then Belle, who prided herself on her tact, hastened to change what she knew might become a sore subject with Brenda.

"Were there many people you knew on the train, Miss——"

"Oh, please say Julia," broke in the young girl. "Every one always does. No, there wasn't any one I knew in the cars between here and Chicago. If I had not had Eliza I should have been very lonely."

Brenda had subsided into an unwonted silence. She was wondering how she could excuse herself to her cousin—whether her mother would really make her give up the tableaux for that evening. She heard, without really listening, an animated conversation between her father and Belle on the best way of learning history. Belle believed that more could be learned by general reading than by studying a text-book. "Belle always has so many theories," Brenda was in the habit of saying.

"I wish Jane would hurry with the coffee," she cried.

"Why, Brenda," and her mother looked surprised. "You are not going to have coffee."

"Of course, you know you always let me have a little cup when I'm going out."

"But you are not going anywhere to-night. Didn't you get my message?"

Brenda understood well enough that her mother did not wish to discuss the question of her leaving her cousin when Julia herself was present, yet she persisted.

"But, mamma——"

Mrs. Barlow shook her head. "There is nothing to be said. You know, Brenda, when I mean a thing I mean it."

Julia looked a trifle embarrassed, realizing that in some way she was a hindrance to a full discussion between her aunt and cousin.

Brenda's face was twisted into a curious scowl. She was forgetting her duty to her cousin.

"Oh, mamma, I've made up my mind to go."

"No, Brenda, it is impossible. Let us hear no more about it."

"What is it, Brenda, that you wish to do?" asked Mr. Barlow, who while talking with Belle had only half heard the conversation between Brenda and her mother.

Mrs. Barlow shook her head. She did not care to enter into a discussion before Julia likely to make the young girl feel that her arrival had interfered with any plan of Brenda's.

Then Belle, who realized that she was not always in favor with Mrs. Barlow, saw her opportunity.

"If Brenda will change with me, she can have my ticket for to-morrow evening."

"Why, that is very kind in you, Belle, but have you time to get ready?"

"Oh, yes, if you'll excuse me now," and before Brenda could remonstrate, she saw Belle receive the tickets from Mrs. Barlow's hands and heard her hasty words of good-bye as she started home under the escort of Thomas.

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Barlow took any notice of the cloud on Brenda's face. Fortunately they could not read her reflections on the duplicity of Belle, who after pitying her so in the afternoon, had now begun to side against her. This at least was the form which Brenda's thoughts took. Rightly or wrongly she considered herself an ill-used young person.

Just then the maid entered with a letter on a salver. Mrs. Barlow glanced at it and then laughed.

"This explains the mystery, Julia, you wrote 'New York' instead of 'Boston,' and so your letter has been two days longer than it should have been in reaching us."

"Oh, did I, Aunt Anna? How stupid! Well, you have treated me much better than my carelessness deserved."

"Well, I'm only glad that I happened to be at home when your telegram came. It would have been a little cheerless for you had you happened to arrive when we were all out. But come, you must be tired."

"Oh, not very." Then, as they left the room, Julia threw her arm around Brenda.

"I know that we shall be great friends."

Already Brenda had begun to return to herself. She hoped that Julia had not noticed her ill-temper. Perhaps after all she should like this new cousin better than she had expected.

"If I were you, Brenda, I'd take Julia to her room now," said Mrs. Barlow.

"How lovely!" exclaimed Julia, as they entered the pretty bedroom near the studio. "Am I to have this all to myself?"

"Yes," replied Brenda.

"I never saw so pretty a room! How I *shall* enjoy it! Whose used it to be?"

"Oh, it was Agnes's room. She had it decorated to suit her ideas. You know she's an artist."

"Oh, yes. How delightful to be an artist. I wish that I had some special talent."

"I thought you had. Some one, mamma I think, said that you were musical."

"So I am in a way. I've given more time to music than to anything else. But that was chiefly to please papa."

Here Julia sighed, while Brenda hardly knew what to say.

"You must miss him very much," she ventured.

"Oh, don't speak of it, Brenda. I can't bear to think that he is really gone." And Julia's tears began to fall.

"What shall I say?" thought Brenda, and as her words of sympathy were beginning to take shape, her mother entered the room. Wisely enough, she made no comment on Julia's tears, believing that they would flow less freely if she seemed to take no notice of them.

"I have come to see if you are perfectly comfortable. To-night Eliza will sleep on the lounge in your room, and after this we will arrange a bed for her in the room across the hall. In either case you will not feel lonely."

When Julia had thanked her aunt for her kindness, Mrs. Barlow drew Brenda one side.

"Now, Brenda, we must bid your cousin good-night," and then, with a final word or two of advice to Julia, Mrs. Barlow with Brenda left the room.

"I'm going to bed now, mamma," said Brenda, as they reached the hall.

"Very well, I haven't time myself to tell you that I think you have behaved very foolishly this evening. I hope you will be more sensible to-morrow."

"Good-night," cried Brenda, without making any promises.

When she was within her own room she flung herself down on her bed.

"I know just how it will be," she said to herself. "I can never do what I want to. It will always be 'Julia, Julia.' She isn't so bad herself, but it's the way every one will treat me that I hate."

With these confused words on her lips she began to get ready for bed.

THE RESCUE

Brenda started for school a little later than usual the morning after Julia's arrival. As she walked up Beacon Street she saw Edith and Nora ahead of her, half-way up the slope on the sidewalk next the Common.

"Oh, dear, they might look back," she said to herself. But they neither looked back nor paused on their way, and Brenda was prevented from hurrying by a line of wagons and street cars which blocked Charles Street. She was kept standing for two or three minutes at the street crossing, and when she continued her way Edith and Nora had turned into the side street leading to the school. When Brenda reached the school door, Belle was the centre of a group of girls seated on the steps.

"Why didn't you call for me, Belle?" cried Brenda petulantly.

"Oh, I had to do some errands on the way, and I thought, too, that you would stay home with your cousin."

"Well! I should say not. I shall see enough of her."

"Tell us about her, Brenda," cried Nora who came out from the house for a moment. "Belle says she has come. What *is* she like?"

"Like? Why, like any girl. There's nothing special about her. She wears black and I think she feels kind of superior. It's going to be awfully hard for me."

"Yes, Brenda," said a thin-faced girl in the group back by Belle. "You don't think any one could be superior to you, do you?"

Brenda, with her back to the sidewalk, was ready with a sharp reply, when a warning look from one of the girls closed her lips.

"Why, girls," said a cheerful voice behind her, "ought you not to go inside now? You should be in your seats by twenty minutes past nine. I have said many times that you were not to wait for me."

The girls all respected Miss Crawdon, and they were just a little afraid of her. Her authority was not always agreeable, when she chose to make them feel it. Miss Crawdon was tall and blonde, with eyes some one said "that saw everything." These were the right kind of eyes for the principal of a girls' school. She had a pleasant voice with a tone of decision in it that no one dared dispute. At her words the girls seated on the steps slowly arose, and in a very short time they were at their desks, getting out books and preparing for the day's work.

Brenda and Belle occupied adjacent seats. Edith and Nora were in the same room, though a little nearer the window. They with about ten other girls formed what might be called the middle class of a school of forty. There were about fifteen older girls who would stay in school one or two years longer, while Brenda and her friends had three years before them. At least they would not "come out" for three years.

The older girls naturally kept much to themselves. They "did up" their hair, wore skirts almost touching the ground, and were in every way envied by their juniors. The youngest girls of all concerned themselves very slightly about the oldest of all. But the girls of Brenda's age imitated in many ways the doings of these older girls, and when, as occasionally happened, one of the graduating class invited a younger girl to walk with her at recess, the latter for a day or two after was treated with great deference by her companions.

These oldest girls were not ahead of their schoolmates in all their studies. In Latin and mathematics some of them recited with the younger girls, or it might be fairer to say that some of the brighter young girls were in the classes with the elder. Edith, for example, was ahead of Brenda in mathematics, and her class almost through geometry, was planning to go into trigonometry.

The discipline of the school was not unduly strict, yet after the opening, girls were not expected to speak to one another without special permission. In this matter they were put rather on their honor, for no special punishment was inflicted for disobedience. A word of disapprobation was usually the most severe reproof, although, in rare cases, girls had been kept after school. Nora, whose intentions were always good, was, of the four friends whom we have been observing, the most likely to break some of the unwritten laws of the school. She always saw the funny side of things, and it was very hard for her to keep still when she wished to share her fun with somebody else. Belle was no more scrupulous than Nora about observing rules, but she could whisper to her neighbor in a quiet way without attracting attention. Edith was really a conscientious, painstaking girl. On this account some of those who did not know her well called her a "bore." Brenda was good or bad by fits and starts. Sometimes for a week she devoted herself to her lessons. She would then put her finger to her lips when Nora, in passing her desk, bent over her to tell her some bit of news. She would pretend not to understand when Belle laid a small piece of folded paper on her desk, and she would keep her eyes fixed on her books when any other girl tried to distract her attention. To-day, however, it was different. In the first place she did not know her lesson very well and did not feel like studying. In the half-hour in which she was supposed to be doing her Latin exercise her mind constantly wandered, and she could not help seeing that Belle was anxious to tell her something. At length the little wad of paper fell on her desk.

"The tableaux were perfectly splendid! You ought to have been there."

Brenda nodded sadly. Surely this was not kind of Belle, who knew that only stern necessity had kept her at home.

"I suppose the tableaux will be as good to-night," and a second note fell on Brenda's desk, "but there won't be half as many people you know. Everybody was there last night. Shall you take Julia?"

Again Brenda nodded, but by this time she was growing impatient. Leaning forward toward Belle's desk, "Keep still, can't you, Belle," she exclaimed in a voice intended to be a whisper. Unfortunately her voice was louder than she thought, and she was recalled to herself by Miss Crawdon's voice, "Be careful, Brenda," and Brenda applied herself to her books until the hour arrived for the Latin lesson.

At recess Belle, pretending not to see Brenda, joined two of the older girls and walked with them for the half hour, while Brenda and Nora and Edith sat on the steps.

"Why didn't you know your Latin lesson?" asked Brenda of Edith. "I never knew you to stumble so, and you couldn't give a single rule."

"Well, you know I didn't study yesterday afternoon. I meant to, but it was too lovely to go in the house, and then last evening I went to the tableaux. It seemed hard to have to stay home to study though I suppose I should have. You didn't know your own lesson very well, Brenda, although you stayed home all the evening."

"But, you see, I had company——"

"You'll find it hard to do your lessons if you make company of Julia. Isn't she coming to school too?"

"Oh, I guess so. Won't it be hateful to have her in the class above us?"

"Perhaps she won't be. Didn't you say she hadn't been at school much?"

"Oh, girls who have studied at home always think they know more than any one else. Oh, there, there!" and Brenda paused in her speech as a little child playing on the opposite sidewalk ran out into the street in front of the very wheels of a passing wagon. For a moment all held their breath, then Nora with a leap and a run was down the steps and in the street. Before the child realized its own danger she had snatched it from in front of the horses, and had dragged it to the sidewalk. The teamster, a rather stupid-looking man, had dismounted from his place.

"Waal, now, the child ain't hurt, I guess," he said to the girl, "I pulled up as soon as I heard you holler, but it was such a little mite of a thing that I couldn't hardly see it."

"Oh, it wasn't your fault," Brenda and Edith exclaimed. "It ran out so quickly, but if you hadn't stopped your horses, it might have been killed."

After assuring himself that the child was not really hurt, the teamster went on, the child himself, surrounded by a group of curious girls, clung closely to Nora's hand—a forlorn little thing—with bare feet and a torn pinafore. The mud spattered over his face did not show very distinctly on his dark skin. One small hand he had thrust into his eye, and behind it the tears were slowly trickling down. Nora held the other hand, and the child clung to her as if never intending to let go.

"What's your name, little boy?" cried one of the girls.

The child only sobbed.

"Here, Amy, give him a piece of your banana. He looks like an Italian fruit-seller's child. He'll eat a banana."

But the little boy was not to be tempted.

Just then the noon bell sounded from the schoolroom.

"There, Nora, let him go, he'll find his way home," suggested one of the girls.

"Oh, no, I'm sure he's hurt. Where do you live, little boy?"

Still no reply. The other girls went back into school, while Nora walked irresolutely toward the door, holding the child's hand. As she stood at the foot of the steps wondering what to do, Miss Crawdon appeared at the door with Brenda and Edith who had hurried to tell her about the child.

"Is the little fellow hurt?" she asked with interest.

"Not really hurt, perhaps, but awfully frightened, and I'm sure he doesn't live anywhere around here. I don't want to leave him when I go into school, what *shall* I do?"

"Don't look so distressed, Nora," said Miss Crawdon smiling. "I'm not sure myself what is best." Then, after a moment's reflection, "You may send him down to the basement with the janitor, and later I will see what can be done."

So Nora, saying all the reassuring things that she could to the child, left him with the janitor, Mr. Brown, although this separation was accompanied with loud cries and shrieks on the part of the

little boy.

It was very hard for Nora and the others to remain perfectly quiet during the hour and a half that remained of school. They were anxious to exchange questions about the child, to speculate about his home, and I am sure that the little boy was more in the thoughts of Brenda, Edith, and Nora than their lessons.

Belle had missed the excitement of the morning, for at the moment of the accident she and the two older girls whom she had joined, were out of sight of the school walking in another street.

She had returned to the schoolroom hardly half a minute before the end of recess, when there was really no time to ask a question. She did not dare to ask a question of Brenda, who still wore an unamiable expression.

When half-past one came, however, Brenda and Belle forgot their little disagreement, and hastened after Nora to learn what she was going to do with her protégé.

"Now, I'll tell you girls, just what I'm going to do. Miss Crawdon says it will be all right. Brenda and I are going with Mrs. Brown to see where Manuel lives—we have found out that his name is Manuel. We can get some luncheon here, and please, please, stop at my house, Belle, and tell my mother, and you, Edith, at Brenda's."

"Why don't you let Mrs. Brown go alone?"

"Oh, it will be so much more fun to go too."

"You can't find his house."

"Oh, yes; it will be somewhere down Hanover Street. Mrs. Brown knows. If we take him there, he'll lead us on. Oh, it will be great fun."

"I don't believe your mother would like you to go without letting her know."

"Well, I just have to go. I'm sure she won't care."

Though Nora was so confident, Brenda had some misgivings. She knew that she really ought to be at home, but the temptation to go with Nora was too strong to resist.

So, soon after two o'clock the strange procession began its march toward Hanover Street, Manuel walking between Nora and Brenda, while Mrs. Brown brought up the rear. Manuel was still silent.

"If he were a girl he'd talk more," said Nora.

Manuel showed very little interest in the whole proceeding. In fact he seemed so tired that Mrs. Brown would have carried him had he not resisted her efforts to take him in her arms.

IV

A CLUB MEETING

The strange procession had not gone very far when Nora heard some one behind calling her name. It was Miss Crawdon, who, as Nora turned around, signalled her to stop.

"Oh, Brenda, Miss Crawdon wishes to speak to us."

In a moment their teacher had overtaken them.

"I must reconsider my promise to you, or at least, Nora, you partly misunderstood what I said. It will not do at all for you to go home with this little boy. Your mother would blame me very much."

"Oh, Miss Crawdon," pouted Brenda. Nora, too, showed her disappointment.

"Now, Brenda, consider what it means. In the first place it is uncertain whether or not you could find his home. In the second place you might have to go into some dirty street or alley. With your mother's consent I should have nothing to say, but as it is——"

"Well, can't we go as far as Scollay Square? We could get a car there and go straight home."

Miss Crawdon hesitated a moment.

"As it happens," she replied, "I have to go in that direction myself. We will walk together, and I will see you safely on your car. Mrs. Brown and Manuel may lead the way."

"Isn't he cunning!" exclaimed Brenda, as the little boy looked over his shoulder at the girls, with one little hand doubled up against his eye, and his other clutching Mrs. Brown's skirt.

"I wish he would talk to us," responded Nora. "Where do you live, little boy?" Manuel smiled knowingly. "There," he said, waving his hand indefinitely toward the Square, across which the electric cars were whizzing.

"Oh, no," cried Nora, "nobody lives there; there are shops and a hotel, and——"

"Birdies, birdies, there," cried Manuel.

Even Miss Crawdon smiled as Manuel ran up to a shop window, and pounded the glass, somewhat to the dismay of the parrots exhibited there in their cages.

"Well, he seems to know this shop," said Mrs. Brown. "We might wait here for a minute."

At the other side of the shop around the corner was a doorway in which sat a woman with a basket of fruit for sale. Manuel himself was the first to catch sight of her, and rushing forward with a flying leap, he almost knocked her basket over. The little boy had found his tongue, and chattering like a magpie, he pointed toward the ladies. The woman, rising from the step on which she had been sitting, came toward the little group. In broken English she explained that Manuel was her youngest boy, and that sometimes she let him go with her on her round of fruit-selling. Lately she had had her stand near this bird store, and in some way on this particular day, Manuel had wandered away from her.

"You must have been worried," said Nora.

"Oh, no," she answered philosophically; "me thought him gone home."

Then Brenda, who had hitherto kept silent, broke in with a graphic account of the fate Manuel had escaped through Nora's bravery. The mother probably only half comprehending the young girl's rapid flow of words, smiled and showed her white teeth. "T'ank you, t'ank you," she said. "You come and see him some day," she added, in a general invitation to the group.

"Come, girls, we must hasten," said Miss Crawdon. "Mrs. Brown will take down Manuel's address. Then, if your mothers are willing, you may go to see him some day."

Rather reluctantly Nora and Brenda bade good-bye to black-eyed Manuel and his mother. They gave Mrs. Brown many injunctions to make no mistake about his house and street. On Saturday they both hoped to be able to go to see him.

To them the whole thing presented the aspect of an adventure.

"I never spoke to a foreigner before in Boston, did you?" said Nora, "I mean except French teachers," she added.

"No, not a poor foreigner," responded Brenda. "Wasn't that woman picturesque, with her shawl over her head?"

As they drew near home both girls began to feel a little doubtful as to the wisdom of what they had done.

"Well, your mother never scolds," said Brenda, as she bade good-bye to Nora at the door of the latter.

"Why, yours doesn't either," exclaimed Nora.

"Oh, you don't know," and Brenda shook her head. "There's Julia now——"

"Nonsense," laughed Nora, running up the steps. "Good-bye, now. I'm coming to see Julia this afternoon. You know I expect to like her."

"Your lunch is waiting, Miss Brenda," said the maid as Brenda started up the front stairs toward her room.

"Oh, I've had my luncheon," replied Brenda. "You don't think I'd wait until this time."

"Brenda," called her mother from the library, "it's half-past three. Where have you been since school?"

"Oh, dear!" grumbled Brenda to herself. "I don't see why I have to give an account of every step I take. I'll be down in a minute," she called out, as she continued her way upstairs. When she descended to the library, she hastened forward with a polite "Good-afternoon" to Julia, who was seated before the fire with a book in her lap.

"Julia has been reading to me," said her mother.

"We have had a very pleasant hour," added Julia.

"But tell me where you have been," said Brenda's mother. "You know that it is a rule that you should come directly home——"

Brenda tossed her head.

"Oh, I asked Belle to come and tell you."

"She may have left word that you were not coming, I think that Thomas gave me some message, but let us hear where you have been."

Mrs. Barlow spoke pleasantly, for she knew by the cloud on Brenda's face that there might be a storm if for the present she said too much about her absence from luncheon.

"Yes," added Julia, "do tell us where you have been. I have an idea that you have had an adventure."

"How could you guess?" exclaimed Brenda, and then, with the ice broken by these words of Julia's, she gave her mother an animated account of Nora's bravery, Manuel's beauty and the fruit-woman's picturesqueness.

Mrs. Barlow and Julia were interested. Brenda had a graphic way of telling a story, and the events of the morning lost nothing by her telling. But Mrs. Barlow shook her head when Brenda spoke of visiting Manuel in his home.

"It might not be at all a proper place," she said, "and besides, Manuel's mother may not care to have strangers visit her. Poor people sometimes are very sensitive about such things."

Before Brenda had time to argue this point with her mother, the portière was pushed aside and Belle and Edith came into the room. Julia rose to shake hands with Belle, while Edith with a very sweet smile, stepping toward her, said:

"I am glad to see you. I am one of 'the Four.' Brenda's told you about us. I am Edith."

Julia felt strongly drawn to the pleasant-faced girl. She liked her better than Belle, although on the two occasions of their meeting the latter had been markedly polite to her.

"Yes, we're all here now except Nora. We ought to be ready to give her a serenade, or something like that when she comes. She's really a kind of a heroine, isn't she?"

"Oh, nonsense, Edith," said Belle. "She did not actually do so very much. Those horses were not running away, and a little paddy like that child has as many lives as a cat."

"He *isn't* a paddy," interrupted Brenda, "but a Portuguese,—a dear little Portuguese—and Nora was very brave. It's just like you, Belle, to think that a thing isn't of any account unless you have had something to do with it."

Belle was silent. In the presence of a stranger she never forgot her good manners, and Julia was still sufficiently a stranger to act as a check on the sharp reply which otherwise might have risen to her lips. Edith now came in as a peacemaker.

"Well, it was great fun to have anything out of the ordinary happen at school. You can't imagine," turning to Julia, "how stupid it is to have things go on in the same way day after day. Last week there was a fire alarm about two blocks away, and just think, the engines passed scarcely five minutes after recess was over, and Miss Crawdon wouldn't let us run out to see where the fire was."

"Naturally not," said Mrs. Barlow, as she left the room, adding, as she passed out,

"By the time you are ready, Julia, the carriage will be here."

"Yes, Aunt Anna," answered Julia, and she, too, after a few pleasant words with Edith, excused herself with the explanation that her aunt had promised to accompany her to do some important errands down town.

"Come upstairs with me," said Brenda, with an air of relief, as Julia left. "There's Nora, now, I know her ring of the bell."

Nora soon joined the other three in Brenda's pretty bedroom.

"Here we are, all four together again," exclaimed Brenda, as she threw herself down on the chintz-covered sofa. "It's so much pleasanter not to have any strangers about."

"Do you call your cousin a stranger?" asked Nora.

"Why, yes, any one can see that she's terribly serious, and that she won't take a bit of interest in the things we do."

"Aren't you going to ask her to join the Four Club?"

"Well, then it wouldn't be a Four Club. Besides five is a horrid number. You never can plan things together when there are five."

"But you can't leave her out."

"I don't see why not. She'll have other things to do in the afternoon—like to-day. We needn't tell her about the Club at all, need we?"

Edith and Nora, to whom Brenda seemed to appeal, said nothing. Belle was looking out of the window, and though she usually would have agreed with Brenda, they had lately had so many little disagreements, that she would not gratify her friend by assenting to her words.

Brenda, however, perceiving that her views were not shared by the other three girls, decided to avoid discussing Julia any further.

"Let us come to order like a club," she exclaimed, "and decide what we shall work for this winter."

In the preceding spring the four friends had decided that it would be very interesting to give

their occasional meetings a club form. Instead of passing their afternoons in mere idle talk, they would have some object. They would all do fancy work, and perhaps have a sale in the spring for some charity. Each of the girls had already spent all her spare pocket-money on materials for needlework, although as yet they had made but little headway in their work. Nor had they decided for what object the sale should be held.

"It's a good deal like counting your chickens before they are hatched," Mrs. Barlow had said when Brenda consulted her on the subject. "It would be better to wait until you have enough work for a sale, before deciding what to do with your money."

In her heart Mrs. Barlow doubted that the girls would make enough money to be worth giving to any institution. She doubted even that they would persevere in their work, and have a sale. Brenda, herself, was too apt to begin with enthusiasm some undertaking which after a while she would let languish until it came to nothing. In this case Brenda was indignant at her mother's want of faith.

"Now you know that I'm older than I used to be, and I'm perfectly in earnest about wanting an object to work for."

"Very well, Brenda," said Mrs. Barlow smiling, "I certainly will not interfere, only you must give me time to think of a beneficiary for your money."

Now if the girls had started with a definite object to work for, their club meetings would have lost much of their interest. As it was, more than half their time was spent in earnest discussions of the merit of different institutions. Edith thought that a hospital was the noblest object of charity, although the others objected that the City or the State usually looked after hospitals. Nora hoped their money would be given to some orphan asylum, or a home for old persons, Belle believed that there was nothing so worthy as the Institution for the Blind, and Brenda changed her point of view from week to week.

"What are we to work for *this* week, Brenda?" asked Belle, somewhat derisively, as she opened her sewing-bag.

"Oh, I don't know. We're not working for anything in particular." Then, as her eye met Nora's, a new idea came.

"Oh, I'll tell you what, girls,—let us work for—Manuel!"



"OH, I'LL TELL YOU WHAT, GIRLS,—LET US WORK FOR—MANUEL!"

MISS CRAWDON'S SCHOOL

A girl's first day at a new school is very trying to her. The scrutiny which two or three dozen pairs of sharp young eyes give her is hard to bear. This ordeal is often more dreaded by a girl than many of the important events of her later years. Now Julia, although she was to go to school in her cousin Brenda's company, looked forward to her first day with considerable anxiety. In the first place she was naturally shy, and in the second place she had never regularly attended school. For the most part her lessons had been given her by her father. But at times when they had stayed long enough in some place to make this possible, she had had special instruction from private teachers. Her father had been very fond of books and had bought many expressly for Julia's benefit. She was, therefore, much better read than most girls of her age. Her education, too, was ahead of that of the average girl of sixteen. Of this fact Julia herself was unaware. She fancied that because she had gone to school so little, she would be found far behind her cousin Brenda and Brenda's friends. Before going to school she had had an informal talk with Miss Crawdon, in which she had revealed more to the keen mind of the latter than she had suspected. For Miss Crawdon never wasted words, and she did not tell the young girl that in some studies she was far ahead of many of her pupils of the same age. The teacher's questions had been far-reaching, and she felt pleased at the prospect of having among her pupils one evidently so fond of books as Julia.

The young girl, on the contrary, on the way to school with her cousin, expressed to the latter her fear at the prospect before her.

"Oh, you needn't worry," said Brenda, more patronizingly than she really intended, "Miss Crawdon won't be hard with you, she knows you haven't been at school much, and even if you have to start in one of the lower classes, you'll probably be able to push on rather quickly."

But even this did not reassure Julia. She was thinking less of her standing in the classes than of the reception she should meet from the girls. It was by no means comforting to feel the many strange eyes that followed her as she walked up the stairs with Brenda to enter the main schoolroom. Miss Crawdon was busy in another room, and Brenda who always had a great many things on her mind, rushed off to speak to one of the girls, leaving Julia alone near the door. There were perhaps a dozen girls standing about in little groups of three or four. They did not mean to be unkind, but when they saw Julia, they not only glanced curiously toward her, but for the time ceased their conversation. When they began to talk again it was not in the loud tone they had used before, and Julia would have been less than human if she had not received the impression that they were talking about her. Every one knows how uncomfortable it is for a girl to feel that she is in the presence of people who are making comments upon her. As a matter of fact what they said to one another was almost harmless.

"Is she Brenda Barlow's cousin?"

"What is she in mourning for?"

"How old is she?"

"Do you suppose she is coming here to school?"

This was the kind of question exchanged by the girls, with here and there a less good-natured comment.

"I don't call her so very pretty."

"She doesn't look like Brenda."

"Wouldn't you say that dress was made in the year one. I never saw such sleeves."

Unluckily the girl who made this last remark was standing rather nearer Julia than she had realized. It happened that Julia herself, who usually cared little for fashion, was sensitive about these very sleeves. They had been made a little smaller than the prevailing mode required by a dressmaker whom Julia had employed in a spirit of kindness without regard to her skill. She had not remembered when dressing that this was to be her first day at school. When she did recall this fact she had not thought it worth while to change her gown. She flushed a little when she overheard the criticism, and walked farther away from the groups toward Miss Crawdon's desk.

As she stood there looking more serious than usual, she was more than pleased to hear Nora's well-known voice exclaiming,

"Why, Julia, are you here all alone? Where's Brenda? Dear me, is this really your first day of school?"

Julia smiled. "I can't answer all your questions at once, but I *don't* know where Brenda is, and this *is* to be my first day of school."

"Is that why you look so mournful? Now we're not such a bad lot. Come, let me introduce you to some of your companions in misery." Then before Julia could object, she found herself receiving introductions to most of the girls in the room, even to the very one whose criticism had annoyed her. She was a thin girl with light hair and eyes and eyelashes. Her chin was long and her face

was somewhat freckled.

"This is Brenda Barlow's cousin Julia," said Nora, pleasantly.

"Yes, I thought you were Brenda's cousin," said the light-haired girl turning toward Julia. "Brenda's been dreading your coming to school."

Julia flushed as any girl might at a remark of this kind, even while she realized the unkindness of the speech.

"Nonsense, Frances," said quick-witted Nora, "I'm sure you never heard Brenda say anything so disagreeable."

But the light-haired girl had turned away. She was in the habit of making thoughtless remarks without caring whom they hit. Nora gave Julia's hand a gentle squeeze. "Brenda's just as glad as I am that you're coming to school," she whispered to Julia. But Julia shook her head, half sadly. She had already begun to see some of her cousin's peculiarities.

By this time many girls were rushing in from the dressing-rooms laughing and chattering as if they must say as much as possible before school began.

A few curious eyes were turned toward Julia, but most of the girls were so absorbed in their own affairs that they took no notice of the tall slender stranger in her black dress.

When Miss Crawdon returned to the room she welcomed Julia very cordially.

"I have arranged a seat for you here at the side near me," she said. "I had to have an extra desk brought in as there was no vacant place. But I dare say that you will not mind being by yourself here."

The seat to which Miss Crawdon pointed was in a little alcove at one side of her desk. It was so placed that it commanded a view of all the other desks in the room, yet it was not as conspicuous from the other desks as it seemed to poor Julia. When she took her seat she felt as if every one was looking at her. Whereas, in fact, only the girls in the very front rows could see her plainly. Between Miss Crawdon's desk and the front seat there was a row of settees where those girls who formed Miss Crawdon's special classes, sat during recitation. There were other class-rooms in various parts of the house, but the more advanced girls recited either to Miss Crawdon or to teachers in the small adjoining room.

Although Julia was less conspicuous than she imagined, it was not long before the whole school realized that a new girl had arrived. Most of them were too polite to show any surprise, but as each class filed through the room on its way to the recitation-room, many curious glances were thrown in her direction.

Miss Crawdon had told Julia that she would require no regular work from her that day.

"Perhaps you would like to look over this history," she had added, giving her a book, "and after recess, you may like to join the class. By listening to the other classes this morning you will get an idea of the kind of work I expect."

So Julia divided the two hours before recess between listening to the recitations and glancing over the history. It happened to be a history of France, and the special chapter was one dealing with the reign of Louis XIV. Julia paid much less attention to the book than she did to the girls who were reciting. It was all so new to her, for it was really true that she had never been in a school before. She admired the skill with which Miss Crawdon asked questions, and she wondered if she would ever be able to give replies herself, as clear as those of some of the girls. Yet not all the girls, she observed, knew their lesson, and some of them showed great cleverness in concealing—or trying to conceal this ignorance from Miss Crawdon. The latter was unusually proficient in reading girls, and she generally recognized the evasive answer that was intended to conceal lack of knowledge. The second class of the morning was one in English history, the period, the beginning of the reign of Mary. Julia had been engaged with her own book, but she looked up to hear Miss Crawdon saying, "So Mary succeeded one of the Princes murdered in the tower, at least I understood you to say Edward V."

"Yes," answered a voice which Julia recognized as that of Brenda's friend Belle, "yes, she succeeded her brother, the murdered prince, who had been beheaded by Katharine of Arragon."

Miss Crawdon did not smile, and Belle could not see the look of surprise on the faces of some of her classmates. But unfortunately she could see Julia's face and the involuntary smile on the latter's lips. She turned very red, and while Miss Crawdon proceeded to set her right, she registered a vow of dislike against that "prig of a Julia" who evidently knew more history than she did. Julia, too, caught the disagreeable look that flashed from Belle's eyes, and she greatly regretted that smile. Belle was one of those girls who seldom study a lesson thoroughly. She always had vague general ideas of the topic under consideration, gained by a rapid survey of the pages assigned for a lesson. When she could do so unobserved, sometimes during recitation she would look between the covers of her book to refresh her lagging memory. Nora and Edith and Brenda were also in the class with her, and sometimes one or the other of them would prompt her to save her from disgrace. Nora occasionally had pangs of conscience, and announced that she considered looking in a book or prompting, dishonorable. But sometimes she yielded to Belle's signals for help over a hard place. Belle did not often signal, for she relied as a general

thing on her own fluency of language to conceal her lack of knowledge. Miss Crawdon, however, had what Belle called an aggravating way of making her repeat her words until her mistakes were displayed in all their nakedness to the rest of the class.

"It's bad enough," she said to a group surrounding her at recess. "It's bad enough to have Miss Crawdon always down on one, but really I can't stand it if Julia is to sit where she can watch everything I do when I'm reciting to Miss Crawdon. I shouldn't think that you girls would like it either," she concluded.

"Oh, we're not afraid; we generally know our lessons," answered Frances Pounder, the girl whose careless remark had hurt Julia's feelings earlier in the day.

"Well, it doesn't matter whether you know your lessons or not, you can see for yourself that it's very funny for Miss Crawdon to put any girl in so conspicuous a place, right beside her, almost. I hate favoritism."

"Why, how you talk, Belle. This cousin of Brenda's hasn't been in school a day yet, and you talk of favoritism."

"Well, why shouldn't she have been in the history class with us? She told me she was going to have French history with the older girls. Just think of it, she's only a little older than we, and she's going to recite with girls nearly eighteen."

"She isn't so very pretty, is she?" said another girl, and so a conversation went on which luckily Julia could not hear. She spent the recess walking up and down with Nora, who was rapidly becoming her most intimate friend.

VI

MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Little by little Julia accustomed herself to the routine of school. At first it was much harder for her than any one suspected. Even after she had become fairly well acquainted with the girls in her classes, she dreaded each recitation. It was no easy task to put her knowledge into the definite form needed in answering questions. She had much more general information than many of her classmates, but nearly all were better skilled in reciting lessons. Although in history, Latin and literature she was two classes ahead of Brenda and the three other inseparables, she was with all but Edith in mathematics, and, rather to Brenda's delight, a class below them in French. Julia's father had been much less interested in modern than in ancient languages, and Julia had had limited opportunities for learning French. Belle, on the contrary, was a really fine French scholar. She was fonder, indeed, of introducing French words and phrases into her conversation than should have been the case with a girl who really understood the French language. Edith excelled in mathematics, Nora, strange to say, Nora, who was so careless about most of her lessons, had a real gift for English composition. Brenda did well in all her studies "by fits and starts," as the girls said. She had fine powers, her teachers often told her, which she seldom exerted to the utmost. But Brenda and her friends formed only a small part of the school, and Julia soon found that in every class she had one or two competitors whose proficiency spurred her on.

To be perfectly frank, however, it must be said that the majority of Miss Crawdon's girls were not hard workers. Miss Crawdon, herself, often felt greatly discouraged that girls with the opportunities of most of her pupils, should appreciate these opportunities so little. With most of them attending school was a mere duty, a way in which several months of each year must be spent until they should "come out." Miss Crawdon tried in vain to arouse in most of them something more like a passing interest in their work. Occasionally she found a spark of earnestness in one of her pupils which she was able to fan into ambition. But more often she had to give up the attempt to induce a bright girl to become a genuine student. There were too many distractions out of school, and parents were apt to be slow in seconding her efforts. Miss Crawdon was pleased, therefore, to find in Julia a girl who loved study and who was inclined to persevere.

One day Brenda came home from school in a state of considerable excitement.

"What do you think, mamma, Julia is going to study Greek! Did you ever hear of such a thing?"

"Why shouldn't Julia study Greek?" said her mother. "Why are you so excited about it?"

"Oh, it's so foolish. No girl at Miss Crawdon's ever studied Greek before. Julia says she's going to college, *is she*? Oh, dear, I think it's horrid."

"Why, Brenda, really——"

"Well, it makes me so conspicuous."

"How can that be?"

"Why every one will point me out and say, 'Oh it's her cousin who studies Greek.' It sounds so

strong-minded to talk of going to college. The next thing she'll want to be a teacher."

"It seems to me you are very unreasonable, Brenda. You ought to be glad that your cousin is so ambitious. I only wish that you were half as fond of study."

"There, that's it. I knew there'd be comparisons. Oh, dear! It never was so before Julia came."

"Daughter," said Mr. Barlow from behind his paper. Brenda trembled, for her father's "Daughter" was generally the introduction to a lecture. "Daughter, I fear that you are jealous."

Brenda shook her head. "Oh, papa!"

"Yes, Brenda, I have noticed in several ways that you are less kind to Julia than you should be. How does it happen that you and she never start off to school together?"

"Brenda is never ready when Julia is," said Mrs. Barlow.

"Ah, Brenda, your habit of tardiness is a very bad one."

"I'm hardly ever late at school. Belle and I get there a full minute before the bell rings."

"That may be, but it would be better if you and Julia started together."

"She does not have to go alone. Nora is generally with her."

"Ah, Brenda, the point I am trying to make is this; you do not spend nearly as much time with your cousin as I had hoped you would, and you are too ready to find fault with what she does!"

"You always blame me, and you never find any fault with Julia. Why didn't she tell me that she was going to study Greek? The girls all asked me to-day if I knew about it, and I had to say that I hadn't heard a word."

"You and Belle have been very much occupied with your own affairs this week. Julia consulted us about her plans and——"

"Well, *is* she going to college?" interrupted Brenda.

"I cannot say positively," smiled Mrs. Barlow. "It rests with Julia herself."

"I never saw anything like it," pouted Brenda. "Julia isn't two years older than I, and you let her do whatever she wants to. Oh, dear!" And Brenda pushed aside the portière and left the room.

"That is just what I feared for Brenda," said Mr. Barlow. "Julia's coming makes her even a little more suspicious than she was before. She constantly has the idea that something of importance has been concealed from her which she ought to know."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Barlow, "I am afraid that Brenda is hopelessly spoiled. We did not realize the danger when she was little. The other two girls were so different."

"It would not surprise me," responded Mr. Barlow, "if after all some change should come to Brenda's point of view from having to consider her cousin more or less."

"If only she *would* consider her," sighed Mrs. Barlow.

If Julia felt at all slighted by Brenda, she did not say so. Indeed she was too well occupied with her lessons and her music to be disturbed by trivial things. What her object was in studying Greek she did not disclose fully to any one, but she studied diligently the difficult declensions and conjugations. The serious looking man with eyeglasses who came to the school three times a week, was an object of much interest to most of the girls.

"Doesn't he look learned? Oh, Julia, I should think that you would be frightened to death," said Edith. But Julia smiled.

"I wish myself that Greek were just a little easier. I've got to the verbs and it seems to me I never shall know them."

"I don't wonder," responded Edith. "I don't see how you ever learn it,—all those queer letters and marks and things. Well, I should feel just as though I were standing on my head if I tried to study Greek."

Edith had no vanity about herself, at least in the matter of lessons. Her special talent was for drawing and mathematics but although she was conscientious about her school work, she rarely distinguished herself in her recitations. Like Nora, she had begun to have a great admiration for Julia. The latter shook her head when Edith spoke of the difficulty she had in learning Greek.

"It's like everything else," she said, "you can learn it if you make up your mind to try hard enough."

"I wish that had been the way with my German, for I really did try. Papa is disappointed, because he wanted me to speak by the time we go to Europe again."

"Then why don't you persevere? It would please him and it would do you good. If I were you I would take it up now."

"Well, perhaps I will after Christmas. Miss Crawdon won't let us make any changes until then."

As Edith watched Julia's diligence and perseverance she really became ashamed of her own rather indolent way of treating her lessons.

When Nora or Brenda came for her to go to walk early on some bright October afternoon she was very apt to say, "Oh, I cannot go now, I must finish studying."

"Well, Edith, I never knew anything so funny," Brenda exclaimed one day when she and Belle had vainly tried to persuade Edith to walk with them over the mill-dam. "You never used to make such excuses and I consider it a perfect waste of time myself to spend such a lovely afternoon studying. I should think your mother'd want you to have some exercise."

"Oh, I shall have plenty this afternoon. I am going to the gymnasium for an hour with Julia, and that will answer for to-day. We took a walk before school this morning."

"You and Nora are too provoking, Edith," exclaimed Brenda rather pettishly. "Ever since Julia came you seem to prefer spending your time with her. You never used to be such a book-worm."

"Well, I'm trying to make up for lost time. I wish that I could accomplish as much as Julia."

"Oh—Julia, Julia, I'm sick and tired of the name," exclaimed Belle. "Why in the world does she study so much, Brenda?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"You ought to—you're her cousin. I believe myself that she's going to be a teacher."

"Belle, it is not nice in you to say that," interposed Edith.

"Why isn't it nice to be a teacher. I thought that you liked them more than anything else. I am sure that Julia does."

"I dare say she does, but it doesn't follow that she's going to be a teacher herself."

"Oh, anybody can tell that she's a poor relation—isn't she, Brenda? Just see how plainly she dresses, and working so to get into college. I think that your mother and father are very good to give her a home."

Now all this was very presumptuous on Belle's part, but she spoke so pleasantly and smiled so sweetly at Brenda as she talked that the latter, though a little irritated, never thought of taking offence at her. But Belle's words had sunk deeper even than she had intended. Brenda had a certain kind of pride which was easily touched. She felt that in some way it was a source of discredit to her to have a cousin who might be a teacher. For in what other way could she interpret Julia's intention of studying Greek.

Julia, unconscious of Brenda's feeling, went on quietly without heeding the disagreeable little remarks that sometimes were made in her hearing by Brenda. Belle was as polite and agreeable toward Julia as to others whom she liked better. For it was a kind of unspoken policy of Belle's to be apparently friendly with all girls of whom she was likely to see much. If accused of this failing she would not have admitted that she was two-faced. She merely liked to be popular, and if she sometimes made ill-natured remarks about a third person, she trusted to the discretion of those to whom she talked. She did not realize that in time she might come to be regarded as thoroughly insincere. She had not measured the relative advantages of "To Be" and "To Seem."

VII

VISITING MANUEL

Two or three weeks after their adventure with Manuel passed before Brenda and Nora were able to visit him. They talked several times of going, but something always interfered. Sometimes it was the weather, sometimes it was another engagement, more often they could not go because they had no one to accompany them. For it was evident that two young girls could not go alone to the North End. At length one morning one of the under teachers in the school offered to go with them that very afternoon. She had overheard them at recess expressing their sorrow that they could not go alone.

"Really," pouted Brenda, "I think that mamma is very mean. We could go as well as not by ourselves, and why we should have to wait for her or some older person to go with us I cannot see."

"Don't call your mother mean," Miss South said laughingly in passing, and then as Brenda explained the cause of her rather undutiful expression, she had added, "Your mother is perfectly right. It would never do for you to go alone. But I have an errand down near Prince Street this very day. If you get Mrs. Barlow's permission I shall be happy to have you go with me." So it happened that one warm, sunny day in early November, the girls and Miss South exchanged their Back Bay car at Scollay Square for a Hanover Street electric car. It whizzed swiftly down a street which neither Brenda nor Nora had ever seen before, filled with gay shops whose windows were bright with millinery or jewelry—or, I am sorry to say it—bottles of liquor, amber and red. There

was more display here than in the streets up town.

"Sometimes," said Miss South, "I call this the Bowery of Boston. It is the chief shopping street of the North End, and on Saturday nights the poor people do most of their buying. I came here one evening with my brother. It was really very amusing."

They had been in the car but a few minutes when Miss South gave the signal for the car to stop.

"It will interest you," she said, "to see this quaint old street. It has an old-time name, too—'Salem Street.'"

Brenda and Nora glanced around them in surprise. It was a narrow street, winding along almost in a curve. Though most of the houses were brick, a number were of wood. Some of them had gable-roofs, and nearly all of them looked old. Shops occupied the lower part of most of these houses, and many of them were pawn-shops. As they entered the street it seemed as if they could hardly pass through. Hooks and poles laden with old clothes projected from many of these shops, and the sidewalks themselves held numerous loungers and children. Nora looked interested, Brenda, a trifle disgusted, as they saw a woman chattering with a hand-cart man who sold fish.

"Ugh, I wouldn't want to eat it," said the latter.

"Oh, it's probably perfectly good fish," responded Miss South with a smile. "Only it does not look quite as inviting as it would if shown on a marble slab in an up-town fish market."

"Are these people *dreadfully* poor?" asked Nora.

"No," replied Miss South. "This is the Jewish section, and most of the men here make a pretty good living. They are peddlers, and go out into the country selling tins or fruit, or they have little shops."

"But these children look so poor!"

"If you will notice more carefully you will see that their clothes are dingy rather than poor. Nearly all wear good shoes, and there are not many rags. Many of these Russian and Polish Jews when they first come to Boston have very little money, and are supported by their friends. But they soon find a chance to earn their living, and a man coming here without a cent, in five years sometimes owns a house. I speak of this, girls, because I have known people to think that dirt and dinginess mean great poverty."

Nora and Brenda made many exclamations of surprise as they looked down some of the narrow lanes leading from Salem Street.

"It's just like pictures of Europe, isn't it?" cried Nora; "and then these people—and the queer signs—Oh! really I think it's *too* interesting for anything."

The signboards of which Nora spoke certainly did look strange.

Some of them had Russian names, others were in odd Hebrew characters. Those which were English were peculiarly worded. The owner of a tiny shop with one little window described himself as a "Wholesale and retail dealer in dry goods," a corner groceryman called himself an "importer." The English spelling was not always correct, and the names of the shop-people were long and odd.

Miss South's errand took her to a large building occupied as an industrial school. On their way upstairs they saw some boys at work at a printing press, and Miss South told the girls a little about the boys' and girls' clubs, which met in this building certain evenings in the week. Miss South wished to speak to the kindergarten teacher whose school was on the top floor. Most of the little children had gone home for the day, and only a few remained whose mothers were out working and had no one with whom to leave the children. Nora and Brenda exclaimed with delight at sight of five or six little boys and girls seated in small chairs around a low table. Nearly all had dark hair and eyes, although there was one little blonde girl with long, light curls. They looked at the visitors with small wonder, for they were used to seeing strangers. Nora at once began to play with the light-haired girl, but Brenda, after a glance or two, preferred to look out of the window. Unlike Nora, she was not very fond of children. They did not remain long in the building, and were soon in the street again.

"Just one block below," said Miss South, "is Prince Street, but before we go there let us look at Christ Church. Do you realize that you are under the very shadow of the spire where Paul Revere hung his lantern?"

The girls fairly jumped with surprise.

"Of course I knew it was somewhere down here, but I hadn't an idea it was so near," said Brenda, while Nora began to recite,

"Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere."

They had turned the corner again into Salem Street, and following Miss South, had crossed the street. There before them loomed the gray front of the old church with its tall spire on which they could read the inscription:

"The signal lanterns of Paul Revere displayed in the steeple of this church April 18, 1775, warned the country of the march of the British troops to Concord and Lexington."

"This is the oldest church building in the city," said Miss South, "and some Sunday you would find it worth while to come down here to a service, for the interior has been restored to look just as it did in its earliest days."

"Oh, how Julia would enjoy that!" exclaimed Nora. "You know that she just loves old things."

"Yes," continued Miss South, "you must take her, too, to see Copp's Hill Burying Ground, up this street. We haven't time to go to-day, but if you do not make other arrangements I shall be very glad to come with you some Sunday."

"You're awfully good, Miss South," said Brenda. "I don't care so much for old things myself, but still I'd like to come again."

"I know, Brenda, you like new things—Manuel for instance. Well, you shall see him in less than five minutes—that is, if he is at home."

They had reached the corner of Prince Street. Like Salem Street this too, was narrow with quaint old houses. One wooden house which looked as if it might fall down at any minute bore a placard which warned passers-by of possible danger. The placard stated that it had been built in 1723.

"In the time of George II.,—just think of it!" exclaimed Brenda, who when she wished, could remember dates.

"Rear of No. 11," said Miss South, and they turned down a short alley. They had not to ask the way, however, for there, in front of the second house, stood Manuel himself. He looked at them at first without recognizing them, but when Nora called his name, he took his finger from his mouth, and in a moment began to smile very broadly. But instead of running to the girls he turned toward the house.

"Come, come," he said, and almost at the same moment Mrs. Rosa appeared at the door. She looked very pale and thin and she had an old black shawl drawn over her head. Nora and Brenda now found that they had lost their tongues. They really did not know what to say, and they were very glad that Miss South had come with them. The alley, too, was so dirty, so different from any place they had ever seen, that they willingly followed Mrs. Rosa into the house when she asked them to do so.

Mrs. Rosa talked very poor English, but Miss South was able to gather from what she said that she had been ill for two or three weeks. She had not been able to go to her fruit stand. Her eldest daughter had been attending to it for her, a girl twelve years old.

"But why isn't Manuel at school?" asked Miss South.

"Him home for company," smiled Mrs. Rosa, showing both rows of white teeth.

Miss South shook her head. "He ought to go every day to the kindergarten."

"His shoes so bad," apologized Mrs. Rosa, and as they all looked at the little boy they saw a red toe peeping out from one shoe. Nora nudged Brenda—Brenda smiled assent. The nudge and the smile meant that in Manuel they were surely going to have a field for their charitable efforts.

The little room in which they sat looked very poor and bare. It had no carpet, and the table and the two or three chairs were of unpainted wood. The most important piece of furniture was the large cook-stove. On the mantelpiece were various dishes, several of which were broken, and there were the remains of a meal on the table. Altogether the room did not look very neat. Although it was not a cold day there was a large fire burning in the stove where something rather savory was boiling in a pot.

While Miss South was talking the two girls realized that they had come rather aimlessly to Mrs. Rosa's. They managed to ask her if Manuel had run away again, and she smiled as she answered, "Every day," and shook her head at the little boy.

"Well, he must be careful not to run under the horses' feet," said Nora.

"He won't find some one ready to pull him back every day," chimed in Brenda, while Manuel and his mother both smiled, though I am sure that the little boy hardly understood a word of what was said.

"Oh, them 'lectrics," said Mrs. Rosa, "they're awful bad. I whip Manuel all the time so he won't run in front of them 'lectrics."

"Aren't you afraid whipping will make him run away more often?" asked Miss South. But Mrs. Rosa looked as if she did not quite understand the meaning of this question, and after a few more inquiries about the other children who were still in school, Miss South said it was time to return home. Before going, Nora gave Manuel a picture-book, and Brenda gave him a top which they had bought for him.

"Come again," called Mrs. Rosa, waving an end of her shawl at them, and "Come again" shouted Manuel as they turned from the narrow alley into the broader street.

"Isn't it perfectly dreadful," exclaimed Nora, "for people to be so poor."

Miss South was silent for a moment. Then she responded, "There are different kinds of poverty. Mrs. Rosa seems very poor to you, and it is true that she has not much money, but if you were to ask her I dare say that she would tell you that she is better off than when she lived in the Azores," and then, as she saw that the girls were interested, Miss South continued, "in Boston she can send her children to good schools, knowing that when they are old enough, they will find a way to earn a living. When she herself is out of work, or ill, she is not likely to suffer, for there are many people and institutions in Boston looking out for the poor."

"But they look so awfully poor now," said Brenda. Miss South smiled. "I would not try to make you less sympathetic, Brenda, but you must remember that a plain uncarpeted room when properly warmed is not so uncomfortable as it looks. The worst thing about Mrs. Rosa's way of living is the fact that she and her children are crowded into two small rooms. At night they bring a mattress from the little bedroom and spread on the kitchen floor. Three of the children sleep there, while Mrs. Rosa and the others sleep in the bedroom."

"How can they possibly live that way!" said Nora, who, as a doctor's daughter, had pretty definite ideas on the subject of ventilation and hygiene.

"It is indeed a very bad way of doing," said Miss South. "The best way to help Mrs. Rosa would be to persuade her to take her family to some country town where they could have plenty of light and air."

VIII

PLANNING THE BAZAAR

Brenda at the dinner-table that evening had much to say about the expedition of the afternoon. Or rather, she had much to tell about Manuel and his cunning little ways, about his mother and the poverty of the family and what she intended to do for them. Her mother smiled, her father looked interested and said,

"Well, I'm glad that you have found a use for your pocket money. I won't begrudge it to you as long as it does not all go into Schuyler's candy."

Julia cried, "Oh, Brenda, how I should love to have gone with you," when Brenda spoke of the old church and the old streets. "Do tell just what the church was like."

But Brenda's ideas were less definite on these points. She wasn't exactly sure what Paul Revere had done—for history was not her strong point—and she was a little annoyed at Julia's surprise at her lack of interest. Julia did not mean to show any surprise, but it did seem strange to hear Brenda say rather impatiently in answer to a question about the church,

"Oh, well, it was a brown church,—no, I think it was gray, with a steeple, but I didn't notice much. Nora quoted some poetry, but I was in a hurry to go on to see Manuel, and I think that it's very tiresome to have to dig up history and things like that out of school."

Mr. Barlow frowned at this. "Before you go to the North End again I hope you will have your history and your Longfellow fresh in mind. It is rather a shame for a Boston girl to be ignorant of historic places in her own city."

"Julia must go with you next time," said Mrs. Barlow, wishing to divert the conversation from Brenda's shortcomings.

"You'll let me know, won't you," interposed Julia pleasantly, and Brenda gave a careless "Yes" as she turned to her father and said,

"Oh, papa, I wish that you would let me buy a carpet and a lot of things for Manuel's mother. You have no idea how poor they seem. Do give me the money, that's a dear. You never will miss it in the world."

"How much, Brenda, does your modesty lead you to think you need?" asked Mr. Barlow.

"Oh, I don't know," answered Brenda, whose ideas of the value of money were very vague indeed. "You might let me buy the things and have them charged."

"Dear me! that would be worse than giving you the money—worse for my pocket. I suppose you'd want to do your shopping in some really fashionable Boylston Street establishment?"

"Now, papa, you're laughing at me!"

"Perhaps I am," replied her father. "But really, Brenda, I don't believe that Manuel's mother would thank you for a carpet. Didn't you say they all lived in one room? A bare floor is easier to keep clean."

"Oh, well, I must buy them something, and my pocket money won't go far. Besides, I've spent all you gave me this month."

"Well, Manuel and his mother and all those brothers and sisters have lived in Boston very

comfortably for several years without any help from you. If you should give them a carpet they might grow discontented. The next thing they would want might be a piano, and from what you say I hardly think that room would hold a piano as well as the whole family and the cook-stove."

"Oh, papa, I believe that you are making fun of me."

"No, indeed, I am not, but I wish you to be reasonable."

"If there's anything in the world I hate it's that word reasonable. It always means that I'm not to have what I want."

"There you are *un-reasonable*," answered Mr. Barlow. "We will talk no more about it now, but some day perhaps your mother will go down with you to see Manuel, and then you can both tell me whether the Rosas ought to have a piano as well as a carpet."

With this Brenda had to be content, but the next afternoon when the Four Club had its regular weekly meeting she and Nora grew excited as they described the poverty of the Rosas to the other two.

"At any rate we can do a lot of fancy-work this winter," said Brenda, "and I shouldn't wonder if we were to have a very successful Fair."

"Oh, don't call it a 'Fair,'" said Belle, "that sounds so awfully common. Bazaar, or Sale—no, Bazaar is best. Let's always speak of it as a Bazaar."

The others assented, for really they hardly ever dared dissent from Belle when she laid down the law in this way.

"Well, what else shall we call it, The Busy Bees' Bazaar?" asked Nora.

"Oh, no, that would be dreadful! We needn't decide about the rest of the name just yet."

"No, I think that it would be better to wait until we have something ready," said Edith, at which the other three looked up somewhat surprised. They had never heard Edith make a remark that sounded so nearly sarcastic.

"Now, Edith, you know very well that we shall have plenty to sell. Just think how much we'll do if we meet every week ourselves. Then every girl in school ought to make at least one thing, and we can get any amount from older people. Really it's the duty of older people to help us all they can. I should think we might have four large tables just loaded with fancy-work, besides refreshments and flowers—and—oh, dear me—I feel quite dizzy when I think of it," cried the sanguine Brenda.

"Aren't you going to ask Julia to join the Four Club?" queried Edith, turning to Brenda.

"How silly," said the latter. "Of course not. It wouldn't be a Four Club then."

"But don't you think it must seem a little strange to Julia. We run upstairs past her room every Thursday, and no one asks her to come."

"Oh, she doesn't care," interposed Belle. "I don't believe that she cares for anything but study and music."

"Yes," added Brenda, "it drives me half crazy to hear her piano going half the time."

"Ah, *that's* what drives you crazy," said Nora, mischievously. "I thought you had seemed a little queer lately."

Brenda tossed her head, but before she had time to answer this, Edith returned to the question of Julia.

"Really and honestly, Brenda, I feel very uncomfortable about Julia. We ought at least to invite her to join us. I dare say she wouldn't come every week, but I *do* think that she ought to be asked. It doesn't seem to me polite to leave her out—or kind."

Again Belle spoke for Brenda. "Really, Edith, you're awfully Puritanic; that's what everybody says: you're always thinking about the wrong and right of things."

"Well, why shouldn't I? I'm sure we all intend to do what is right."

"Yes, of course, in a way. But you don't have to keep thinking about it always. People have to enjoy themselves sometimes, and if we can't enjoy ourselves in this Four Club we might as well give it up at once."

"Do you mean that Julia would prevent our enjoying ourselves if she came?" Nora's voice sounded ominously severe.

"I didn't say that, but—well what's the good of talking?" cried Belle, who saw that she was getting into deep water.

"Yes," chimed in Brenda, "that's what I say too." But Edith continued in a rather grave voice,

"Of course it's your house, Brenda, and you and Belle started the Club, and no one can compel you to invite any one you don't want. But I'm sure if I had my way Julia should be here this minute, and I'm not sure that I'll stay in the Club if she isn't asked."

"Do you mean you won't work for the Bazaar?" exclaimed Nora in surprise, thinking of Manuel, and of the dainty needlework at which Edith was so skilful.

"I haven't said exactly what I'll do," replied the quiet Edith, with more spirit than she generally displayed. "Only I can tell you that I'm not going to see Julia left out of things the way she has been."

"Oh, Julia's all right," said Brenda scornfully. "She doesn't know how to do fancy-work, and she'd just feel bored if she came to the Club. If you want a 'cause' Edith, you'd better adopt a smaller orphan than Julia."

"Like Manuel," said Edith, with a bright smile, for, determined though she was when she had made up her mind about a thing, she was also a peacemaker. Even when Brenda and Belle most annoyed her, she hesitated to say sharp things to them, remembering that "A soft answer turneth away wrath."

"Yes, like Manuel," said Nora, taking up Edith's words. "I won't give Manuel up to you, for you know that I mean to adopt him myself, but he has a sister, or two of them for that matter, and I shouldn't wonder if either of them would give you enough to do."

"Oh, yes," said Brenda, "they both looked as if they needed lots of clothes. But they have the *sweetest* black eyes."

"Well, then, why shouldn't we make dresses or aprons or something like that, before we get started on our work for the Bazaar?" asked Edith.

"Oh, how can you?" cried Belle. "Horrid calico dresses and things like that—I should just hate them."

"There, don't get excited," said Nora. "I've thought of that myself. But my mother says there are plenty of Societies and Sewing Circles we can get clothes from, if the Rosas really need clothes. She says it would be bad to begin giving them things."

"Well, then, what are we going to have a Bazaar for?" asked Brenda.

"For fun," responded Belle, so promptly that Nora looked at her a little suspiciously.

"No," replied Nora, "not for fun, but we've got to have an object in a Club of this kind, and besides there'll probably be other things we can do for the Rosas."

"Send them to the country in the summer, perhaps," said Edith.

"There are the Country Week people," cried Belle. "They always do things like that."

"Let's wait until we get the money," said Brenda, grandly. "Perhaps we'll have enough to buy them a house—or——"

"Or a horse and carriage," laughed Edith. "Oh, Brenda, you *are* so unpractical."

"There, there," said Nora, who saw another cloud rising over the horizon of the Four Club. "Let's talk of something sensible."

"What are you working at, Belle?"

Belle held up a pretty piece of blue denim on which she had begun to outline a pattern in white silk. "This is to be a sofa cushion," she said in answer to Nora's question. "People always like to buy them, and this shade of blue goes with almost anything."

"Oh, it's too sweet for anything," said Nora, enthusiastically.

"Yes, indeed," added Edith, with perfect sincerity. "You do such perfect needlework that I really envy you."

Both Nora and Edith were glad to praise Belle's skill, for although they knew that they themselves had been in the right, they realized that Belle would not feel very kindly toward them for not siding with her in the matter of Julia. Nora, like Edith, was a peacemaker, and both wished the afternoon to end as pleasantly as possible.

Belle was by no means indifferent to the praise of her friends. She really could do very fine embroidery and she took considerable pride in her work.

"I never *could* have patience to do anything like that," said Nora, whose specialty was crocheting. "I like to do something that I needn't look at all the time. I could crochet an afghan almost in the dark."

"Yes, but an afghan is such an endless piece of work."

"Well, I don't suppose I'll make *many* of them for the Bazaar."

"I should say not," said Edith. "What are you going to do first, Brenda? You haven't had a needle in your hand this afternoon."

"I know it, I know it," cried Brenda, the heedless. "But I can't think what to begin first," and she opened the bottom drawer of her bureau, where were displayed a tangled heap of linen and floss and gold thread and silk plush and other materials for fancy work which she had bought at

different times. There were cushion covers and doilies in which a few stitches had been taken, only to be thrown aside for something else, and some of them were in so soiled a condition that they were not likely to be good for anything.

"Oh, what a wicked waste of money, Brenda Barlow," exclaimed Nora, as she looked at the contents of the drawer.

"Well, at any rate it shows that I have had good intentions," said Brenda.

IX

A MYSTERIOUS MANSION

At the corner nearly opposite Miss Crawdon's school stood a large, old-fashioned mansion of brick painted light brown. It was a detached house almost surrounded by a high wall. In the wall was a pillared gateway, and each pillar was surmounted by two large balls that looked as if they had dropped from the mouth of a great cannon. Behind the fence and close to the house were two little garden beds, and there were three or four trees in the yard back of the house. It was said that the mansion had once been surrounded with extensive grounds that sloped down hill almost to the river. But new streets and houses had gradually encroached on these grounds until hardly a trace of them remained. There was never a sign of life seen about the old house. Windows and doors were always closed. Even the blinds were seldom drawn up, though once in a while at an upper window, some of the schoolgirls said that they had seen a woman's figure seated behind the lace curtains. Occasionally, too, on sunny days they had noticed a large, old-fashioned carriage drive up under the porte-cochère, while an old lady very much wrapped up, and attended evidently by a maid, entered it. In taking their walks at recess the girls always passed this house, and, as schoolgirls, they naturally felt much curiosity about the lady who occupied it, since she seemed to be surrounded by an air of mystery.

They knew, of course, her name—Madame du Launy—and some of the girls had heard more about her from their parents.

"My mother," said Frances Pounder, "says that my grandmother told her that Mme. du Launy was a very beautiful girl. She married a Frenchman whom her family despised, and she stayed in Europe until after her father's death."

"Was the Frenchman rich?" asked Edith, in rather an awe-stricken voice, for the story sounded very romantic. The girls at this moment happened to be seated on the steps leading to the school, and Frances was in her element when she had an interested group hanging on her words.

"Oh, dear, no, he wasn't rich at all. He was a cook, or a hair-dresser, or something like that, only very good looking. But when Mme. du Launy's father died, she had three little children, and her father was so proud—he was a Holtom—he couldn't bear to think of her coming to want, so he left her all his fortune just the same as if she hadn't married beneath her."

"That was right," said Nora approvingly. "I think it's ridiculous for fathers to cut their children off with a penny, the way they used to."

"Well," responded Frances, "I think it's a great deal more ridiculous for people to marry beneath them."

"Of course you'd think that, Frances," interposed Belle.

"There, there, don't begin to quarrel, children," said Nora. "Go on with the story, Frances. What did Mme. du Launy do when she got her money?"

"Oh, she brought her Frenchman and her children to Boston, and she lived at a hotel while she began to build this house. Some people went to see her, but the Frenchman was a terribly ill-mannered little thing, and nobody liked him because he was so familiar. Mme. du Launy and he were hardly ever invited anywhere, and they spent most of their time driving about in a great carriage which held the whole family, and a maid and governess."

"I should think they would have stopped building the house."

"Oh, no," said Edith, "they kept on, and after a while they went to Europe to buy things for it. They had more than a ship-load, and they say that everything was perfectly beautiful,—foreign rugs, and tapestry, and glass, and gilt furniture."

"Dear me, I should love to have seen it."

"Well, it's all there in the house now, but you'd have to be a good deal smarter than any one I know to see it."

"Why Frances, do you mean that no one ever goes there?" asked Julia.

"Yes, that's just what I mean. I don't suppose any one in Boston except the doctor, and two or three very old people, have ever been inside that door."

"Yes, that's true," added Edith. "I've heard my mother speak of it. Mme. du Launy is terribly peculiar."

"I should think she'd be lonely," said Julia.

"I dare say she is," replied Frances, "but it's awfully selfish to shut up a great house like that."

"Why does she do it?"

"Oh, I believe, when she came back from Europe the second time she set out to give a great ball. She sent invitations to every one, no matter whether people had called on her or not. Of course very few people went, only her relations and a few others. This made her so angry that she vowed she'd have nothing more to do with people in Boston. Not long afterward her husband died, then her children died or turned out badly, and she has just lived alone ever since."

"It sounds rather sad," said Julia, when Frances had finished.

"Nonsense, Julia," said Brenda, "you're so sentimental."

"No, she isn't at all," cried Edith, "it is really sad. I wonder what became of the children."

Here Belle spoke up. "I've heard that the boys all died. One of them ran away to sea and was drowned. But I believe the girl married some one her mother didn't like, and so she disinherited her. She may be living somewhere, but she must be an old woman herself, for my grandmother says that Mme. du Launy is about eighty."

As the girls looked toward the house they saw a figure standing behind the curtains of the window over the front door.

"There she is now," the girls cried.

"Wouldn't you like to go inside?" said Nora to Edith.

"I don't know that I'm really anxious to," replied the latter.

"Oh, I am," said Nora, and a moment later she cried out to Frances, "Frances, you are rather clever, can't you suggest some way by which I can find my way inside that house? Wouldn't one of your great aunts give me an introduction to Mme. du Launy? I'm just dying to see what is inside those brick walls."

"No," responded Frances, rather scornfully; "if they could they wouldn't, but I'm sure they haven't kept up any acquaintance with Mme. du Launy."

"Well," replied Nora, "I'll find a way. Mark my words, before the present crescent moon is old I shall have at least a speaking acquaintance with Mme. du Launy. Poor thing, she must be very lonely."

"I don't believe she'd appreciate your society particularly, Nora, for one thing you're pretty young," said Edith.

"No matter, I'm going to know her. Come, Brenda, I'll confide in you."

So Brenda and Nora walked down the street, leaving the other girls to wonder what they were planning. This was by no means the first time that the girls at Miss Crawdon's school had discussed Mme. du Launy and her affairs. Indeed, each set of girls had wondered about her and her beautiful furniture, and her music box that played a hundred airs, and all her foreign treasures, and her possessions lost nothing in splendor as the girls told what they had heard about them.

Of the four friends, Belle and Edith were most indifferent to the house across the way. But a number of others among the schoolgirls seemed inclined to join Nora and Brenda in whatever they were planning. One day as they walked about at recess they saw the old lady leave the house and enter her carriage. They were too polite to stand and gaze at her, but some of them could not resist the temptation of staring at the carriage as it rolled by.

The next day Nora and Brenda were seen to be very much interested in playing ball. They tossed it from one to the other, and occasionally as they passed the brick mansion they let it roll within the gateway on the gravelled walks. There were half a dozen girls walking in front of the old house and tossing the ball. As they played, the ball rose higher and higher. Nora and Brenda were standing almost inside the gateway, when suddenly the ball seemed to fling itself against one of the windows, and the crash of breaking glass was heard. Some of the girls looked frightened and hurried across the street toward the school. Brenda too, started to go, but Nora took her by the hand. "Remember your promise," she said, so loudly that two of the other girls who were crossing the street, turned about and joined them. Just at that moment the school-bell rang, and rather reluctantly the girls turned back to school. Nora and Brenda paid very little attention to their lessons the rest of the morning. Some of their friends who had witnessed the mischief done by the ball were also excited. They all more than half expected to see Mme. du Launy's aged servant-man make his appearance to complain of the injury done to the window. As it drew near two o'clock and nothing of the kind had happened, they were really disappointed.

"We're not going home with you," cried Nora, as she and Brenda and the two other conspirators walked down the steps of the school.

"Why not?" asked Edith from the dressing-room.

"Oh, we have something to attend to," replied Nora.

"Well," said Edith, "luncheon is the most important thing that I have to attend to just now."

"What shall I say to your mother?" asked Julia, as she saw Brenda preparing to turn in the opposite direction from home.

"Don't say anything, Julia. I'm not a baby to need looking after."

Julia had no answer for this inconsiderate speech, for indeed she had become only too well accustomed to Brenda's little rudenesses.

"Let's wait and see what they are going to do," suggested Edith, looking toward Nora and Brenda and the two or three others who had joined them.

"I must go on," answered Julia. "I ought to be at——"

"I'll wait," spoke up Belle. "Come, you can stay, Edith."

So the two friends waited near the school while Brenda and Nora and the others crossed the street to Mme. du Launy's mansion. They were surprised to see them ring the bell, and after a moment, when the door was opened, to see them step inside.

Not many minutes later they saw the door reopen, as the girls, looking somewhat crestfallen, turned away from the house.

"What in the world were you up to?" called Belle, rather excitedly as they turned homeward.

"Wait till we get out of sight of the house," said Nora, "and I'll tell you. It was this way, I had just made up my mind that I'd see the inside of that house. Frances Pounder seemed so sure I couldn't. So I thought and thought, and to-day when we were playing ball you see we broke the window."

"On purpose! I do believe. Why, Nora, I should think you'd be ashamed!"

"Well, I had the money in my pocket to pay for it. That was what we went for after school. But that queer old butler,—really I almost laughed in his face. However, I managed to say, 'I'm extremely sorry, but I broke a pane of glass in the window over the front door when I was playing ball this morning.' 'We hadn't discovered it, miss,' he said, as solemn as could be. 'Then you might go and look,' I replied, 'and if you will please tell Mme. du Launy that I'd like to pay for it, I'll be greatly obliged.' I thought that while he was looking at the glass and talking to the old lady, he'd at least ask us into the reception-room, or drawing-room. But not a bit of it. There's a little vestibule just beyond the front door, and there he left us. He asked us to sit down, and we did sit down on the edge of two great black settles there in the marble vestibule. When he came back I felt sure he was going to take us straight up to Mme. du Launy. Instead of that he merely said: 'Mme. du Launy presents her compliments, and is greatly obliged to you for telling her about the window. She couldn't think of letting you pay for it, as an apology is quite enough.'"

"And you didn't see anything in the house?"

"No, not a thing; though as he opened the door into the hall we caught a glimpse of a big gilded table and an enormous piece of tapestry over the stairs. Wasn't it mean, after all our efforts?"

"Who has won the bet, you or Frances?" asked Belle.

"I'm not sure. I have been in the house and I haven't," replied Nora.

"I should think you'd have been frightened to death. What would you have done if you had seen the old lady?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. There were so many of us we shouldn't have been frightened," and Nora looked at Brenda and the other girl who were vehemently describing the adventure.

X

A SOPHOMORE

When Edith's brother Philip came in from College to spend Saturday and Sunday, Edith's house was apt to be a rendezvous for the other girls. Not that Philip was likely to waste much time with mere girls. Not he! He was a Harvard sophomore, and realized his own importance quite as much as the girls did. But still there was always the chance that he would come into the room just for a minute, and tell them some of the latest Cambridge news. He would have scorned to call it gossip. If there was any one thing in the world he hated—so he said—it was girls' talk, this jabbering about nothing. For his part he wouldn't waste his time *that* way. Yet, when he had an appreciative audience,—and girls generally appreciated what Philip said,—he would often spend as much as half an hour talking about the fellows—how beastly it was Jim Dashaway couldn't row on the crew, and he would grow almost enthusiastic when describing the tussle between Ned

Brown and Stanley Hooper over the respective merits of Boston and New York in which Hooper, the New Yorker, was terribly beaten.

"And upon my word," he concluded, "I wasn't sorry, for the New York set is getting just unbearable. I wouldn't so much mind fighting Stanley Hooper myself about New York and Boston. I guess I'd show him that New York isn't the whole world."

"I should say not," exclaimed Nora; but Belle, who had some New York cousins, was silent. Brenda, however, noticing Belle's expression, and not feeling disposed to side completely with Nora, said,

"You're terribly narrow, Nora, to think that nobody's any good unless he comes from Boston."

"I didn't say so," replied Nora.

"No, but that's what you mean, and I'm surprised, Philip Blair, that a boy should be so awfully one-sided."

"Well, you'd better talk, Brenda Barlow," broke in Nora again. "Just see the way you treat Julia. If she'd been born in Boston——"

"I don't treat her," interrupted Brenda.

"No, that's just it, you don't treat her decently."

"Oh, I say," said Philip, from his place in front of the mantelpiece, "how queer girls are; do you always fight like this when you're together?"

"We don't fight like you boys," answered Edith, good-humoredly. "We don't knock each other down and run the risk of breaking one another's noses."

Philip looked over his shoulder in the glass. There was nothing the matter with his own shapely nose, and I doubt that he would have run any such risk as Edith suggested. Perhaps this was the reason why Philip was not a fighter. There was one good thing about the little disputes in which Brenda and Belle indulged. They very seldom lasted long. In the present instance the girls were ashamed of having shown temper before Philip. The latter, however, did not dwell on their weakness.

"Oh, say, did you hear about the time Will Hardon had with the Dicky, last week?" he asked.

Nora nodded. She, too, had a brother in College.

"What was it?" asked Edith. "You haven't told *me*, Philip."

"How funny you are, Edith," said Belle. "You never hear anything. Hasn't anyone told you how the other fellows made him run blindfolded in his shirt sleeves down Beacon Street?"

"No, really?"

"Of course, really!"

"And then they led him up the steps into Mrs. Oxford's when she was giving an afternoon tea, and when they took the bandage off his eyes there he was in his shirt sleeves, without his hat, and his hair all tumbled, and everybody looking at him."

"Oh," said one girl, and "Ah," said another; and "How silly!" they all cried together.

"If girls amused themselves like that what fun you'd make of us!" said the practical Nora.

"I shouldn't think there'd be much fun in making anybody uncomfortable."

"Oh, it gives a fellow a chance to show what kind of stuff he's made of," explained Philip, "whether he has good manners, and whether he's clever—and all that."

"There must be better ways of showing bravery," said the practical Edith. "I don't believe you know a bit more about Will Hardon's bravery than you did before."

"We knew something about his manners."

"What?"

"Why, when he saw where he was, he didn't run away, or flunk out. He only looked a little sheepish, the other fellows said, but he just bowed to the ladies, and saying politely that he was sorry to have disturbed them, he walked off as nice as you please."

"Wasn't he mad at the two fellows for taking him there?"

"Of course not; that's a part of the thing. Why, there are fellows in Cambridge who would go through fire and water, or stand on their heads in front of a pulpit for the sake of getting into the Dicky. I tell you we make some of them suffer."

Philip said "we" with a rather important air, although he had belonged to the illustrious organization a very short time.

"Well, I think you're perfectly horrid," cried Brenda, "I mean the Dicky. I've heard about the way you make people suffer, branding them with hot cigars, and making them run barefoot winter

nights, and doing all sorts of useless things."

"If you went to College you'd see more use in them."

"I'm glad girls don't go to College."

"Oh, some do!"

"Not girls we know."

"I'm sure I can't tell," said Philip rather crossly, "there are a lot of girls studying in Cambridge now at the Annex, and the fellows don't like it at all."

"Well, I declare," exclaimed Nora, "I'd like to know what difference it makes to them."

"Oh, they hate to see these girls going about with books, and trying to get into Harvard."

"Yes, trying to break down the walls," said Nora, sarcastically.

"Oh, see here, it would just spoil everything to have women in the classes with us."

"Are you afraid they'd get ahead of you?" asked Edith, gently.

"Now, look here, Edith, I don't want you to talk that way," responded Philip with brotherly authority. "There isn't any danger of girls getting ahead of us."

"Why, I heard," said Nora, "that one of the professors——"

"Oh, yes, I've heard it too," interrupted Philip. "I've heard that some professors say that their Annex classes do better work than ours,—but anybody can tell that that's all rot."

"I believe it's all perfectly true," said Nora.

"Well, I wish myself that our English instructor hadn't such a fondness for reading themes to us that the girls have written. He makes out that they are better than ours, but I can't say that I see it myself."

"Who gets the best marks?"

"I'm sure I can't say. He gives us such beastly marks that I dare say he makes it up with the girls. But I wouldn't let a sister of mine go to College," he concluded inconsequently.

"It's a good thing Edith doesn't wish to go," said Nora; adding mischievously, "but Brenda Barlow's cousin Julia is going."

Brenda blushed, for Julia's intention of going to College was still a sore point with her.

"Does Julia wear glasses, or look green? I beg your pardon, Brenda——"

"No, she doesn't," said Nora shortly. "She's about the nicest girl I know."

"Oh, she is lovely," added Edith.

"A matter of opinion," murmured Belle under her breath.

"You don't mean to say you haven't seen her," cried Brenda in surprise.

"No, I haven't happened to," answered Philip.

"She's invited to my cooking party next week," said Nora. "You know that you've accepted too, so you'll see her."

"Oh, yes, by the way," said Philip, "what evening is it?"

"Friday, of course," replied Nora, "so we can sit up late without thinking about school the next day."

"Well, you'll see me sure," said Philip. "But see here, it's five o'clock now and I have an engagement down town."

Philip hurried off, bowing in a very grown-up way to the group of girls. For whatever criticisms any one might make about Philip's indolence and disinclination to study, no one could deny that he had very good manners. Though only about four years their senior, he seemed much older than Brenda and her friends. Years before they had all been playmates together, but his two years in College had taken him away from them, and it was not often that he condescended to spend as long a time in their presence as had been the case this afternoon.

"Do you think that Philip looks very well, Edith," asked Belle when he had left the room.

"Why, of course, don't you?" replied Philip's sister.

"It seemed to me he was just a little pale."

"He is always pale," said Edith.

"Do you suppose he sits up too late?" asked Brenda.

"I'll warrant he doesn't study too much," said Belle.

"How can you?" cried Nora. "How can you criticise Edith's brother? Don't let her do it, Edith."

"It doesn't trouble me," answered the placid Edith. "I know all about Philip, and he's good enough for me."

"That's right," said Nora. "Always stand up for your brother. But I do think he might have better friends. He really isn't very particular."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Oh, I don't know exactly, but I heard my brother talking the other day. He says there are two or three fellows just sponging off of Philip all the time, and Philip is too good-natured to say anything."

"I wonder how he'll like Julia," said Edith.

"Oh, he won't like that kind of a girl," hastily interposed Belle. "Boys never like a girl who studies; especially one who is going to College."

"Well, Julia is just the nicest girl I know," said Nora, repeating the words she had used to Philip.

"And Philip is one of the nicest young men I know," said Brenda, politely, turning to Edith. "But don't tell him I said so," she added with a blush.

"Oh, no, of course not," laughed Edith, as the girls separated for the afternoon.

XI

THE COOKING CLASS

Nora's cooking party was not altogether a pleasure affair. It was the result of her father's desire that she should have some knowledge of domestic matters before she left school. Dr. Gostar was a busy man, having little time to spend with his children. His practice was large, but as he gave his services as willingly to poor as to rich people, he had not accumulated much money. Nora's home, however, was a very pleasant one. The numerous members of the family used all the rooms with the greatest freedom. As the four other members of the household besides Dr. and Mrs. Gostar and Nora were boys, the furnishings of the house had a well-worn, comfortable look. No one was kept out of any particular room. The boys had a large play and workroom in the attic, but when they wished to sit in the library (which other people might have called a "drawing-room") they were not forbidden.

Mrs. Gostar, though fond of society, was never too busy to hear what her children had to say, to read to them or hear them tell about their school, or to sympathize with them in any way. She had agreed with Dr. Gostar when he had expressed a wish to have Nora learn cooking.

"I am anxious," he had said, "that my little daughter shall know how to cook. I have been so often in houses where wives and mothers have been quite helpless when a cook left, that I should be very sorry to have Nora grow up as ignorant as they. I know that a great deal of sickness comes from eating badly prepared food."

Nora herself had been rather pleased at the prospect of learning to cook. But Belle thought it very vulgar, and for a time was not sure whether or not she would join the cooking-class.

During the first winter the girls had had lessons once a week. But through this season of Julia's arrival in Boston, they had met to practice cooking only once a month. The lessons always were given at Nora's house, because, as Edith said, her cook wasn't too fashionable to let them fuss around in the kitchen.

The first winter they had had a teacher, but this year they were supposed to know enough to concoct certain dishes themselves. The cooking party took place on the third Friday of the month, and from six to eight the girls were busy cooking. At eight o'clock any guests whom they had invited arrived, and at nine o'clock they had a little supper. They were not permitted to have too elaborate a bill of fare. Even as it was, Belle's grandmother protested against what she called an indigestible supper served at this hour. As a matter of fact it was not apt to be indigestible. Dr. Gostar himself usually made out the list of eatables. Light salads, simple cakes, bouillon, ices, blanc-manges, jellies, oysters or eggs cooked in various styles, and chocolate prepared with whipped cream, were conspicuous on the list from which he made his selection. But the girls on any given evening were restricted to one sweet, one solid and two kinds of cake. With the assistance of a maid each girl in turn set the table, and sometimes, besides their young friends, their parents were present to see what their skill and taste had accomplished.

"There, there, Edith, I'm sure your cake is burning," cried Nora on the Friday evening after their talk with Philip.

"Oh, dear, I can't do anything about it now; I've cut my fingers," and Edith held up her hands rather plaintively.

"Here, take my handkerchief," said Brenda; and before Edith could stop her she was binding up

the wound with a delicate lace-trimmed handkerchief. It was Agnes's birthday present to her, sent from Paris, and intended only for full dress occasion.

"Why, Brenda, that lovely handkerchief!" exclaimed Belle, who was looking on.

"Oh, it won't hurt it. How does your finger feel, Edith?"

"It feels all right, for it wasn't a deep cut, but with my right hand tied up I don't believe I can lift that cake out of the oven," and Edith looked about helplessly, for she was not used to battling with difficulties.

Over her dress each girl wore a long-sleeved blue-checked apron—each of them at least except Julia. This was her first appearance at the cooking-club, and as Brenda had forgotten to tell her about the aprons, she was unprepared. She had on a small white apron, borrowed from Nora, and when Edith spoke about the cake, she seized a holder, and opening the oven door, lifted the pan out. As Edith feared, the cake was burned, though not the whole top, but black spots here and there gave it a very unsightly appearance, and Edith felt very much disturbed as she looked at it.

"How provoking! That was the only cake we were to have to-night, and there isn't time to make another."

"Oh, we can do something," cried Julia. "Let me help you."

"I don't see what we can do," half moaned Edith.

"I'll show you," cried Julia hopefully. "You have plenty of sugar and eggs—and——"

"But really there isn't time to make anything not to speak of baking it, and, oh, dear, I am so unlucky!" sighed poor Edith.

"Nonsense," said Julia. "You haven't any idea what I can do. I shall just have to show you," and she began to break the eggs into a bowl, beating them and stirring into them a liberal amount of sugar. "Run, Brenda," she cried, "and bring me a sheet of that brown wrapping paper."

Brenda obeyed, and after buttering the paper, Julia dropped her mixture of sugar and eggs, a spoonful at a time, here and there, on the paper.

"Oh, I know," cried Brenda. "Kisses, but I never would have thought of it myself."

"Well," responded Julia, "there is nothing you can bake so quickly, and almost every one likes them. There, this first batch must be ready now," and she opened the oven door to remove the pan with its sheet of kisses, delicately browned and of the size and shape that a confectioner could not surpass. Two or three other lots were baked before there were enough. By the time they were finished Edith's finger had ceased to pain her, and she was helping place the other eatables on the dumb-waiter.

From the floor above there came the sound of laughter, and the voices of the boys could be heard mingled with those of the girls as they called to the three kitchen maidens.

At last, with the help of Hannah, the maid, who had come down from the floor above, all the kitchen work was declared at an end.

"That's all," shouted Brenda, as Belle and Philip gave a final pull on the cords of the dumb-waiter.

A moment later Edith and Julia and Brenda entered the dining-room, with faces perhaps a little flushed, but otherwise looking very unlike the three cooks they had been a few minutes before.

Under Nora's direction the dining-table had been exquisitely arranged. There was a great glass bowl of pink roses in the centre, and the plates and cups were of china with a wild rose border. The candles in the silver candelabra at each end of the table had pink shades.

"There, you go, Philip, and tell the others that supper is ready," said Nora, glancing at the table and giving a final touch to one or two dishes.

With Philip leading, the guests trooped into the dining-room. "Trooped" is perhaps too boisterous a word to apply to the procession of young people who came into the room two at a time with a fair amount of dignity. To Julia, in fact, they appeared to a certain extent to be imitating the demeanor of their elders. She could not help thinking that the manner with which Belle let herself be led to a chair was entirely too coquettish, and only Nora seemed to be her real self in the presence of the guests.

But Julia was not a harsh critic, and before very long she forgot that she had not always known these merry young people. She laughed at the jokes made by the boys, although she did not always see the point of them. Most of these jokes turned on something connected with college. For every one of them was in Harvard, although some were only Freshmen. The stories that they thought the funniest dealt with the queer things that some of their friends had had to do when undergoing initiation into one of the College Societies, and many of their doings seemed really inane.

Before they had been long in the dining-room Mrs. Gostar joined them, and later Dr. Gostar himself appeared. The presence of these elder people lessened the laughter only a very little, for all the young people knew that Dr. Gostar enjoyed fun as well as they.

"What was the catastrophe to-night?" he asked Nora, for it was a favorite joke of his that at each meeting of the cooking-class some dish suffered. When he had heard about the disaster to Edith's cake he praised Julia so heartily for having come to the rescue that she blushed deeply. Even without this success in cooking, Julia would have been voted a great addition to the cooking-class. There was something very pleasing in her gentle manners, and Belle, to her surprise, found herself growing a little jealous of Brenda's cousin. Before this she had not thought her sufficiently important to arouse jealousy.

XII

CONCERNING JULIA

In the meantime the Four Club held regular meetings, and every Thursday afternoon Julia heard Edith and Nora and Belle rushing up past her door to Brenda's room on the floor above. Of course in a general way she knew what was going on, for the affairs of the Four Club were no secret. Yet although from time to time Brenda and her friends dropped a word or two regarding their doings, they never talked very freely about the club.

Nora and Edith were silent because they were sorry that they could not persuade Brenda to let them invite Julia to the meetings. Brenda said little about the club, because possibly she was ashamed of her own indifference. As to Belle, she never had had much to say to Julia, and in this case although she felt pleased that her influence chiefly had kept Brenda from counting her cousin in the club group, she hardly ventured to express this feeling in words. There might as well have been five girls as four in the group working for the Bazaar and no one knew this better than Brenda and Belle themselves.

Although Julia had a pretty correct idea of what was going on, she tried to show no feeling in the matter. Her studies, her music, and her exercise occupied almost all her afternoons, and she reasoned with herself that even if she had been invited, it would have been only a waste of time for her to spend hours at fancy-work, which might otherwise have been more profitably employed. But after a while, when through the half-open door she heard her friends running upstairs, she sometimes felt a thrill of disappointment that they did not care enough for her to stop on their way to ask her to join them. Now Julia meant always to be fair in her thoughts, as well as in her actions towards others. So at first when she found that she was left out of the plans of her cousin and her friends, she reasoned with herself somewhat in this fashion.

"Now, Julia, you know that you are a newcomer, and you cannot expect that you will be taken in all at once, just wait."

But after she had waited a good while, she began to feel a little hurt, although she did her best to conceal her feeling from Nora and Edith. In the meantime the latter two girls argued warmly with Brenda, and tried to make her see that it was mean to keep Julia out of the Four Club.

"Nonsense," said Belle, who happened to overhear them, "Julia herself would say that it was awfully stupid to sit for a whole afternoon, sewing."

"Well, if she did not work harder than—well than Brenda does, she would not be very much bored; besides she could look out of the window part of the time, the view there is perfectly fine," responded the lively Nora.

Brenda had tried to speak when Nora had made this very unflattering allusion to her own lack of industry, and when Nora finished she said, holding up a square of linen on which a wreath of yellow flowers was half embroidered,

"There, I've done all this this month."

"That's very good for you," said Belle, patronizingly, "but I'd be willing to bet——"

"Don't say 'bet,'" murmured Edith.

"I'd be willing to bet anything," continued Belle, "that you'll never finish it."

"Why, Belle," continued the others.

"No, you won't," repeated Belle, "you never could, you'll get tired of the pattern or of the color, or you will spoil it in some way, and throw it into the fire, or worse into that bottom drawer of yours with all those other specimens."

Brenda, instead of growing angry at this, only laughed.

"Well if I don't wish to finish it, I certainly won't," she replied. "But it happens that I have made up my mind to finish it this Autumn, before Christmas, in fact, so you can make your bet as large as you please, and pay the money into the fund for Manuel's benefit, for I shall win."

The girls were all a little surprised at Brenda's reply. She was more ready usually to answer pettishly any criticism made by Belle.

"Very well," said Belle, "Edith and Nora are my witnesses, and we shall watch to see when you

finish that centrepiece."

"Yes, indeed, Brenda," laughed Nora, "indeed we shall follow the career of this wreath with great interest, and now since you seem to be in an amiable frame of mind, let us go back to Julia. It seems terribly mean not to ask her to join us."

The pleasant expression on Brenda's face changed to a frown.

"I've told you often that Julia would not enjoy working with us, and it would just spoil everything to have her come."

"Of course it's your house, Brenda, and you started the club, and Julia is your cousin, so Edith and I have not the same right to say anything, but it seems to me very unkind to leave her out."

"There, I don't want to hear anything more about it," cried Brenda, "haven't Belle and I both said that Julia would not enjoy herself, sewing with us, and it would not be a 'four club,' and I don't want to hear anything more about it."

By this time Brenda's voice was positively snappish, and Edith looked up in alarm. But Nora was undismayed.

"Nonsense, Brenda," she cried, "Belle said that Julia would not enjoy the cooking class, though I'm perfectly sure that no one there had a better time, and the boys thought that she was splendid, didn't they, Edith?"

"Yes," returned Edith, "Philip was surprised; he said she was fine, he always supposed that she was a kind of blue-stocking with glasses, and——"

Here Brenda interrupted, "Well, I'm sure that I never said anything like that to him, and I shouldn't think that you would, Edith."

"Of course, I didn't," responded Edith, indignantly, "it was something Frances Pounder said, and well—Belle——"

"Now, Belle, I do wish that you would not say things about my cousin," broke in Brenda.

"Oh," cried Belle, "you wish to have the privilege of saying everything yourself; but you might as well let other people have a chance."

"Philip did not mean that anybody said anything particularly disagreeable about Julia, only he had a sort of an idea that she did not like people, and that she would not join much in any fun that we might plan."

"Oh, what nonsense, Edith!" exclaimed Nora, "she likes fun as well as any of us, only she is just a little quiet herself. She wants somebody else to start the fun for her."

"Well, she does not dance," said Belle, "and a girl can't have much fun if she does not dance."

"I know that she does not care for round dances, at least her father would not let her learn, but I'm sure that she does the Virginia Reel as well as anybody, and the Portland Fancy. Why she was as graceful as, as anything the other evening," concluded Nora.

But all the conversation at the meetings of the Four Club did not concern Julia and her absence from the club. The girls had many other things to discuss, and their tongues were often more active than their needles. Sometimes as their merry voices floated down to Julia, the young girl sighed. It is never pleasant for any one to think that she is not wanted in any gathering of her friends, although in this special case Julia had no great desire to devote even one of her afternoons to needlework. Nevertheless she could not repress a sigh that she was of so little consequence to Brenda and her friends.

Before Thanksgiving came, the club really seemed in a fair way of realizing its plans for a sale. Edith had finished two or three dainty sets of doilies, for she worked out of club hours. Nora's afghan was at least a quarter made, a great accomplishment for Nora. Belle had several articles to show, and even Brenda had persevered with her centrepiece until hardly more than a quarter of the embroidery remained unfinished. Moreover several of the girls at school had promised to help, on condition that nothing should be expected of them until after Christmas.

"That will be time enough," the Four always answered, "for we shall not have the sale until Easter week."

The girls at school were especially interested when they heard that the Bazaar was to be for the benefit of Manuel, not that any one of them had a clear idea of his needs. But they felt an interest in him because they believed that his life had been saved by one of their number. There were, to be sure, one or two sceptics, like Frances Pounder, who said that of course the child had been in no great danger, for in his own part of the city children are in the habit of playing most of the time under the very feet of the horses passing that way. "And who," the wise Frances had added, "ever heard of a child like that having so much as a leg broken?"

But Frances was not infallible, and many of the girls had heard of accidents to poor children. If they had not, the fact remained, which Nora and Brenda and half a dozen others were ready to testify to that Manuel had been in great danger on the memorable day of his rescue. With his danger granted, it was plain enough that caring for him became a duty imposed on his rescuers.

With little opportunity to show it, Julia had as much interest in Manuel as the other girls. Strange though it may seem, he was the first very poor person with whom she had been brought in contact. For in the secluded life which she had led with her father, she had not seen a great variety of people. It is true that in traveling she had often come across miserable looking and ill-clad women and children, and she knew very well that there were many like them in the world. With her own allowance she subscribed to a number of charities, but her father had not encouraged her greatly in this kind of thing. His own ill health had had the rather unusual effect of making him unsympathetic towards forms of misery unlike the kind which had been sent to him. He thought, too, that young people should be as closely sheltered as possible from the knowledge of the dark side of life. He gave liberally to hospitals, but poverty in itself did not appeal to him. On that account Julia was not permitted to hear or to see much of actual poverty.

But Julia, on the other hand, had always had the greatest desire to help the less fortunate, and to know more about the conditions of their lives. She was therefore greatly pleased when one day in a book-shop she found a copy of "How The Other Half Lives." It was very suggestive to her, and buying it she had read it at home eagerly from cover to cover.

Now she knew that in Boston she was not likely to see any cases of misery as extreme as those described in that famous book, and yet in the midst of the luxury of her uncle's house she often wished that she could do something to help the poor. But Julia, in spite of her self-reliance in practical matters, was rather shy, and whenever she thought of speaking to her aunt on the subject, she hesitated in fear lest she should be thought presumptuous. Manuel and his wants, when Brenda and Nora came home full of what they had seen at the North End, seemed to her an opportunity. She hoped, indeed she almost expected that she would be invited to go with them on a second visit. Her disappointment in this matter was even greater than that which came from being left out of the "Four Club." There were things she knew that she could have done for Manuel and his mother, and even if Brenda and her friends were able to provide for all his wants, there must be others in the same neighborhood as poor as he. Yet week after week passed away, and no chance seemed to open for her to tell Brenda what she would like to do. At school Julia was left much to herself. The girls near her own age were so absorbed in their own affairs that they seldom had a thought for the lonely stranger. They had so many things to talk about in which Julia had no part,—the dancing class, the bowling club—and a thousand and one harmless bits of gossip harmless for the most part, though sometimes carrying with them a little sting. When Julia sat or walked with one of these chattering groups she felt that she was only tolerated, and she could seldom join intelligently in what was said, and often a dropping of the voice, or an only half-intentional glance of significance made her feel herself in the way. To be sure there were Edith and Nora, of the set a little younger than the girls with whom she recited. They were undeniably her friends, and yet Brenda and Belle had a fashion of dragging them off at recess without giving Julia an invitation to follow, and the latter had too much sense to care to bring herself too often within the reach of Belle's sharp tongue. So though she sat or walked by herself, the older girls who noticed her excused themselves with "Oh, if she cared to go with any one she would walk with Brenda and Nora and the others of the 'Four,'" for in school, as in the club the "Four" had come to have a special meaning. On the other hand Brenda and Belle would usually say to the remonstrating Edith and Nora:

"What is the use of talking, Julia is in the classes with the older girls, and she ought to make friends with them. She really doesn't belong with us, and there is not the least reason why we should have her on our minds all the time." Now there is hardly any classification of persons more definite and rigid than that which separates the girls of one age at school from those who are a year or two older, or a year or two younger. Nor did Julia generally repine at her own situation. She thought it perfectly natural that the other girls should be slow in admitting her to intimacy. If she had any feeling it was regret that her own cousin seemed so indifferent to her.

XIII

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

For a week before Thanksgiving there was great excitement among the schoolgirls on account of the approaching football game. The "Four" were as excited as the others, although not so many of their own particular friends were in the Harvard team. It was to be a game with Princeton, one of the great University matches, and for special reasons there was the deepest interest in the match. Those girls who had brothers in college, or even cousins or friends, held themselves with more dignity than any of the others, and those who had relatives in the team "were too proud for anything," as Brenda said. The game was to be played in Holmes' Field, and tickets were not easy to get, because the seats were far less numerous than now on the great Soldiers' Field. The girls were making up little groups to go to the game with youths of their acquaintance as escorts, under the chaperonage of older people. A few who had received no invitation were especially miserable, and took no trouble to disguise their feelings.

Edith at this time became unusually popular, because it was known that her mother had given her permission to arrange a large party to accompany her to the game, and every girl was hoping for an invitation—every girl, at least who had not been invited elsewhere to go in some other party.

Now Edith was of a generally generous disposition, and not inclined to limit her favors, of whatever nature, to any particular set of girls. For this reason she had to bear many a reproof from Belle, and even occasionally from Brenda, both of whom were inclined to be more exclusive.

So it happened that the general harmony of "The Four" was somewhat disturbed when Nora one day at recess exclaimed,

"Who do you suppose is going with us to the game?" For of course in the minds of the others there could be but one "game," and that the one to which they all wished to go.

"Why, who is it?" cried Brenda, and "Who is it?" echoed Belle.

"I know that you can't guess."

"Oh, don't be silly, Nora, it wouldn't be worth while to guess about something you'll know all about so soon, except that you speak as if it were some one we might not care to have, and if that's the case, I declare it's too bad," said Belle.

"If it's anything like that," broke in Brenda, rather snappishly, "I will just tell Edith what I think."

"*It—that,*" cried Nora, "didn't I say that it was a person, a girl, if I must be more definite, Ruth Roberts, if I must tell just who it is."

"Oh," cried Belle, and "Ah," echoed Brenda.

"You need not look so surprised," rejoined Nora, "and if you take my advice, you will not say anything to Edith; she ought to have her own way in arranging her own party, and you know when she makes up her mind it is of no use to talk to her about it."

"Well, I don't care," rejoined Brenda, "it's hard enough to have Julia tagging about everywhere, but why in the world we should have Ruth Roberts, when we never see her anywhere except at school, I really cannot understand, and I don't see how you and Nora can like it either."

"Why Ruth Roberts is as pleasant a girl as there is in school, and yet she would have a terribly lonely time, if it were not for Edith and Julia; nobody else ever thinks of speaking to her."

"Well, why should we, she lives out in Roxbury or some other outlandish place, and she doesn't even go to our dancing school or know people that we know. There isn't a bit of sense in knowing people that we'll never see when we're in society," responded Belle, while Brenda echoed, "Yes, that's what I think, too."

Nora smiled pleasantly, and her eyes looked brighter than ever under the rim of her brown felt hat, with its trimmings of lighter brown. Nora's temper was not easily ruffled. Then Belle added a final word.

"Oh, it's clear that this is all Julia's doings; ever since Ruth went into her Latin class they have been awfully intimate. But I don't see," turning rather snappishly towards Brenda, "why the rest of us have got to take up Ruth Roberts just because your Cousin Julia is so devoted to her."

Now this was a little too much, even for Brenda, who generally did not contradict Belle, and she answered with vigor, "Really you are growing perfectly ridiculous, Belle; I haven't anything to do with it, but I must say that I think that Julia has a right to choose her own friends. Ruth Roberts is all right, and anyway I'm thankful to have Julia take a fancy to anybody, it leaves us a great deal freer to do as we like. I should think that you would see that yourself."

"Oh, well," said Nora laughing, "the whole thing is not worth quarreling about. I'm glad to hear you talk so sensibly, Brenda. If you hadn't, I was going to tell Belle that it seems to me that Edith has a right to ask any one she wishes. She is always very good to us all, and just think how many tickets her father has bought for this game!"

"Yes, I know, but still——"

"The least said, the soonest mended," said Nora, though to tell you the truth, the quotation did not sound especially appropriate. "The least said, the soonest mended, and let us all go to the game with a crimson flag in each hand to wave for the winners."

"Crimson," cried Belle, "I am going to carry an orange scarf, and perhaps an orange flag."

"What for? why I never heard of such a thing!" exclaimed Nora.

"Nor I!" cried Brenda, "at a Harvard game!"

"Isn't it a Princeton game, too," asked Belle, "two or three of the boys I used to know in New York are in that team, one of them is a kind of cousin of mine."

"Oh," said Nora, "I didn't know that you thought that people had to be so very devoted to cousins."

Even Belle herself could not help smiling at this, which was very appropriate, following so closely, as it did, her own remarks about Julia.

"You can see yourself that this is different," she answered. "I should call it very impolite if there were no orange flags shown at the game."

"Well, you have the most ridiculous ideas, hasn't she, Brenda?"

Brenda nodded assent, and Nora continued, "I never knew that people had to think that about politeness in college games; why it's a duty to do everything you can to help your own side——"

"I never said that Harvard was my side," interrupted Belle, "didn't I tell you that I have a cousin on the Princeton team."

"You'd better not say anything of that kind to Philip, or to Edith, either, they are both perfectly devoted to Harvard, and they expect their party to give great encouragement to the Harvard team. Why, Belle, I cannot imagine your doing anything else."

"I'm not a child," responded Belle very crossly, walking away from Nora and Brenda, "I do not need to be told what to do."

What Nora or Brenda might have answered, I cannot say, for hardly had Belle disappeared within the house, when Edith herself appeared, with Julia and Ruth.

Ruth was a pretty and amiable girl, about Julia's age, and therefore a little older than "The Four." She had been in the school for two years before the coming of Julia, but in all that time she had had only a speaking acquaintance with the other girls. Many of them would probably have been surprised had any one told them that they were very selfish in leaving their schoolmate so entirely to herself. It was not because they did not like her. They were merely so very much wrapped up in their own affairs, that they hardly noticed that she was often left to herself. Ruth lived in the suburbs, and as Belle had said, outside of school the other girls seldom saw her. At recess each little group had so many personal things to talk about that an outsider would have been decidedly in the way, and would, perhaps, have been a little uncomfortable in joining them. No one gets a great deal of enjoyment from reading a single chapter in the middle of a book, and so it is often hard to be a mere listener when the tongues of half a dozen girls are vigorously discussing people and events of which the listener has not the slightest knowledge.

Ruth herself was very independent, and as she was more interested in her studies than many of the girls at Miss Crawdon's she had acquired the habit of studying during recess. Since after school she spent more time than most girls of her age in outdoor sports, it did her no great harm to pass the half-hour of recess in this way. Ruth, as well as Julia, had undertaken to prepare for college, and it had been a great delight to her to have the latter placed with her in one or two special classes. Julia's liking for her had made Edith take a little more interest in her than would otherwise have been the case, but the ball game was the first important event in which she was included with the others of Julia's set. She naturally was pleased at the prospect of going with the others, for like Julia, she had never seen a great football game.

No one who saw the hearty way in which Nora and Brenda greeted Ruth, as she came up with Edith and Julia, could for a moment have imagined that she had been under discussion. The mercurial Brenda for the moment was so annoyed by Belle's proposed championship of Princeton, that she was unexpectedly cordial to Ruth, and almost to her own surprise found herself urging Ruth to come to town early on the Saturday of the game, to take luncheon with her and Julia.

The latter expressed her thanks in a glance towards her cousin, as Ruth accepted very gracefully, and Nora exclaimed, "What fun we are going to have; you know we are all invited to dine at Edith's that evening. Oh dear! I can hardly wait for Saturday."

"I know it," replied Brenda, "it's less than a week, too, but it seems an awfully long time."

Then they gossiped a moment in a very harmless fashion about the prospects of Harvard, and Edith quoted one or two things that Philip had said, and Nora told them that her father was perfectly sure that the crimson would win, and as they trooped into the dressing-room when the bell rang, Belle was surprised to see Brenda leaning on Ruth's arm.

XIV

THE FOOTBALL GAME

At last the wished-for Saturday arrived. It was one of those clear, bracing days that always put every one in good-humor. Though cool, it was not too cool for the comfort of the girls and older women who were to sit for two or three hours in the open air. Every car running to Cambridge carried a double load, with men and boys crowding the platform in dangerous fashion. Carriages of every description were rushing over the long bridge between Boston and the University City and not only were red or orange flags to be seen waving on every side—small flags that could be easily folded up, but occasionally some group of youths would break out into the college cry.

Edith and her guests drove out to Cambridge in carriages, although they all thought that the cars would have been much more amusing. Edith, however, had had to yield to her mother's wishes, for Mrs. Blair had a strong objection to street cars, and Edith was forbidden to ride in any except those of the blue line in Marlborough street. But if less entertaining, the carriage ride was probably more comfortable than a journey by car would have been on that day of excitement.

Edith and Julia and Ruth and Nora rode in one carriage, while Brenda, Belle, Frances Pounder and Mrs. Blair were in the other. As Frances was a distant cousin of Edith's, her mother usually included her in her invitations, although in general disposition the two girls were very unlike. Belle and Frances were more congenial, and had the same habit of talking superciliously about other people. Brenda and Frances were sometimes on very good terms, and sometimes they hardly spoke to each other for weeks. For Frances had an irritating habit of "stepping on people's feelings" as Nora said, whether with intent or from sheer carelessness, no one felt exactly sure. She was the least companionable of all the girls of their acquaintance, but on account of her relationship to Edith she often had to be with them when "The Four" or rather three of the four would have preferred some other girl.

When the carriages with Edith and her party reached Cambridge they drew up before Memorial Hall as Mrs. Blair had arranged with Philip.

"We thought," she said, "that it would be both easier and pleasanter to leave the carriages here, and walk to the field." And the girls agreed with her. They felt more "grown up" walking along with their escorts, than if seated in the carriage under the eye of Mrs. Blair. Philip, of course, was on the spot, to meet them, and one of his friends was with him.

"I couldn't get any more fellows," he said in an aside to his mother, "to promise to sit with us, they'd rather be off by themselves with the rest of the men. It really is more fun, you know."

"Hush," whispered his mother, fearing lest some of her friends might hear this rather ungallant speech.

"O, of course I don't mind it much," he continued in answer to his mother's look of reproach, "I'm willing to please Edith this once, but I wouldn't want to have to look after a lot of girls very often."

Then he turned around to let himself be presented to

Ruth, whom he had not met before, and Mrs. Blair introduced his friend Will Hardon to all the others,—except of course Edith who knew him.

Belle looked a little disturbed when she saw that there were to be but two students to escort them, and she forgot for the time being, that girls of less than sixteen can hardly expect to be considered young ladies by college undergraduates, who at the sophomore stage of existence are more inclined to the society of women a few years their senior. Belle knew, however, that she had the manners of an older person, and she kept herself fairly well informed on college matters—that is on their lighter aspect, and could talk of the sports, and of the "Dicky," with greater ease than many girls of eighteen or twenty. Therefore as she walked along beside Will Hardon, her tongue rushed on at a great rate, bewildering the youth so that he had hardly a word to reply. Brenda, walking on Will's other side listened in admiration to Belle's fluency. Try her best Brenda never could have imitated it herself, but it was one secret of Belle's influence over her, this ability to talk and act like a real young lady instead of a schoolgirl. Philip attached himself to Ruth and Julia, Edith and Nora walked together, and Mrs. Blair and Frances Pounder brought up the rear, "Just where I can keep my eye on you," Mrs. Blair had said laughingly to them as they started.

Julia was the only one of the group who had never been on the field—or even in Cambridge before. She was astonished when she reached the field to see the great crowd of spectators. It was a scene that she had never imagined. Tier above tier at one side were the benches filled with men and women, with bright flags fluttering, or rather little banners and handkerchiefs, all eagerly looking towards the centre. Then there was the great throng of students massed by themselves, and the crowds of older men, all intent on the coming game.

What cheers as the rival elevens came upon the field! For an instant the volume of sound seemed almost as strong for Princeton as for Harvard. From the very first moment when Princeton lined up for the kick-off Julia's eyes eagerly followed the ball. At the beginning Princeton seemed to lead, but when Harvard gained ten yards on two rushes by her full-back, and her left half-back had the ball on Princeton's thirty-yard line, the crimson scarfs fluttered very prettily.

"Say, isn't that a fine play for Roth," cried Philip, as the Harvard fall-back tore through Princeton's centre for four yards planting the ball on the thirty-yard line, and then a little later after some good play on both sides, he yelled wildly as he saw that Princeton was really driven to the last ditch, with Harvard only one yard to gain. Both made the try, and scored a touch-down in exactly fifteen minutes' play. Then when Hall, on the Harvard side, a great stalwart fellow brought the ball out, and held it for Hutton to kick on the try for goal, even Frances Pounder lost her air of indifference, and as the ball struck the goal post, and bounded back, she watched to see whether this was a time for applause, and finally condescended to clap her hands. The score now stood Harvard 4, Princeton 0, and Philip and Will excusing themselves for a few minutes leaped down to talk matters over with their classmates standing below at the end of the benches. As the game continued Roth distinguished himself still further. He scored another touch-down for Harvard from which a goal was kicked, making the score 10 to 0.

"It's almost too one-sided," said Julia, "and I can't exactly understand it, for the Princeton men seem to be playing well, and really if you look at them, they are larger than most of the Harvard players,—*that* ought to count in a game like this."

"Well the game isn't over yet, and there may be some surprises before it is through."

But just here Philip and his friend returned, and when Belle asked what the other men thought of the Princeton prospects, "Oh, they haven't a leg to stand on," said Philip, "at least that's what every one says, and you can see for yourself now, they can't hold out against our men."

"I'm thankful for one thing," said Mrs. Blair, leaning towards her son, "there haven't been any serious accidents yet, although I am always expecting something dreadful to happen."

Hardly had she spoken, when two or three ladies in the neighborhood screamed. Princeton had just secured the ball, when one of her men who had fallen with half a dozen others on top of him, seemed unable to rise. He had in fact to be carried from the field, and though the girls afterward learned that he had only broken his collar bone, like so many other spectators, for the time being they were decidedly alarmed at his condition. After this Princeton had a little better luck. Harvard tried for a goal from the thirty-five-yard line, but missed. Then the ball was Princeton's on her twenty-five-yard line, and after several rushes with small gains, the ball was passed back to Princeton's full-back for a kick. The ball went high in the air, and the Princeton's ends got down the field in beautiful shape. A Harvard half-back muffed the ball, and it was Princeton's on Harvard's twenty-yard line. Just here, Belle, emboldened by the turn of events managed to take a large orange and black scarf from her pocket. As yet she had not dared to wave it, though if you stop to think, had she been truly sympathetic, she ought to have had courage to show her colors even when her chosen side was losing ground.

Now in spite of the improvement in Princeton's play, the score had not changed, though Princeton had the ball on Harvard's ten-yard line when two minutes later the first half ended.

In the second half of the game there was more excitement than in the first. Roth, who had been the hero of the afternoon in Harvard eyes, was carried off, and two or three Princeton men were disabled. Harvard, contrary to what had been expected was apparently playing the fiercer game. The yell of the Harvard sympathizers grew louder and louder.

In two downs Princeton had gained four yards. Then when the ball was passed to Dinsmore the noted Princeton half-back, Douglass, the popular Harvard quarter-back tore through the centre, and downed Dinsmore with the loss of five yards, making it Harvard's ball on Princeton's twenty-two yard line.

The wildest hurraing—a perfect pandemonium—now arose from the Harvard bleachers. For the crimson was within striking distance of a touch-down, and the orange had begun to droop. The girls in Edith's party, even those not wholly familiar with the game in its finer points, were thoroughly worked up. Some of the rough play worried Edith, and she buried her face in her hands with a shudder when Jefferson, the Harvard centre was carried from the field apparently senseless.

"Don't be a goose, Edith," whispered Nora, "you know that it can't be anything very dreadful, or they wouldn't go on playing."

"Oh, yes, they would," murmured Edith. "They'd do anything in a football game, they haven't a bit of feeling." But she lifted her head, and was repaid by seeing Hutton kick a goal from the field thus sending the score up to fifteen. This especially pleased her, because Hutton's little sister, who had a high opinion of her brother's prowess, was a great pet of hers.

"Don't you feel much as the Roman women used to feel at the Coliseum games?" Julia contrived to say to Ruth in one of the intervals of play.

"It's almost as savage a sport as some of those gladiator affairs," replied Ruth, "but I don't believe that the gladiators were more uncivilized-looking than these players. Did you ever see such hair?"

The next moment the girls were all attention. For although the Harvard score never went beyond that fifteen, the game was an absorbing one for the followers of both colors.

Princeton's battering-ram proved effective more than once, and every one could see that in the matter of strength her men were ahead of the Harvard team. But in activity Harvard was undeniably the superior, and at last when the game was called, the score still stood 16 to 0 in favor of the crimson.

Then what a scene! Men almost fell on one another's necks in their delight. The team was surrounded by a dense throng, and the 'rah, 'rah, 'rah was fairly deafening. The friends of the vanquished hurried away from the field, and only a few of the younger and more enthusiastic lingered about in little knots to argue the situation, and prophesy a victory for their own men at the next intercollegiate match.

"Oh, don't let's go off right away," cried Brenda, as she saw Edith turning in the direction of the exit from the field.

"No, we might as well wait until Philip comes back; he and Will couldn't resist going over there on the field to talk things over with some of their friends," said Mrs. Blair, "and I told them that I felt sure that you would excuse them."

"Why, of course," added Julia, and Ruth followed with a polite, "Yes, indeed." But Belle, looking a little discontented, said nothing. "What is the good," she was saying to herself, "of having two young men in your party, if they never stay with you, when so many of the other girls are at the game with only their fathers, or elderly relatives."

If she had thought carefully, she would have realized that the two boys had really sacrificed not a little fun to act as escorts to "a parcel of girls," as some of their student friends put it. Really they had been very polite, they had hardly laughed at the mistakes made by the girls in the use of terms during the game, and they had been more than willing to explain the fine points of the play. When they were with the girls, it was not Belle whom they thought the most about, but on Philip's part, it was Julia, and on Will's, Ruth with her bright face, and vivacious manner.

"Did you see papa?" cried Nora, "he was tossing his hat in the air, like a boy. I tried to make him look at us, but he would not do so. I suppose it was harder for him to recognize us than for me to distinguish him."

"No, I didn't see your father," replied Edith, "but I did see your brother Clifford. He, however, never looked our way for a second. He had his hat on the back of his head, and he and two or three other men seemed beside themselves."

"Oh, yes, I suppose he and his friends are dreadfully pleased. You know that Jefferson is a great friend of theirs."

"But he was hurt."

"Oh, that's nothing! As long as he wasn't killed it's all the more glory for him. He and Clifford are room-mates, and they are devoted to each other."

Then as the crowds from the benches swept past the girls, they saw many friends and acquaintances, and Belle's injured pride was salved by the return of Philip and Will just as two or three girls whom she especially disliked walked past escorted only by an uncle.

How pleasant the walk back to the Square through the college grounds was, with a few minutes in Philip's room, not long enough for the cup of tea which he wished to offer, but long enough to make them all enthusiastic to accept his invitation to come out to Cambridge some other afternoon and examine his trophies. Really there seemed to be few ornaments on the walls that were not connected in some way with college sports—flags, medals, certificates of membership in this society or that, photographs of the crew, of the teams,—but some time you may hear more about the room, and so I will leave my description of it until then.

To Julia the whole day had been more than delightful, she enjoyed every moment of it, and she began to feel so at home with Edith's friends, that not even Belle could rival her in quickness of repartee. Frances Pounder looked at her in astonishment, when some of her own little snubbing remarks fell one side without any effect. Ruth Roberts, too, proved herself a great acquisition to the party, especially at the dinner at Edith's. For Mrs. Blair gave an elaborate dinner to the group that had attended the game, increased by the addition of two friends of Philip's; and even if, as the worldly wise Frances Pounder suggested, the whole affair had been arranged to prevent Philip and his friends from joining the boisterous crowd of students in their Cambridge celebration of the victory, Philip certainly had occasion to congratulate himself on possessing a mother who would take so much trouble for her children. So Brenda ate raw oysters, and Belle entertained Will Hardon with an account of her last visit to New York, and Nora endeavored to eat and talk at the same time, and Edith smiled placidly on her friends while trying to remove the sting from some of Frances Pounder's sharp remarks, and Julia forgot her shyness, and Ruth Roberts impressed Mrs. Blair as a particularly intelligent girl, and all the boys, as well as the girls, said that they had never had a pleasanter afternoon. So who can say that the game had not proved itself a great success in more ways than one?

XV

A POET AT HOME

One day Julia had an adventure—not "a wildly exciting one," as some of the girls liked to describe what had happened to them, but one that she was always to remember with pleasure. It was a windy day in early January, and there was a fine glaze on the ground from a storm of the day before. As she was slipping along down Beacon street, on her way home from school, it was all that she could do to hold her footing. One hand was kept in constant use holding down the brim of her hat which seemed inclined to blow away. Luckily she had no books to carry, and so when suddenly she saw some sheets of letter paper whirling past her, she was able to rush on and pick them up as they were dashed against a lamp-post. Another moment, and they would have been driven by another gust of wind down a short street leading to the river.



"SHE WAS ABLE TO RUSH ON AND PICK THEM UP AS THEY WERE DASHED AGAINST A LAMP-POST"

When she had the papers safely in her possession, Julia naturally looked around to see to whom they belonged. The owner was not far away, for just a few steps behind her was an old gentleman, not very tall, dressed all in black with a high silk hat. Under his arm he carried a book, and as he held out his hand towards her Julia had no doubt that he was the owner of the wandering manuscript.

"Thank you, my child," he said, as she held the sheets towards him. "Another gust, and I should have had to compose a new poem to take the place of the one that was so ready to—go to press against that lamp-post.

"There, that was not a very brilliant pun, was it?" he asked, for Julia now was walking along by his side.

"Why, sir," she had begun to say, looking up in his face. Then suddenly she gave a start. Surely she had seen that face before! But where? Yet almost in a shorter time than I have taken to tell it, she recognized the owner of the papers. He was certainly no other than Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, the famous Autocrat of the Breakfast table, several of whose poems she knew almost by heart. All her old shyness came back to her, she did not exactly dare to say that she recognized him, and all she could think of was another question in relation to the manuscript. "Were—were they some of your own poems?" she managed to stammer, "it would have been dreadful if they had been lost."

"Not half as dreadful," he replied smiling, "as if they had been written by some one else. As a matter of fact these were sent me by an unfledged poet who wished me to tell him whether he would stand a chance of getting them into a publisher's hands. He told me to take great care of them as he had no copy. I read his note at my publisher's just now, and I felt bound to carry the manuscript home. But I'm not sure that it would not have been a good thing to lose a sheet or two to teach him a lesson. He should not send a thing to a stranger without making a copy."

The poet of course did not speak to Julia in precisely these words, but this was the drift of what he said, and it was in about this form that she repeated it to her aunt and Brenda at the luncheon table.

"What else did he say?" her aunt had asked, with great interest.

"Oh, he thanked me again for picking up the papers, complimented me for being so sure-footed on such a slippery sidewalk, and what do you think, Aunt Anna, when he heard that I had not long been in Boston, he asked me to call some afternoon to see him. He is always at home after four. I walked along until he reached his door step. Do you know that he lives very near here. I was *so* surprised to find it out. Have you ever been there, Brenda?"

"No," said Brenda, shaking her head, "I did not exactly notice whom you were talking about."

"Why, Dr. Holmes," replied Julia.

"Oh," said Brenda, with a stare that seemed to imply that this name did not mean much to her.

"Why, you know, Brenda, Oliver Wendell Holmes?" prompted her mother, and still Brenda looked rather blank.

"Brenda," said Mrs. Barlow, "I am surprised. Surely you remember how pleased you were with 'The Last Leaf' when I had you learn it last summer, and you *must* remember that I told you that the poet who wrote it lives in Boston."

"I dare say," answered Brenda carelessly, "but I had forgotten. I don't see why Julia should be so excited about meeting a poet. There must be ever so many of them everywhere."

"Ah! Brenda," responded her mother, "I do wish that you would take more interest in the affairs of your own city. Here is Julia who has been in Boston but a short time, and I am sure that she knows more about our famous men and women than you who have lived here all your life."

For a wonder Brenda did not laugh at what her mother said, nor take offence.

"I never shall be a book-worm," she said very good-naturedly. "I am willing to leave all that to Julia."

So when Julia asked her one afternoon, if she would not like to go with her to call on Dr. Holmes, she declined with thanks, and left Julia free to invite Edith.

As the two friends walked up the short flight of stone steps to the front door, their hearts sank a little. To make a call on a poet was really a rather formidable thing, and they pressed each other's hands as they heard the maid opening the door to admit them.

"Just wait here for a moment," said the maid, after they had enquired for the master of the house, and she showed them into a small room at the left of the entrance. It seemed to be merely a reception-room, but it was very pretty with its white woodwork and large-flowered yellow paper. There was a carved table in the centre with writing materials and ink-stand, and little other furniture besides a few handsome chairs. Tall bookcases matching the woodwork occupied the recesses, and they were filled with books in substantial bindings.

In a moment the maid had returned and asked them to follow her. At the head of the broad stairs they saw the poet himself standing to meet them with outstretched hand. When Julia mentioned Edith's name, "Ah," he said, "that is a good old Boston name, and if I mistake not, I used to know your grandfather," and then when Edith had satisfied him on this point he turned to Julia, and in a bantering way spoke of the service she had done him that windy day. Then he made them sit down beside him, one on each side, while he occupied a large leather armchair drawn up before his open fire, and asked them one or two questions about their studies and their taste in literature. As he talked, Julia's eyes wandered to the bronze figure of Father Time on the mantelpiece, and then to the little revolving bookcase on which she could not help noticing a number of volumes of Dr. Holmes' own works. The old gentleman following her glance, said:

"They make a pretty fair showing for one man, but my publishers are getting ready to bring out a complete edition of my works, and that, well that makes me realize my age." After a moment, as if reflecting, he asked quickly, "Does either of you write poetry?"

"Oh, no, sir," answered Edith quickly, "we couldn't."

"Why, it isn't so very hard," he said, "at least I should judge not by the numbers of copies of verses that are sent to me to examine. Poetry deals with common human emotion, and almost any one with a fair vocabulary thinks that he can express himself in verse. But nearly everything worth saying has been said. Words and expressions seem very felicitous to the writer, but he cannot expect other persons to see his work as he sees it."

"It depends, I suppose," said Edith shyly, "on whose work it is."

"I am afraid," replied the poet, "that there is no absolute standard for verse-makers. It has always seemed to me that the writer of verse is almost in the position of a man who makes a mold for a plaster cast or something of that kind. Whatever liquid mixture he puts into that mold will surely fit it. So the verse is the mold into which the poet puts his thought, and from his point of view it is sure to fit."

Though Edith may not have grasped the full force of the poet's meaning, Julia was sure that she understood him.

"Do you really have a great deal of poetry sent you to read?" she asked.

"Every mail," he answered, "brings me letters from strangers,—from every corner of the globe. Some contain poems in my honor, as specimens of what the poet can do. Others are accompanied by long manuscripts on which my opinion is asked. I am chary now about expressing any opinion, for publishers have a way of quoting very unfairly in their advertisements. If I write 'your book would be very charming were it not so carelessly written,' the publisher quotes merely 'very charming,' and prints this in large type."

Both girls smiled at the expression of droll sorrow that came over the poet's face as he spoke.

"And I am so very unfortunate myself," he added, "when I try to get an autograph of any consequence. Now I sent Gladstone a copy of a work on trees in which I thought he would be

interested. He returned the compliment with a copy of one of his books. But—" here he paused, "he wrote his thanks on a postcard!" Again the girls laughed. "Dear me!" he concluded, "this cannot interest young creatures like you; do you care for poetry?"

"Oh, yes indeed we do," cried Julia, "and we just love your poetry."

"Well, well," said the poet, with a twinkle in his eye, "perhaps you would like to hear me read something?"

The beaming faces that met his glance were a sufficient answer, and taking a volume from the table, he began in a voice that was a trifle husky, though full of expression,

"This is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign,
Sails the unshadowed main,—
The venturous bark that flings
On the sweet summer wind its venturous wings
In gulfs enchanted, where the Siren sings,
And coral reefs lie bare,
Where the cold sea maids raise to sun their streaming hair."

When he had finished the stanza, he looked up enquiringly.

"The Chambered Nautilus," murmured Julia.

"Ah, you know it then?" said the poet.

"Oh, yes, I love it," she answered.

Then with a smile of appreciation, adjusting his glasses, Dr. Holmes read to the end of the poem in his wonderfully musical voice. When it was finished, the girls would have liked to ask for more, but the poet rose to replace the volume. "Come," he said, "you have listened to the poem which of all I have written I like the best, now I wish to show you my favorite view." Following him to the deep bay-window, they looked out across the river. It was much the same view to which Julia was accustomed in her uncle's house, and yet it was looking at the river with new eyes to have the poet pointing out all the towns, seven or eight in number which he could see from that window. Somerville, Medford, Belmont, Arlington, Charlestown, Brookline, and one or two others, perhaps, besides Cambridge with its spires and chimneys.

"In winter," said Dr. Holmes, "there is not much to see besides the tug-boats and the gulls. But in the early spring it is a delight to me to watch the crews rowing by, and an occasional pleasure-boat, ah! I remember"—but what it was he did not say, for as Edith turned her eyes toward an oil painting on the wall near by he said, "Of course you know who that is; of course you recognize the famous Dorothy Q. Now look at the portrait closely, and tell me what you think of that cheek. Could you imagine any one so cruel as to have struck a sword into it? Yet there, if your eyes are sharp enough, you will see where a British soldier of the Revolution thrust this rapier."

When both girls admitted that they could not see the scar, "That only shows," he said, "how clever the man was who made the repairs."

Before they turned from the window he made them notice the tall factory chimneys on the other side of the river which he called his thermometers, because according to the direction in which the smoke curled upwards, he was able to tell how the wind blew, and decide in what direction he should walk.

"Remember," he said, "when you reach my age always to walk with your back to the wind," and at this the girls smiled, they feeling that it would be many years before they should need to follow this advice. Yet during their call how many things they had to see and to remember! He let each of them hold for a moment the gold pen with which he had written Elsie Venner and the Autocrat papers, and Julia turned over the leaves of the large Bible and the Concordance on the top of his writing table. Dr. Holmes called their attention to the beautiful landscape hanging on one wall done in fine needlework by the hands of his accomplished daughter-in-law, and he told them a story or two connected with another picture in the room. Julia, as she looked about, thought that she had seldom seen a prettier room than this with its cheerful rugs, massive furniture, and fine pictures, all so simple and yet so dignified. When the poet pointed out the great pile of letters lying on his desk, he told them that this was about the number that he received every day.

"But you don't answer them all," exclaimed Edith almost breathlessly.

"No, indeed," and he laughed, "my secretary goes through them every morning, and decides which ought to be given me to read, and then—well if it is anything very personal I try to answer it myself. Often, however, I let her write the answer, while I simply add the signature."

Edith gave Julia a little nudge; they were both at the age when the possession of an autograph of a famous man is something to be ardently desired. But neither of them had quite dared to ask Doctor Holmes for his. It is possible that he saw the little nudge, or perhaps he read the eager expression on their faces, for almost before they realized it he had placed in the hand of each of them a small volume in a white cover, and bidding them open their books he said, "Well, I must put something on that bare fly-leaf."

So seating himself at his table with a quill pen in his hand, he wrote slowly and evidently with

some effort, the name of each of them, followed by the words "With the regards of Oliver Wendell Holmes," and then the year, and the day of the month. As he handed them the books, he opened the door, and with a word or two more of half bantering thanks to Julia for her assistance on that windy day, he bowed them down the stairs.

So impressed were they by the visit that they had little to say until they reached home, where they found Mrs. Barlow a very sympathetic listener. Brenda, who happened to be at home looked with interest at the little volumes of selections from Doctor Holmes' writings with their valuable autographs, and said, "Well, you might have taken me, too."

"Why, Brenda, I am sure that I asked you," said Julia, "but you declared that you would not speak to a poet for anything in the world."

They all laughed at this, a proceeding which this time did not annoy Brenda.

Mrs. Barlow admired the little books.

"But I hope that you did not stay too long," she said gently, "for I have been told that Doctor Holmes has a way of sending off a guest who tires him, by bringing out one of these little gift books."

"Oh, I don't think we tired him," said Julia; "at any rate he was too polite to show it, but I'm glad that we have the books."

XVI

AN HISTORIC RAMBLE

On a bright, sunny morning just before the beginning of the Christmas holidays, Miss South asked Julia if she would care to go within a day or two to visit some of the historic spots at the North End.

"It is not quite as good a season," the teacher had added, "as in the early autumn or spring, but I have learned that it is never well to put off indefinitely what can be as well done at once. Something may happen to prevent our going later, and so if you can go with me this week I shall be very glad."

"Oh, thank you, Miss South," replied Julia, "I should love to go, and any day this week would do."

"And I may go, too, mayn't I?" cried Nora, who happened to be standing by.

"Why, certainly," replied Miss South, "the more, the better; I should be pleased to have all 'The Four' go."

As it happened, however, on the afternoon selected for the excursion, only Julia and Nora really cared to go. Brenda and Belle had some special appointment which nothing would induce them to break, and Edith expressed decided objections against going again into that dirty part of the town.

Even a Boston December can offer many a balmy day, and one could not wish a pleasanter afternoon than that which Julia and Nora had for their visit to the North End under the guidance of Miss South.

She made Faneuil Hall the beginning of the trip, and if I had time I should like to repeat what she told them about this famous building and its donor, old Peter Faneuil, the descendant of the Huguenots.

Nora was very much impressed by hearing that the first public meeting in the building which Peter Faneuil had given to his native town was that which assembled to hear Master Lovejoy of the Latin School pronounce a funeral eulogy over the donor of the hall.

For his death happened less than six months after the town had formally accepted his gift in 1742.

"You must remember," said Miss South, "that fire, and other causes have led to many changes in the old building, both inside and out, and yet it may still be considered the most interesting building in the country historically, or at least of equal interest with Independence Hall in Philadelphia."

As they walked about and looked at the portraits of Washington, and Hancock, and Adams, and Warren and the other great men considered worth a place in this famous hall, Miss South told them of a political meeting which she had once attended there, and how interesting it had been to look down from the galleries upon the mass of men standing on the floor below. For no seats are ever placed in this part of the hall, and with an exciting cause, or a noted speaker to attract, the sight of this crowd of men close pressed together is well worth seeing.

"There is one time in particular," said Julia, "when I should have loved to look in on the people in the hall."

"When was that?" asked Miss South.

"Why, during the Siege of Boston," she answered, "when the British turned it into a play-house, and all the British officers in town were attending 'The Blockade of Boston.'"

"Why, how can you remember?" exclaimed Nora.

"I don't know," said Julia; "I've always remembered it since I read it in some history that just in the midst of the play the audience rose in great excitement at the report 'The Yankees are attacking our works at Charlestown.'"

"Yes, that was the beginning of the end for the British in Boston," said Miss South. "We are going to see other things to remind us of them this afternoon. But now we must hasten on, for the afternoon will hardly be long enough for all that we wish to see."

Then after a short walk, she said, "I am taking you a little out of your way to show you one or two spots that you might overlook yourself. Now just here at this corner of Washington and Union streets, where we stand, Benjamin Franklin passed much of his boyhood. Some persons believe that his birthplace was here. But I am more inclined to accept the Milk street location than this. Yet, here, almost where we stand, his father hung out the Blue Ball sign for his tallow candle business, and here, too, he lived with his wife and thirteen children.

"Not far away," she continued as they walked along, "was the Green Dragon Tavern where John Adams, and Revere, and Otis and the other Sons of Liberty used to hold their meetings, and this—let us stand here for a moment—is the site of the home of Joseph Warren. Here, where this hotel stands in Hanover street, he lived and practised his profession of physician, and in this old house I suppose, the news was brought to his children of his death at Bunker Hill."

To save their strength Miss South now signalled a passing street car, and in a very few minutes they were taken to the corner of Prince street. On the way Miss South had said that she wished to show them North Square, and when they left the car, one turn from the main thoroughfare brought them within sight of this noted locality.

The little corner shops, of which there were many in sight had signs worded in Italian, and some of the shop windows displayed all kinds of foreign-looking pastry and confections—less tempting, however, in appearance than the fresh green vegetables shown in the windows and doorways of other shops. The dark-browed men and women who passed spoke to each other in Italian, and some of the women wore short skirts and bright kerchiefs which made their whole costume seem thoroughly foreign.

"Down this Garden Court street," said Miss South, just before they reached the square, "used to stand the house of Sir Harry Frankland."

"Oh, yes," cried Nora, "there's *one* thing that I remember, the story of Agnes Surriage. I've read the novel."

"Well, Agnes used to live here," said Miss South, "at least in this neighborhood. No trace of the old mansion remains, although when built it was the finest house in town, three stories high, with inlaid floor, carved mantels, and other decorations that even to-day we should probably admire. Many other houses in this neighborhood are old, and I have a friend who can tell almost their precise age by studying the style of the bricks and mortar, but the only one of great historic interest is that little old wooden house," and she pointed to one on the western side of the square.

"It does not look so very old," said Julia.

"No, because it has been clapboarded after the modern fashion. Aside from that, however, you can see that its overhanging upper story makes it unlike any house built in modern times. Here Paul Revere lived for many years, and his birthplace is near-by. I hope that in time it may be bought by some patriotic person, to be preserved as long as it will stand. At present it is a tenement house, and liable to destruction by fire at any moment through the carelessness of its occupants. Now we must hurry on, but I wish that you could come to the square some time on a holiday, when it is a centre for all the picturesque Italians of whom there are so many now in this part of the city."

As they turned about under Miss South's guidance, she pointed out other old houses—(one with the date 1724 above it) almost tumbling down,—and she told them a little about the habits of the people living in the narrow streets and alleys which they passed.

"On the whole these people are much better off than ever they were in their own country. They have political liberty, and their children have the chance of acquiring a good education. In that school over there they are taught to speak English, and they do learn it in a very thorough manner. The older people are slow in learning our language, and even slower in acquiring our habits. They are so anxious to make money that they live crowded together in a very unwholesome fashion. Sometimes a whole family and one or two boarders will live in the same small room, and the children will go without proper food or clothes while the father is saving money enough to invest in a house or shop which he wishes to own."

"Cannot this be prevented?" asked Julia.

"Only by teaching young and old better habits. That is the effort which all the charity workers in

this neighborhood make. The kindergartens, and industrial schools, and all the other organizations are gradually accomplishing this. But it is hard work. I should like to tell you more about their difficulties, but now I suppose we must pay more attention to history."

While Miss South had been talking she had led them up a narrow street which in snowy weather must have lived up to its name "Snowhill street." At the top of the hill after a turn or two they came upon an old burying-ground.

"Copp's Hill," said Julia.

"Why of course," responded Nora.

"I brought you here to-day," said Miss South, "because I knew that the gates would be open. One cannot always get in during the winter months except by special arrangement. But in summer the old graveyard is like a park, and the little children from all parts of the North End come here to play, and mothers with their babies are thankful enough for a seat under the trees where they can feel the cool breeze from the harbor."

"How quaint it is!" said Julia, looking down the narrow street, just as they entered the gate. "Why there is Christ Church, isn't it?"

"How did you know it?" asked Nora, "I thought that you had never been here before."

"Well, I haven't, but there are ever so many photographs, showing just this view. What is that queer little house, Miss South?"

"I am glad that you asked, although I should not have forgotten to point it out. That is a real Revolutionary relic, General Gage's headquarters during part of the British occupation; it is one of the most interesting houses left standing."

Now turning their steps away from the quaint, hilly street, they were within the enclosure of the graveyard. It would take long to tell all that they saw. There was the old gravestone which the British had made a target, and marked with their bullets. There were some stones with nothing but the name and date, and neither very legible, others with rough carvings of cherubs' heads, or the angel of death, while some of the vaults at the side had heraldic carvings, the arms of old Tory families.

Miss South told them of the days when this graveyard had been neglected, and when the gravestones had toppled over, and had been carried off by any one who wished them. Some had been found by the present custodian of the ground in use as covers for drains, others as chimney tops, and some in old cellars and basements. There were famous names on some of the stones, and strange verses on others.

Julia copied an inscription or two, such as,

"A sister of Sarah Lucas lyeth here,
Whom I did love most dear;
And now her soul hath took its flight,
And bid her spightful foes good-night."

and this

"Death with his dart hath pierced my heart,
While I was in my prime;
When this you see grieve not for me
'Twas God's appointed time."

She had heard before of the Mather tomb, and looked with great interest on the brown slab enclosed with an iron railing, under which rested the noted Puritan preacher.

Yet while Julia took interest in the stones and inscriptions, Nora was better pleased with the lovely view of the water to be seen from the summit.

"It was there in the channel," said Miss South, "that the men-of-war lay when Paul Revere started out on that wonderful ride, and not so far from the spot where the receiving ship 'Wabash' now lies at the Navy Yard, the British landed in Charlestown on their way to Bunker Hill."

"Oh, yes," said Julia, who had put aside her pencil and notebook, "I can understand now what a fine view the people of Boston must have had of the battle when they crowded to the graveyard and the roofs."

"Yes, there was almost a clear view then," said Miss South, "and it must have been a very exciting day for the watchers on the Boston side of the water."

"They were making for the steeple,—the old sexton and his people;
The pigeons circled round us as we climbed the creaking stair,
Just across the narrow river—oh so close it made us shiver!
Stood a fortress on the hilltop that but yesterday was bare.

"Not slow our eyes to find it—well we knew who stood behind it,
Though the earthwork hid them from us, and the stubborn walls were

dumb.

Here were sister, wife and mother, looking wild upon each other,
And their lips were white with terror, as they said "The Hour is Come!"

"Bravo!" cried the others as Nora finished this quotation from Holmes' well-known poem. "If there were time," added Miss South, "we might ask Nora, or perhaps you Julia, to cap these stanzas with some other historical poem.

"The North End would be well worth another visit," continued Miss South, as they turned away. "I hope that some time you will both come to a service in the old church, and if you choose the first Sunday of the month, you will be able to see the fine communion service presented by George the Second, and you will find the high backed pews and the frescoes on the wall the same as they were a hundred and twenty-five years ago."

"What lots of little children there are playing about," cried Nora; "I should think that they would be run over a dozen times a day, for there are certainly more in the middle of the street than on the sidewalks. Why see there, why just look, it really is——"

"Manuel," broke in Julia, as Nora rushed forward and took the little fellow by the hand—"why how are you, Manuel?"

"My mother sick," he replied, smiling at Nora whom evidently he remembered very well.

"Oh, couldn't we just go to see him, I mean his mother," cried Nora.

"But if she is sick—" replied Miss South with hesitation.

"Let us wait here at the corner—this is the very corner," pleaded Nora, "and you can see whether there would be any harm in our going there; Julia wants to see the house, and perhaps Mrs. Rosa only has a cold."

As this seemed to be a sensible suggestion, Miss South with Manuel by the hand went down the little street where the Rosas were living.

XVII

THE ROSAS AT HOME

In a few moments Miss South returned.

"I do not think," she said, "that there would be the least harm in your going with me to the house. I know, Nora, that your mother would not object, and Julia, you can use your own judgment. I am sure that there is no contagious disease in the neighborhood, and——"

"Oh," interrupted Julia, "do let me go back with you. I have never been in a tenement house and I am so anxious to see one. My aunt would not have the least objection, and you know that Brenda has been there."

So in less time than it takes me to tell of it they were actually at the door of the house where the Rosas lived. Fortunately their rooms were now on the first floor, and as the door was open as well as the window, there was good ventilation. Had this not been the case they must have been half suffocated by the heat from the stove which was glowing hot. Mrs. Rosa was seated in a high backed wooden rocking-chair, but she rose to her feet as she saw Miss South and the two girls approaching. To do this was evidently a great effort for her, and after she had said a word or two of welcome in broken English, she sank back half exhausted.

She had strength, however, to speak to her elder daughter, who had not turned when they entered, and at her bidding Angelina had looked up from the depths of the mysterious mixture which she was stirring in an iron kettle, and coming forward offered her hand to the three newcomers. Two younger girls in rather untidy dresses, with half the buttons off their shoes looked on a little timidly, and no one but Manuel seemed perfectly at ease.

"It's rather hard, isn't it," said Miss South pleasantly, "to take care of so many children, Mrs. Rosa?"

"Oh, yes, Miss South," she replied, "they gets hungry every day, and always wants so much to eat." Even the lively Nora did not smile at this, although she afterwards said that she wondered if their mother expected the children to want only one meal a week.

"But you're not able to work now; you can't go out to your fruit stand, can you?" continued Miss South.

"Oh, no indeed, no indeed," shaking her head. "I'm awful weak."

"Then how have you been paying your rent?"

"Well, the good minister, he help me; he pay it just now, and John he have a license for papers, and he sell quite a good many every day after school—and, oh well, we get along." Mrs. Rosa had

a very pleasant expression, and as she talked she looked almost handsome. Her black stuff dress, worn without a collar, made her pale face seem more haggard than usual, yet it beamed with gratitude as she told how kind one and another had been since her illness had become so serious.

"Where does she sleep?" asked Julia in a half whisper to Nora.

"Why, in that little room where you see the door open. I remember they told us when we were here before, that she and the girls sleep there, while the boys have a mattress to themselves on the kitchen floor. They bring it out every night."

"How dreadful!" was all that Julia had time to say, for she saw Angelina's sharp eyes turned towards her, and feared that already she had been impolite in talking thus in an aside to Nora.

The latter, while Miss South was talking with Mrs. Rosa about her recent symptoms, tried to draw Manuel into conversation, but, as before, only a word or two at a time could be drawn from him, although his expression was still as seraphic as ever, even when Nora was half teasing him.

Yet, after all, they had been in the dingy room but a very short time when Miss South reminded them that it was growing dark, and that Mrs. Gostar and Mrs. Barlow would both disapprove their being out much later. As they rode up Hanover street in the car both girls noticed that Miss South was unusually quiet. At last Julia broke the silence.

"I'm sure that you are thinking about Mrs. Rosa," she said softly.

"Yes," answered Miss South, "I see that something must be done to help her, but I am not sure just what it should be. Possibly she cannot recover, or perhaps if she had a good doctor he might advise—but still, she is almost too poor to take advantage of any advice."

"Yes," said Nora, "suppose a doctor should advise her to go to Colorado, or California; why he might as well talk about the moon."

"I know it," murmured Julia, "and yet people are sometimes very kind to the poor."

"Yes, at Christmas especially," rejoined Nora with a laugh. "Did you hear one of the little girls when I asked her what she had Thanksgiving say, 'Two turkeys, one Baptist and one 'Piscopal.'"

Julia looked a little shocked at this, but Miss South only smiled. "I am afraid that loaves and fishes count for a great deal with these people when they come to select a church. They have discovered that they can get more from the Protestants than from their own church, and if they have some little disagreement with a priest, they take advantage of this to put themselves under the wing of the Bethel, or of Christ Church. Both have a great many Portuguese in attendance, and I ought not to be too censorious, for some of them undoubtedly are perfectly sincere."

"How does it happen, Miss South, that you know so much about these poor North End people?" asked Julia. "There, I did not mean to be inquisitive, but it seems wonderful that you should understand them so well."

"To tell you the reason fully," replied she, "would be a long story, but just now it may be enough to say that I have had a little mission class down there but a block or two from Mrs. Rosa's for several years. In this way, spending one evening among them, as well as Sunday afternoon, I have come to understand the characteristics of these foreigners."

"Have you known Mrs. Rosa all this time?" asked Nora.

"Oh, no indeed, I never had seen her until after you rescued Manuel. But since then I have called at the house two or three times and I have grown to like Mrs. Rosa very well. She has more influence over her children than many other foreign mothers of my acquaintance. But here we are at Scollay Square, and as it is only five o'clock, would not you enjoy walking down over Beacon Hill instead of taking another car?"

"Yes, indeed," both girls exclaimed, and pleased enough they were with their choice. For as they wound in and out through some of the picturesque streets of the West End, Miss South almost made the old streets alive again with the people of the past. As they passed the head of Hancock street back of the State House,

"Down there," she said, "was the Sumner homestead, where Charles Sumner lived for many years." Then as they continued down Mt. Vernon street, toward Louisbourg Square, she told them that here was once the estate of Rev. William Blackstone.

"Historians," she added, "believe that the spring of fresh water whose discovery by Blackstone led Winthrop's party to prefer Boston to Charlestown, was probably not far from the centre of the grassplot in the square. But we must walk quickly," she concluded, as they turned to a side street that led them to the familiar Beacon street.

"I have come over here to call your attention to this curved front of cream white at the middle of the slope. You have passed it hundreds of times, Nora, but I wonder if you have ever realized that it was for many years the home of William Hickling Prescott, the historian, and that here he wrote many of his finest works."

Nora was ashamed to admit that she hardly remembered what Prescott had written. But Julia, whose historical reading had been unusually deep for one of her years, was delighted to see the home of the author of "Ferdinand and Isabella." If there had been no old landmarks to look at

they all would have enjoyed the walk to the utmost. Few streets in the world are more beautiful than Beacon street, at dusk or after the lamps are lighted. Those who walk westward at this time of day have the Common and the Garden on one side, the dignified old houses on the other, and winding far in front of them the long street with its long lines of lamps, while far off in the west the heights of Brookline whose brightly lit houses and twinkling street lamps suggest a huge castle as the end of the journey. Home for Julia and Nora, however, lay far this side of Brookline, and it was not long before they had to bid Miss South good-bye, with many thanks for her kindness.

Nora at dinner that evening was full of the experiences of the afternoon, and her mother and father and the younger boys were not only interested, but had various suggestions to make as to the most helpful things to do for the Rosas. I won't say that the boys were always practical, for with their minds full of the approaching Christmas they could think of little that was really worth while doing except giving the family an elaborately decorated Christmas tree.

Dr. Gostar promised to find out whether Mrs. Rosa was having the proper kind of medical treatment, and Mrs. Gostar said that she would try to talk with Miss South and learn whether there was any special thing that she could do.

"The Christmas tree is not a very bad suggestion," said their mother consolingly to the boys when she saw that they were disappointed that their father treated this as a matter of slight importance.

"Why I think that it would be just lovely to give them a tree," added Nora, "if, if, that is, you know that we must not forget Brenda."

"Of course not," replied her mother, "but Brenda does not own the Rosas, in fact I should be inclined to think that she had forgotten them lately."

"Oh, she has made up her mind that she is going to accomplish something wonderful for them by means of the Easter Bazaar, and——"

"In the meantime she would leave them to starve."

"Oh, papa, you are laughing at me; Miss South says that there is no danger of any one's starving in Boston."

"All the same you cannot expect me to encourage a dog-in-the-manger disposition in Brenda, and you have so good an adviser in Miss South that I am willing to help you to carry out any plans which she starts."

Dr. Gostar was so far right in his estimate of Brenda that he would have felt more than justified in what he had said to Nora had he looked in at the Barlows at dinner-time. For he might then have seen that Brenda was very much disturbed, and from her lips he would have heard some very cross words.

"Really, Julia, I think that it was awfully unkind in you and Nora to go to see the Rosas without me; you know that I wanted to see them, and you never gave me the least idea that you were going."

"But I am sure that Miss South invited you to go to the North End with us."

"Well, you never said a word about the Rosas, and you know that I do not care at all about old streets and houses, and besides, I could not have gone this afternoon, so that you might have waited."

"How unreasonable you are, Brenda, and inconsiderate towards Julia," interposed her mother. "Really I had begun to hope that you were improving, and here you are, crosser than ever."

"Yes, Brenda, don't let me hear you talk in that way again," added her father.

"Well, I don't think it's fair for Julia and Miss South and Nora to keep making plans for the Rosas when I was the one who first wanted to do something for them; you remember, papa, that I asked you to buy a carpet for them, and I have been thinking so much about that Bazaar, but now it won't be a bit of good if everything is going to be done for them at Christmas."

"Nonsense, Brenda, you can have a share in Julia's Christmas tree, and I cannot feel that your interest in them has continued very strong. It seems to me that you have been more interested in the Bazaar than in the Rosas, and that now you should be willing to let others make plans for them."

During all the discussion Julia had had little to say, but she resolved at the earliest opportunity to ask Miss South to tell Brenda the exact condition of the Rosas.

XVIII

MERRY CHRISTMAS

When Miss South heard of Brenda's feeling on the subject of the Rosas she hastened to invite her to assist in the Christmas tree enterprise "not so much with money, Brenda," she said, "as with your taste. I know that you and Belle can make several of the decorations for the tree. Money to spend for the things has been given me by a friend, and we shall have more than enough."

With this suggestion Brenda was not at all displeased, for she had spent more than double her liberal allowance of Christmas money on gifts for her friends. A foolish habit of exchanging presents had grown up at school, and each girl tried to return the presents of the season before with something handsomer than the giver had bestowed on her. In this way those who had to consider money were called mean if they did not give a handsome present to all those whom they knew, that is those girls with whom they had anything more than a speaking acquaintance. The ever extravagant Brenda had reached almost the end of the list of those whom she wished to remember with Christmas gifts, and had had to go to her father for more money, which he gave her only on condition that she should deduct it from her allowance of the next two months. It was probably this knowledge that she could do little for the Christmas tree for the Rosas which had led her at first to express herself rather ill-naturedly to Julia on the subject.

Mr. Barlow always protested a little against Brenda's present-giving habit. He said that it was very foolish to give a silver pin-tray to a girl who perhaps already had a half-dozen similar articles, which she would probably return with a silver scent bottle, of which Brenda already had more than she could use in a lifetime. "It would be much more sensible if each of you would go out and buy the thing which you wish the most for yourself and let others do the same. I have an idea that your wants would be less numerous and less costly if you felt that you were spending your own money for yourself."

"Oh! papa."

"Yes, I mean it. If you were in the habit of buying more books, it would not be so bad, there would be little danger of your having too many, and one book, if a duplicate, could be properly exchanged for another. But you buy such foolish things for one another, and the chief aim of each girl seems to be to outdo every other girl."

"Oh, papa, I'm sure we all make out lists of what we want the most, and we always try to please one another, indeed we always do, and one can't be mean; I'm sure you wouldn't want any one to call me mean."

"Now, Brenda, of course not; but there are different kinds of meanness, and I wonder how many of you girls at Miss Crawdon's ever stop to think how many little comforts your Christmas presents would buy for the needy men and women who have so little to brighten their lives. No, Brenda, I do not begrudge you the money that I give you, but I often do object to your way of spending it—sometimes," he hastened to add, as he saw the frown gathering on Brenda's face.

But, after all, it would take too long to tell you how thoroughly in earnest Julia and the others were in their efforts to make the Christmas tree a success. The tree, to be sure, was the least part of it. For Mrs. Rosa's small kitchen was not adapted to a very large one, and Miss South decided that it would be rather foolish to put too much money into a thing of that kind. The decorations were inexpensive, or homemade, and the presents were useful rather than ornamental. Of course there were toys and colored picture-books for Manuel and the smaller girls, and bags of candy and oranges for each of the family, and candles enough on the tree to make a cheerful illumination for five or ten minutes while Miss South and Philip stood near by with pails of water ready to use in case a spark of fire should fall where it was not expected. But after all, things went off very well, and when the Four, or rather the Five—for Julia, of course, was included—drove down to see the distribution of the presents, they had hardly standing-room in the little kitchen. Julia and Miss South had done the most of the purchasing, and the things that they had thought of were innumerable. I need not tell you what they all were, but there was a new rug to go in front of the stove, and there were two wadded quilts for each of the family beds, there was a new gown for Mrs. Rosa, and mittens and shoes for all the children, and—but it is better for you to imagine it all, only remembering that when a family is absolutely destitute, a great deal of money may be spent without making a great show. The Christmas dinner had been sent by the Baptist Church, and on Christmas evening the children were to go to a festival at the Episcopal Church where they expected to receive some other presents. For even Miss South had not yet had enough influence to get the Rosas to devote themselves to one church. They still continued to think that to attend two Protestant churches showed a praiseworthy excess of virtue.

But whatever the trouble and expense had been, the beaming faces of Mrs. Rosa and the children were sufficient compensation for Miss South and her pupils. Even Belle had no fault to find with the tree, or the Rosas or with anything connected with the celebration.

But for Julia one of the pleasantest results of the Christmas tree was the intimacy which grew up between her and Miss South, a rather unusual friendship to have arisen between a girl of sixteen and a woman ten years older.

Mr. and Mrs. Barlow were pleased with the animation which Julia had shown in this work for the Christmas tree, and they had no objection to the intimacy with Miss South, since Miss Crawdon had assured them that they knew her to be a young woman of unusually fine character. Just after Christmas Miss South went up to the country for a week or two of perfect rest, and Julia for the first time since she came to Boston found herself entering into a round of gaiety. Dancing parties

were given almost every evening by some one of the schoolgirls, and no one thought of inviting Brenda without asking Julia, too. It is true that Julia did not care very much for round dances, but she had come to see that it was almost a duty to enter more heartily into the amusements of her schoolmates. So, putting aside—so far as she could—her natural diffidence—she almost always accompanied Brenda, and though she could not take part in round dances, she seldom had to sit alone. There was always some other girl who did not dance, or who had not been asked for the dance, and not infrequently some awkward boy who preferred sitting it out to dancing. On some occasions, even when there had been but two or three square dances in which Julia could take part, she had reported to her uncle and aunt at breakfast the next morning that she had enjoyed herself very much.

"A contented mind is a continual feast," said Belle, sarcastically, when she heard Julia telling some one how much she had enjoyed a certain evening. "Why, I do not think that Julia was on the floor twice. Whenever I saw her she was talking to wall flowers, or small boys who ought to have been at home or in bed." By "small boy," Belle meant any one who was not yet in college, for she herself was hardly polite to any one younger than a sophomore, and she wondered that any hostess to whose house she was invited should think of having any one there younger than this. But the best-intentioned hostess sometimes had young cousins or nephews whom she wished to invite, and the two or three years' difference in age between a sophomore and a boy still in the preparatory school did not count for much in her eyes, however it may have been regarded by some of the girls of Belle's age.

Yet in spite of Belle's unfavorable criticisms, Julia was gradually winning her way to considerable popularity, and this without any effort on her own part. She was especially polite to elderly ladies, not from any motive, but because this seemed the proper thing, and her natural kindness of heart led her to look after any other girl who seemed neglected or lonely. As to the boys—well, while no one could tell exactly how it was, she had a way of drawing them out and making even those who hated parties, admit to her that if more girls were like her they wouldn't mind going out. "But most girls, you know, just order us boys about so, and we have to dance whether we want to or not, or they call us all kinds of things behind our backs," one of them said to Julia one evening.

"Why, how do you know?" she had asked.

"Oh, our sisters tell us; why haven't you any brothers yourself?"

"No," said Julia, laughing at his earnestness, "nor any sisters either."

"Oh, well, you know lots of girls, and you must have heard them talk. I can tell you after I have heard my sisters and their friends talking people over, I think that I will never go to a party again."

"Then why do you?"

"Oh, you have to; some way, the other fellows all kind of make fun of you if you don't, and then your family all get at you, and it's all an awful bore. But when I find a girl like you who don't mind sitting still and talking, I don't have quite so bad a time." Then remembering that a little more politeness was due even to a girl who didn't pretend to be fond of dancing, he added, "Wouldn't you like to try this Portland Fancy? I can generally get through that all right, and I don't mind dancing with you," and though the compliment in the last part of his speech was a little dubious, Julia accepted, to the amazement of some of the other girls, who would have felt themselves very much lowered if obliged to dance with a schoolboy.

After all the gaiety of Christmas week it wasn't the easiest thing in the world for the girls to settle down to work at school. There were so many things to talk over, there was so much to think about. Christmas day itself had been very pleasant for Julia, though it had been kept by her uncle and aunt strictly as a family festival. She and Brenda were the youngest of the group gathered at the table, for Brenda's elder sister was still in Europe, and the other cousins invited to the dinner were all older than Julia and Brenda. The presents were given unostentatiously at breakfast before the arrival of any outside of the household, and Julia was touched to find that she had been remembered not only by the relatives whom she had seen, but by the absent cousins in Europe who had known her only when she was a very little girl. Brenda in her turn was extremely surprised by the handsome gifts which Julia gave to her and to her father and mother. There was the beautiful bracelet which she had been longing for as she had seen it in a Winter street window, with the tiny watch set near the clasp, while for her father and mother was a large paper edition of Thackeray, finely illustrated and elegantly bound. Brenda was too heedless of money herself to stop to count the cost of these gifts, and yet she realized that they must be expensive, and while thanking Julia with the greatest warmth, she wondered how in the world she had been able to afford them.

Her father had laughed as usual at what he called her "silverware," and had asked her again as he had always asked her since she had acquired the habit of present exchanging, as he called it.

"Now, wouldn't it really be more fun to have all your own money again, Brenda, so that you could start out, and buy for yourself the things that you like the most instead of all these odds and ends."

"Oh, papa," Brenda had replied, as she always did, "I just love these things, and I have more presents than almost any girl I know; they say that I really am the most popular."

"Yes," he rejoined, "because you make the most presents. However," as he saw a cloud settling on her face, "I will not say anything if you are happy. Only remember that you won't have any allowance again until the first of March."

But an empty pocketbook did not seem the worst thing in the world to Brenda with her happy-go-lucky disposition, and on the Monday after New Year's, when they were all back in school she was the merriest of the crowd.

XIX

NORA'S THOUGHTLESSNESS

It is never the easiest thing in the world to settle down to work after the holidays, and even Julia for a day or two found herself a little dreamy, with her thoughts constantly going back to the many pleasant things of that Christmas week. But it was not as hard for her as for her cousins to resume the regular routine. She had a more definite aim than they, with the prospect of college examinations not so very far away. Brenda had not yet made up her mind to give her approval to her cousin's studying Greek, and she did not take the trouble to contradict Belle and Frances Pounder when they said that it must be a very disagreeable thing to have a cousin who intended to be a teacher. It is true that neither Belle nor Frances was thoroughly informed as to Julia's intentions, but they never needed very definite facts on which to base their theories. Consequently when they were at a loss for a subject of conversation, they were in the habit of discussing Julia's peculiarities. Other persons did not find Julia peculiar. To older people she seemed an especially well-mannered girl, with a delightful vein of thoughtfulness that was not too often met in young girls. She had become also a decided favorite with the brothers of her school friends to an extent that sometimes seemed surprising. For Julia was not an extremely pretty girl, and she was not half so well informed on sports and games as were the girls who had lived all their lives in Boston. But she had a way of listening attentively to whatever any boy happened to be saying to her, and the questions that she asked always showed an unusual degree of attention—an attention that any one could see was not a mere pretence. Philip Blair had already begun to confide to her a larger share of his college woes than he would have confided to his placid sister Edith. For Edith had an uncomfortable habit of forgetting just what was to be kept secret, and though Philip had no very dark secrets, there were still little things that he preferred not to have told. Julia was also very ready to help Nora's younger brothers in their lessons, and as Harry Gostar said, "There isn't another girl Nora knows that could help a fellow with his Greek exercises, and even if she hasn't studied Greek any longer than I have, she has learned more than enough to show me where I make mistakes in these beastly old conjugations."

There was probably some jealousy in the feeling of Frances and Belle toward Julia, but jealousy was not a strong motive with Brenda. In her case there had been little more than pettishness in her first attitude towards her cousin—the pettishness of a spoiled child. Yet this pettishness, which left to itself would have seemed of little account,—hardly worth noticing, when fanned by Belle and Frances took on the aspect of jealousy. In consequence of this feeling Julia had been made at times very uncomfortable, though no one had ever known her to say a word to Brenda in resentment.

Sometimes she found it very hard not to say a word when she heard the Four rushing upstairs on the afternoons of the club meetings. Strange though it may seem, no invitation had yet been given her to assist in the work for the Bazaar, even although all the other girls realized that the success of the Rosas' Christmas tree had been largely due to her. Perhaps it was just as well that Julia had no opportunity to inspect the things that were preparing for the Bazaar. For even after these many weeks of work there was hardly a single finished article. Belle's centrepiece was so elaborate that a whole afternoon showed hardly more than a single finished leaf, or one exquisitely wrought blossom.

"If any one would pay you for your time, Belle," Nora said mischievously one day, "we should have money enough to send one of the Rosa children to Europe."

"You'd better talk, Nora," Belle replied, "your afghan isn't half done either, and an afghan does not begin to be as fussy as a centrepiece, and it isn't even artistic, or——"

"Oh, well," Nora replied, "this is not the only thing that I have done; I keep it to work on here, but I have finished a small shawl at home, and a pair of baby's shoes, and I am going to do any number of things besides."

"Ah," said Belle, tossing her head, "you won't find me working myself to death over a Bazaar. I think one afternoon a week is a great deal to give to any poor family, for that is what it amounts to, and you know that I don't care much about those Rosas, anyway."

"Oh, Belle!" cried Edith, looking shocked.

"No, indeed, I don't, and I am sure that Brenda does not care half as much as she pretends. Why, Edith, as for that you yourself never go down to the North End to see them."

"I can't; my mother won't let me go into dirty streets or into tenement houses."

"Oh! if you cared very much, you'd find some way to go there occasionally. You could drive."

Edith looked so uncomfortable at this suggestion, that Nora, on whom usually fell the duty of taking up the cudgels, exclaimed,

"You know that Edith was very generous at Christmas, and that she is ready to do ever so much more for the Rosas, and it isn't a bit fair to speak in that way."

Belle discreetly said nothing further, for she had learned that when Nora assumed this positive tone, Brenda was apt to go over on her side, and then Belle herself would be so in the minority as to be obliged to seem an unpopular person, and if there was one thing in the world that she dreaded, it was to be considered unpopular. So trimming her sails she said, "Why, how silly you are, Nora, you know that I was only in fun. Of course we all are interested in the Rosas, and I only wish that I could do two or three centrepieces for the Bazaar. But I am always so busy at this season——"

"You busy, Belle," cried Nora. "Who ever heard of such a thing. You are just the idlest person I know."

"Indeed I am not," was the answer. "I have to do all the errands for the family, and half my clothes are made in the house, and we always have such stupid seamstresses, that——"

"I should say so, Belle; I do think that you have had some of the ugliest clothes, lately, that I have seen this winter," interrupted Nora, rather unceremoniously. Belle reddened very deeply at this speech, for as a matter of fact she was extremely sensitive on the subject of her clothes. Unlike Brenda or Edith, she never had the privilege of going to a fine costumer; nor could she even employ the dressmaker who made some of the gowns worn by others of her set of friends. The circumstances in her family were such that she could not gratify her taste in dress. She must wear this thing or that thing that her grandmother had selected, or must have something of her mother's altered to the present fashion for girls. However skilful the alterations, she felt as if she were in some way disgraced. Now to tell the truth Belle herself had so much natural taste that only a very severe critic could see anything to criticise in her dress, and a sensible person watching the two girls would have said that it was much better for a young girl to be brought up with the somewhat economical habits that had to be Belle's than to have the rather too elegant clothes, and the many changes of costume which Mrs. Blair seemed to prefer for Edith. But girls will be girls, and Belle's great grievance was that when fawn brown for example, was the fashionable spring shade, she had to wear a gown of stone grey, because somewhere in the cedar chests in her grandmother's attic there was a stone grey thibet, ample enough to cut over into a spring gown for her. As to hats, neither her mother nor her grandmother approved of her having her hats trimmed at a milliner's. In consequence, after her mother had put on a hat a simple trimming such as she approved herself, Belle would spend her first spare afternoon in ripping it all off, in order to retrim it. Indeed she usually spent not one afternoon but several in this operation, and even ventured to lay out her own pocket money in little ornaments or in ribbons that she thought would add to the appearance of the hat. In the same way she was able too to make slight alterations in the appearance of her gowns, and sometimes the changes were improvements. At other times what she had considered a genuine addition to the style of her garment or hat to other eyes seemed only queer, or in schoolgirl parlance "weird."

When therefore Nora said that she had considered Belle's clothes of the present winter the ugliest she had seen, she touched a tender cord. In the first place Belle had had a strong dislike for the coat and hat which her mother and grandmother had selected for her, and in the second place she thought that she had improved the appearance of her costume as a whole by entirely altering the style of her winter hat. For she had twisted the front to the back, had added a deep blue bow to the trimming, and she believed that altogether she had accomplished wonders.

At Nora's speech the tears came to her eyes, and the heedless Brenda, who was not herself always careful of the feelings broke forth indignantly,

"I do think, Nora, that you might be careful what you say; you know that Belle dresses as well as she can, and I think that she always looks well. I wish that I could trim hats."

"Oh, Brenda, it is a good thing that you can't, for if you could you never would have a thing to wear; you can do fancy work, but you haven't a thing finished yet for the Bazaar."

While Nora was talking Belle had been folding up her work, and in a moment more she was putting on her hat and coat.

"You are not going now?" cried Brenda. "Oh, don't go; you're not mad at Nora, are you?"

"Oh, no," answered Belle with the air of injured innocence. "Oh, no, but I think that I ought to be going. I did not mean to stay the whole afternoon."

"Oh, don't go," urged Edith; "if you'll wait half an hour I will go with you, but I must finish this piece of drawn work."

But Belle continued to put on her outer wraps, and in a few minutes had bidden the others good-bye. As a matter of fact Belle was deeply offended, and she knew that if she had stayed much longer with her friends she would have been driven to express herself strongly. Now a general quarrel was a thing to be dreaded, and she knew that it would be unwise to risk it. Belle was certainly a sensible girl, and what she now did was really the best thing under the circumstances.

Left to themselves the three other girls let their tongues move very freely. It was something new for the rather loquacious Belle to go off without a word, as if in some way she had been vanquished. It was the very best thing that she could have done for herself.

"Really, Nora, I don't see how you could speak in that way to Belle. I am sure that she feels very badly," began Edith.

"Well, she is awfully conceited about her clothes, and sometimes she does look so queer."

"But you shouldn't say so to her face——"

"Better to her face than behind her back."

"I don't know," rejoined Edith, "there are some things that it is just as well not to say at all. Belle has a right to wear whatever kind of hats she likes."

"Oh, Edith," responded Nora, "you are altogether too fair. I am tired of having Belle find fault with every one else as if she were just perfect herself. For my own part, I——"

"Well, Nora," said Brenda, "you ought not to say anything to Belle when she is in my house. I happen to know that she is very sensitive about her clothes. In the first place her mother will never let her have what she wants——"

"No, it's her grandmother," interrupted Edith. "She really does have a hard time, and it isn't fair to criticise her."

"No," added Brenda, "it is not."

"Well, Brenda," said Nora, "you ought not to say anything. You make Belle awfully mad sometimes by what you say. I heard you telling her the other day that you should think that she'd just hate that winter coat that she has been wearing, the fur is so very unbecoming, and you asked her why she didn't have a chinchilla collar and muff. She won't quarrel with you, because there are so many little things that you can do for her."

"There, there," cried Edith who saw that neither Brenda nor Nora was in an amiable frame of mind. "Don't let us bicker. Any one would think that we were all enemies instead of the inseparable four."

"Oh, Edith, we can't all be as amiable as you," responded Nora. "But really I am a little sorry that I offended Belle, for I know that she has a rather hard time at home, but I do wish that she would not put on such superior airs, and I do wish that she would not wear her hats hind side before. Sometimes I almost hate to go out with her."

"Why, Nora, I never heard of such a thing. I did not know that you attached the least importance to appearances. Besides I thought that you always wanted to make every one comfortable in her feelings. It seems strange that you should have been so awfully thoughtless towards Belle."

"I dare say that you are perfectly correct," responded Nora; "you usually are, Edith Blair. And I haven't a doubt that I shall go down on my knees to-morrow at recess, and apologize to Belle and to every one else whom I have ever offended. But I say that we have had enough of this exchange of compliments for to-day. Let us put up our work, and talk about something else. Why, see here, Belle has left her centrepiece behind her."

"Oh, give it to me," cried Brenda; "I will put it away," and she took it from Nora's hands.

"We shouldn't have had this fuss, should we," said Edith, "if Julia had been working with us?"

"You don't call this a fuss," rejoined Nora, "only a slight misunderstanding."

Now in spite of her outspokenness Nora was really a very fair minded young person, or perhaps I ought to say because of it. Those who express themselves very plainly often hurt the feelings of their friends, and not all of them have the courage to admit that they have been wrong. It does require some courage to go to a girl who is in the habit of justifying all her own words and deeds to tell her that you yourself have been wrong. Yet this was just what Nora did a day or two later when she began to reflect on the criticisms she had made in the matter of Belle's clothes. She was surprised herself at the graciousness with which Belle received her apology. But this was one of the cases—rather exceptional to be sure,—in which Nora was decidedly in the wrong. Belle, therefore, could afford to be magnanimous. After this Nora was much more careful about criticising any one, for it was her general aim in life to follow as closely as she could the Golden Rule.

XX

FIDESSA AND HER MISTRESS

On the very afternoon when Nora and Belle had their falling out, Julia, after finishing her practising, had gone for a walk. It was a bright, clear day, and she wished that she had some other girl to walk with her. For when by herself she never ventured beyond the entrance to the

park, although if her cousin or one of her school friends could go with her, her aunt had no objection to her walking in the park itself. One of the disadvantages of her friendship with Ruth Roberts lay in the fact that they could seldom be together in the afternoons. Their homes were too far apart. Sometimes on Saturday Julia would go to Roxbury to spend the half day with Ruth, and on other Saturdays Ruth would come in town to stay with Julia. It was hard to tell which was the pleasanter thing to do. At Roxbury, there were Ruth's ponies to drive, and in snowy weather a chance to coast down a quiet side street. Out of town there are many more chances for fun for girls past sixteen than can possibly be found in town or the city. When Ruth visited Julia the two usually went to a concert accompanied by Mrs. Barlow, or when she could not go, by one of their teachers. Of late Julia had been in the habit of inviting Miss South to go with them. Brenda never went to these concerts. She was not fond of music, and she did not pretend to be. The only matinee that she cared for was the theatre, and as her parent were decidedly opposed to her going often to the play, she could not indulge herself half as much as she wished.

On this particular afternoon Julia felt especially lonely. Doubtless no small part of her loneliness came from the fact that she was perfectly well aware of the presence of the "Four" in the house, and though she had tried not even to say to herself that she felt slighted, she would have been less than human not to feel that her cousin had slighted her in not asking her to the club. "To look up and not down, to look out and not in," had been one of the lessons which her father had been most careful to teach her. It was therefore not very often that she let her thoughts dwell too long on her own affairs. But on this particular day she felt a little low-spirited and inclined to regard herself as rather ill-used. Without realizing it she had walked some distance into the park, and pausing to admire a bit of distant view that she was able to get from a slightly elevated point, she lingered a moment or two longer to decide whether it was an animal or a child that she heard crying behind a small clump of bushes near by. When she found that there was no other way of satisfying herself, she walked up to the bushes, and there, standing forlornly on three legs, was a tiny Italian greyhound.

"Why, you poor little thing!" she cried, "what is the matter?" and as she spoke she took the little creature in her arms.

"Is your leg broken, or sprained, or what?" she continued, though of course she did not expect any reply from the dog. The greyhound showed great joy at the sound of a friendly voice, and looked up in Julia's face with an expression of confidence and gratitude.

"Come, I am going to put you down on the ground for a minute to see whether you are hurt, or only pretending." So, suiting the action to the word, she stood the little dog on its feet. As if understanding her purpose, the little creature limped in front of her for a few steps, but the limp was so slight as to assure Julia that no serious accident had befallen the leg, which the dog still seemed inclined to hold off the ground.

"Now let me see if your collar tells who your owner is," added Julia, and she bent down towards the dog. There to her surprise, she read in clear letters, "Fidessa, Madame du Launy." Now immediately Julia decided that the owner of the dog must be the mistress of the large house near the school, about which her friends were so curious. In an instant, too, she remembered that she had seen this little animal, or one very like it, taking its exercise in front of the great, mysterious house. Julia had always been fond of dogs, and the little trembling creature appealed strongly to her. For a moment she almost wished that there were no name on the collar, so that she might have kept it with her for a day or two while finding the owner. "O, if only it had no owner, what joy!" she thought, as she gazed into its dark eyes, "to keep it for myself!"

As things were, however, she felt that she ought to try to return it as soon as possible, and taking the little Fidessa in her arms, she retraced her steps to the other side of the city where Madame du Launy lived.

As she stood in front of the house which Nora and Brenda had tried so unsuccessfully to enter a few weeks before, the old timidity which at one time had been the trial of her life returned to her. Nevertheless, she rang the bell bravely, and was welcomed almost with open arms by the serious-faced servant who opened the door. He had seen Fidessa instantly, and if he had not, the little creature would have made herself quickly known. When Julia released her, she jumped about in the greatest excitement, whirling around in a circle and then rushing ahead up the stairs. All trace of the lameness seemed to be gone, greatly to Julia's surprise.

While Fidessa was running ahead, the man, asking Julia to follow him, had shown her into a large room, rather dimly lighted. At first she thought that she was alone, but far at the other end of the apartment she saw a slight figure arise from the depths of a large armchair, as the man said solemnly, "Madame du Launy, here is a young lady who has found Fidessa." At that moment the truant dog bounded into the room, and leaping up towards the old lady almost knocked her over. At the same moment a plain, elderly woman entered behind Fidessa, and Julia could see as she stood in the doorway that her eyes were rather red around the edges as if she had been weeping.

"Draw up a blind, or two, James," said Madame du Launy, querulously, "we are not at a funeral. Come nearer, my dear, I am sure that I am very much obliged to you for your trouble. Where did you find my poor little dog?" By this time, the "poor little dog" was seated calmly on a cushion with its slender front legs crossed as if it had never given any one a moment's uneasiness. As Julia looked at the lady who had addressed her, she saw that she was, or had been tall. Her figure, though somewhat bent, gave the impression of stateliness. This aspect was increased by the large towering structure which she wore on her head, whether to be called cap, or turban, it

was hard to tell with its folds of black silk, its border of white lace and with two or three jeweled pins sticking in it.

In answer to Madame du Launy's question, Julia described finding the little dog in the park, and her fear at first lest it had hurt its leg.

"That is an old trick of Fidessa," said her mistress smiling, "when she is at all unhappy she limps about on three legs as if really lame. She does not know her way about the city, and she is never supposed to go anywhere without her leash. As nearly as I can understand from Jane, Fidessa went out for a drive to-day under her care. When Jane left the carriage to call on a friend of hers, who lives near the park, she forgot all about my dog. Fidessa probably jumped out of the carriage to take a walk herself. But I must say that it seems most extraordinary that no one saw her, neither the coachman, the footman nor Jane. When the carriage started home none of them took the trouble to look under the rugs to see if she was there." Here Jane began to sniffle a little. "Well," continued Madame du Launy, "it is a great wonder that she was not stolen or run over, poor little thing! It's no thanks to you, Jane," and she looked daggers at the unfortunate maid. "It is a wonder, too, that none of you could find Fidessa. For I don't believe that the little thing was actually hiding, and you all three have come back with the report that it was impossible to find her."

While Madame du Launy was speaking Julia said to herself that she would be very sorry to bring on herself a scolding from so sharp-voiced an old lady, and she could not help feeling sorry for Jane, even though the latter had probably been careless.

But now, with a sudden change of manner, Madame du Launy turned toward the young girl. "There is no reason, however, why you should suffer for Jane's misdeeds.

"Jane, ring the bell," she cried, and then in what seemed an incredibly short time, a man entered with a butler's tray, which he placed on a table in front of Madame du Launy, while the latter invited Julia to come nearer and take a cup of tea.

Now as Julia sat there drinking tea from the quaintest of old-fashioned china cups, and eating slices of thin bread and butter, and cakes that almost melted in her mouth, she could not help wondering what her friends and her cousin would say to see her actually seated in the house which most of them considered absolutely impossible to enter. In spite of the fact that the curtains at one or two windows had been raised a little the room was still rather dark, and as she glanced about, Julia could see the pictures and furniture rather indistinctly. She noticed, however, that one wall was quite covered with large pieces of tapestry representing medieval battle scenes, and that on the opposite wall on either side of a long mirror there hung a number of family portraits. One of these in a heavily gilded oval frame represented a young girl of perhaps eighteen years, whose features, for some reason or other, seemed strangely familiar; in fact there was something in the bright and earnest face that drew Julia's eyes so constantly towards it that she began to fear lest Madame du Launy would think it strange that she should pay such close attention to it.



"NOW AS JULIA SAT THERE DRINKING TEA FROM THE QUAINTEST OF OLD-FASHIONED CHINA CUPS"

It seemed a remarkable thing to Julia that she should find herself drinking tea under the roof of the mysterious house about which the schoolgirls had shown so much curiosity. It seemed even stranger that Madame du Launy should prove to be altogether less of an ogre than she had been represented. Although a trembling hand and a rather weak voice betrayed her age, she talked brightly of various things, asking Julia about her school, and her studies, and drawing the young girl out to talk about the western country in which she had spent so much time. On one subject, however, the old lady was silent. She said nothing in praise of Boston, either ancient or modern. She never alluded to a single individual as "my friend" or "my neighbor." She spoke only of things, and for the most part of things that had no connection with New England. Her questions about the school were evidently prompted by politeness in accordance with the general rule that one should show an interest in whatever probably interests the one with whom she is talking.

Jane who stood not far from her mistress' chair, and James who kept his post near the drawing-room door, looked in amazement on Madame du Launy and her young guest. In all their remembrance,—and both had lived in the house more than twenty-five years—they had never seen a young girl in conversation with their mistress. Indeed, they had seen very few guests in that gloomy old drawing-room, and certainly they had never known any one else to be asked to drink tea. It was as pleasant as it was novel to Madame du Launy to have Julia sitting with her, and as for Fidessa, she altogether forgot the strict discipline under which she had been reared, and instead of sitting calmly on her cushion, she jumped up in Julia's lap, and from time to time planted a cold, moist little kiss on her cheek. When at last Julia rose to go she had made a much longer visit than she should have made in view of the fact that the end of the afternoon was near at hand, and that she had some distance to go to reach her uncle's house. When, however, she rose to go, Madame du Launy begged her to wait a moment. "I have ordered my carriage," she added, "for it is altogether too late for you to go home alone. Let me thank you very much for your kindness to my little Fidessa, for it would have been a very serious loss for me, had she fallen into the wrong hands." Then when she saw James returning to announce that the carriage was ready, she added, "and if you will come again some afternoon, and spare an hour or so for me, you will add more than you can imagine to relieve my very monotonous life." Thus Julia as she bade the old lady good-bye felt that she had made a new friend, and in a very unexpected way. The carriage in which she rode home, though old-fashioned in shape, was delightfully comfortable, and when she descended from it at her uncle's door, still another surprise awaited her. The footman placed in her hand a little box "with Madame du Launy's compliments," he said. This when she opened proved to contain a delicately chased little envelope opener, shaped like a tiny scimitar. "Really," she thought, "I have had a most exciting adventure. Better than I deserve, for it was only this afternoon that I was feeling so cross and so disheartened because the Four would not include me in the club. But if I had been with them this afternoon I could not have had this adventure."

"Well, I certainly *should* call it an adventure," said Mr. Barlow that evening, when she told him her experience with Mme. du Launy. "Why, even I, in all my years of residence here, have never had a glimpse of the old lady. I have sometimes thought it a pity that she should lead so solitary a life, but it's her own choice. They say she has a regular hermit disposition. How did it strike you, Julia?"

"Not that way, uncle, at all, not at all, though she seemed very sad."

"Perhaps she's repenting for the way she has neglected her grandchildren," interposed Brenda.

"Are you sure that there are any grandchildren?" enquired Mrs. Barlow.

"Why, yes, of course, at least I suppose so," answered

Brenda.

Mr. Barlow laughed, "I am afraid that you cannot make out a very strong case of cruelty to children unless you can prove the existence of the children."

"Oh, well," interposed Mrs. Barlow, to prevent that ruffling of Brenda's feelings which was sure to follow when she felt that some one was laughing at her, "There is not much doubt that there are one or two grandchildren for whom Madame du Launy ought to do something. I forget what I have heard about it myself, but I could make enquiries."

"Oh, Julia will soon be able to tell us more about Madame du Launy and her grandchildren than anybody else ever dreamed of," said Brenda, a little spitefully, as she left the room.

"Poor Brenda," murmured Mr. Barlow, "will she ever overcome that spirit of jealousy?"

XXI

MISS SOUTH AND JULIA

"You can say what you like," said Belle to Brenda when the latter told her of Julia's adventure with the dog, "but I think that it was downright mean in her to go to Madame du Launy's in that

sneaking kind of way."

"Why, Belle, it wasn't sneaking. What was she to do with the little dog? She couldn't leave it on the street."

"Well, she knew how anxious we all were to see the inside of that house, and the least that she could do was to invite some of us to go with her."

"Oh, Belle, if you are not the most unreasonable girl in the world," exclaimed Nora, who had heard the latter part of this speech. "You couldn't expect her to invite one of us Four, when at that very moment we were having our meeting; and it's you who won't let the rest of us invite her to sew with us. For my part, I am glad that Julia has got ahead of us."

Here Brenda spoke up in a tone rather more judicial than she was accustomed to employ. "I think that you are wrong, too, Belle; I don't believe that Julia had ever given Madame du Launy a thought before, and I'm almost sure that she didn't expect to be invited into the house when she took the little dog home."

"Oh, she knew what she was doing," replied Belle; "you can't make me believe anything else, and I only hope she'll invite you to go there with her some day. You must be sure to let me know if she does."

"Oh, of course," responded Brenda carelessly, "but then I am not so anxious myself to see Madame du Launy, I never did care so very much for old ladies."

"It isn't Madame du Launy," interposed Belle, "it's the house. Didn't Julia tell you that it was perfectly beautiful?"

"I don't know that she said so very much about it. She hasn't said much to me. You'd better ask her yourself, if you wish to know all about it," said Brenda in reply, while Nora added a little mischievously, "Yes, here she comes, with Edith and Ruth."

But Belle with a scornful "No thank you," passed on into the house.

As a matter of fact Brenda was just a little envious of what to her seemed Julia's good fortune in this particular instance; but her cousin's charm of disposition and manner had already begun to have an effect on her, and she was also weary of hearing Belle so constantly find fault with her. After all blood is thicker than water, and Brenda had a little more than her share of true family pride. By noon, however, her annoyance with Belle had disappeared, and she listened eagerly to some plans which Belle was arranging for the afternoon.

It happened that very day that Miss South and Julia were to make one of their journeys to the North End, and on the way Julia very naturally told her teacher of her visit to Madame du Launy. The latter listened with great interest, but made rather less comment than Julia had expected. Yet she asked one or two questions that surprised Julia. "Did you like the picture of the young girl over the drawing-room mantelpiece?"

"Why, is there one there, did I speak of it?" said Julia.

Miss South, Julia could not help noticing it, really blushed as she replied,

"Well, you may not have mentioned it, but I had heard——"

"Oh, yes," interrupted Julia, without waiting for her to finish. "Oh, yes, I do remember; a young girl with long, fair curls. I sat just where my eye fell on it, and I could not help thinking that it was rather a sad picture, at least the girl had a sad expression, and it seemed too, as if I had seen some one who looked very much like her. Why, have you ever seen that portrait, Miss South?"

"Oh, no," answered Miss South. "Oh, no, but I have heard of it, and—" but she did not finish the sentence, and altogether she seemed to be in a rather silent mood, although she encouraged Julia to talk freely about Madame du Launy.

"Madame du Launy must be dreadfully lonely," said Julia, "living alone in that great house. I believe it is true as the girls at school say that no one ever goes to see her."

"Not to see a great many people does not always mean loneliness," replied Miss South. "You know that I have not a great many acquaintances in Boston, but still I am never lonely. Of course," she continued, "I have you girls, but that is not the same thing as having friends of my own age to exchange visits with me."

"Yes," responded Julia sympathetically, "and since I have known so much about you I have often thought that it must be very hard to be alone this way in a large city. Of course you have your brother to think about—but he is so far away, out there on the railroad in Texas,—why you are worse off than I am, for I have my uncle and aunt—and Brenda—" she ended with a smile.

"As I have said, Julia," continued Miss South, "I am not so very lonely, although I have not a single relation in Boston, at least not one to whom I can turn; yes, I might as well say, not one."

"How did you ever happen to come here, then?" asked Julia.

"Oh, I had just finished my normal course in New York, when I met Miss Crawdon one summer. She needed an assistant, and made me a very good offer. Besides I had always wished to come to Boston, and as long as Louis and I had to be separated, it seemed to me that I might as well be

here as anywhere else. I should have liked to go to Texas with Louis, but his work keeps him so much on the railroad that we should not have been much good to each other. Of course when he is a railway president we shall live together—but he is only twenty-two now, and it is foolish to think of that at present."

For the first time since the beginning of her acquaintance with Miss South, Julia felt decidedly anxious to ask questions about her early life. Perhaps Miss South had an insight into her mind. At any rate she said, in a half tone of apology, "Since you are interested, Julia, I will tell you a little about myself. When my brother was ten years old, and I fourteen, our father died. Our mother had died several years before. The little bit of money which our father left was hardly enough to support us until we were educated. Fortunately he had a friend, a lawyer, who looked after it very carefully, and although he had to spend most of the capital for us as well as the interest, we were both able to live comfortably, though in a very economical way, until I was eighteen. At this time we had but a few hundred dollars left, and Louis was glad enough to take a situation in a railroad office offered to him by the efforts of the same kind friend. He was soon earning his board, and every year he has had an increase of salary, with a steady promotion. I went first to the State University in the state where I had grown up and was able to afford myself a good normal course. Since I came to Boston I have been able to save a little from my salary. You can see, then, that I am not very badly off—only I do wish sometimes that I had a few relations."

"Haven't you any, really?" asked Julia.

"None—at least practically none near enough to take any interest in me. You see my mother was an only child, at least her brother and sister died young, and so was my father. Besides he was an Englishman, and what distant cousins of his there are, live in England."

Julia would have liked to ask more, but just at that moment a little figure darted into view, and flung himself upon her. It was Manuel, in all the glory of a new pair of trousers, new at least to him, though even an eye inexperienced in tailoring could see that they had been cut down from garments originally made for a much larger person. But to him they were absolutely the finest pair of trousers that he had ever seen, because they were the first that he had ever worn. After this there was no danger that any one could imagine that he was his own little sister, a mortifying mistake that strangers were in the habit of making.

Miss South and Julia followed him down the crooked street, which their several visits had made very familiar to them, and stood behind him as he pushed open the narrow door. At the very first glance into the room, Miss South, who was ahead, felt a little disheartened. Everything was in disorder, although she had been making such efforts this winter to get Mrs. Rosa to see the necessity for cleanliness and neatness. But when she and Julia went inside she felt that perhaps she had been a little too severe in her judgment. Mrs. Rosa lay back in her chair looking sicker and weaker than they had ever seen her, and though she put out her hand in greeting, she seemed unable to rise.

"How is this?" exclaimed Miss South.

"Oh, miss, I believe I'm real sick," was the reply; "I haven't eaten nothing for such a long time. I can't eat nothing, and I can't hardly raise my voice to the children. Here you, Manuel, don't eat that bread and molasses before the ladies."

Then Mrs. Rosa lay back in her chair in a fit of violent coughing brought on by her efforts to be polite and parental at the same time.

"Aren't you almost ready to go to the hospital, now, Mrs. Rosa?" enquired Miss South, sympathetically. "I think that it is altogether too hard for you to try to stay here to manage these children and take care of yourself."

Mrs. Rosa shook her head. "Not the hospital, miss; I should die, I'm sure, if I should go there."

"But you can't stay here, if you grow worse, and indeed, I am sure that you cannot get any better, if you stay here. Then your children would be much worse off than they would be if you should be parted from them for a little while. The doctors at the hospital might make you perfectly well." Mrs. Rosa shook her head feebly, and Miss South felt decidedly discouraged. Even when Julia added her voice in a gentle persuasive way, Mrs. Rosa refused to be convinced. No, she would stay where she was for a while. By and by perhaps she would go somewhere, but she could not tell; she couldn't leave the children, and the nurse had told her that she could not take them with her to the hospital.

"Well, wouldn't you go to the country if we could find a place for you there?" asked Julia gently; "perhaps we could find a house where you and the children all could go, for you can't get well if you stay here."

At this suggestion, Mrs. Rosa's face brightened a trifle, but from her reply it was hard to tell whether she would be perfectly willing to leave her own unwholesome abode, even for the country.

"You ought to make Angelina keep this room cleaner," said Miss South.

"Oh, I can't make Angelina do nothing," she answered; "Angelina is so lazy I don't know what to do with her. She just reads library books all the time."

Again Mrs. Rosa leaned back in a fit of coughing, and Miss South and Julia, after leaving one or two little delicacies that they had brought her, went away less cheerful than they had been.

"It's rather dreadful, isn't it?" said Julia.

"Yes," replied Miss South, "especially as it would not require a great deal of effort or money to make that family perfectly comfortable."

"How much?" asked Julia.

Miss South laughed. "You are very practical," she said. "Perhaps I ought to have said that it is effort in the right direction that is needed rather than money."

"Nobody can do very much, I am afraid," said Julia, "while Mrs. Rosa is so obstinate. It seems as if some one ought to have the right to oblige her to move."

"Well, personal liberty is one of the privileges that foreigners living in this country appreciate the most. Yet Mrs. Rosa ought not to feel that she can do just as she likes, since she is living on charity altogether now."

"I was wondering—" began Julia.

"Yes," continued Miss South, "her church pays half her rent, and provides her coal; the Provident Association supplies her with groceries. Some of her Portuguese neighbors help her with food from their own table, and one or two charitable people give shoes and old clothes to the children. The dispensary doctor treats her without charge, and she has the occasional services of a district nurse. If Angelina would only follow out some of the directions left by the nurse, the whole family would be much more comfortable."

"I had no idea," said Julia, "that so much would be done for one poor family; and you haven't spoken of what you do yourself, Miss South."

"Oh, my part is very small; I just keep a general oversight, and by calling on Mrs. Rosa once or twice a week, I try to see that things run smoothly."

"There isn't so very much, then, for Brenda and the other girls to do. You know that they are working for a sale from which they hope to raise a lot of money for Manuel and his family."

"Yes, I have heard about it," replied Miss South, "and I should be the last one to discourage them in their efforts; but I am sure that if Mrs. Rosa had been depending on their help she would have suffered this winter. They are too spasmodic."

"What do you think then that there will be for them to do with the money they raise at the Bazaar, for I am sure that they have large expectations?"

"Oh, there are many practical things. This matter of moving the family to the country, for example. To accomplish this will take more money than you might think, and I do not myself know any charitable agency with money to expend in this way."

"But do you think that you can move them?"

"Why not? It may be hard, but if Mrs. Rosa should find it impossible to get help from the people who have been helping her, she may be glad to fall in with our plan."

"Well, it's all very interesting," said Julia, "and it may be that I can help you in some way. Of course I do not wish to interfere with Brenda's plans, and I shall have to find out what she intends to do. If I were going to have anything to do with the Bazaar directly, it would be different."

"Haven't you been admitted yet into the sacred circle of 'The Four'?" said Miss South, smiling. "I thought that you would have been before this."

"No," replied Julia a little sadly. "No, I suppose that they think that I should not have so very much time for fancy work, and I dare say it is better that I should spend what spare hours I have in some other way, but still—"

"But still," said Miss South, finishing out her sentence, "but still it isn't altogether agreeable to be left out."

"No," answered Julia, "it isn't."

While they were talking they had been riding up Hanover street, and leaving the car in Washington street, they did two or three errands in one of the large shops.

"Shall we walk home now, or ride?" enquired Miss South.

"Oh, I would much rather walk," answered Julia, "if it is all the same to you;" and so they walked on through Winter street, intending to cross the Common. Leading off Winter street there is a side street on which is the back entrance of the music hall. Now just as they reached the corner of this street, they saw two girls near the theatre door, walking in their direction.

"Why, how much that looks—why it is Brenda," exclaimed Julia, "and that is Belle with her," she continued in surprise; "I wonder what they are doing down here."

Even as she spoke, the two figures at which she had been looking a moment before disappeared within a doorway.

"Would you like to meet them and ask them to walk home with us?" enquired Miss South.

"Why, I don't know," replied Julia. "I am afraid that they may not wish to come with us; it almost seems as if they are hiding from us. You saw them, didn't you, that first time, Miss South?"

"Yes, indeed, I recognized them both, but isn't it unusual for them to be down town alone?"

"It's against the rules for Brenda, I know, at least I have heard my aunt say that she did not care to have her go down town without her. I imagine that probably they have some one with them. Brenda is rather careful about disobeying, as a general thing."

"Oh, then it's probably all right," said Miss South, "and we might as well go on."

XXII

BRENDA'S SECRET

Julia had not been long in the house after her walk with Miss South, when she heard her aunt at her door. In reply to her "Are you here, Julia?" the young girl ran forward, with a "Yes, indeed, auntie, come right in."

"Why, how pretty your room looks," exclaimed Mrs. Barlow; "I had almost forgotten that it could be so pleasant."

"That sounds as if you had not been up here for some time, and indeed I was thinking myself only this morning that you had rather neglected me lately—at least in the matter of visiting me."

"I know it, dear child, but you know that I have been very busy this winter. There are many things to occupy me, and the Boston season is so short. We haven't had one of our pleasant chats here for several weeks. But I hope that you are perfectly comfortable. I am sure that you would tell me if you should need anything that I had overlooked."

"Nothing has ever been overlooked, Aunt Anna, that could add in any way to my comfort."

"Then you are perfectly contented. Sometimes I fancy that I see an expression on your face that seems to indicate—well, not discontent, but something of the kind, as if you were a little unhappy."

"Oh, no indeed, Aunt Anna. You are all too kind, and I enjoy every moment in Boston. Of course I miss poor papa, but he had expected to leave me for so long a time, that I was prepared, and he himself always said that he wished me to think of him as only gone away for a time, yet of course I miss him. But then you and Uncle Thomas have been everything to me, and so thoughtful. I can't imagine a more delightful room than this with the view of the river, and these dainty, artistic things about me, and my own piano and books. You have no idea how I have enjoyed it."

"Well, I am glad that it all pleases you, for perhaps we could not have done as well for you if Agnes had been at home. You know that this was her studio, and no other room in the house is so large and cheerful. Now it has always seemed hard that you could not have kept Eliza with you this winter; she had been a part of your old life, and you would have been much happier with some one to talk with about it."

"Of course I should have been glad to have had her with me, but I couldn't insist on her staying when her brother needed her so much after the death of his wife. I had such an amusing letter from one of her little nieces the other day, thanking me for lending them their Aunt Eliza, and saying that they did not know when they could return her."

"Then she can't come to spend the summer at Stormbridge?"

"I do not exactly know, for Eliza has not written to me herself; but I half believe that it is better for me to do without a maid; I feel ever so much more independent, although naturally I *do* miss Eliza."

Mrs. Barlow smiled at the philosophic tone which

Julia had assumed, for she had quietly made her own observations on the state of Julia's mind when at the very beginning of her stay in Boston Eliza had been called away.

"Another year you may need somebody, even if you cannot have Eliza. The older a girl grows the more stitches there are to be taken for her, and next season you will have less time than at present to do things for yourself."

"But I like this feeling of independence, or rather I like to feel that I have to depend almost entirely on myself; I am just so much more of a person than I should be if I had Eliza to wait on me constantly, as I used to."

"A certain amount of independence in a young girl is a good thing," replied Mrs. Barlow, "and I

am glad that yours takes a somewhat different form from Brenda's. I wonder, for example, where she is this afternoon. She had an appointment at her dressmaker's, but when I went there to make a suggestion or two about her new coat, they told me that she had not been there, and here it is near dinner-time with no sign of Brenda. Probably she is with Belle or some of the girls, but still I do not like her going off in this way."

While Mrs. Barlow was speaking Julia hoped that she would not ask her if she had seen Brenda, and fortunately she did not do so. To be sure, Julia had nothing special to tell, and indeed had not her aunt spoken of the broken appointment at the dressmaker's, she might have mentioned the glimpse of Brenda that she had had down town, but now she began to suspect that something was wrong, at least it was strange that Brenda should have deceived her mother about the dressmaking appointment. The dressmaker's rooms were not down town, so that it was not this appointment that had taken her to the neighborhood of Winter street.

"But where have you been, yourself, this afternoon, Julia?" asked Mrs. Barlow; and Julia told her of her visit to the Rosas, and of the plans that Miss South had suggested for raising them out of their present trouble. "I am afraid that Brenda won't agree with her," she said, "for she has the idea that the one thing needful is to give Mrs. Rosa a large sum of money to spend just as she likes."

"Brenda isn't very practical," replied Mrs. Barlow. "I only wish that she had your common sense; or if she were more like Agnes, it would be better, for although Agnes is an artist, she is decidedly practical."

"Oh, Brenda is so much younger," said Julia apologetically.

"Yes, I know it, that is undoubtedly one reason for her heedlessness, but it sometimes seems as if her wilfulness increases every day. I am afraid, too, that she has not always been considerate of you; I have been wishing to speak of this for a long time, though it is not an easy thing to do. It would pain me very much to have you feel that any of us—even Brenda had been inhospitable."

"Oh, no indeed, Aunt Anna, I am not likely to think anything of that kind. I make allowances for Brenda, and I honestly think that she is getting to like me better."

"There ought not to be any question of that kind. If it were not for Belle, Brenda would be inclined to throw herself more upon you, but I am sure that Belle keeps her stirred up all the time. But there—I ought not to talk so much about this, at least to you, only I have thought that I ought to tell you that your uncle and I have feared that you have had several experiences this winter that were not altogether pleasant, and I should fail in my duty if I did not express our appreciation of your patience."

Then rising from her chair, Mrs. Barlow leaned over Julia, and kissed her on the forehead, saying as she turned to leave the room, "We have barely time now to get ready for dinner."

Just as Julia opened her door to go down to the library where she usually talked with her uncle for a few minutes before dinner, she saw Brenda rushing upstairs to the floor above.

"Where's Brenda?" asked Mr. Barlow, as they took their places at the table. There was a note of severity in his voice, that Mrs. Barlow and Julia detected at once.

"Why, she has been out all the afternoon," replied the former; "but I have sent word for her to hasten downstairs."

At this moment the delinquent entered the dining-room, and took her place at the table. Although she had changed her street dress, she had apparently dressed in a great hurry, and her hair looked almost disheveled, as she had evidently not had time to rearrange it.

Hardly responding to the greetings of her parents and cousin, Brenda began to talk very rapidly about—well about the subject to which many of us turn when we are embarrassed,—the weather.

"Yes," said her father, in a kind of general response to her very vague remarks. "Yes, I will admit that it has been a fine day, almost the first really springlike day that we have had, that it is a delightful day to have been out in the open air, but all this does not prevent my asking you why you should be so late to dinner; you know my rule, and that I shall have to punish you in some very decided way if this happens again."

"For once Brenda has no excuse ready," added Mrs. Barlow; "now *I* am anxious to know where you have been this afternoon?"

Brenda turned very red before replying, "Oh, Belle and I have been together."

"I dare say," said Mr. Barlow, "but that does not tell us where you have been?"

"Any one would think," cried Brenda, almost in tears, "that I was a girl of ten years of age. I do not know any one who has to account for everything she does; there is not a girl at school who is watched in this way."

"Sometimes I think that it would be better if you were under closer guardianship. Some one has been telling me that you need it."

Brenda flashed a glance at Julia as if she might be the informant, and Julia rejoiced that she had not even mentioned having seen Brenda down town.

"You were not at the dressmaker's this afternoon," said Mrs. Barlow reproachfully.

"I hope that you were not on the bridge, looking at the crews," said Mr. Barlow.

"No," said Brenda quickly, "I was not. Why did you think of that?"

"Because some one has been telling me that a number of foolish girls are in the habit of going where the Harvard Bridge is building on fine afternoons, just as the class crews are out exercising, and that some of these girls always wave their handkerchiefs, and even cheer, as their favorites come near—and more than this some one has told me that you are often to be seen among these girls; now, Brenda, I tell you frankly that this won't do."

"Oh, papa, you are so particular; a great many girls think that it is perfectly proper to go there, and no one ever says a word about it. I wonder who told you; some old maid, I am certain of that."

"No, indeed, no old maid, but a young man, and a student, too. He felt very sorry that you should be seen there; he says that there is always a great mixture of people in the crowds on the bridge, and that it must be far from an agreeable place for a young lady, besides not being a proper one."

"Well I only wish that I could tell who that young man is," cried Brenda. "I should call him a perfect goose."

"He is far from that," responded Mr. Barlow; "and I ought to say that I agree with him thoroughly. I only wish that I had heard about this before, and now I hope that you will understand, Brenda, that you are forbidden to go near the Harvard Bridge in the afternoon."

"Not to the bridge at all!" cried Brenda, in a most doleful voice. "Why, I can't see the harm."

"Well, I can, and that is enough."

"You can go to the races themselves, Brenda, when they actually come off," interposed Mrs. Barlow, "but if you think it over, you will see good reasons for not hanging about the bridge, as a boy might, merely to see the crews pass."

Brenda made no attempt at further argument, and one result of the little discussion that there had been about the bridge and the crews was to divert her father and mother from asking further questions about the way in which she had spent this particular afternoon. She was rather relieved when the evening passed without Julia's referring to having seen her down town. She was almost sure that Julia and Miss South had recognized her, and Belle and she were in dread lest in this way her father and mother should learn that she and her rather mischievous friend had gone alone to a matinee.

For this was now Brenda's secret,—she had not only gone down town alone, but she had gone to the Music Hall without an older person accompanying her. With parents as indulgent as hers there seemed no need for her to try to secure forbidden pleasures. Nor would she probably have done this but for Belle. It had been the study of Belle's life to get what she wished in a clandestine way. Her stern old grandmother was constantly forbidding her to do this thing or that, and her commands were often really unreasonable. No one was quicker to detect this than Belle herself, and it was on this ground that she often excused her own disobedience. "Why even mamma does not expect me to mind everything that grandmamma says," and as her mother was rather timid, as well as half-ill all the time, she gave her self-possessed daughter very few commands of her own.

"I don't believe that I should be so ready to disobey mamma," Belle would say to Brenda when the latter on occasions remonstrated with her, "but with grandmamma it is different, for I do not consider that she has any right to lay down the law as she does."

Nevertheless when Brenda and Belle sat in the front row in the large Music Hall—for Brenda had bought expensive seats—both girls felt that old Mrs. Gregg was pretty nearly right in saying that places of amusement were not proper for a young girl. They had both been at similar performances before, but always some older person had selected the entertainment. This one, which they themselves had chosen from the glaring posters decorating the bill-boards of the city, and from the conversation of the Harvard freshman of their acquaintance was altogether different from anything that they had seen. It was advertised as an exhibition of ventriloquists, but it had a general air of vulgarity that was extremely displeasing to them. Brenda wished more than once that she had not joined Belle in this adventure. She did not like the loud jokes, and the scant costumes of the performers, and she hoped that there was no one in the audience who would recognize her. Of course there were times when she laughed at the funny things on the stage—for who could help it—but many of the jokes and the incidents at which the rest of the audience laughed the loudest fell rather flat on the ears of the two young girls. This was as it should be, for neither of the two was anything worse than heedless and a little too fond of having her own way. In Belle this wilfulness took the form of a willingness to use subterfuge, both in word or deed to gain her own way. Brenda did not follow her very closely in this direction, although there was danger that her conscience would be dulled, before she realized it, under Belle's influence. Brenda indeed felt so uncomfortable during the performance, that if she could have done so without observation, she would have left the hall. But she did not quite dare to go out in the face of the great audience, and besides when she made the suggestion to Belle, the latter would not hear of her going. "No, indeed," she had said, "why should we go. You are a regular baby, Brenda; it isn't so very bad, only a little vulgar, and just see what crowds of people

there are here, and some of them seem just as good as we are, and you know I read you that newspaper clipping that said that this was one of the successes of the year. You and I are not used to this kind of thing, but dear me! we can't expect to stay children all our lives." So Brenda sat there with an uneasy conscience, wondering what her mother would say, or her father—or Julia who never by any chance did anything that she ought not to do.

Stolen sweets are apt to taste a little bitter, and when the performance was over, Brenda and Belle went out with the crowd. On the way out rough people, or people whom Belle called "rough," pushed against them, while one or two rude boys made saucy remarks to the young girls who seemed conscious of being in the wrong place. It wasn't at all an agreeable experience, especially as they were both wondering if any of their friends were likely to see them.

Then there was that chance glimpse of Julia and Miss South, and the rather silly action on the part of Brenda and Belle of hiding in the doorway. Really they needed all the consolation they could get from their visit to the confectioner's around the corner. There they drank great glasses of chocolate, sipping the whipped cream at the top, as if they were young ladies of twenty loitering in the shops after the symphony. As they stirred the chocolate with their long spoons, and lingered on the settee at the end of the shop to watch the lively young men and women who were constantly coming in and out to buy bonbons, or to get refreshment, they forgot all that had been disagreeable at the music hall, and for the time being imagined that they were young ladies themselves. Yet when Brenda reached home with hardly time to dress for dinner, conscience began to prick again.

XXIII

ALMOST READY

Now however slowly time appears to pass, the end of any period of waiting is sure to come, and its last days or hours generally seem to melt away. Thus, when The Four realized that less than two weeks lay between a certain April afternoon when they met to sew, and the day appointed for the opening of the Bazaar, they began to feel a little nervous. "I wish that we hadn't set any particular day," exclaimed Brenda, "we might just have waited until we were all ready, and then we——"

"Oh, Brenda, how unpractical you are," cried Edith, "that would have been perfectly ridiculous. You know that we have to advertise a little, and engage music and people to help us, and make all kinds of arrangements."

"Oh, I dare say," responded the unpractical Brenda, "but still it takes all the fun out of it to think that we must be ready by a particular day; I feel exactly as if some one were driving me on, and you know that is not pleasant."

"Oh, nonsense," interposed Nora, with a smile. "Just think how long we were working without any special object. I am sure that we had all the time we wished, and we had hardly a thing to show for it. For my own part I shall be awfully glad to have the Bazaar over with. The weather is altogether too fine to waste indoors on fancy work, but until we have that money for Manuel I suppose that none of us will feel free to do as she likes in the afternoons. There are so many things to attend to that I don't see how we are ever to get ready even in two weeks."

Now the plans for the Bazaar had received much attention from the older persons in the families of the young workers, and the encouragement that they had had from their elders was now their chief incentive. Edith's mother had offered them the use of a large drawing-room in her house which was just adapted to an affair of this kind. It was a long room with hard wood floor, intended really for dancing. Its walls, paneled with mirrors, would reflect the tables of fancy work in such a way, as to make it seem "as if we had twice as much as we really have," said Brenda. As to other things there was a great deal to be decided. Brenda and Belle wished a small orchestra engaged to play during the evening of the Bazaar, and furnish music for dancing at the close of the sale. Edith and Nora were afraid that this would eat up too much of their profits, but Brenda was very decided in her views. "You can't expect that we are not to have any fun out of it ourselves, after all the trouble we've had, and I know that there is going to be plenty of money for the Rosas. We shall make lots out of the flower table; we have quantities of plants and cut flowers promised us from the greenhouses of our friends—just quantities, and then the refreshment table, and—well you know yourselves that we shall have more than we can sell."

"What good will that do?" enquired the practical Nora. "We can't make much out of things that we can't sell."

"Oh, I mean sell in the regular way; of course we'll have an auction, and get ever so much in that way. I shouldn't wonder if we should have more than \$500 to give to Mrs. Rosa."

"Don't count your chickens too soon, Brenda," said Belle; "suppose it should rain on the day of the sale, or suppose,——"

"Oh, how tiresome you are!" cried the sanguine Brenda, "you are just as bad as the others, and it's quite as much your Bazaar as mine, and if it doesn't succeed, you'll be just as much to blame."

The fretful note in Brenda's voice warned her friends that she was taking things too deeply to heart.

"Why, Brenda, no one is probably going to be to blame, for the Bazaar will be a great success," interposed the peace-loving Edith. "All we have to do now is to try our very best to make it go off as well as possible."

Now the Bazaar was to be the Wednesday of the week following Easter, and this year Easter fell almost in the middle of April. During the last days of school preceding the Easter vacation the four did much canvassing among their friends to see whether all the articles promised were finished. Of course there were several disappointments. Some girls who had promised special things either had not finished them or had forgotten all about them. On the other hand, there were some who had not only done much more than they had promised themselves, but had collected many pretty, and even valuable articles from their friends. All the school girls near the age of the four were invited to assist at the tables. The four resolved themselves into an executive committee, adding to their number Julia, and Frances and one or two others. Each of these girls was to have special charge of a table or department, and she in turn was to call on others to assist her.

Julia had invited Ruth Roberts as her chief assistant, rather to the distaste of Frances, who thought that this was going too far out of their set.

"What do we know about Ruth Roberts?" she had said in a contemptuous way; "nobody ever heard of her, I am sure, until she came here to school."

"We have nothing to do with that," replied Nora, to whom the remark happened to be made. "I dare say that there are a great many good people in the world of whom we have never heard; I know all that I need to about Ruth Roberts, that she has good manners and a pleasant disposition, and an agreeable family. I know, for I have visited them——" Then, throwing a little emphasis into her voice, she concluded, "Really, Frances, you are growing very tiresome, and if I were you I should try to be less narrow-minded. Any one to hear you talk, would think that no one in the world is worth considering who does not happen to live in certain streets in your neighborhood."

"Perhaps that is what I do think," answered Frances. "We can't make intimate friends of every one in the world, and we might as well have nothing to do with those who are not in our own set. I hate these people who are always trying to push in."

"If you mean Ruth, you are entirely wrong. She is the last girl in the world likely to try to push in. She thinks quite as well of herself as you do of yourself, and I dare say that she had some ancestors, even if they were not governors of Massachusetts."

Now despite the fact that this speech, when quoted, sounds rather acrimonious, Frances took no offence at it. She could not afford to quarrel with so popular a girl as Nora, and besides she knew that the Gostars had a good claim to the same kind of pride of descent that she had herself. So, although both girls turned away from each other with an annoyed expression on their faces, their next meeting was perfectly amicable.

When Nora repeated this conversation to her mother, Mrs. Gostar smiled.

"If I were you, Nora, I would not take anything that Frances says too seriously. She has been brought up rather unfortunately."

"But it is so tiresome to have her going around most of the time with her head in the air, saying, 'Oh, I cannot do this, or I cannot do that, because I am a Pounder.'"

Mrs. Gostar laughed at this speech, and the gesture and tossing back of the head with which Nora emphasized it.

"Frances hardly says that, does she?" she enquired.

"Yes, she does, she really does—sometimes," replied Nora, "and I am sure that she feels like saying it all the time. Of course we all know that there have been two governors, and one or two generals, and other people like that in her family somewhere in the dim past. I am sure that we have heard enough about it. But there is nothing very great about Frances' own family so far as I have ever heard, and some one told me that her father could not even get his degree at college. If they hadn't so much money——"

"There, there," interrupted her mother, "aren't you growing uncharitable yourself? It is really true that Frances had ancestors who were of great service to the country, and her family has had position for a long time, and all the advantages of education. But among your schoolmates and hers there are probably other girls of good descent, who have had advantages hardly inferior to those that Frances has enjoyed. They may have names that are not so well known, and yet their ancestors may have been almost as useful in building up this country as those of Frances."

"Well," said Nora, "I don't value people for their ancestors, but for what they are themselves."

"That is the right spirit, and yet neither you nor I should blame Frances for having pride in what her ancestors have done. It is well to remember such things, if remembering them makes one more ambitious or more helpful to those around him. But when this pride in his own people leads one to belittle all others whose part in making history may have been almost as important, if less

conspicuous—then I would rather see a girl or a boy without family pride. In connection with this, let me tell you a story. Years ago a murder was committed by a member of a good, old family, and sometime afterwards a lady who bore the same name, though she was not closely related to the murderer, was out shopping. It seemed to her a certain clerk was not sufficiently deferential, and so to reprove him, she said, in a rather haughty tone, 'Perhaps you do not know who I am.' 'No, madame, I do not,' was his reply. 'I am a *Blenkinsop*,' she responded, thinking probably that this would overwhelm him. 'Indeed,' he answered, 'you surprise me. I thought that all the *Blenkinsops* had been hanged.' So you see that it does not always do to boast of one's family name. Of course this does not apply to Frances, and I should be sorry if either she or you should forget all the good things which her ancestors did for the commonwealth. Yet it would be a great deal better to forget it than to have the remembrance of the distinction of your ancestors so elate you as to make you contemptuous of your schoolmates."

"I know that, mother dear," replied Nora, "and I believe that some day I may be able to have a little talk with Frances, and perhaps I can get her to see things as I do."

"You might tell her," responded Mrs. Gostar, with a smile, "about the Virginia lady of whom I was reading the other day. Her little niece was remarking with pride that her grandfather had been the son of a baronet, and that in consequence she had a right to feel superior to many of her neighbors. 'Yes,' responded the aunt, 'he was the son of a baronet, who was the son of a manufacturer, who was the son of an apothecary's apprentice.' 'Oh, dear,' sighed the niece, 'is it really true? Am I descended from an apothecary's apprentice? I thought that all my ancestors were gentlemen.'"

"I haven't finished," returned the aunt. "The apprentice was the grandson of a baronet, who in turn was said to trace his descent from a king of England." The aunt smiled at the expression of relief on her niece's face on hearing this, as she said, 'I always knew that we were of good family.' My own moral," concluded Mrs. Gostar, "would be the same as that which the aunt tried to impress on her niece. We all can trace our descent through a variety of families, and while we can often find ancestors to boast of, as often we find others who are what Frances might call 'very plain people.'"

Nora realized that she was fortunate in having a mother who was always ready to advise her in the small matters that seem so important to schoolgirls, as well as in those larger things that really are of consequence. Without encouraging anything approaching gossip or tale-bearing Mrs. Gostar always permitted Nora to talk very freely on all the subjects that interested her, and the confidence between mother and daughter was almost ideal. Mrs. Blair and Mrs. Barlow were also ready to advise their daughters, although they both were a little more occupied with society than Mrs. Gostar and had less time at home. The wilful Brenda, too, was more apt to seek her mother's advice after she had done a certain thing than to ask it in advance. Yet although her doings were sometimes a little annoying to others, she always admitted to herself that she could depend on her mother's sympathy. Edith, with a rather phlegmatic disposition, seldom did anything wrong. She had been brought up rather strictly in accordance with prescribed rules, and she was always confident that whatever her mother had arranged or advised was exactly right. Belle alone, of the Four, was unfortunate in her home surroundings. Her mother, a nervous invalid, had permitted Belle's grandmother to rule the household with a rod of iron, and knowing that the old lady was often unjust the former did not reprove Belle sufficiently when she broke some of her grandmother's rules. Belle in this way came to be a law to herself. She obeyed her grandmother when there was no escape for it, but oftener she took the chance of disregarding her authority, saying to herself,—or even to others—"If mamma could do as she liked, she would let me do this." It was not always a legitimate excuse, although the conditions in her family enabled many of her acquaintances to make excuses for Belle.

As to Frances, those who knew her best, realized that her family pride had been nurtured at home, and that her unfortunate way of looking at things was not wholly her own fault.

Yet that Nora had been able to influence her somewhat was proved by a slight change in Frances' demeanor towards others. The latter was even known one day to offer to go out to Ruth Roberts' house to help her finish a piece of work for the Bazaar. In those last days, too, before the Easter vacation there seemed to be an unusual unity among the schoolgirls. Even those in the older classes, who seldom interested themselves in the "small fry," as they called the Four and their contemporaries, came forward with many contributions for the Bazaar.

"Dear me!" moaned Brenda one day, "I am afraid that we won't have people enough to sell all these things to, and a while ago I was afraid that we shouldn't have things enough to sell to all those who might come to our Bazaar."

"That shows," said Miss South, who had come up behind Brenda while she was talking, "that it is never worth while to borrow trouble about anything."

"That is true," interposed the placid Edith, to whom Brenda had been talking. "For my own part, I am never surprised or disappointed about anything, for I never expect too much beforehand. I find that I can always put up with things when they come."

"Then you are really a philosopher, Edith," said Miss South, "some persons take almost a lifetime to learn this simple lesson, and indeed some persons never learn it at all."

As the preparations for the Bazaar advanced it was very pleasant for Julia to find herself counted in among the band of workers.

It is true that she often had to take a sharp word from Brenda, or a cold glance from Belle, but these things did not disturb her.

She had become accustomed to her cousin's little ways, and she realized that her "bark was worse than her bite," as Nora was in the habit of saying.

There was one thing about which Brenda was very decided, and that was that no older person, that is no parent or teacher, was to have any part in managing the Bazaar.

"We want all the credit ourselves, and I think it will be a fine thing to show how much we can do all by ourselves." If she could have had her own way, I believe that she would have refused the offer of Edith's mother to provide a room for the Bazaar, and she would have been quite willing to pay for a hotel drawing-room from her own allowance—although to do so would have run her several months in debt. But this was evidently so unwise a plan, that she contented herself with simply broaching it to her friends. "The idea!" had been their criticism, "of throwing money away like that when we can have such a beautiful room for nothing."

"It certainly would be foolish," said Belle, "and besides my mother would not think a hotel a proper place for girls like us to hold a bazaar; it would be different if we were in society, or if some older women were managing it."

"Oh, I suppose you are right," Brenda acknowledged with a sigh, "but I should be ever so much better pleased with a hotel. It would seem so much more as if we were grown up. I hope that this won't seem like a children's party. You know that Edith always had her birthday parties in that room."

"Yes, but she'll have her coming out party, there, too, I heard her mother say so the other day, and really I think that it is very, very kind in her to offer the room, because there will be strangers coming and going all day long through the house." So Brenda had to profess herself grateful for the room, and was obliged to turn in other directions for an outlet for the energy which she was anxious to show in managing the Bazaar.

XXIV

AN EVENING'S FUN

Mrs. Blair had said that all the preparations for the Bazaar must be completed on Tuesday, the day before it was to open. She knew the ways of girls too well to think that it would be safe to have anything left for Wednesday morning. The flower table, of course had to be arranged on that day, and some things for the refreshment table. But so definite had she been in expressing her wishes, that the girls felt that it was due her for lending her house to pay all deference to what she said. On the Monday therefore after Easter they went to work with a will to gather in the promised contributions. There were naturally some disappointments, but on the whole the fancy articles bestowed upon them were numerous and beautiful, and many were the "ohs and ahs" from the Four and their assistants, when on Tuesday they fell to the task of opening the parcels and arranging their contents on the tables. Tuesday was rainy, and at dusk gave little promise of a bright sky for the following day. Brenda was in a tremor of excitement. "Oh, dear, how dreadful if to-morrow should be stormy! I am sure it will be, and what *shall* we do?" with great emphasis on the "shall."

"Full many a cloudy morning turns out a sunny day," sang Nora, while Edith patted Brenda on the back and said, "Well, we can't do anything to change the weather, and we might as well hope for the best. I know that a lot of people will come even if it rains, and perhaps they'll be good and buy three times as much as they would in fine weather."

Just then Julia came in with the evening paper in her hand. "See, or rather hear the news. Old Probability says, 'clear and fair Wednesday.' Mrs. Blair sent this paper up from the library to cheer you. There was a large patch of blue in the west when the sun went down——"

"The sun!" exclaimed the others derisively.

"In the place where the sun should have gone down," she responded with a smile. "Why, how well the rooms look! there won't be a thing for the boys to do this evening."

For Philip and Will Hardon and one or two others were to come in the evening to see what they could do to help, and in view of their coming Mrs. Blair had invited the girls to stay to dinner.

"Oh, no, there really isn't a thing for them to do, but perhaps when they see how hard we have worked they will make up their minds to spend any amount of money to-morrow. I think it's a rather good idea to have them come to-night, so that they can make a lot of other boys come to-morrow."

"Boys are not so fond of spending money at fairs, I can tell you that," said Nora, rather decidedly, "and besides most of them are so much in debt that they haven't anything to spend."

"Oh, well, Philip's friends are not like that," said Belle, rather sharply. "I know several who have

more money than they know what to do with. Some juniors that I know—New York fellows, are coming to-morrow and they will spend a lot of money."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Brenda, "I hope that we have things that will suit them. It seems to me that most of these things are for girls to use."

"Oh, they can buy things for their sisters and cousins; besides, boys like pincushions and picture frames and sofa pillows. Oh, I am sure that we shall have no trouble getting them to buy all that they can afford," replied Belle positively.

As a matter of fact when the boys after dinner were ushered into the pretty little ballroom, where the tables laden with fancy goods stood, they expressed great interest in all that they saw, and began to make bids for the things which seemed to them best worth having.

"Look out," cried Nora, "or we may take you at your word, Will Hardon, and make you pay one hundred dollars for that crimson pillow that you admire so."

"Well, why not?" he enquired, "as long as it is to be in a good cause."

"Oh, no," interrupted the practical Edith, "that would not really be fair. Besides, I am sure that we ought not to sell anything until to-morrow; everybody ought to have an equal chance at the beginning."

"Oh, how silly you are, Edith," broke in Brenda; "as if all the people who come to the Bazaar could be here at the same minute. If any one wants to bid on anything to-night I say that it is perfectly fair." After much discussion, it was at last decided that any one who had a great preference for any special thing might write his name on a piece of paper and have it pinned to the object with the limit of price that he was willing to pay.

"Then you must be willing," said Brenda, "to let us sell the things you have chosen, if some fussy old person comes along and wishes any of these reserved things, and refuses to be contented with anything else."

"But in that case what are *we* to do?" cried two or three of the boys in chorus.

"Oh, there will be plenty of things that will suit you just as well, if you only make up your minds to it."

"Perhaps you'll want me to buy a blue sofa pillow or some other Yale thing," sighed Will Hardon.

"Perhaps I shall be driven to take this," moaned Philip, holding up a large doll dressed in the long embroidered robes of a baby.

All the girls laughed except Edith, who seldom saw the funny side of things as quickly as the others.

"Well, you can see yourselves, boys," she said, in a determined tone, "that you ought to be glad to buy whatever is left over,—for you probably won't get in until toward evening. You can always find some one to give the things to that you buy."

"This doll?" asked Philip, holding it rather clumsily on his arm.

"Why, of course," said Edith, "we know several children who would be delighted with it at Christmas."

"No, thank you, sister Edith," responded Philip, "I'm not going to spend my hard earned allowance in presents for children; if you make me buy this doll, out it goes to a certain room in one of the college buildings to become a cherished decoration, and," waving the doll dramatically in the air, "I shall defy any proctor or college authority to tear it away from me."

"Then I hope he may get it," murmured Will Hardon to Ruth Roberts; "I can't imagine anything that would amuse the fellows more; we'd have to hold open house for a week or two—a regular reception. But you know I'm in earnest about that pillow," he added, for he knew, and Ruth knew that he knew that the down pillow with its rich crimson cover embroidered with a large "H." was the work of her skilful fingers.

Ruth and Will had met several times since the ball game, and although the Four had not yet discovered it, these two young persons had begun to take considerable interest in each other.

"You wouldn't pay a hundred dollars for it?" queried Ruth.

"If I couldn't get it in any other way, of course I would, and besides it would be worth much more to me."

This was not entirely an idle boast, this readiness to spend a large sum of money for a small thing—on the part of Will, as Philip and some of his classmates might have testified. Although very quiet in his way of living, and in his general conversation, he had a larger income than many in his set. His own tastes were simple, and though he naturally spent more than the average undergraduate, in accordance with the habit of the set to which he belonged, he still had enough to spend on others, and more than one of his less fortunate classmates had reason to thank him for what he had done for him. No one knew of his liberality except those whom he helped, for he had not the least wish to pose as a benefactor.

Now Ruth, while pleased at his wish for the cushion had no idea that he would, if necessary, pay a hundred dollars for it.

"If you really wish to have it, I'll try to secure it for you," she said. "I am sure there won't be any trouble, although I suppose that it can't be laid aside to-night, as long as Edith feels as she does."

"Very well," answered Will, "I'll trust to you, for I really do want it very much."

"Come," cried Brenda, rushing up to them, "you are not doing a thing, you two."

"Well, the rest of you seemed so busy that we thought we should only be in the way," said Will with the glibness that is almost second nature with youths of his age, "but we're ready to work now," and they went across the room to the surprise table where half a dozen of their friends were busy. The "surprise table" had been an idea of Belle's, and was a rather agreeable change from the usual grab-bag. All kinds of little things—toys, novelties, like those used as German favors, small books and photographs, were neatly done up in bright tissue paper wrappings, and tied with silk ribbons. They were heaped on a large table, and purchasers were permitted to buy each little package at their own price, provided at least, according to a sign placed above the table, that no bid should be for less than fifteen cents. Nora was to have charge of this table, and she expected to have a great deal of fun out of the misfits between the purchasers and the parcels.

Altogether the preparations for the Bazaar had moved along much more smoothly than any one had expected. It is true that the various mothers of the girls comprising "The Four" had said that they would be glad enough when it was all over, because for a fortnight it had been impossible to get the girls to think of anything else. Yet each of these mothers saw a compensation for the excitement of this last week or two in the fact that her daughter had shown more perseverance than she had given her credit for. Mrs. Barlow was especially pleased with the good spirit that her niece Julia had shown, for it would have been so easy and natural for her at the last to display a little pettishness in the way of a refusal to have anything to do with the Bazaar in view of the fact that she had not been invited to join "The Four" at their weekly meetings for work.

But Julia was not one to show this kind of resentment, and since she had become interested in Manuel she was only too glad to help the Bazaar that was to benefit him. At her aunt's suggestion she had made it her special duty to collect flowers and plants for the flower table, and armed with notes of introduction from Mrs. Barlow she had gone to many a supposedly close person to ask for some small contribution to the flower table. Her success had been altogether remarkable, and in addition to the cut flowers that were to arrive on Wednesday, a great many beautiful potted plants and vines had been sent in from various conservatories for general decorations.

The only real work for the boys who had come to assist, consisted in moving some of these heavy plants about to places between the mirrors, or near the flower table where they would be most effective. The work did not, of course, proceed very rapidly, for every one in the group of fifteen or more had to give an opinion on everything, and a unanimous opinion as to what looked best in any particular case was naturally impossible.

The large room was so handsome as to require comparatively little decoration. The long mirrors with which every side was paneled formed a complete decoration in themselves, and added to the general effectiveness, as Brenda said by making the tables "look double."

Now if the boys did not find a great deal of work to do they were very outspoken in their admiration for all that had been accomplished by the girls.

"Well, if other people will only be as much impressed as you are, and will open their purses accordingly, we shall have nothing to complain of," said Nora, "and I hope that you will all come back and buy everything that is left over by to-morrow evening."

"Can't we have first choice of anything?" queried Tom Hurst, a mischief loving friend of Philip's whom some of the girls distrusted a little.

"No," answered Nora, sternly, "you must not be so selfish. There may be old ladies who will want ___"

"Do you suppose that any old lady will want that tobacco pouch?" asked Tom, with a most innocent expression on his face.

"She might," answered Nora, with a very dignified manner. "She might if she had a son who was fond of smoking, at any rate she ought to have first choice."

"Well, then," replied Tom, "I don't believe that I shall return, for I am not sure that I ought to patronize an institution that encourages old ladies to buy tobacco pouches."

"They're more harmless for old ladies than for Harvard undergraduates," said another of the girls seriously, whereat two or three of the boys pulled cigarette cases out of their pockets, and said, "Wouldn't you rather have us use tobacco pouches than smoke these unwholesome cigarettes?"

"You shouldn't use tobacco at all," cried Edith in a plaintive tone, "at your age, Philip, you know how mamma feels about it."

"Don't be a goose, Edith," retorted Philip, "unless you want us to stay away to-morrow. Anyway it's time we started for Cambridge, we're not used to late hours." At this the rest of the boys

laughed rather more loudly than the occasion seemed to warrant, but with a return of good manners they bade the girls good-bye, and promised Mrs. Blair, who had returned to the room that they would certainly drop in some time on Wednesday.

"Don't forget your promise to me," said Will Hardon in an undertone as he shook hands with Ruth, and Ruth promised not to forget. Ruth and one other girl were to spend the night with Julia and Brenda, so as to be ready early in the morning, and the rest of the assistants started off in a large group attended by one of Mrs. Blair's servants, for none of them had very far to walk.

"It certainly does look as if it might clear up," said Belle to Nora, as they walked along.

"Yes, indeed," answered Nora, "there are as many as twenty stars to be seen, and that is almost a sure sign. Some people believe that it will be fine the next day if you can count nine stars the night before."

XXV

THE BAZAAR

The sun, after all, did shine on Wednesday morning, and The Four and their assistants arrived bright and early at Mrs. Blair's.

By ten o'clock everything was in order for patrons, and really the arrangement of the tables reflected great credit on the young girls. The table of fancy handiwork was loaded with beautiful articles. There was Nora's afghan with its rich, warm stripes, there was Belle's fine embroidery,—centre piece, doilies, and other dainty bits chiefly for the dining-room. I cannot truly say that Brenda, though giving liberally, had contributed very much that was made by her own hands, and I have an idea that if the bottom drawer of her bureau had been examined, it would have been found to contain the majority of the unfinished things over which at one time or another she had been so enthusiastic. Not even her zeal for the Bazaar had enabled her to disentangle that confusion of odds and ends.

Some of the older girls at school had contributed beautiful things. One had copied an old French miniature and had had it framed in gilt. Another had painted a set of tiny chocolate cups. There were some exquisite picture frames covered in old brocade brought over from Europe by another girl, and still a third had sent some wood carvings done in a peculiar style which she had learned at Venice. An uncle of Edith's who was a publisher, had sent a number of finely bound books. Then there were many smaller and less expensive things, so that it seemed as if every taste must be suited.

"Oh, how lovely," exclaimed Ruth as she stood for a moment beside the flower table which Edith, Julia and Ruth had spent an hour or more in decorating.

"Where did you get those beautiful orchids?" asked Edith.

"Why Edith Blair," answered Julia, "I should think that you ought to recognize your own possessions. Your mother sent these in from your greenhouse in Brookline."

Edith laughed good-humoredly. "I thought that they had a kind of familiar look, but then other people have orchids, too."

"Well other people *have* been generous, as well as your mother. I have quantities of violets besides these on the tables, and the most beautiful roses, and see this dozen of maiden hair fern in little pots. Almost every plant has been engaged by some of the girls at the tables. They are to be left with me until evening."

"What will you do with things that are left over?"

"Oh, I have been told to do with them as I like, and probably they will be sent to the Children's Hospital. Shouldn't you think that a good idea, Edith?"

"Oh, yes, the very best in the world; it would be fun to go up on the same day and see what the children say to them."

"Yes, provided we really do have anything left over. Of course it would be better if we could sell everything in the room."

"Yes, of course, when you can leave do come over to my table for a minute; I want to ask your opinion about arranging something. It's awfully hard to combine the colors, and in some way Frances and I never agree exactly about things, though I try to see things as she does," and Edith walked off, sighing a little over her weight of responsibility, for she had complete charge of the fancy-work table with Frances Pounder as chief assistant. Other girls from their group of friends were to relieve them at intervals during the day, but the responsibility of seeing that there were always two attendants at the table fell entirely on Edith.

Belle had complete charge of the refreshment room, which was a small room off the dancing hall where the other tables were set. Brenda and she had chosen this department, but the latter had

declined any responsibility. "I wish to be free to move anywhere; I just hate having to stay in one spot, so ask as many others as you wish, Belle." Thus Belle had surrounded herself with half a dozen of the younger girls, and she was able to assume an air of authority over them that would have been impossible with the girls of her own age.

There were three or four little round tables in this room beside the larger one covered with boxes and baskets of bonbons. At the little tables the girls were to serve ices to all who wished them.

"Dear me," fretted Belle as she and Brenda stood surveying the room. "Dear me! I wish that we had a larger room. This is going to be awfully crowded if we have many people, and there will surely be a crowd before evening. I don't see what we shall do."

"Can't they take turns?" asked one of the younger girls, who happened to be standing near. "We could not have more than a dozen at a time, I should think."

"Oh, you don't know anything about it, Annie Bell," exclaimed Belle in a tone that brought tears to the eyes of the younger girl. "Of course I don't expect that every one who comes to the Bazaar will rush in here the first thing, but we ought to have had a larger room. I'm almost sorry that I said that I would take charge of this part of the Bazaar. It's going to be a great deal more fun outside."

"Ah, well!" replied Brenda, consolingly, "you won't have to stay in here all the time, the girls can look after things, and besides I am not going to be away all the time."

"Oh, no," said Belle, "if I undertake a thing I always calculate to carry it through. Some one has to be here at the money table all the time, or else things will get dreadfully mixed up."

"Well, I'm sorry that you feel so," said Brenda. "But as long as there is no one here now I will go off for a while and see how Nora is getting on at the surprise table."

As Brenda went off, Belle sat down at the little table which answered for cashier's desk. She had already taken in two dollars for bonbons, although as yet the Bazaar had had but a few patrons. Toward noon about forty altogether had visited the Bazaar. Among these were several elderly ladies and gentlemen, and a number of nurses with children who patronized chiefly the surprise table and the refreshment room, and Belle had her hands full making change, and correcting the errors of her young assistants with whom arithmetic was evidently not a strong point.

At about one o'clock the attendants at the Bazaar began to go down to the dining-room where Mrs. Blair had had a luncheon spread for them.

"How's business?" asked Belle of Nora, as they sat there over their salad and cocoa.

"Oh, fine," replied the latter, expressively, if inelegantly. "I've taken nearly twenty dollars, and the table looks as if hardly a thing had been touched. Julia and Ruth have done a great deal better, of course, and I wouldn't dare say how much Edith and Frances have made. They sold that set of chocolate cups for twenty dollars to old Mrs. Bean."

"That was more than they were worth," interrupted Belle.

"Oh, I don't know, they *were* LOVELY, there was ever so much work on them."

"Well, I suppose at a Bazaar, a thing is worth what any one is willing to pay for it, but still, even if I could afford it, I would not pay twenty dollars for those cups. I didn't like the shape."

"You're too fussy, Belle, about little things; I've heard ever so many other persons admiring those cups, and Mrs. Bean thought that they were beautiful."

"Well, what else have they sold?"

"I can hardly tell, I've been so busy myself, but the table begins to look just a little bare, at least in spots, and I know that even Frances thinks that they have done very well. You know it's a great deal for her to be contented with anything."

"Well, I wish I could get some one to change with me this afternoon, I'm awfully tired of that little refreshment room. It will be more fun in the evening, but——"

"You ought to make Brenda take charge for an hour or two."

"Who in the world could ever make Brenda do anything?"

"I know she's a kind of a will-o'-the-wisp, and she feels as if she were managing everything and everybody here, but then that does not hurt us and it pleases her."

Here Belle remembered that it was always her custom to stand up for Brenda, and in the fashion which is always rather annoying to the person who has not intended any offence, she said, "Why of course we all understand Brenda, and for my part I think that she is exactly right. Of course, she was the one who planned this whole thing, and except for her no one would have tried to do a thing for the Rosas."

Nora did not think it worth while to reply that she had not been the one to make any criticism of Brenda. Instead she contented herself with saying, mischievously, "Well, you know that it was I who discovered Manuel, and if we had not had an object we should not have had a Bazaar." Belle had nothing to say to this, and indeed there was no chance, for two or three of the younger girls

came down with a rush, thus reminding Nora and Belle that they ought to go upstairs again to their duties.

By the middle of the afternoon the Bazaar was a scene of the greatest activity, every one was there, young and old, and the fancy-work table had really begun to look bare. One of Nora's brothers had to be sent down town for a fresh supply of novelties for the surprise table, as not only the children but their parents found great amusement in opening those bright-colored packages. Belle and some of the older girls regretted that there was nothing to raffle.

"Don't you honestly think that it is much more exciting to get a thing in that way than to buy it just as you would in a shop?" asked Edith, who had been influenced by Belle to try to coax Mrs. Blair to change her opinion in the matter of raffles. But Mrs. Blair was firm, and she gave her reasons so clearly that not only her daughter, but all the others interested in the Bazaar, except Belle, seemed convinced.

"I haven't said," she had been careful in explaining, "that raffles are wrong, only very often they lead to things that are not exactly right. It is hard to make the average person see why it is perfectly right to buy shares in a handsome doll-house, and wrong to invest in a lottery ticket."

"Oh, every one understands about lottery tickets."

"Well, that may be true, lotteries are against the law in this part of the country, and yet a raffle at a bazaar or other charitable affair is to my mind always objectionable. Some persons take their disappointment very much to heart, and——"

"But, mamma, do you not call people very silly who take a little thing like that to heart?"

"I may call them silly and yet I cannot justify myself in causing them this discomfort, if a raffle should be held in my house. Without going into all the principles involved, Edith, I am sure that you can see that I have good reasons for feeling unwilling to have any raffles at the Bazaar."

So Edith and the others had acquiesced, with only a slight feeling of rebellion when one or two particularly handsome things were contributed to the Bazaar, which seemed almost too expensive to sell to a single purchaser.

A strong reason given by Mrs. Blair against raffles had been her objection to having people urged to buy shares, and she had cautioned the girls to be careful not to try to influence their friends when looking at things on the tables to buy against their will. On the whole did any action of this kind seem necessary, since almost every one who attended the Bazaar came as a purchaser, and as there was only one fancy-goods table, there was no rivalry among the sellers. Some of the larger and more expensive things did not sell very readily, and Brenda was in a twitter—at least that was what Nora called it—about the fate of these things. There was one especially valuable thing, or valuable from the point of view of The Four, a water color contributed by an artist friend of Mrs. Barlow's. He was a well-known artist, and his work was in demand, and down town the picture would have brought a large price. The girls in making the price of articles for the sale, had been uncertain what to do about this, and after long consultation with the older persons interested, had decided on one hundred dollars.

The artist himself had acquiesced in this, for they had thought it polite to refer the matter finally to him. Every one had prophesied that the picture would sell at once, yet for some reason or other, by the middle of the afternoon it was still unsold. By four o'clock it seemed as if all Miss Crawdon's school had emptied itself into the pretty hall, and about this time Brenda began to yield to a little temptation.

"What are you and Belle so mysterious about?" asked Nora, as she saw the two busily talking in a corner, and evidently rather afraid of being interrupted.

"Oh, nothing, only a little business," Brenda had replied, and then she and Belle had resumed their conversation which seemed to partake of the nature of calculation, with frequent references to a little notebook. After this Nora could not help noticing that Brenda devoted her attention to the older schoolgirls, and the college boys who in the latter part of the afternoon had begun to arrive in considerable numbers.

"What in the world are you doing?" she asked again and again, as Belle darted by as if searching for some special person, or Brenda stalked up and down studying her notebook.

Toward four o'clock there was considerable bustle at the entrance to the room, and Mrs. Blair's waitress, who had been standing in the hall, came forward with a message for Julia. At least she went up to the flower booth, and after speaking to Julia the latter hurried forward to the door where stood an old lady leaning on the arm of a tall serving man. "Who is it?" "Isn't she fine looking?" "Oh, no, I think her rather queer; who ever saw a turban like that?" were a few of the remarks that flew around the room, as Julia and the old lady with her attendant walked over toward the group of easy-chairs which Mrs. Blair had thoughtfully provided in one corner.

"Why, it's Madame Du Launy," cried Nora, who was really the first to recognize the occupant of the mysterious house near the school, and soon the news spread, until there was hardly a person in the room who had not heard it. Every one, naturally enough, was too polite to show her curiosity, although it must be admitted that a few of the bolder wandered nearer to the seated group than was actually necessary in order to get a good view of the old lady, or to overhear a part of what she and Julia had to say to each other. At Julia's request the waitress had found Mrs.

Blair, and after making the necessary introduction, Julia had led Madame Du Launy, accompanied by Mrs. Blair, to the flower table. No one who had ever heard Madame Du Launy called miserly, could have believed this true while watching her progress from table to table at the Bazaar. Though every one knew that she had her own little conservatory, she bought plants and cut flowers with great liberality, and while she always asked the price of each thing, she never demurred at the stated sum.

When Madame Du Launy and her little party approached the fancy-work table, Frances fairly bristled with importance, and displayed her goods, as if conferring the greatest favor. In spite of this rather forbidding manner on the part of the young saleswoman, Madame Du Launy proved a good patron. She bought one set of Edith's doilies, as well as several smaller things, and then her eye fell on the water color, which, to display it the better, had been hung on the wall back of the table.

"Is that for sale?" she asked rather abruptly.

"Why, no, or rather, yes," replied Frances with a certain hesitation.

"At least it has been for sale," she added.

"Is it sold?" asked Mrs. Blair in some surprise; "a short time ago, I understood that you had not found a purchaser."

Frances reddened a little under Mrs. Blair's rather searching glance, and reddened still more deeply as Mrs. Blair continued, "Has any one bought it within the last half hour?"

"Why, no," said Frances, "not exactly, although—"

During this conversation, an expression of annoyance had come over Madame Du Launy's face. Apparently she was accustomed to having whatever she expressed a desire to buy, and this reluctance on the part of Frances was far from agreeable to her. It was hardly less distasteful to Mrs. Blair.

"I should think, Frances, that as valuable a thing as this would either be for sale, or if sold would have had a purchaser, whom you could mention."

"I wish that Belle were here," murmured Frances rather helplessly.

"Why I thought that you and Edith had complete charge here," remarked Mrs. Blair.

"Well, so we had, but Edith is resting now, and——"

"It is of no consequence, Mrs. Blair, there are other pictures elsewhere that will probably suit me as well, only I imagined that the young ladies wished to sell this one," interposed Madame Du Launy haughtily, and holding her head rather high, she started in the direction of the surprise table. Now just at this moment Miss South, who had been amusing herself with some of Nora's funny little surprise packages, turned away from this table to meet Julia who was walking a step or two behind Madame Du Launy and Mrs. Blair. She had removed her hat, and her wavy, brown hair, was dressed rather low on each side of her forehead, somewhat as we have seen it in the portraits of a generation or two ago. She smiled brightly as her eye met Julia's, and then she looked toward Mrs. Blair and Madame Du Launy, whom evidently she had not noticed before. For as her eye fell on the latter she gave a start of surprise. At the same time the latter, with a gasp, leaned heavily on the arm of her attendant, and would have fallen had he not led her quickly to a chair.

XXVI

GREAT EXCITEMENT

For several moments all was confusion. While trying not to show an inconsiderate curiosity, the girls behind the tables could not help leaving their places, though they stood at a fair distance from the spot where Julia and Miss South and two or three older women were trying to do what they could to revive Madame Du Launy. Although she had not actually fainted, she was certainly not herself, and for several minutes she leaned back in her chair with her eyes half-closed. Yet although she looked pale and almost pitiful with the lines of age clearly showing in her face, she would not accept help from any one, not even the glass of water which they offered her. At last, after a time that seemed longer than it really was to those who stood by, she opened her eyes, and without a word to those standing near, motioned to her man.

"My carriage, at once," was all she said, then motioning to him again she took his arm, as she rose from her seat. Turning for a moment toward Julia who had extended her hand, "Good-bye, dear," she murmured as she started to walk with stately step across the room.

The whole thing had been so strange—Madame Du Launy's fainting-spell, and her peculiar manner on coming to herself, that those who stood near instead of making any comments only gazed after the old lady in surprise. In the midst of the excitement Miss South, too, had slipped away, and on making enquiries about her Julia was told that she had gone home.

Yet although at the very moment of this strange occurrence no one had had much to say, when the girls gathered in little groups aside, their tongues swung back and forward with great energy.

"What in the world could have caused it?" was asked on every hand, and many were the guesses and speculations as to what had caused the little scene.

"Oh, old ladies ought not to try to go to festive places like this," said one of the girls glancing around the long room with its walls paneled with mirrors, its decorations of vines, and plants, and bright streamers.

"Especially old ladies who have hardly set foot in the house of any one else for fifty years, more or less," added another.

"Well, even then I don't see what made her faint," said Nora, who happened to have heard the last remark. "There wasn't anything particularly exciting going on here."

"Oh," replied Belle, "it had something to do with Miss South. I stood where I could see Madame Du Launy's face, and when she fainted she had just met Miss South's eye, and didn't you notice, Miss South looked as if she would like to faint herself!"

"How ridiculous!" said a girl who had newly joined the group, "you always see more than any one else does, Belle."

"What if I do? I am just as often right, and you can see for yourself that Miss South is not here now. I noticed that she hurried away as soon as she could."

"What if she did?" cried Nora; "I do think, Belle, that you are sometimes perfectly ridiculous. Any number of people are not here now, who were in the room half an hour ago."

"Oh, you know what I mean, Nora; mark my words there is something queer about the whole thing."

"How in the world, I wonder, did Madame Du Launy happen to know about the Bazaar?" asked Frances Pounder.

"Why, Frances Pounder, where have you been?" cried Nora.

"Why, yes, Frances Pounder, where have you been?" echoed Belle. "Haven't you heard of the tremendous intimacy that has sprung up between Julia and Madame Du Launy since she rescued her little Fidessa from the park police? It really is a wonderful story, and we all expect Julia to be the old lady's heir."

"Come, come," interrupted Nora, "we can't afford to waste our time gossiping; we should be thankful that Madame Du Launy ventured to come here at all, for she bought any number of things, and paid good prices, and now if we do not return to our tables, we may lose all the patronage of the other old ladies who are wandering about."

So two by two the little crowd dispersed. Some of the girls went behind the tables, while others hovered about, picking and choosing what they should buy according to their purses or their taste.

But to tell all the happenings of that afternoon and evening would take a longer time than can be spared to it now. In the evening not only the fathers and uncles of many of the girls came upon the scene, but Philip and his friends appeared to form a small army of purchasers. The latter were not on the whole inclined to buy very expensive things, though they patronized the refreshment table so steadily that Belle had to beg one of the New York boys to become assistant cashier. They also almost swept the flower booth clean of cut flowers and plants, to the loss of the little patients in the children's hospital, who might otherwise have been benefited, had any flowers been left over. Yet although I say that they did not buy a great deal I must not be misunderstood. They did carry off all kinds of little things that they thought would raise a laugh in their college rooms. Philip, for example, bought a work-basket, lined with pink and white silk, grumbling as he did so that this was the nearest approach he could find to crimson. Besides that he paid a good price for the doll which he had admired, and which Nora had mischievously reserved for him by pinning to it a card bearing his name. He also bought a small hammock of twisted ribbons, in which he said he intended to suspend the doll in a conspicuous place over his mantelpiece.

Tom Hurst had to buy two or three tobacco pouches, and in addition he chose a rattle, the covering of which Nora had knitted and decorated with bells.

"Pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw,"

quoted Nora, as he carried away his purchase, at the same time presenting him with a wisp of straws from a broom, which she had tied together with a piece of crimson ribbon. "To be forever cherished," responded Tom, as he walked off with his trophies, in a tone that made the usually unsentimental Nora blush.

As to Will Hardon, he lost no time in going to the table over which Frances and Edith presided to enquire for a sofa pillow which had been reserved for him.

"Reserved!" cried Edith in a tone of surprise, for Ruth had taken her into the secret. "I thought it

was understood that nothing could be reserved here——"

Will's face fell, for he was very much in earnest.

"Oh, now Miss Blair," he said, "you surely were not in earnest last evening; you know that I had made up my mind to that pillow."

"Wouldn't something else do just as well?" she asked, "this centrepiece for example, *I* worked this," with an emphasis on the pronoun.

"Why, it's very pretty," said poor Will, "only I shouldn't know what to do with it, but I'd like it very much, really I would," he hastened to add, as Edith looked a little serious.

"Well, I'm sorry," she responded, "that you fix your affection on such impossible things; now this centrepiece is also disposed of. Mrs. Barlow has bought it, and will take it home this evening."

"Also," exclaimed Will, "you said 'also,' do you mean that the sofa pillow is really gone?"

Edith could not help smiling at his expression of disappointment.

"Here comes Ruth," she said, "ask her;" and Ruth, with her hands full of flowers which she was carrying across the room to Mrs. Pounder, paused for a moment.

"Why, you look as if you were quarreling," she said to Edith, "you and—Mr. Hardon; can't I be umpire?"

"Why, yes," replied Will, "that was just what we wish, for you are the only one who really understands the merits of the case. You remember that cushion?"

Ruth looked sufficiently conscious to make further reply unnecessary.

"Of course you *do* remember it," continued Will, "and you know that you more than half promised to save it for me. Now nobody here at this table seems able to tell me about it, at least Miss Blair isn't, and she ought to, if any one could, tell me just where it is."

"I am not sure," responded Edith, "that you have really put the question to me. At any rate I am positive that I have not made any statement about it."

"But you told me to refer to Miss Roberts, and I thought that that meant that you knew nothing about it."

"Well, honestly, I can't tell you about the cushion," said Ruth; "if any one offered more than one hundred dollars, which I think was your limit, I suppose that it has been sold."

"You think that I did not mean what I said," cried Will.

"Oh, no, indeed, but if any one offered more——"

All this time Edith had been standing with one hand behind her back, and at the last minute she raised her arm, and disclosed the cushion, which a minute before she had brought from its hiding-place beneath the table.

"There, that is mine," exclaimed the young man, "let me have it."

"Well, I declare!" cried Edith, as in surprise, "this card really does bear your name, and so I suppose that I must give you the cushion."

Will leaned forward eagerly. "Yes, it is mine, but," as he glanced at the card, "the price is not right. It is only one-tenth what I expected to pay."

"Why! would you really have paid one hundred dollars for it?" asked Ruth.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Oh, it is so much more than it is worth," she replied. "Even for the Rosas we could not have permitted it."

"Well," he answered, as he handed out the crisp ten dollar bill, which paid the price marked on the pillow, "well, I must make it up to the Rosas in some other way." Then turning toward Edith, "thank you, Miss Blair, for waiting on me, although you did give me a bad quarter of a minute, when you made me believe that I might have missed the purchase which I came expressly to make." So with a pleasant smile, carrying the pretty cushion on one arm, he walked across the room with Ruth.

Belle, as she watched them, could not help thinking how well they looked together, even though for the moment she felt a little jealousy of Ruth's growing popularity. Neither the evening before, nor during the whole progress of the Bazaar, had Belle received any special attention from even one of "the boys" as Philip and his friends were called collectively. Ruth, to be sure, was nearly a year and a half older than "The Four," and it was more natural that she should receive a little more attention of the kind that young ladies receive. But Belle thought that she herself felt as old as she should ever feel, and now since she wore her hair done up, and had skirts that almost touched, she did not see why she should not be treated just as if she were "grown up." To suit her ideas, therefore, of the deportment of a young lady, she had begun to assume a very coquettish manner. But this, instead of producing the desired effect—that of gaining for her great

admiration, only amused the boys, and led them to make fun of her when by themselves. Edith through Philip, and Nora through her brother, had some knowledge of this fact. But Brenda regarded Belle with more or less awe, and considered her an exceedingly worldly-wise person. When, therefore, Belle proposed to her that instead of selling the water-color painting of which I have spoken, at a fixed price, they should vote it to the most popular young man of their acquaintance, Brenda acquiesced.

"You see it will be this way," said Belle, "we can get people to vote by taking shares."

"How much will the shares be?"

"Oh, a dollar, and we can easily sell a hundred and fifty dollars worth. I am sure that is a great deal better than letting the picture go for one hundred dollars."

"But isn't that the same as a raffle?"

"No, stupid, of course not."

"For you know that Mrs. Blair has forbidden us to have any raffles."

"Yes, I know about that rule, and a very silly rule it is, too," replied Belle, "but this isn't at all the same thing as a raffle. People just pay for the privilege of voting, and don't expect any gain for themselves, as they would in a lottery or raffle. It's a good thing, too, for the person they vote for, it's doing him good, and no one can disapprove of a plan to help other people," said Belle with an unselfishness of sentiment that could not have been looked for in her.

"Oh, no," said Brenda, hesitatingly, "I suppose not."

"All the same," Belle had continued, "I think that we had better not say anything to Edith and Nora about it, they might interfere in some way, and besides I am sure that they both have enough to do looking after their own tables."

"Well, but how can we get any votes if we do not say anything to anybody?" enquired Brenda.

"Oh, of course we must take Frances into our confidence. She is at the table where the picture is. There won't be much danger of its selling at once for one hundred dollars, and we can trust Frances to head any one off who pretends to wish to buy it."

So it was as a result of this plan of Belle's that Frances had prevented a sale of the picture to Madame du Launy. For at that time Brenda and Belle had a number of names on their books, enough in fact to represent one half the valuation of the picture. Each girl who voted was bound to secrecy, for Belle realized (though she had put it in a different light to Brenda) that she was violating the spirit, if not the letter of Mrs. Blair's command. Nevertheless the very fact that the carrying out of this plan involved a certain amount of mystery, gave the whole thing more zest than it would otherwise have had for the two.

Strangely enough, however, after the first fifty votes had been cast, with a great scattering as to the most popular youth, the two girls found it hard to get more names. The evening, indeed, was half over before the list had increased to sixty votes.

About this time an awkward thing happened. Running upstairs from the dining-room, Belle had dropped the neat little book in which she kept record of her votes, and when one of the maids handed it to Mrs. Blair, great was her surprise to find on the fly-leaf the sentence "voting contest for the picture."

"Whose handwriting is this?" she asked Edith, "and what does this all mean; surely none of you is carrying on a raffle."

"It's Belle's writing," answered Edith a little reluctantly, for she saw that her mother was angry. "But I do not know what it means."

Well after this, of course Belle was summoned to talk with Mrs. Blair, and though she reiterated that she had only desired to make as much money as she could for the Bazaar, Mrs. Blair insisted that Belle should give her all that she had already received to return to those who had subscribed or voted. Brenda, too, came in for a good share of reproof, and the whole thing was very humiliating to the two girls, who found themselves so clearly in the wrong. Beyond obliging them to conform, however, to her views of what was proper, Mrs. Blair had no intention of making them unduly uncomfortable.

"Think no more about it," she said, "only remember that you have prevented the sale of the picture, for I saw to-day that Madame Du Launy was very anxious to buy it."

After hearing this Brenda and Belle, although mortified, decided to make the best of the rest of the evening. They merely explained to some of the voters who asked them, that it had been decided to give up this plan for disposing of the picture, and that the money would be returned.

The episode of Madame Du Launy in the afternoon, and this little unpleasant incident of the evening were the only things to make this Bazaar seem very different from other Bazaars.

You know what they are all like, and that each fair or sale or Bazaar depends for its charm on the unity with which the workers carry things on, and the extent to which their friends patronize it, and I will say for "The Four" that they were much more in harmony through this whole affair than

often they had been in the past, and that their friends—especially their young friends—did even more than had been expected of them to help swell the fund for the Rosas.

Brenda had been anxious to have one or two of this interesting family on the spot to work on the sympathies of the patrons of the Bazaar. She had thought that it would be delightful to have Angelina wait on the refreshment table, and she did not see why Manuel might not have been present all the time. "In some kind of fancy costume, of course, for I know that his own clothes would not be exactly clean and whole."

But Mrs. Blair had objected to the presence of the Rosas whether in fancy dress, or in their usual garb, and Mrs. Barlow had succeeded in making Brenda see that it would not be the best thing in the world for the Rosa children to be introduced to what must seem to them a scene of great luxury in a Back Bay house, even though it might be explained to them that part of the gorgeousness was due to a desire to help them—the special gorgeousness, I mean, of the Bazaar.

"Who in the world is to take care of all the money?" asked Nora, as she looked at the large tin box almost running over with silver and bills taken in as receipts at the various tables.

"Oh, Mrs. Blair is to put it in her safe to-night, and to-morrow it will be exchanged at the bank for large bills!" answered Brenda.

"And then—?"

"And then we must have a committee meeting to decide what is to be done with it. When it was last counted there were nearly three hundred dollars, and there has been something added to it since."

"Why, how perfectly splendid!" cried Nora; "why we should be able to do almost anything we wish to do for the Rosas; why, it is a regular fortune!" for Nora had ideas almost as vague as Brenda of the value of money.

"Oh, yes, we've done very well, but I am glad that it is all over; the Bazaar has been fun, but it is kind of a relief not to have it on my mind any more."

"Oh, Brenda, it hasn't worried you much, you took things very easy until the last day or two."

"Well, that's just it; I've felt so busy to-day, that I would like to rest for a week."

"But you haven't been half as busy as Julia, she has hardly left her post all day, and I think that she looks pretty tired."

"Dear me," said Brenda crossly, "if she had not wished to serve at the flower booth, we could have found some other girl to do it. Oh, Julia," she cried as her cousin drew near her, "are you coming home in the carriage with me?"

"Why, yes, if you wish it."

"Well, it has just taken papa and mamma home, and when it comes back, I shall be ready."

The pretty dancing-hall now presented a thoroughly disordered appearance. It was strewn with wrapping papers that had been pushed from behind the tables, or had been thrown there by careless persons who had tossed down the coverings of their surprise packages. There were also a number of faded flowers lying about, and the tables themselves were in confused heaps. For, of course, not everything had sold, and the "remains" as one of the boys called what was left, had to stay on the tables until the morning.

When Brenda and Julia were finally ready to go home, they were almost the last to leave. Even the Cambridge boys had said "good-bye" and Ruth and Frances had started for home.

"Thank you very much, Mrs. Blair, for letting us come here," said Brenda, as they left the room. For Brenda seldom forgot her good manners where older people were concerned, even though she was sometimes inclined to be pettish toward her younger friends.

"Why, what is that?" she enquired, as Julia had a large package lifted into the carriage.

"It's that water-color that was on Edith's table."

"Why, what are you taking it home for?"

"I have bought it," replied Julia quietly, "and I am going to give it to Aunt Anna."

Brenda was almost too much surprised to speak, for this was the picture which she and Belle had tried to raffle.

"But you did not pay one hundred dollars for it?"

"Why not?" said Julia with a smile, as they reached their door.

A MISTAKE

Brenda, herself, was too sleepy that night when she reached home, to express her surprise at Julia's having bought the picture. Yet she certainly wondered that the cousin whom she had hitherto regarded as bound down to economy, should have been able to spend so large a sum for a single purchase. Julia on her part was not surprised at her cousin's indifference, for Brenda had a way of seeming curious or especially interested only in relation to things that immediately concerned her. When they had separated, and Julia was alone in her own room, she had opportunity for the first time since the morning for thinking over all the events of the day. Her place at the Bazaar had been a very pleasant one, and while she had not had much to do with any of the girls except Ruth, her attention had been constantly occupied in disposing of her flowers. Philip and his friends had been especially good patrons, and the former had taken the chances that came to him of going up to the table and talking to Julia on one thing and another, not always connected with the Bazaar or with the Rosas. In spite of a certain amount of conceit—and what young sophomore is without this quality—Philip was really a very agreeable fellow, and in Julia he had some one ready to listen to him more attentively than was Edith's habit, or indeed that of the other girls. For Belle, for example, although she liked what she called "attention" from the boys of her set, wished to have the conversation turn entirely upon herself and her own affairs, and she always showed impatience when the person with whom she was talking turned to any other subject. Now Philip—though in this he was not so very different from other young men—liked to have some one to talk to who would listen sympathetically to his tales of college triumphs, or grievances, and occasionally give him a word of advice. In Julia he found not only an attentive listener, but an intelligent adviser. So although the Bazaar was not just the place for confidences, he had been able to have several pleasant little snatches of conversation with Julia. She had enjoyed these little fragmentary talks as much as Philip had, and they both had had much amusement from his rather clumsy attempts to help her in arranging bouquets for her customers.

Julia, therefore, had many pleasant things to recall connected with the Bazaar, and not the least pleasant was the fact that she had been able to contribute a good deal toward helping the Rosas.

The one strange feature of the whole affair had been the sudden departure of Madame Du Launy. "And why," mused Julia, "did Miss South go away without bidding me good-bye? I know that she meant to stay until evening. Well, perhaps it will all be explained. Though certainly now I cannot understand it all. Perhaps to-morrow—" and here Julia fell asleep with the question still unsettled.

Early the next morning—as soon at least as she had had her breakfast, Julia started off to find Miss South, but the maid at her boarding-house said that she had gone out and probably would not be back before evening; with this she had to be content, although in addition to general enquiries about the strange event of the day before, she wished to talk over with Miss South some of the plans which they had been discussing for the assistance of the Rosa family. They had been finally successful in getting Mrs. Rosa to promise to go to the country for the summer, if for no longer a time. They had found a house in Shiloh, a small village with elevated land not so very far from Boston, and they were sure that a residence there would benefit the sick woman. A man whom Miss South knew, who had been at one time given up by the doctors as in hopeless consumption, had moved to this village, and after a year had been pronounced almost well. He had opened a little shop there, his children had found employment for their spare hours, and the family had at last started on the high road to prosperity. This was a great change for them, for during their father's illness in town, they had often had to have charitable relief. Miss South's plan for Mrs. Rosa included a certain amount of work for the family. A farmer had been found who promised to employ the oldest boy, and a woman who took summer boarders said that she could pay Angelina two dollars a week, to help in her kitchen, if she could sleep at home. The house which they had selected had a small piece of land where it was hoped that Mrs. Rosa could raise some vegetables.

To accomplish what they wished, considerable money was needed, and they had enlisted Brenda's interest to so great an extent that she professed herself perfectly willing to have the money raised at the Bazaar used to rent and equip the house, and pay the many little expenses that would be caused by the enterprise. "As Brenda really has been interested in Manuel, it would be hardly fair to leave her out of this plan, although," said Julia, "although we might get on without her help."

"Oh, dear, no," Miss South had said, "it would never in the world do to overlook Brenda. She is an impulsive little thing, and although Mrs. Rosa and the children might have fared badly this winter, had they had no one but Brenda to depend on, still it is a great advance for Brenda to be interested in some one besides herself, and it is excellent discipline for her to have a certain share in carrying out this plan. It is not altogether a matter of money."

Now, Brenda, of course, in deciding to favor the plan proposed by Miss South was not acting entirely for herself. Edith, Nora, and Belle were as much concerned as she, and Nora in fact, as the rescuer of Manuel, was more interested than any of the others. Belle, the only one who might have been expected to oppose Miss South's plan, really had no objection to it. Her one thought in the whole matter had been to get as much pleasure and glory as possible out of the Bazaar itself. Edith, while practical about some things,—needlework for example, and lessons,—seldom put her mind on money matters, and Nora was as heedless about this as about other things. Brenda was almost as heedless, and yet The Four had thought it perfectly proper that she should be treasurer

of their little fund.

So it happened that on the very morning when Julia was trying to find Miss South, Brenda had received from Mrs. Blair's hands four crisp one hundred dollar notes. This was a little more than had been taken at the Bazaar. But in getting the loose bills and cheques changed into more compact form, Mrs. Blair had added enough to make the sum an even four hundred dollars.

The other three girls were with Brenda as she received the money from Mrs. Blair, and immediately they sat down to count up the expenses that must be paid from their receipts. Rather to Mrs. Blair's surprise these expenses mounted up to more than one hundred dollars, and she scolded The Four a little for having engaged an expensive orchestra for the music of the preceding evening, when music was not really needed at all. The ices and other things furnished the refreshment room made another large item in the bills, although there had been some profit from this department.

"I will take one of your one hundred dollar bills, and with it pay the expenses," said Mrs. Blair, "and I would advise you to take care of the three hundred dollars, for after all it is not a large sum to be used toward the support of a sick woman and five children."

"Of course we'll take care of it, at least Brenda will," cried Nora, as Brenda folded the money away carefully in her purse, and placed the purse in a small leather bag. Then they went home with Brenda, and they saw her lock the bag into her top bureau drawer.

After this they sat for a while as girls will, idly talking about the affairs of the day, while Mrs. Barlow's French maid bustled about, laying away some new waists and skirts of Brenda's that had just come home from the dressmaker's.

"Look," at last cried Brenda, jumping up from her seat impetuously, "look, Marie, did you ever see so much money," and opening the drawer and the purse she brandished the three hundred dollar bills before the eyes of the young Frenchwoman.

"Oh, my! Mees," cried Marie, "three dollars, that is not so very much!"

"Three dollars!" shouted Brenda, "three hundred dollars, what you call twelve hundred francs."

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Marie, her eyes almost jumping out of her head, "oh, my! I never did see so much money, let me look." So they let her touch the bills, and they laughed at the comments she made, and especially when she cried, "Louis would marry me if that money was mine."

"I thought he was going to anyway," said Belle, "you have always said that you were engaged."

"Oh, yes," she replied. "Oh, yes, sometime, perhaps, but it takes much money to get married. If I have to wait too long, perhaps Louis will find another girl with more money. But no matter." And she went out of the room looking much less cheerful than before she had seen the money.

"How mercenary!" said Belle as she disappeared, for Belle always had a word large enough to fit every happening.

"Well, it must be hard not to have any money but just what you earn every week," interposed Edith sympathetically.

"Oh it's better not to have much money than to have a man think only of that in marrying you," responded Belle in her most worldly-wise voice.

"Come, I think that we are talking of things that we know nothing about," said Nora, "but if I were you, Brenda, I would not let every one in the house know where that money is."

"Nonsense, I always carry the key with me, and anyway it won't be here long," answered Brenda.

"No matter, if I were you I would give it to Mr. Barlow to take down town."

"Yes, you ought to," added Edith.

"Oh, what fusses you are!" cried Brenda, "any one would think that I was a two-year-old baby."

Just then there was a tap at the door.

"May I come in?" said a voice, which they at once recognized as Julia's.

"Yes, indeed," cried Nora and Edith, and the former flung the door wide open and greeted Julia with a kiss.

"Where have you been, but of course you have been to see Miss South. It was so funny that she did not stay last evening. What was the reason?"

"Well I did not find her; she was not expected home to-day," answered Julia.

"How queer!"

"Why, to tell you the truth, I was a little surprised myself, for we had an appointment together this morning, although if we had not had one, I should have gone up there to find out if she was ill yesterday."

"Oh, tell me," enquired Edith, "have you heard anything about Madame Du Launy? Mamma said that she would send there to enquire this morning, but I have not been home since she sent."

"Yes," said Julia, "I did make enquiries at the house, and was told that she was feeling pretty well to-day, but that she could not see anybody."

"Not even you!" exclaimed Belle, a little sarcastically.

"Not even me," replied Julia pleasantly. "I suppose for one thing that the Bazaar yesterday tired her. They tell me that it is the first time in twenty years that she has been inside of any house in Boston besides her own."

"I wonder if that is true," said Edith, reflectively.

"Yes, I believe that it is," answered Julia. "Madame Du Launy said almost as much to me, although I must admit that she never talks very much about that kind of thing. As often as I have seen her this spring, she has never said a word to me on the subject of Boston people and their attitude to her,—or her attitude to them—" she hastened to add.

"You talk like a book, Julia," said Brenda, who had complained once or twice that Julia talked too precisely, "like a school-teacher," she generally said, when she spoke on the subject to Belle.

Julia laughed good-naturedly. Brenda's little arrows did less harm now than in the earlier part of the season.

"So long as I make myself clear, it is all right, isn't it?" she asked.

"Oh, of course," answered Brenda, "but you and Belle always do use such alarmingly correct expressions."

"Brenda," called Mrs. Barlow from the floor below. The girls exchanged glances. There was something ominous in the tone, and even the dilatory Brenda decided that it would be best to respond as quickly as possible to the summons.

Thereupon the other girls rose to go. In fact, the morning was almost over, and during the two or three hours which The Four had spent together they had talked about everything connected with the Bazaar until there was little more for them to say. The late hours which they had been keeping were telling upon them all, and if any one of them had been asked to tell what she felt the most need of at that particular moment, she would probably have said, "A good nap."

Julia, however, was the only one to say frankly that she felt sleepy, and she excused herself as the others went downstairs, while they bade her good-bye at the door of her own room. She had been there but a few minutes seated in a wicker easy-chair before the long window which afforded a beautiful view of the river, when the door was hastily flung open, and in a second Brenda stood before her.

"I think that you are just as mean as you can be, Julia Bourne," she cried angrily. "It does seem as if I ought not to have spies in my own house watching everything that I do and carrying tales just as if I were a baby."

"Why, what do you mean, Brenda?" asked Julia in genuine astonishment.

"You know very well what I mean. You and Miss South, you saw me with Belle the other afternoon; oh, it wasn't so long ago that you could forget it, you saw us down there by the Music Hall and you told mamma that we had been there. Anyway, I do not see whose business it is. We are old enough to go about by ourselves, but I think that you are just as mean as you can be," and with this final outburst Brenda flung herself from the room without giving Julia time to reply.

The latter for a moment sat in her chair completely puzzled. Then she remembered the day on which she and Miss South returning from the North End had seen Belle and Brenda in Winter Street. The two girls had disappeared so quickly that she did not suppose at the time that they had seen her. Now, however, it seemed that they had been merely in hiding. But of one thing she was sure, she had never spoken of the encounter to her aunt, and all this torrent of anger on Brenda's part was wholly uncalled for. It did seem too bad that Brenda should have taken this tone just as she had begun to hope that she and her cousin were to understand each other. On the other hand the case was not very serious, since to Brenda in a calmer mood it would be very easy to give an explanation. Yet if it were not for her uncle and aunt, who were always considerate, Julia now felt that it would be hard for her to continue under the same roof with Brenda. Julia herself, had always been closely observant of the golden rule. Nor was her piety of the kind that was displayed only on occasions. She had been most regular in her attendance at Sabbath-school, and she and Nora and Edith never thought of letting rain, or heat, or any other thing prevent their attendance at the morning service as well. But besides these outward observances she kept the spirit of the teachings of her Church, or tried to keep them in her daily life. Neither Brenda, therefore, nor any one else could accuse her of hypocrisy. She believed strongly in the soft answer that turneth away wrath, and yet no one could say that behind any one else's back she indulged in harsh criticism.

At luncheon Brenda did not come to the table, and a question or two from Mrs. Barlow brought out the fact that Brenda had vented on her cousin part of the annoyance that she had felt at her mother's reproof.

"Of course I shall make it clear to Brenda that I did not get my information from you. Indeed I do not see how she could have thought so. I certainly intimated that I had had my information from

some one who had seen her in the hall. In going there with Belle, Brenda broke two well-understood rules of mine. In the first place she is not allowed to go down town except with some older person. In the second place I disapprove of young girls going to matinees of any kind, and the performance they went to see was not at all a proper one for them. I know that I had previously declined to take them. Brenda knew my opinion of this particular performance, and two friends of mine who saw her and Belle there were exceedingly surprised that I had permitted them to go alone. They spoke of the matter incidentally to me, and in that way I learned of Brenda's disobedience. But I am sorry that Brenda should have troubled you about the affair, for I know that when she is angry she can say very disagreeable things."

"It is not of very much consequence, Aunt Anna," replied Julia, "as long as it is a thing that can be straightened out. If I really had seen Brenda at the Hall, I might have mentioned the fact without realizing that it could make her so angry, but when she understands about this I am sure that we shall be as good friends as ever."

"I hope so," responded Mrs. Barlow.

XXVIII

EXPLANATIONS

Now it happened that on Thursday afternoon Julia went to Nora's and stayed all night. The next morning the two went out to Roxbury to fulfil a promise to Ruth to pass a day and night with her. Thus it happened that Julia and Brenda did not see each other until Saturday evening. They then met in the presence of an elderly friend of Mrs. Barlow's who had come to stay over Sunday with the family, and so Brenda had no opportunity of making an apology—if she intended to make one for her language of the subject of the matinee. For Mrs. Barlow, of course, had explained her error to Brenda, and though the latter had not expressed great contrition, her mother knew that in the end she would do what was right. Luckily Julia herself was not one to feel resentment, for Sunday passed without her hearing a word on the subject from Brenda.

After the second service on Sunday, Miss South joined Julia just outside the church door. "I am very glad to see you," she said, "for I was greatly disappointed in missing you the other day. I have many things to tell you, if you will walk with me for half an hour."

This Julia was pleased to do, for it was a beautiful afternoon, and moreover, she was anxious to hear why Miss South had gone away so suddenly from Edith's, on the afternoon of the Bazaar.

"I must begin at the beginning, Julia," said Miss South, "for you are old enough to hear a rather romantic story at first hand, which otherwise you might hear in an incorrect form."

"I won't say that I have been curious, Miss South," replied Julia, "although I have thought that in some mysterious way your going off had some connection with Madame Du Launy."

"That is true logic on your part," responded Miss South, "and you will be interested to hear that I have spent several hours since Wednesday with Madame Du Launy. Before I forget it I must tell you that she was very sorry that she could not see you when you called. She told me to say this to you as a special message from her."

"Thank you," answered Julia, "but I am very anxious to hear what you have to say. I feel sure that it is something very interesting."

Miss South smiled. "Then I must begin at the very beginning. You may have noticed that rather striking portrait of a young girl in the room where Madame Du Launy usually receives her visitors. Well, that young girl was my mother." Julia naturally gave a start of surprise, and for a moment her mind occupied itself in reproducing an image of this portrait. Then Miss South resumed her story.

"Yes, my mother was the only one of Madame Du Launy's children who married, and she married against her mother's will. My father was a very independent man, and when his wife's mother said that she would never forgive her for having married a poor man without family or position, he accepted this as final. He would not let my mother make any attempt at reconciliation, yet had she made such efforts I am sure that they would have been unsuccessful. He took her to Ohio first, and after a time they moved further west. We lived from the earliest time that I can remember, very simply and economically, but we had the advantage of good schools,—we two children, I mean—and when I showed a desire to go to college I was sent to the State University of the State where we had grown up. My brother, as I told you, was several years younger than I, and was only preparing for college when my father died. Our mother had died when we were little children, and in accordance with our father's wishes we had heard little about our grandmother besides her name. Once he had told us that she was an embittered old woman, and that she had not shown any regard for him, or my mother after her marriage. We knew that Boston had been our mother's home for a time, although most of her youth had been spent in wandering around Europe with her parents. After our father's death I thought once or twice of trying to find out whether or not our grandmother was alive. But my brother always dissuaded me, so keen was his resentment for the way she had treated our father. My telling him that this

had been mere prejudice on her part—for she never had met my father—did not make him change his mind. He made me believe that it would be disrespect to both our parents if I should seek my grandmother. When I came to Boston, and heard about this peculiar Madame Du Launy, who lived opposite the school, I felt that she must be my grandmother, and some letters and a picture—a small water-color of the house—made it perfectly clear that in this surmise I was correct. Before the Bazaar I had decided in the course of the spring, to make myself known to Madame Du Launy, and I ought to tell you that it was your account of her gentler side that led me to think seriously of doing this."

"How very interesting!" cried Julia. "Why, I never heard anything like it. But why did not Madame Du Launy ever try to find you?"

"For the very good reason that she did not know of my existence. You see my mother never wrote to her after the first months of her marriage when my grandmother returned all her letters unopened. Yet Madame Du Launy—I find it very hard to say 'Grandmother' had heard that my mother had had one or two children, but she had also been told that they had died. All that she heard, however, was mere rumor, for she was too proud to write to my father after her daughter's death. But of late years, she says, she has been very unhappy, and has thought much about my mother. It was my close resemblance to her portrait that caused her to faint the other day. I have a photograph made from that portrait, and occasionally I dress my hair in the same style, those old fashions are somewhat in vogue now, and I can do so with propriety. My grandmother says that I am wonderfully like my mother."

"Dear me!" said Julia, "it is more interesting than a novel. I suppose that now you will go to live with Madame Du Launy, and we shall lose you at school."

Miss South smiled. "I shall certainly finish out my present year of teaching, although it is probable that I may go to live with Madame Du Launy." Then after a pause, "There is one thing that I ought to say, Julia, because I know that already it is reported that I am to be a great heiress. Madame Du Launy has a good income, but it comes from an annuity, and when she dies it will die with her. She seemed to think that she ought to explain this to me before asking me to live with her. The house is hers outright, and she has said that she will give it to me and my brother. I would not speak of this if it were not that I should be placed in a false position otherwise. In fact I am the more ready to go to live with my grandmother, because she is not the enormously rich woman that she has been represented to be. But now I have talked enough about myself, so let us turn to the Rosas."

"Why, yes," responded Julia, "I have been wondering whether or not you had seen them since the Bazaar."

"Yes, I was able to go down yesterday, and I found Mrs. Rosa quite ready to go to the country. I did not feel at liberty to tell her of the success of the efforts of 'The Four,' but I told her that money was certain to be furnished for the expense of removing her, and setting her up in the little home that we have planned for her."

"Wasn't she perfectly delighted?"

"Well, she did not show a great deal of emotion. She is almost too weak for that, but I am sure that she is pleased, although she has a certain amount of regret at leaving the city."

"She ought to be perfectly thankful to leave that wretched place."

"It does not look quite as wretched and dirty to her as it does to us, and after all home is home, and the North End has been her home for many years."

"I won't ask what the children think of the change, for I shall see them myself in a day or two, and I suppose that I ought to be going home now. But I do wish to tell you how delighted I am about your good fortune in finding your grandmother. You know that I have grown quite fond of Madame Du Launy myself, and I have been so sorry for her loneliness that I am very glad indeed that she is to have you to live with her. Now, here I suppose that I ought to leave you at this corner, so good-bye until to-morrow."

"Wait a moment, Julia, I have been so wrapped up in myself that I have not given you a message from Madame Du Launy. At least she wished me to tell you that your kindness in running in to see her this spring had been greatly appreciated, and that she has been made very happy by the glimpses of fresh, young life that you have given her. In the future she hopes to see much more of you and of some of your young friends. Poor grandmother! It is her own fault that she has been so shut out from people and interesting things here in Boston. But in her youth she was a very sharp-tongued and overbearing woman,—she says this herself—and she so resented the criticisms which people made on her marriage that she was only too glad to give up their society, and in return for their criticisms she said so many sharp things that even if she had wished it, there was small chance of her having pleasant associations with most of the families of her acquaintance. Oh! before we part there is one thing that I must tell you about Mrs. Rosa. It seems that she has been greatly annoyed lately by a young man, the son of an old friend of hers, who for several years was in the habit of lending her small sums of money. The friend had given her to understand that these sums were gifts in repayment of kindnesses that Mrs. Rosa had done her friend in her youth. In fact the young man's mother had borrowed from the Rosas in their prosperous days. Lately, however, this friend has died, and her son has a little book in which the money lent Mrs. Rosa amounts with interest to two hundred dollars. He claims that it

is a debt due him, and though he cannot collect anything from a person who has nothing, he annoys Mrs. Rosa very much by coming to her house and telling her that she ought to get some of her rich friends to help her pay the debt. He is very well off himself, for a Portuguese, and his behavior is a kind of persecution."

"Well," said Julia, "I must tell the girls, for if they should let Mrs. Rosa have even a little of the money——"

"He would certainly wheedle it from her, and you ought to give them a word of warning."

As they parted Julia felt that she had many things to think about—many more things than she had had to consider for a long time. When she reached home she found the family all discussing some of the rumors that had come to them about Madame Du Launy and Miss South, and she was glad that she had had her information at first hand, and that she could contradict some rather absurd rumors that were in circulation.

"The worst thing about it," said Mrs. Barlow, "appears to be the fact that by this turn of Fortune's wheel, Miss Crawdon's school is likely to lose one of its best teachers."

"I am not so sure of that," responded Julia; "I have an idea that Miss South may continue to teach; she is very fond of her work——"

"But her grandmother will certainly wish her to give all her time to her, and her first duty will be with her."

"Whatever her duty is, I am sure that she will do it," replied Julia; "she is the most conscientious person I have ever known; just think of her going down to see Mrs. Rosa this very week, when she must have had so much to interest her in at her grandmother's."

"By the way," asked Mr. Barlow, "are Miss South and Madame Du Launy sure that they are correct in their surmises about the relationship? They must have some stronger proof than personal resemblance, and the possession of one or two old pictures."

"Oh, yes," interposed Mrs. Barlow, "I believe that Miss South has many other proofs to show in the way of letters, certificates, and some other things that belonged to her mother."

"Then her name, too,—you know she is called Lydia from a sister of Madame Du Launy's who died young, and—why how foolish we are, of course Madame Du Launy always knew that the name of the man whom her daughter married was George South, the name of your teacher's father. One of her objections to him was his plebeian name," said Mrs. Barlow's cousin who had remained over Sunday.

Brenda had had less comment to make on these exciting events than had Julia, and even Mr. and Mrs. Barlow had seemed to take more interest in this romance of Madame Du Launy and Miss South. If the truth must be told Brenda was really half worn out. Her vacation had been anything but restful. The Bazaar by itself need not have tired her had she not in the latter part of the week spent almost every hour in some kind of vigorous exercise in search of what she and Belle called "fun." There had been two long bicycle rides, one dancing party, a three hours' walk to Brookline and back one day, and other things that really had told on her strength. Moreover her conscience was pricking her. For on the preceding afternoon, moved by an impulse which she now regretted, she had persuaded Nora to go with her to the North End to visit Mrs. Rosa. This was not long after Miss South had left the sick woman, and they found Mrs. Rosa somewhat depressed, first at the thought that she was really going to leave the city, second by the fact that her persistent creditor had just been in and had told her that he might "take the law on her"—so she quoted him, if she did not pay the money which he found written against her name in his mother's little book. Now Mrs. Rosa ought to have rested herself on Miss South's assurance that the young man could not make good his claim in law, but she was only a rather ignorant foreigner to whom the power of the law meant that she might be dragged off to the nearest police station by the brass-buttoned officers. She did not tell the young girls about her creditor, but when they pitied her for looking so ill, she sighed so sadly that they felt very sorry indeed for her. Marie, who had accompanied them to the North End had left them for a quarter of an hour to see a friend of hers living in the neighborhood, and then Brenda had no one but Nora to remonstrate with her for any folly she might wish to commit. When, therefore, out of a small bag which she carried, she took her purse,—her best purse with the silver monogram,—and when from the purse she extracted the three hundred-dollar notes, the proceeds of the Bazaar, even Nora gave a little gasp.

"Why, Brenda, how did you ever dare to bring that money down to this part of the city?"

"Why shouldn't I, you goose! I am sure that it will do Mrs. Rosa more good to see this money than anything else possibly could. See! Mrs. Rosa" she continued, "this is all yours, this three hundred dollars that we made at the Bazaar that we have been telling you about——" For Nora and she had expatiated on the charms of the occasion—the flowers, the music, and the many pretty articles that had been displayed on the tables. In fact they had brought several simple little things as presents for Mrs. Rosa and the children, and while the former probably did not understand all that they said to her, she did realize that some one had been at a great deal of trouble for her, and that this money was the result.

"All for me, oh tank you," she said, reaching her hand out towards the bills. Nora hastily jerked Brenda's arm.

"You mustn't give them to her."

Now up to this moment, Brenda had had no intention of doing this. "Why, Nora, really I think that I understand things as well as you do." Nora for the moment forgot the effect which opposition usually had on Brenda. Mrs. Rosa glanced questioningly from one girl to the other.

"Why, yes, you may look at them close too, you may hold them," said Brenda, laying the bills on Mrs. Rosa's transparent hand. The expression on the poor woman's face brightened.

"The money means a great deal to her," said Nora, sympathetically.

"Yes," answered Brenda, "you see that I was right in giving it to her, I mean in letting her see it. She has a little color in her cheeks already. She knows what that money can do for her and her children." It was hard enough for Mrs. Rosa to understand English when spoken in a full voice, and she made no effort to comprehend the undertone in which the two girls were speaking.

"Are they for me to keep?" she asked eagerly.

"Not now," responded Brenda, "but by and by, next week, perhaps you shall have a little money to spend, and some of it we may spend for you to take you to the country, you know."

"Come, Brenda," said Nora, "we must not stay too long, if the children are not to be back until five o'clock, we cannot wait to see them. We ought to be watching for Marie now."

"I know, I know," retorted Brenda, impatiently, "I shall be ready when you are."

"If I could just have this money in the house for a little while," said Mrs. Rosa, with her quaint accent, "I should be so happy. I think it would make me sleep. I haven't slept for *so* long," and she sighed and looked paler than ever.

"Poor thing," said Brenda, "I wish that I could give it to you now. Indeed I do not know why I should not, it is certainly yours, and I do not care for the responsibility myself,"—this speciously, for Brenda knew perfectly well that her father stood ready to take care of the money.

"Nora," she called rather sharply, "I think that we ought to let Mrs. Rosa have this money until we are ready to spend it. It is really hers now, people would not have come to the Bazaar, except to help the Rosas."

"Now, Brenda," cried Nora, "don't be foolish. I cannot imagine your doing so crazy a thing. It was bad enough for you to have brought the money down here. It was an awful risk, for suppose you had lost the purse,—oh, my," with a change of tone, "why there is Manuel. I must run out and speak to him," and in her usual heedless way Nora left the room with little thought for the subject which she and Brenda had the moment before been discussing.

Left alone with Mrs. Rosa, Brenda felt an increase of pity for the poor, pale woman, who looked as if she had very little more time to live. As she handled the bills with feverish fingers, Brenda made a quick resolve.

"Why should I not give her a pleasure that will cost me so little, and I am sure that no reasonable person can object.

"Mrs. Rosa," she said, leaning forward, "if I should let you keep that money for a few days, would you promise not to let the children see it. You must keep it right in this purse, and never let it out of your sight. I mean when any one is here you must keep it under your pillow, though of course when you are alone you can look at it."

Mrs. Rosa smiled gratefully, and Brenda taking the bills began to put them back in her portemonnaie. "I think," she said reflectively, "that I will keep one of these bills in case there are special things that Miss South or Julia may have planned for you." She could afford to be liberal in her feelings now that she was getting ready to do something that in the bottom of her heart she knew that the others who were interested in Mrs. Rosa would not approve. So she tied up the one hundred dollar bill, that she intended to keep, in a corner of her handkerchief, and placed it carefully in the bottom of her bag.

"Remember," she said, as she handed the little purse to Mrs. Rosa, "remember that you are not to spend this."

"O, I remember, I promise, miss," responded Mrs. Rosa, and just at this moment Nora reopened the door.

"Come, Brenda," she said, "Marie is outside waiting, and we ought to start for home at once. Good-bye, Mrs. Rosa, I suppose we shall hardly see you again in this uncomfortable room. Come on, Brenda, how long it takes you to put your gloves on!"

Brenda, of course was greatly relieved that Nora asked not another word about the money. But all the same her conscience had begun to trouble her, and after she reached home could she have thought of any way to do it, without betraying herself, she would have sent down to Mrs. Rosa's for the purse and its contents. On Sunday, at least in the morning, she had felt reassured.

"What possibility," she thought, "is there that anything could happen to the money. There might be a fire at the North End, but so there might be at the Back Bay. Perhaps she ought to have let her father put it in the bank. Well on Monday morning she would go down, perhaps before school

if she could wake early enough. But on Sunday it was out of the question." So she had reasoned until Sunday afternoon. Then as she heard Julia tell what Miss South had said to her, she became very nervous.

"Oh, dear," she thought. "Oh, dear, what *shall* I do if anything has happened to that money?"

XXIX

AFTER VACATION

On Monday morning as might have been expected, Brenda did not awake very early, and though she had a few uneasy minutes as she thought of Mrs. Rosa, on the whole she was too much absorbed by her preparations for school to worry over what had now become a very unpleasant subject to her.

At school all was bustle and excitement for the quarter hour preceding the opening. Some of the girls had been in New York, or even as far as Washington during the vacation, and they had much to tell of their doings. Even those girls who had remained in Boston had had very exciting experiences, or at least this seemed to have been the case judging by the eager tones in which they talked, and the effort of each girl to make herself heard above all the others. If there had been nothing else eventful among the girls of the set to which The Four belonged, the Bazaar would have afforded abundant food for discussion. Even the older girls were interested in this affair, and felt proud of the success of their schoolmates. This morning, too, was an exciting one at the school, because it marked the beginning of the spring term—the last term of regular school for several of Miss Crawdon's pupils, who next year were to take their place in society. Already in their spring gowns, modeled after the styles of their elders, they looked like young women, and their sweeping skirts and elaborate hats seemed to put a gulf between them and their younger companions. Among the girls of intermediate age there was also a special reason for dreading the spring term, for during the few remaining weeks, two or three of them besides Ruth and Julia were to concentrate all their energy on preparation for the preliminary college examinations. Not all of these girls were likely to go to college, but Miss Crawdon had encouraged them to prepare for the examinations, hoping that their success in passing them might lead them eventually to take the college course.

Even these girls, the less frivolous in the school, were chattering,—or perhaps I should say talking—as eagerly as the others. They had many little points to talk over regarding the requirements for college, the special tutoring they might need, and similar things. Julia, although she had been conscientious in her work during the winter, really did dread the coming ordeal. Examinations of any kind were new to her, for until the past winter her studies had always been carried on in an individual way. It was still a sore point with Brenda that Julia should think of going to college. She felt certain that teaching was her cousin's ultimate aim, and she did not like the idea at all. A few years before this Brenda had been remarkably free from anything resembling snobbishness. This may have been partly on account of her youth, although a more probable reason was that she had not in her earliest days so many snobbish friends to influence her. For in spite of her intimacy with Nora and Edith, Brenda permitted herself to be too greatly influenced by Belle. Frances Pounder, too, was only one of a group of girls much less simple-minded than Brenda, whom the latter had come to associate with rather closely. Any one of them would have indignantly denied a special regard for money. They would have been pained had you said that they made wealth a consideration in choosing their friends. Yet this was what it amounted to,—their way of cavilling at those who did not belong to their set. They said that family was the only consideration with them. But I doubt that a very poor girl, however good her family, would have been considered by them as welcome as a richer girl of poorer family. There was Julia, for example, who had in every way as strong a claim to consideration as Brenda—for were not the two cousins? Yet Frances invariably had some little supercilious thing to say about Julia—except in the presence of Nora and Edith—and the superciliousness came largely from the fact that she regarded Julia as a poor relation of the Barlows. "She can never be of any great use," Frances had reasoned, "to us;" including in the latter term all the girls with whom she was intimate, "and therefore what is the good in pretending to be fond of a strong-minded girl who may in a few years be a teacher in a public school? I honestly think that she would just as soon as not teach in a public school, Brenda, for I heard her praising public schools to the sky the other day. I'm sure I wonder that she does not go to a public school instead of to Miss Crawdon's. It would save your father and mother a lot of money," concluded Frances, forgetting that how Mr. and Mrs. Barlow spent their money was really no concern of hers. At times Frances laid aside her good manners. Brenda never knew just how to respond to speeches of this kind, and their chief effect was a little feeling of irritation that a cousin of hers should have put herself in this position of being classed with mere wage-earners. Brenda was no longer jealous of Julia in the ordinary sense. She had begun to lose the childish pettishness of her earlier years. Observation was teaching her that even in the one household there could be room for two girls near the same age, and that any privileges or affection accorded Julia did not interfere with her own rights. Indeed had she been perfectly honest with herself she would have admitted that Julia's companionship during the past winter had really been of great value to her. If any one were to tell her that Julia was not to be in the house with her another year, she would have admitted that she would be

lonely. In spite of the childishness which Brenda sometimes showed towards her cousin, the two girls saw a great deal of each other, and Brenda had lately acquired the habit of slipping into her cousin's room on her way up and downstairs to talk over little happenings of one kind or another.

But at school on this bright spring morning, Brenda felt some irritation at the sight of Julia and Ruth in close consultation with the Greek teacher. "He has such sharp eyes," whispered Frances, as she and Brenda passed him in the hallway. "Don't you feel as if he were always looking right through you, and saying, 'you're a little ignoramus; every one is who does not study Greek with me.'"

"Oh, how tiresome you are, Frances," responded Brenda crossly; "I dare say Miss Crawdon will say that, too, in the English class at the close of the next hour unless you have a better composition than I have."

"Why, Brenda Barlow, I had forgotten all about it, and we were expected to have it ready this morning. Have you written yours?"

"No," replied Brenda, "I forgot mine, too. There were so many other things to think of last week."

It happened, naturally enough, that Brenda and Frances and several other girls who had neglected their compositions in the same way received a reprimand from Miss Crawdon, who thereupon said,

"Since so little English written work has been handed in to-day, I will submit a composition of my own to you for criticism. It is very simple, and consists merely of a brief description of an evening party, supposed to be the work of a girl of about your age."

"Now listen, 'I have seldom had so nice a time as at Clara Gordon's party. In the first place the house is a particularly nice one, and the room where we danced has the nicest floor for waltzing that I ever saw. Then there were so many nice people there, all the girls and young men whom I know especially well, and some others from out of town. The orchestra played divinely. I never heard nicer music, and John Brent, my partner in the German, was just as nice to me as he could be. I wish that I could describe the nice supper that we had at nice little tables in the dining-room. There was every imaginable kind of nice thing, ices, salads, and cakes. The sherbet was so nice that some persons who sat down late could not get any. It was all gone. I got along very nicely, for John Brent looked out for me. I have not told you about the dresses, but they were all so nice that it is hard to say which was the nicest. I danced until I could hardly stand, for I was determined not to miss a single dance, but when my aunt tried to urge me to go home before twelve o'clock so that I wouldn't be tired to death, I wouldn't give in for a moment, but told her that I felt quite nicely.'

"There," said Miss Crawdon, "this is a longer composition than many of you have prepared to-day, and mine is voluntary, while many of you have failed to carry out what was really a command laid upon you. What do you think of my composition?"

While she was reading, some of the girls had rubbed their eyes in amazement. It did not take even the duller very long however to see that Miss Crawdon had been playing a practical joke upon them. She had always had a great deal to say to them on the necessity of a wide vocabulary, and she had been particularly severe towards those girls who made the adjective "nice" take the place of more expressive words. "You noticed, perhaps," continued Miss Crawdon, "that I have not been extravagant in the matter of adjectives, at least I have been extravagant in the use of only one, for I have been able to make 'nice' serve in almost every instance where an adjective was needed, and in none of these instances was it used in its own proper sense."

Those girls who had not previously seen the joke, now glanced at one another in amazement. Yes, it really was a practical joke, this little composition by Miss Crawdon, and they had only begun to find it out. Then Miss Crawdon spoke again.

"I will not pretend that my composition has cost me much effort. Indeed, I only wrote it here in school in the few minutes at my disposal before the opening hour. I need not say also that it is the result of a few hastily jotted notes, based on scraps of conversation which came to me as I passed various groups of my pupils, at recess or before school. But, seriously," and all eyes were fixed on her, "I do wish that you would avoid the word 'nice' altogether for the present, unless you can resist the temptation to make it do duty on all occasions. Now, hoping that you will take this lesson to heart, I will leave you to Miss South, who will talk to you for a quarter of an hour on the subject of letter writing."

Thereupon Miss South took Miss Crawdon's place, and the girls had no opportunity to exchange opinions regarding Miss Crawdon's humorous, if brief, essay.

Miss Crawdon and Miss South were joint teachers of this class in English. Miss South had charge of it oftener than Miss Crawdon. But the latter had general supervision of it, and as the first hour of certain mornings was given to it, occasionally Miss South was permitted to arrive at school a little late, while Miss Crawdon took her place. When Miss South was late it was not on account of any dilatoriness of her own; it was usually business of Miss Crawdon's that detained her—for she was Miss Crawdon's trusted friend—and she often had to go to the bank, or to hold an interview with an anxious parent, or to do some other thing by which Miss Crawdon might be spared care or unnecessary steps.

On this special Monday morning, however, Miss South was not only late, but she looked a little

worried. Many of the girls had heard of the newly discovered relationship between her and Madame Du Launy, and in the quarter hour before school, the story of the discovery, with a few slight variations from accuracy, had been talked over very freely. When Miss South did not appear to take charge of the English class, most of her pupils assumed that she was no longer to be a teacher at Miss Crawdon's. They were therefore astonished when she entered the room, as ready to assume her school duties as if she had had no change of fortune.

Yet, as I have said, Miss South looked a little worried, and her glance wandered two or three times in the direction of Brenda in a way that caused Brenda's conscience to reassert itself.

"Oh, dear," she thought, "what shall I do if Miss South has heard about that money? Of course it is no concern of hers, but still, but still——"

Now Brenda did not know exactly what she dreaded, for her idea of the value of money was very vague. She only knew that she had not done right in leaving the two hundred dollars with Mrs. Rosa. Yet she consoled herself with the reflection, "At any rate I have a third of that money safe at home, and that is a great deal to have saved, if anything has happened to the rest."

Nora, too, had come late to school, though Brenda had been too much carried away by the excitement of seeing the other girls again to notice this. Later in the morning Nora slipped into her accustomed place, and her face, too, though Brenda had not observed it, looked a little more serious than usual.

It was not until the end of school that the storm burst. At recess Nora, contrary to her usual custom, had remained at her desk studying. But after school she ran up to Brenda, with an "Oh, how *could* you, Brenda? We have lost almost the whole advantage from the Bazaar! Miss South and I were down at the Rosas this morning—I promised not to say anything to you, until after school—and, well, Miss South will tell you. I can't bear to talk about it."

"Brenda," said Miss South, drawing near, "I suppose that you would like me to tell you about Mrs. Rosa's money, yet I do not feel that it is a matter with which I ought to meddle. I had nothing to do with raising the money, only I have been interested in the plan by means of which you all wished to help the poor woman."

"We all think that you have been very kind," interposed Nora, politely.

"Ah, I have been. I am very much interested in Mrs. Rosa and her family—and so I know is Brenda," for she saw a cloud settling on the young girl's face.

"But you were not exactly wise, Brenda, in leaving that money with Mrs. Rosa."

"Has it been stolen?" gasped Brenda.

"Well, not exactly stolen, although Mrs. Rosa no longer has it."

"Brenda," interrupted Nora, "I certainly begged you not to leave it there. Though I never imagined that you would do so."

"Well, Brenda," continued Miss South, "Nora received a letter this morning from Angelina, written apparently in great haste last night. What she said was very vague, but she spoke of the loss of two hundred dollars in such a way as to recall to Nora your suggestion that you might leave the money with Mrs. Rosa. Nora was so excited that she left her breakfast—so she tells me—almost untasted. She gave her mother a hasty account of what Angelina had told her, and her mother advised her to see me. The upshot was that we went at once to Mrs. Rosa's, and there we found that the young man who has been troubling her lately to pay a debt which he claimed that she owed his mother had called to see her soon after you and Nora were at the house. He caught sight of the purse that you had left with Mrs. Rosa, and when her head was turned, pulled it from under the pillow and began to examine its contents. Naturally he was astonished to find that it contained two hundred dollars, and when Mrs. Rosa saw him with the purse in his hand he refused to give it up to her. The poor woman was alone and very weak, and so completely in his power that she could not refuse when he compelled her to tell him how the money had come into her possession. When he learned that it had been raised for her at a Bazaar, and that it was to be used for her benefit he seemed very much pleased. 'It is really your own,' he said, 'or else the young ladies would not have left it with you. If it is to do you any good you had better give it to me to keep you out of prison, for that is where I shall send you for not paying your debts, unless you give me this money.' So by continued threats he finally made her sign a paper saying that she paid the money willingly to rid herself of a debt owed to his mother. He even made her think that he had done her a great favor in not trying to get the fifty dollars—the balance of the debt which he claimed."

Brenda had listened with an almost dazed expression while Miss South told this strange story.

"But he did not really take it, did he?" she murmured.

"He not only took it," said Miss South, "but we have reason to think that he has left the country with it. His friends say that he had been getting ready for weeks to go to South America, and that he expected to sail from New York this morning."

"Can't he be stopped?" asked Brenda. Her voice sounded very weak, and her face was not at all the face of the usually cheerful young girl.

"He cannot be stopped now, Brenda, and I doubt if in any case we could recover the money. He was very clever in getting Mrs. Rosa to sign that paper. If he were in Boston we might recover the money on the ground that it did not belong to Mrs. Rosa, and that therefore she had no right to give it away. But we can hardly make that a ground for any action now. Besides, I know that she thought that the money belonged to her, in some way you gave her that impression, and any testimony of hers would not help us very much if you had a case in court against young Silva."

"But she knew," moaned poor Brenda, "that the money was only to help her to go to the country. I am sure that I said so to her."

"You cannot expect a woman of her limited intelligence, a foreigner, too, who only half understands English, to grasp the meaning of all that is said to her. The fact was clear to her that you had brought her some money, and when her creditor claimed it, she believed that he had a right to it, and that to use it in this way would benefit her more than to spend it in going to the country."

"Well, it seems to me that she just deceived me," cried Brenda, angrily.

"No," responded Nora, "you must be fair. Miss South and I both believe that she didn't mean to do anything with the money when she took it from you, but she thought that you had given it to her——"

"And she never has been as anxious to move from the city as we have been to have her," continued Miss South, "yet it is so much the best thing, and our plans are all carefully made, that I hope we can carry them out."

"I have one hundred dollars at home," said Brenda, "but, oh, dear, I do not like to think about it; how angry Belle and Edith will be. Do they know yet?"

"No," said Miss South, "I thought it better to tell you first. Nora and I are the only persons except Mrs. Rosa and her friends who know anything about the money. But of course you must tell the other girls as well as your father and mother. It might be worth while for them to consult a lawyer, at least they might feel better satisfied. For my own part, I am confident that the money cannot be recovered."

"Come, come, Brenda, now do cheer up," cried Nora. "It's no use crying about spilled milk, and perhaps we can think of some way to straighten things out."

"I might sell my watch," said Brenda, as they walked away from the school, "and give up my allowance for the rest of the year, for it is just as if I had thrown that money away—and we all worked so hard for it."

"Well, we all had a good time out of the Bazaar," replied the optimistic Nora, "and perhaps the money has done some good in going to Mrs. Rosa's creditor. I shouldn't wonder if we could get a subscription for all that we need to help the Rosas," and so Nora chattered on, in her efforts to cheer Brenda. For the latter, always at one extreme or the other, was now very low-spirited.

XXX

BRENDA'S FOLLY

It would make a long story to tell what every one said on the subject of Brenda's folly. For this was the name given it, and by this name it was long remembered, much to Brenda's discomfiture, when the subject of Mrs. Rosa and her money was brought up.

There were so many persons who had a right to express an opinion, that poor Brenda felt that simply to listen to what they said was punishment enough. There were all the girls who had worked for the Bazaar, and all their parents, and all the girls at school who hadn't worked for the Bazaar, but had done their share of buying. There were the boys from Harvard, whose criticism took the form of mild chaffing, and there were—but the list, it seemed to Brenda, included every one whom she had ever known, and some with whom she was sure that she had no acquaintance.

Mr. and Mrs. Barlow were especially severe, and told her that she must gradually reimburse The Four from her allowance. "For the money," said Mr. Barlow, "did not belong to you, you held it in trust for Edith, and Belle, and Nora, and indeed I wonder how they ever came to entrust it entirely to you. You are too heedless a girl to have any real responsibility, and I only hope that your thoughtlessness is not going to deprive Mrs. Rosa of the country home that Miss South and the others have planned for her."

Poor Brenda! Before that fatal Saturday two hundred dollars had seemed to her very little, but now it seemed an almost infinite amount. Her father, of course, could easily have given her the sum at once, but he preferred to make her realize her heedlessness. Indeed the lesson had already begun to benefit her; for the first time in her life Brenda realized the value of money. How in the world could she herself ever save the required sum from her allowance. Why, if she should not spend a cent upon her own little wants it would take her more than two years to get together two hundred dollars. For her allowance it should be explained, was large enough only to

provide little extra things that she needed, or thought that she needed. She had not to use any of it for clothes, or other useful purposes. Yet when Brenda began to count the things that she must give up for two years, or longer, it seemed as if she could hardly bear the sacrifice. But her sense of justice prevailed, and at last she admitted that she deserved this punishment.

"Poor Brenda!" said Mr. Barlow to Mrs. Barlow, as Brenda walked away after this interview with her head bent as if in reflection. "Poor Brenda! This lesson will be a hard one, but if we are ready to help her out of every difficulty, she will never be able to stand alone. I, at least, could not feel justified in coming to the rescue just now."

After this conversation with her father, Brenda walked upstairs sadly, at least her head drooped a little, and any one who had followed her to her room would have found that the first thing she did was to fling herself, face downward on that broad chintz-covered lounge of hers. While she lay there, she did not hear a gentle knock at the door, nor the soft footstep of some one entering the room.

"Why, Brenda Barlow," cried a pleasant voice. "Why, Brenda Barlow, why are you lying in this downcast position?"



"WHY, BRENDA BARLOW, WHY ARE YOU LYING IN THIS DOWNCAST POSITION?"

At first there was no reply from the prostrate figure. Then Julia—for it was she who had entered the room—ventured a little nearer, and repeated her question in a somewhat different form.

Thereupon Brenda sprang to her feet, and though she attempted to smile at Julia, there were very evident traces of tears on her cheek.

"Brenda," said Julia, "you know that I am very apt to go straight to the point, if I wish to say anything, and so I will not apologize for what I am going to say. I am sure that you won't be offended if I tell you that you are thinking too much about the loss of Mrs. Rosa's money. I have been noticing you for several days." (It was now about a week since Miss South had made the discovery of the loss.)

As Brenda made no reply, Julia continued, this time a little timidly, "Nora and Edith feel sorry that you will not take an interest in the plans for moving Mrs. Rosa to Shiloh. You know we have been out to see the cottage, and we missed you dreadfully. Belle wasn't there either, but since the Bazaar she hasn't been as much interested in the Rosas. But we thought that you really had some interest."

"Why, yes, I have," replied Brenda. She did not resent Julia's "we" in speaking of the efforts now making for the Rosas, although not so very long before Brenda herself had opposed having Julia considered one of "The Four."

"Why, yes, I have an interest in Mrs. Rosa," repeated Brenda, then with a return of her old light-heartedness. "Two hundred dollars' worth of interest, and what bothers me is to know how to

turn it into capital." (You see from this that Brenda had not altogether forgotten her arithmetic.)

"There, Brenda, that is just what I have been wishing to speak about to you. I have been afraid that you have been worrying over this. For Uncle Thomas has told me that he has decided not to help you to pay it."

Again the girl to whom she was speaking seemed unlike the old Brenda, for she did not resent the fact that Julia had apparently been taken into Mr. Barlow's confidence to so great an extent.

"Now, Brenda," continued Julia, "as I have said before, I always prefer to come straight to the point, and so I must tell you that the two hundred dollars has been paid to Miss South—the other girls have voted to make her the treasurer—for Mrs. Rosa's benefit."

"Where in the world,—" began Brenda, in a most astonished tone. Then with a glance at Julia's face, over which an expression of self-consciousness was spreading, "Why, Julia Bourne, had you anything, did you, why I really believe that you had something to do with it. Did you get some one to give you the money?"

"No," replied Julia, with a look of relief, "oh, no, no, I made no effort to collect money."

Brenda's wits were now well at work.

"There, Julia, I begin to see; it seemed funny when you paid one hundred dollars for that picture, at least I thought very little about it then, but to-day when I was going over everything connected with the Rosas in my mind, it occurred to me that one hundred dollars was a rather large amount for you to pay, and I meant to ask you how it happened—" then stammering a little, as she realized that this was not a very polite way of putting things, "at least, I know that I should never have so much money saved up from *my* allowance for any one thing. But you are more sensible than I, and of course you can make money go a great deal farther."

Julia smiled pleasantly, for she understood in spite of a certain confusion of statement, pretty well what her cousin meant.

But still she did not answer immediately, and Brenda, who was now thoroughly herself, exclaimed,

"Do tell me, Julia, did you give that two hundred dollars to Mrs. Rosa, that is, was it a present from you?"

For a moment Julia was silent, then she replied with some hesitation, "Yes, yes, although I had not meant to tell you, it is my little contribution to the plan you all have made for helping the Rosas. I have been wishing to do something, and it seemed better to give this now, when the money was so much needed, rather than to wait until later, as at one time I had thought of doing. Though I am sure," she continued modestly, "that there would have been little trouble in raising the money, only I thought that it was better for me to make my contribution promptly now, while you were—"

"Then it was just to help me; so that there would not be so much fault finding with me. Why you are a perfect angel, Julia," cried Brenda.

"Hardly," said Julia, laughing. "Hardly an angel, though if this makes you feel more comfortable, I shall be very happy."

Brenda was on the point of asking her cousin how she happened to have all this money, for the more she thought about it, the stranger it seemed.

Before she could ask a question, Julia however had bidden her good-bye, saying that she had an engagement with Edith, and Brenda was forced to wait an opportunity for getting the information she wished from her mother. After all, the explanation was fairly simple. Brenda and Belle without good grounds had decided at the first that Julia was entirely dependent on Mr. Barlow. Instead of this Julia had a good income of her own, which when she came of age would be largely increased. The girls had wrongly assumed that Julia was studying and working diligently simply because she expected at some time to be obliged to earn her living, whereas the real motive behind all her efforts was her genuine love of study. Had circumstances made it necessary Julia would have enjoyed the teacher's profession, as a means of earning her living. In fact sometimes when she thought about her future she found herself regretting that she could not adopt this profession. But she knew that the ranks were already fairly crowded, and she felt that she would have no right to enter a profession that could barely support those who needed it as a means of livelihood. Brenda and Belle had made many mistakes not only in their estimation of her fortune but in the reading of her character.

Brenda was beginning to find out her own mistakes, and when once she was convinced of a fault she was seldom slow to acknowledge it. In the end she would have been fair to Julia even if her cousin had not established a certain claim upon her by her generosity towards the Rosas. For really by giving the money so promptly she had saved Brenda from a continuation of annoying criticism. Two hundred dollars was not an extremely large sum for a rich girl to give to a good cause, but Julia's delicacy and thoughtfulness made Brenda her firm friend. Belle, naturally enough, was not so ready to change her point of view. When she did permit herself to show greater cordiality towards Julia, it was rather because she had a full appreciation of what it would mean to her to have a girl of Julia's wealth her friend. It was hard for Belle to take an impersonal

view of anything, and this, perhaps, was largely the reason why she became of less consequence in the little set which had been called "The Four Club." As the others of the quartette grew older, Belle's selfishness became more and more disagreeable to them. Although there was still a quartette of friends, Julia began to have the fourth place, while Belle gradually withdrew to the more congenial society of Frances Pounder. But in saying this I am anticipating a little, for Belle retained her interest in the Rosas long enough to be one of those who helped move the little family to the little house which had been chosen for them in Shiloh.

XXXI

THE SHILOH PICNIC

Miss South and Julia were the leaders in the work of removing the Rosas from the city. Julia showed remarkable ability, and the more she had to do the better she seemed to do it. Nor did her lessons suffer because of this outside interest. The day of removal was continually changing. It was put off from week to week with one feeble excuse or another on the part of Mrs. Rosa. Miss South was more patient with the poor woman than were her young helpers. She realized that the poor woman could not be expected to appreciate all the advantages to result from the change, and she sympathized with Mrs. Rosa's reluctance to leave her old neighbors to go among strangers. Indeed it was the end of May before they were really off. On the Saturday before their departure The Four, and two or three of the other girls who had been especially interested, went out to Shiloh to see the little cottage which had been fitted up for the Rosas. It had only six rooms, and these were not very large, but what fun the girls had in exploring every nook and corner! Floors and walls had all been newly painted,—some in rather bright colors. There were small mats in front of each bed, and one in the centre of the room intended for dining-room, but besides these, there were no floor coverings. The bedsteads were iron, painted brown, and all the other furniture was of the simplest possible style.

"I am afraid," said Julia, "that Angelina will be disappointed in not finding a piano; she has an idea that we are considering her education as much as her mother's health in making this change, and as she happens to be very anxious to take music lessons she will expect some kind of a musical instrument if not a piano."

"What nonsense!" cried Belle. "Angelina ought to be thankful that she has not been sent away as a servant. She is certainly old enough to live out."

"If it were not for her mother's being so weak, undoubtedly we should make some effort to put her at service. But with all those younger children, for the present Angelina will have sufficient practice in house-work, and she is to work every day for a boarding-house keeper; if the family stays out here I have a plan that will be of great value not only to Angelina, but to the rest of them. In fact," concluded Miss South, "Angelina, if she takes kindly to the scheme, may serve as a model for a number of other girls at the North End, who stand sadly in need of such training as she will be able to get in this comfortable house."

"Oh, do tell us about it now," begged Nora, "I know that you have some plan to carry out—Domestic Science—isn't that what you call it,—but I haven't the least idea what you really intend to do."

Miss South smiled at the eagerness which Nora displayed, smiled indulgently, but in reply, said merely,

"I am afraid that there will hardly be time now, but in the early autumn, if there is no opportunity before you go away, I am going to have a special meeting to which you will all be invited, at which I will tell you of a scheme which with your coöperation as well as that of some other interested persons I hope to carry out next season. There really is not time to say much about it now, for Philip and his friends will soon be here and we must all go to work to prepare our tea."

Then the girls set to work with a will, and in addition to the delicious things sent out in hampers, they prepared several dainty dishes. Many of these delicacies were the result of the practice they had had in the cooking class of the past two seasons. Julia set the table with the new dishes that filled Mrs. Rosa's corner closet,—the closet, that is, that was to be Mrs. Rosa's. No one criticised the thickness of the cups, nor the crudeness of the colors with which the cups and plates were decorated, for by the time the boys came they were all so hungry that they could have eaten and drunk from plates and cups of tin.

It was rather a picnic supper on the whole, as the table was not large enough for the group of merry young people who wished to gather around it. Some of them, therefore, sat out on the steps, and on the tiny little piazza at the corner, and laughed and talked in at the top of their voices in the intervals between courses. Though each course consisted of little more than a sandwich, or a stuffed egg, or a salad, those who in turn took the part of waiters and waitresses served them with all the pomp that might have had its proper place at a great feast. It was all in fun, and the fun was of the heartiest kind. Then when the supper was over, boys and girls—the dignified Philip, the serious Will, as well as fun loving Brenda and Nora, set to work with energy, and washed and wiped dishes, and put things in order, so that the little house showed not the

slightest trace of "invasion of the Goths and Vandals," as Brenda said, with an unusual correctness of historical allusion. There was a delightful drive, to wind up the evening, around the borders of the lake which forms one of the attractions of Shiloh, and when just at dark they stepped aboard the train they all declared that it was the pleasantest expedition that they had known for—well for a long, long time.

"If Mrs. Rosa were to take summer boarders, I am sure that I should love to come out here for a month," said Ruth, "I mean if she only hadn't so many children to fill up the house, so completely."

"If you were to come," said Will, in an undertone, "I am sure that I should wish to spend the summer in Shiloh, too. I made friends with the owner of the omnibus that brought us up, and I rather think that I could get him to take me in."

Ruth blushed as Will made this speech, for even she could not help noticing the decided preference that he showed for her society. It had been his actions rather than his words that had attracted the attention of the others, for he seemed in no way afraid of having his preference known. Ruth was neither foolish, nor vain, but she had to admit to herself that Will's little attentive ways were rather gratifying.

In the cars on the way home, Philip and Julia happened to sit together. Philip was still somewhat conscious in his manner, for he could not forget that he was a sophomore. Yet with Julia he always got on capitally, and they had really become very good friends.

"Do you see much of Madame Du Launy now?" he asked. "I hear that you and she were great friends for a time."

"Oh, we are now," answered Julia, "only naturally since she and Miss South have discovered their relationship, I do not go there as often as I did earlier in the spring."

"Then this story about Miss South is really true, she actually *is* the old lady's granddaughter!" said Philip. "I heard a lot about it just after the Bazaar, but in some way I thought that it would prove to be a mistake. You know that things like that do not often happen out of books."

"Oh, this is perfectly true," answered Julia, "and the whole thing is just as interesting as it can be. It seems very sad that Madame Du Launy should have lived a lonely life for so long when here was a granddaughter close at hand, and a grandson not so very far away. She could have been such a help to them, and they to her."

"It shows that an old lady can't afford not to know who her grandchildren are, and where they live," responded Philip, "especially if one of them is as pretty and clever as Miss South."

"Oh, well, there were special reasons in this case," answered Julia.

"Then doesn't it seem queer," continued Philip, "that you yourself should have had the credit all winter of being a poor dependent—isn't that what they say in novels? How do you feel now when you know that every one knows that you are an heiress?" he concluded, mischievously.

"Oh, pretty well, I thank you," answered Julia, adopting his tone. "You see I never imagined for a moment that people attached any importance to my having or not having money. Indeed, to be perfectly fair, I cannot see any change in any one since the discovery was made."

"Whew!" whistled Philip, "not even in Belle?"

After a moment of silence, Julia replied, "I do not suppose that under any circumstances Belle and I could ever have been great friends. Our tastes are so unlike. In the early winter many little things troubled me. I often felt neglected when The Four left me out of their plans, especially while they were working for the Bazaar. But at length I decided that I ought not to expect Brenda to treat me at once like an intimate friend. I knew that in time she would understand me better, and this is what has really happened. But Nora and Edith were always so kind to me that I had a delightful winter."

"Then pity," said Philip, with a smile, "would be utterly wasted on Brenda's cousin?"

"It would be utterly wasted on her," replied Julia, cheerfully, "especially since she has been permitted to make a fifth in Brenda's Four Club."

THE END

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