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PEGGY PARSONS
A HAMPTON FRESHMAN

BY
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Contents

CHAPTER I—MAKING AN IMPRESSION
CHAPTER II—SUITE 22
CHAPTER III—PEGGY'S MASTERPIECE
CHAPTER IV—NEW PAINT AND POETRY
CHAPTER V—MORNING GLORY
CHAPTER VI—AS OTHERS SEE US
CHAPTER VII—CINDERELLA
CHAPTER VIII—INDIAN SUMMER
CHAPTER IX—THE HOUSE DANCE
CHAPTER X—TINSEL AND SPANGLES
CHAPTER XII—THE AUCTION
CHAPTER XIII—FEET OF CLAY
CHAPTER XIV—SPRING TERM

INTRODUCTION

Last year Peggy Parsons and Katherine Foster were room-mates at Andrews Preparatory School.

Their escapades and their hunger for good times and adventure kept them from being great favorites of the principal there, but they were loved by the girls of the school and were soon invested with a degree of leadership.

"Peggy Parsons at Prep School," the first book in this series, tells how much happiness they managed to crowd into a single year.

A would-be charitable enterprise of Peggy's is recounted, also. And if she had never undertaken it, mistaken though she was, she could not have gone to Hampton, and the present volume would never have been written.

Mr. Huntington, a rich old man, whom people believed to be poverty-stricken because of the way he lived, became a great friend of Peggy's as the result of a Thanksgiving dinner party she arranged for the cooking-class of her school to give him.

She and Katherine were instrumental, through an adventure in playing amateur detectives, in finding Mr. Huntington's grandson, of whom he had lost track.

The grandson—the "Jim" of the present book—was an Amherst student about Peggy's own age.

Katherine Foster had planned to go to Hampton College, but Peggy could not see her way clear. The room-mates were broken-hearted at the prospect of not being together for another year. After Katherine had been assigned another room-mate, Gloria Hazeltine, Peggy gave up hope of going and could not plan with any interest for any other kind of year.

Mr. Huntington then stepped in and turned over for Peggy's use the income from a dear little group of bungalows which he had named "Parsons Court."

So Katherine and Peggy were enabled to look forward to college together just as they had their prep school.

PEGGY PARSONS
A HAMPTON FRESHMAN

CHAPTER I—MAKING AN IMPRESSION

“Katherine Foster!”

“Peggy Parsons!”

Two suit-cases went banging down on the wooden platform and two radiant figures hurled themselves into each other’s arms, oblivious of the shriek of departing trains, the rattling of baggage trucks, and the jostling crowds who were at liberty to laugh at their impulsiveness.

For this was Springfield, where East meets West on its way to half a dozen New England colleges, and where every fall the same scenes of joyous greeting are enacted with the annual accompaniment of little squeals of delighted welcome and many glad kisses.

“Well, Peggy, you look just the same as ever!”

“It’s been a perfect *century*, Katherine! Going right up to Hampton? Taking the 9:10? So am I. Oh, so *much* to talk about——”

Breathlessly chattering all the while, the two girls in blue serge, who had been room-mates last year at preparatory school, gathered up their suit-cases again and crossed the tracks to the other side of the station to wait for the Hampton train. Engines steamed along before and behind them, but neither looked away from the other’s glowing face during the crossing, nor did they cease both to talk at once until they were actually seated in their train some time later, packed in with a mob of laughing and attractive girls with suit-cases in the aisles, in the racks over their heads, and in their laps.

“Isn’t it wonderful that we met this way?” cried Katherine, while Peggy was trying to hand the remaining untraveled bits of their tickets to the perspiring conductor. “We’ll see our new rooms for the first time together, and we’ll make a very nice impression on the inhabitants of Ambler House because we can plan out some kind of grand entry to appeal to them.”

Peggy laughed. “It’s an awfully *big* place we’re going to,” she said, looking about at the swaying crowds of girls. “I’m just beginning to realize it. It will take more than our planning to make any impression at all, I think. And maybe nobody will *ever* notice us. It won’t be like Andrews.”

“You’re still Peggy Parsons, aren’t you? And I’m still your room-mate, Katherine Foster. *And* we’re going to live in one of the grandest suites on campus—oh, I don’t believe they will pass us by altogether.” And Katherine gave a little swaggering motion of her head that sent Peggy into gales of laughter.

“You’re conceited and snobbish, friend room-mate,” she giggled. “The summer has spoiled you.”

But Katherine smiled back complacently into her eyes.

Suddenly there was a curious stir all about them. The girls who had been standing in the aisle were all pushing toward the end of the car, and those seated were struggling up from under their luggage, their faces bright with anticipation.

“Katherine,” whispered Peggy, “I think we’re there!”

Oh, the world of meaning in that one sentence. The hopes, the expectations, the pleasures and good times for four whole years were summed up in it, and Katherine silently nodded her head, unable to speak.

The brakeman was already calling out something that he meant for “Hampton,” and he rounded out his shout with the long-drawn wail, “Don’t leave any articles in the car!”

As if any of those precious and bulky suit-cases could be forgotten! The stampede began in earnest as soon as the train stopped, and Peggy and Katherine found themselves swept out to the platform and jostled down the steps and thrust forward toward the station of their own college town.

The girls from the train rushed this way and that, and other girls from the college rushed to meet them. Katherine spied a taxi that had still two vacant seats.

“Come, taxi,—quick,” she gasped in Peggy’s ear. And the two went running forward, their suit-cases bumping and thumping against their knees. Before they reached the machine they saw that they were racing with a mob of other girls, all frankly eager to be the first to secure places in the last cab with a vacancy.

In every direction other taxis were whirring off, filled to overflowing with girls and bags, and here and there the rumble of hoofs mixed in, as a pair of horses drawing an old-fashioned cab likewise laden dashed off.

Peggy and Katherine were panting. It had become a very exciting race. A taller girl, with a lighter suit-case, sprinted ahead of them and reached the taxi first. But she stopped to ask the driver his price, and while she was doing so Katherine and Peggy piled in.

The taller girl turned to take her rightful place and saw two hot and beaming young ladies in the exact corner she had run so hard to claim.

She stepped back with a chagrined laugh, and Peggy and Katherine laughed too, with the utmost good nature, now that they had attained what they sought. They heard the other two occupants of their car murmuring the names of college houses to the chauffeur, and with a thrill of pride Peggy said, “Ambler House.”

“And you, miss?” the driver asked Katherine.

“Why, Ambler House, too, of course,” she said, and then blushed scarlet for fear the other girls would think her an idiot, for at the moment it had indeed seemed to her that even a taxi-cab driver ought to know that she was going to live in college wherever Peggy was.

The quaint, prim streets of the New England town were nothing but so much colored confusion to the eyes of the four in the cab. Each one had a consciousness that this perhaps was the height of life: that they would never touch anything better than this again. Riding along thus, packed tight in a taxi, through Hampton, to college for the first time.

They felt as if all previous experiences were washed away—and all future ones unknown and unguessed at. Everything was before them—the glory of being young singing in their hearts and going to their heads like wine—what wonder that they felt life had been made just for them and was already beginning to yield its fruits into their eager hands!

The cab went grating up a hill, and in a moment there was a bright stretch of green before them, with any number of red brick buildings on it, some of them covered with ivy. Hampton College was spread before their gaze without any warning to prepare them. But each girl knew, as if she had seen it often, that this was really College.

Katherine and Peggy craned their necks quite frankly out of the window, and when they drew their heads in, the other girls followed their example shamelessly.

“It looks—nice,” ventured Peggy, with a long sigh of satisfaction.

“It looks just—the way I thought it would,” answered one of the strangers, and then gave a little embarrassed laugh because her voice had sounded so thrilled.

The taxi made a sharp turn, and they were actually inside the sacred precincts of Campus—there on each side were the rows of college houses, and in the distance was a magnificent structure of stone. The morning sun shone over it all. A sense of homelikeness and a strange comfortable feeling of love for it came, even at this first view, into their hearts.

“We are to live in one of these houses,” Peggy rapturously reminded Katherine. “In a moment the taxi will stop and it will be *our* house. Katherine, pinch my arm. It all seems so queerly familiar, maybe I’m just dreaming it after all.”

But the taxi did stop in a minute or two, and the driver was opening the door and saying “Ambler House” in a matter-of-fact tone. The two other girls nodded good-bye to Peggy and Katherine. Katherine stepped down and was handed her bag. Peggy was conscious that the long porch of the brick house before which they had drawn up was filled with girls interestedly watching for freshman newcomers. She thought of their plan to make a good initial impression, and descended as gracefully as might be, with a charming little smile of eagerness and anticipation that was not assumed at all.

The driver was lifting down her heavy suit-case. And then quite unexpectedly came the fall that follows pride. Only, while the pride had been Peggy’s, the fall was her suit-case’s.

Thump! Thud! it went smashing down to the ground, and its bulging sides flew apart, and hair-brushes, mirrors, nightgown, kimono, and powder boxes and tooth paste all shot out in every direction and rolled ignominiously about on the campus lawn, in full view of the crowded porch of Ambler House.

Peggy’s crimson ears caught shrieks of laughter, her tear-filled eyes saw girlish figures doubling up in mirth—and under her feet and round about, the ground was white with powder, redolent with oozing perfume and strewn with her most intimate belongings.

There was something about it all that had the awful publicity of a nightmare. Such things couldn’t really happen. Oh, if she could only melt away—or wake up or even crawl back into the taxi and hide.

“Shall I help you pick the things up?”

“I’m afraid this powder can never be scraped up again. I’ve put some back into the box, but there’s quite a bit of grass and gravel mixed with it.”

She was completely surrounded by helpful girls, who had flown out from the porch, their laughter still on their lips, and were now kneeling and stooping everywhere about the scene of the catastrophe.

“Your clean shirtwaist,” cried one of these helpers sympathetically, as she pulled a fragile bit of dimity and Cluny lace from under the taxi-cab where it had fluttered. “It won’t be good for very much now until it’s laundered.”

Into the suit-case the things were tumbled with despatch but not neatness. The taxi driver was contrite, but he did not offer to touch any of the scattered feminine luggage and insisted quite audibly that there had been “too many things in there anyway.”

Katherine paid him, eying him reproachfully, and he chugged away, leaving the two heart-broken freshmen greatly discomfited by the mishap.

Thus it was that the two girls who had hoped to make so attractive an impression slunk into

Ambler House with a straggling procession of merry followers behind them carrying odds and ends that refused to be crammed back into the damaged suit-case. And thus it came about also that they looked about Suite 22 with blind eyes and failed to realize that it was one of “the grandest suites on Campus” and overlooked Paradise.

Peggy sat down in a little heap on the window seat in their living-room and didn’t even appreciate that it *was* a window seat, and one of very, very few at college.

“I’m glad it—didn’t happen in Springfield,” was the first thing Peggy said.

“Ye-es,” admitted Katherine, standing uncertainly in the middle of the room. And then she added irrelevantly: “I think there are awfully nice girls in this house.”

Peggy buried her little burning face in the upholstery of the window seat. “Do—you?” she asked in muffled tones. “I didn’t dare look at them.”

“I thought they seemed a very—*jolly* set,” pursued Katherine tentatively.

She was rewarded by a rueful chuckle from the figure on the window seat.

“And anyway,” Katherine followed up her advantage, “they *did notice* us,—more than they do most freshmen. Paid rather particular attention, in fact.”

That was too much for happy-go-lucky little Peggy and she laughed until she shook, even while the contradictory tears ran forth from her swollen eyes and trickled through her fingers onto the green leather seat-cushion.

“I—I’ll—never go down to luncheon, Kathie,” she protested between a laugh and a sob. “I’ll never go outside this room again. I can’t possibly bear to look them in the face.”

Rap-tap-tap!

Katherine whirled toward the door and Peggy sat up.

Rap-tap-*tap*! It was more insistent this time, and the knob of the door turned even as Peggy called out a none too cordial “Come” that broke pathetically in the middle.

A dark-haired girl entered impetuously, a sparkle in her friendly eyes. Peggy remembered her with an inward qualm as one of the most appreciative spectators on the porch a few moments ago.

“Aren’t you folks *crazy* about your rooms? Have you seen the view over Paradise? It’s wonderful. I’ve been wondering who would have these. I live right across the hall—and I—I——”

Those sparkling eyes fairly danced now, and Peggy became aware of a tiny package being thrust forward by the pretty visitor.

“I saw yours was trampled, so I brought you some tooth-paste!” finished the girl, to their amazement.

She had scarcely left them, swinging mentally between indignation and bewildered gratitude, when a pair of girls came unceremoniously in upon them without knocking at all, and stood hesitating before them, arms entwined about each other and holding something half out of sight.

“I always think it’s a ghastly thing to be without powder,” one of them finally mustered the courage to say, “and I came away with two boxes. It’s rice powder, flesh tint,—I hope you like that as well as white; and I brought you some—and a chamois. Yours was muddy. I picked it up, but I parted with it again. I knew you wouldn’t possibly want it,—it couldn’t make your face anything but *black*.”

“And here’s a—waist.” The other was speaking now. “I thought you might be—traveling light, and —since nobody’s trunks have come, please wear this down to luncheon. It’s my *best* one, so I won’t deprecate it at all. I think it’s a darling, and if you’ll give it its first wearing, I’ll be only too happy.”

Katherine glanced across at Peggy and smiled. Her room-mate was wiping away the last gleam of moisture from her eyes, and the inner sunlight of her spirit was beginning to shine through the gloom.

She rose and went toward the girls, but they laid their offerings on a chair and withdrew. While Peggy was looking after them appreciatively, another stranger entered on a similar mission.

For fifteen minutes, while Peggy and Katherine were making themselves presentable for luncheon, the gift-bearers kept coming, leaving their present on the dressing-table in the bedroom or the window seat in the living-room, sometimes saying nothing at all, and sometimes a great deal.

“You won’t mind going down now?” Katherine asked.

“N-not so much,” admitted Peggy, putting dabs of perfume out of various bottles here and there on her cheered-up countenance, on her fluffy gold-brown hair, and on the new waist, contributed.

For at least six girls had brought perfume and loyal Peggy meant to have one represented just as truly as another, so she followed this neutral course of using all,—with a resulting odor that was anything but neutral.

As she went into the big dining-room, each giver could distinctly discern the pervading sweetness of her own scent bottle and was satisfied.

It seemed to Peggy that every face was lifted and turned toward her as she and Katherine came in. There was a temptation to walk with lowered eyes, and sink into the seat the head waitress might indicate, without meeting a single person’s gaze.

But casting this desire aside, she went in bravely, her eyes taking in the whole room. And every girl smiled back at her with the very essence of friendship and proprietorship, for there was hardly a girl in the room who had not contributed something that the radiant freshman was even then wearing, or had just made use of.

So Peggy did not have to wait until the others in her house had learned to love her, but she was taken from the first day into their hearts. And she felt the warmth of their love around her even while she went through so prosaic a ceremony as the partaking of a meager college luncheon.

CHAPTER II—SUITE 22

It was right in the middle of Freshman Rains.

The faces of the new girls appeared white and mournful, pressed against the dormitory windows, or flushed and laughing from between rubber helmets and slickers out on the campus, according to their dispositions.

Up and down the second floor corridor of Ambler House trooped the usual forenoon procession, umbrella tips clicking on the polished boards: those who were going out to classes making a flapping sound with their rubber garments, those returning giving out a sloshing noise that advertised the weather outside in an unfavorable manner.

Before several of the doors wet umbrellas were open on the floor to dry, while tiny rivulets trickled steadily from the steel prongs. They looked like big black bats which had flown in to seek shelter from the outer torrents and might be expected to take wing again at any minute.

It was not a hilarious atmosphere at best, but, to add to its dripping depression, two wails of a most long-drawn and lugubrious sort began to be wafted down the length of the hall over the tops of the wet umbrellas, drifting in heart-brokenly through the students' doors, and dying away in receding cadences whenever a disconsolate head lifted itself from a cushion to listen or a helmet strap was shoved back from a surprised and inquisitive ear.

"M—MMm-MO-O-Oh," went the wail, and then "Moo-oo-oo," with a pastoral significance that was particularly mystifying.

No use for any girl to tell herself that this was the wind howling—or the rain dejectedly descending on a tin roof—for no wind ever howled so precisely up and down scales with such sobbingly human and barnyard notes, and no rain was ever known to be so surprisingly vocal, nor so loud and threatening one moment and so tremulously broken and far away the next.

"Go! Gug-gug-go! Gug-gug-GO-go-go!" screamed the dual wail, apparently expressive of the utmost suffering, and yet, through it all, maintaining a baffling rhythmical quality and a monotony of utterance that sent a shuddering wonder in its wake as it coursed down the hall.

But during such a disheartening season as Freshman Rains the spirit of investigation is not keen, and the residents on the second floor preferred to distract their attention by lessons that must be learned or by long and rambling letters home that ended with vague hints that somebody in their house was being killed down the hall.

It was not until the voices broke out into wild and mirthless laughter that their apathetic spirits were aroused to protest.

"Goodness, girls, what's that awful noise?" an indignant brown head poked itself out from one of the umbrella-guarded doors and sent its peevish remonstrance down the corridor. In an instant every door framed a face—or two faces—and a babble of questions was echoed back and forth.

But triumphantly right through the shrill notes of their eager queries rang the weird and displeasing sound that had so disturbed them.

"Ha-HA! Ho-HO! He-HEE! Haw-HAW!"

“It’s too much!” averred the girl who had spoken first. “*Where* is that sound being made? And *what* is it? Seems to me as if it were from Suite 22—do you think somebody is torturing those freshmen?” It was just what everybody did think, but they dreaded the admission. “Let’s go in there,” the girl continued, “and—and find out.” She ended rather weakly, shrinking before the task of investigating so unearthly a sound as that.

The girls were flocking forth, some still in their damp slickers, the rain glistening on them; others all immaculate just as they were ready to start out to recitations: and still a lazy third contingent, who had not yet had any classes or who were wantonly cutting them, as sweet as flowers in Japanese silk kimonos and little pattering slippers.

Together they made the charge on Door 22.

Crowding in at the breach as it swung open, they gasped in sudden bewilderment at the sight that met their eyes.

Standing rigidly side by side like two soldiers on parade, but with their hands solemnly placed upon their diaphragms while they emitted simultaneously the weird noises that had alarmed the house, were Peggy Parsons and Katherine Foster, the idols of Ambler House!

Their eyes widened at the wholesale intrusion and their hands fell limply to their sides, and then, as the indignant chorus broke out around them, they looked at each other in crimson confusion and burst out laughing.

“Why—c-could you h-h-hear us, g-girls?” cried Katherine incoherently through her shaking spasms of mirth.

“Hear you?” echoed Hazel Pilcher, who had led the charge upon them. “Hear? Well, my *dears*, did you think you were exactly whispering? I never listened to so awful a concert in my life. It’s a wonder I didn’t call the house-matron. Oh, you incorrigible youngsters, what in the world was it?”

Peggy’s face assumed an aggrieved expression immediately.

“It was only our lesson,” she responded somewhat sulkily.

“Lesson! My goodness, what are they giving the freshmen now that their lessons turn out to be imitations of a menagerie? Why, when I was a freshman”—(with a very superior air, for Hazel Pilcher was now enjoying all the glory of a sophomore’s exalted position)—“we had Latin and French and math and history, but I never heard of a course in ghostly noises. I’m sure that in my year they at least spared us that.”

“Just the samey that was our lesson,” Peggy persisted, “that was our practice work for to-morrow’s yell.”

“Do you mean——?” Hazel began to understand, for one cannot be a sophomore without knowing most of the abbreviations in which college terminology abounds.

“Elocution, if we have to simplify it,” said Peggy. “I suppose you girls didn’t take that course. Well, Katherine and I are just—taking it for all it’s worth. I guess we want to learn to speak correctly and place our voices right from the diaphragm and make full and open tones——”

“Spare muh!” interposed a senior who was known to be already practicing up for dramatics. “I hear nothing but that sort of thing all day long these days. I might have guessed what your vocal gymnastics meant—but they were so particularly horrible——”

“Well, the worse they sound the better they are,” murmured Peggy, deprecatingly. “And I thought myself we did it rather well.”

Elocution, or, as the girls called it with enthusiasm, yellocution or yell, was an elective course

that entailed no studying, but a vast deal of labor along a different line. The victims who were beguiled into taking it, thinking to gain an easy course minus mental effort, that would count nevertheless a perfectly good two hours a week for their degree, were often mere tearful wrecks after the first few days when they were stood up before an enormous, gaping class and put through test after test to the running accompaniment of wounding comment on their enunciation, their manner, their throats, their gestures—everything.

They became acquainted for the first time with all the distressful mystery of larynxes and pharynxes—which most of them had always supposed were the names of diseases—they learned about diaphragms, too, and were forced to breathe in different ways and shout and cry “Ha-ha,” all the time feeling for the muscular hammer stroke at their waist lines. It was so embarrassing to Peggy at first that she couldn’t make any sound at all when they told her to say “Ha-ha,” and it was only after three attempts that she managed a faint and disheartened squeak.

“Your voice is little and thin,” criticised the teacher sharply. “I shall give you exercises to round it out.”

And that’s what she had done, and these were what Peggy and her faithful room-mate were practicing at the moment of the inrush of visitors.

She explained to her guests how little and thin her voice was, but they laughed scornfully and said if she had any more of a one, they’d see that she was put off campus, that, as far as they were concerned, they believed she had the biggest and the fattest voice on record, which seemed to restore Peggy’s self-respect in a way marvelous to behold.

“A person can be happy,” she assured them conversationally, “just so long as she doesn’t know anything about herself—how she talks, how she looks or how she impresses other people. But the minute you get her conscious of all these larynx-pharynx-diaphragm machines inside her she’ll never know another happy minute until she conquers them all and can speak just like a Nazimova with ’em. Though Nazimova is rather sobby, I’m told—maybe I’d better train myself up after Blanche Ring instead.”

“Peggy,” Katherine put in at this point questioningly, “don’t you think we might set the water over and give the girls some tea?”

At this delightful prospect many of the girls—especially the little lazy kimonoed ones—sat right down wherever they happened to be, in a chair or on the floor, with such looks of blissful anticipation on their faces that they were a pleasant sight. It wasn’t often tea was served in the middle of a rainy forenoon and the two Andrews freshmen were already so practiced in little parties before they came to college, that even a cup of tea served by them had a grace and an added interest, that it could not have possessed in the rooms of girls who were just tasting their first bit of life away from home.

Peggy looked in some consternation at the comfortable crowd with its expectant and gleeful expression, and demurred slowly.

“I just *have* to train my voice,” she said, “but I suppose, even with them here, I can go right on?”

A groan greeted this proposal that was anything but complimentary.

Peggy looked hurt. “Oh, you just wait,” she said vindictively, but with a laugh struggling for utterance at the same time. “Some day you’ll pay to hear me—see if you won’t—and I mean to work at it right along all through four years and then—and—then——” her voice grew dreamy and her eyes stared off into a heavenly future, “and then maybe I can be in the mob at senior dramatics!”

The senior of the party laughed at the pretty compliment, for she herself was only in the mob, and her classmates didn’t think she had such a marvelous success either—so it was pleasant to have the adoration of a popular freshman.

“I’m sure you will be,” she said graciously, “and with one accord we all accept the future mob member’s invitation to tea.” And she sat down with the rest and waited patiently.

With a sigh, Peggy lit the little alcohol lamp under the tea kettle and Katherine dived mysteriously under the desk to emerge a moment later with something that sent a general shout of approval through the entire group.

“A box! A box!” they cried, “Katherine has a box from home!”

Nothing else in life possesses quite the wonder and the satisfying delight of a real box from home. If the parents at home only knew of the wide-eyed envy of all the girls as they cluster around one of these brighteners of college existence as it is being opened, there would be a continuous procession of expressmen tramping in at the back door of all the college houses, week in and week out, and every single closet shelf would hold its quota of jam jars, home-made cookies, and fine large grape-fruit so that the same glow of satisfaction and sense of being loved would abide in each girl’s heart all the time.

The tea ball was being daintily dipped in and out of the steaming cups, the cold chicken was being eagerly passed down the line of girls, when the door of suite 22 opened again and a confused and blushing stranger, tall, with wonderful reddish hair and baby-blue eyes, stepped inside and asked in a voice that was so full of fright that it would never have passed in that elocution class of Peggy’s, if this was Miss Katherine Foster’s room.

“I’m trying to find Miss Foster,” the scared voice went on, “because I was to have roomed with her this year. I’m Gloria——”

With a single bound, the impulsive Peggy had reached the beautiful stranger and had thrown her arms around her neck. It was all her fault, she was thinking, all her fault that this nice, nice girl had been deprived of the finest room-mate on campus, for while Peggy and Katherine were at Andrews Preparatory School, Peggy had not known that she herself could go to college until the last minute, and Katherine had already been assigned another room-mate. When Peggy had been given the money to come, however, by old Mr. Huntington, her friend, Katherine had written to Gloria Hazeltine—who stood before them now—and had explained that she just must room with her own Peggy, and would Gloria mind and she could easily find somebody else.

Neither of the girls had seen Gloria before, but at this first glimpse of her, Peggy’s heart was warm with a sense of wanting to make up to her for having taken her place, and hence the smothering arms she wrapped so quickly around the newcomer’s neck.

All the embarrassment of the new guest fled at this surprisingly eager reception. She drew back from Peggy’s arms and smiled happily down into her face.

“Oh, oh,” she cried, “I wish more than ever that you were my room-mate! Which is Peggy Parsons that has taken you away from me?”

Peggy at once saw the other’s mistake and flushed. “I’m the guilty party,” she admitted. “I’m Peggy. But I want you please to like me a little—anyway. And now——” suddenly changing to a business-like tone of hospitality, “sit right down and have some tea. Girls, this is Morning Glory, Katherine’s and my best friend. You don’t mind my calling you that?” she inquired anxiously. “That’s the way Katherine and I spoke of you to ourselves and you—your looks bear it out so well,” she faltered.

Gloria, very much taken into the Ambler House set, and already being plied with tea and wonderful beaten biscuit, didn’t mind anything, and in a few minutes the whole room seemed to glow with a pervading happiness and content that took no account of the gloomy weather outside, and for this season at least the bugaboo ghost of the Freshman Rains was laid.

CHAPTER III—PEGGY'S MASTERPIECE

Peggy was bending absorbedly over her desk one evening biting her pen and then writing a bit and now and then crossing out part of what she had written, all with a kind of seraphic smile that puzzled Katherine more and more until she finally just had to speak about it.

"What are you doing, room-mate?" she demanded; "that look is so—so awfully unlike your usual expression."

"Hush," said Peggy, glancing up and waving her pen solemnly toward the other. "It's a poet's look."

"A——? Peggy Parsons, you're rooming with me under false pretenses. If you're going to turn into a genius I'm going home. You know I perfectly hate geniuses and there are so many funny ones around college. I always thought that at least you——" her tone was scathing and beseeching at the same time, "at least you were immune."

"Maybe I am," said Peggy speculatively. "What is it?"

"What's what?"

"Immune. Could a person be it without knowing it, do you suppose?"

Katherine had thrown herself across the room and had kissed Peggy fervently and repentantly at this remark. "Oh, I take it all back, Peggy," she cried, "you're not a genius. They always understand every word in the dictionary and you are—you are just a dear little dunce, after all!"

"Well, I like that!" exclaimed the injured young poet. "Let me read you this, Katherine," she continued with shining eyes, "and then you'll see—oh, Katherinekins, Katherinekins, what a bright room-mate you have, and how proud you'll be of me to-morrow when Miss Tillotson reads this out in English 13."

Katherine glanced toward the inky manuscript suspiciously.

"Is it very long?" she inquired.

Peggy only shot her a reproachful glance and began to read in a sweet, thrilly voice, that already showed the effects of strenuous elocution training and would have made the veriest nonsense in the world seem beautiful by reason of its triumphant youth and its perfect conviction.

> "Dreams that are dear—of night—of day—
> All I could think or hope or plan:
> Naught is so sweet in that dream world's sway
> As this wonderful hour of the Present's span.

There was a silence in the room when she had finished, and Peggy folded her manuscript up tenderly and laid it away on her desk with an air that was little short of reverent.

"How did you do it?" breathed Katherine, carried away by the magic of the voice rather than by any clear idea of what the voice had read. But she had a great deal of faith in Peggy, and anything she would read like that must be very fine. So Katherine passed her judgment on it

immediately.

“Do you like it?” Peggy pleaded, “oh, do you? Oh, I’m so glad. It’s—it’s just a piece of my soul, Katherine.”

Katherine accompanied her room-mate to English 13 next day with a pleasant sense of exhilaration in her heart, for wasn’t this the day Peggy was to be praised before them all—freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors alike—for her wonderful poem?

There was a little stir and flutter through Recitation room 27 as the bright-eyed young literary lights of the college trooped in.

English 13 had to be held in the largest recitation room on campus, for it was the one class that everybody would rather go to than not. It was purely elective with a number of divisions and you could walk by and decide whether or not you wanted to go in—and you always decided to go in.

Grey sweaters over the backs of chairs, a blur of black furs, youthful heads with hair all done alike, lolling arms along the chair-tops, slim white hands toying with pencils or sweater buttons—a gigantic, lazy, comfortable, enjoying-life sort of a class when you came in from the back of the room, but as you went down toward the front and glanced back, there was a light of eager anticipation shining in every face, a universal expression of intelligent interest such as it is the fortune of few college professors, alas, to behold in this world.

Peggy and Katherine had dropped the wonderful poem in the 13 box outside the door—it being written on pale-blue paper so that Peggy would recognize it at once in the bundle that would soon be brought in, in Miss Tillotson’s arms.

They sat as near the front as they could get, and that queer, unaccountable, crimson uneasiness that affects authors when their work is about to be read in public—part pleasurable but mostly agony—swept Peggy in a miserable flood and she sat deaf, dumb and blind to all that was going on around her until she heard the bell strike that announced the opening of class.

Miss Tillotson at this minute came in, her arms full of manuscript, as usual, her glance moving lightly over the rustling audience of girls, who were beginning to sit up straight with that eager interest flaming. Miss Tillotson was always sure of a response. From the moment she fingered the first manuscript and began to read in her wonderful voice that made the good things seem so much better than they were and the bad things so much worse, every pause she made, every raised-eye-brow query, every slight little twist of amused smile was received with a collective long-drawn breath, a murmur of appreciation or a small, sudden sweeping storm of laughter that convulsed the entire giant class at once, only to drop away suddenly to still attention as her voice again picked up the thread of narrative or resumed the verse.

It is a pity but true that Peggy heard absolutely nothing of her adored 13 to-day until her own blue-folded poem was lifted up. She had gone through a hundred different emotions in the few minutes that she had already spent in this classroom. Every time Miss Tillotson’s fingers lingered near her manuscript in selecting what next to read, a shiver of despair went up and down her spine. Oh, why had she done such a thing? She, only a freshman, to have had the effrontery to write a poem when all these upper-classmen—and even the Monthly board members—were in the class—and had written such wonderful things! Of course there was the approval of Katherine by which she had set so much store a short few hours ago. But—she glanced at Katherine now sitting so tranquilly beside her. Katherine was only a freshman herself! What did her approval mean? She hated herself for the disloyalty of the thought, but still she could not help wishing that she had never shown the poem to Katherine and then she could make out it was some one else’s and not have to suffer the awful humiliation——

Miss Tillotson was reading! Oh, it had actually come—this horrible calamity! Nothing could happen to save her now. Her poor little blue poem was being read out to all these wonderful girls of Hampton and she could not prevent it. Drowning, drowning in a sea of confusion, there drifted hazily through Peggy’s mind a pathetic story she had once read in a newspaper about a man

whose ship was sinking and who had put a note in a bottle, “All hope gone. Good-bye forever.”

When the smooth voice of Miss Tillotson stopped there was a slight rustle over the class, and then with one accord the girls burst out into a laugh.

It was the merest ripple of enjoying titter, but in Peggy’s crimson ears it roared and echoed until the mocking sound of it was the one thing in the world. She lifted her swimming eyes and kept them on Miss Tillotson’s face and even achieved a somewhat ghastly smile on her own account, believing, poor child, that she could thus keep secret the awful fact of her identity as the writer of that “thing”—the poem had already descended to this title in her mind—and that neither Miss Tillotson nor the girls need ever know.

“If all that the writer could ‘think or hope or plan’ is expressed in this particular—flight,” smiled Miss Tillotson, with that dear little quirk to her mouth that Peggy had loved so many times but which hurt now, oh, beyond words to tell, “I should think that dream world of hers would resemble a nightmare.”

Another gale of laughter swept the class, fluffy heads leaned back against the chairs in abandon and shirt-waisted shoulders shook.

Peggy felt that if Katherine looked at her or ventured a pat of sympathy she would die. But Katherine, when Peggy’s miserable glance sought her face, was gazing interestedly around the room from literary light to literary light as if to determine which could have been guilty of the blue manuscript. It certainly was a brilliant way to ward off detection from her room-mate and Peggy was grateful.

Peggy hardly knew how she got home that day. She and Katherine did not speak until they had gained the safety of their own suite and then they put a “Busy” sign on the door, and sat down on their couch.

“Katherine,” said Peggy at last, “one of two things must happen now. Either I shall never touch pen to paper again or I’ll keep at writing until I make a success of it and show Miss Tillotson that I can after all.”

“Yes, room-mate,” agreed Katherine solemnly, “that’s the only alternative open to you now.”

The tragic whiteness of Peggy’s face deepened.

“Never again, or—never give it *up* until I’ve made good,” she murmured. “It might mean—more times like this, Katherine, if I kept on,” she reminded tentatively.

“Yes, Peggy,” Katherine answered slowly, “I think it *would* mean more times like this.”

“And nothing but my own determination to go on,—no reason to think I have any particular talent or ability—she has already taken away all that notion. Just the will to do it whether I can or not—to show her that I can.”

“Yes,” agreed Katherine once more, “that’s all you’d have to go on. *I* think you are good at writing, but then I think you can do anything. I can’t write myself, so my opinion really isn’t so very valuable. You’d have to do it without encouragement.”

“I want her respect, Katherine; I want to have her think in the end that I’m the best writer that ever took Thirteen, but—it would mean giving most of my time and all my energies to my English—and I might not turn out any good in the end.”

“True,” Katherine again attacked her room-mate’s problem, “and if you never touch pen to paper again” (the phrase had them both) “you can soon forget this hurt to-day and you need not put yourself in a similar position again, and your main work can go to—well, to math or anything else.”

Peggy paced up and down the room and Katherine, never doubting but that this was the most serious problem that had ever been fought out in college, followed her room-mate's figure with eyes that brimmed with sympathy and a heartful of affectionate loyalty that longed to be of help and could not.

"Say, Peggy," she said suddenly, "I want to take a note over to the note-room for one of the girls in my Latin class. Don't you want to come along? This doesn't have to be decided all at once, does it?"

Peggy silently slipped on her sweater again and the girls ran across the campus to the big recitation hall and thence down the basement steps to the note-room. Crowds of girls were swarming into and out of this place where, on little boards—one to each class—the girls left their communications for each other under the proper initials. In so large a college it was necessary to have some easy and direct means of reaching each other without delay or the expense of telephone or postage. Every girl went to the note-room once every day—and a particularly popular one ran down after each class to gather in the sheaves of invitations, business notes, and club meeting announcements that were sure to be hers.

Peggy and Katherine squeezed through the crowds, greeting many other freshmen as they were suddenly brought face to face, and at length they stood before the freshman bulletin and Katherine stuck her note in the rack at the letter R, while Peggy glanced, from habit, back to her own initial. There were many little important-looking notes stuck upright over the letter P, and Peggy fingered them over listlessly. Delia Porter, Helen Pearson, Margaret Perry and so on, until all at once from the most inviting looking of all leaped her own name, Peggy Parsons, in perfectly unfamiliar writing—writing almost too assured to be that of a freshman at all.

Wonderingly she unfolded the little square, and then, jammed in by the other girls as she was, she flung her arms around Katherine's neck and cried out with a sob of joy, "Oh, kiss me, Katherine!—they want my poem for the *Monthly*!"

From dull gray the world leaped to glowing radiance. For a freshman to be invited to give a poem to the *Monthly*! Her great problem was solved automatically, and Peggy would be an author from that time forth until she should be graduated.

"Let's see your note," urged Katherine, when they were out of the crowd once more. "I want to look at it myself."

Peggy eagerly unfolded the precious thing again and read, while Katherine looked over her shoulder:

> "*My dear Miss Parsons*—or wouldn't it be more like college to say Peggy?—I'm writing to ask you if we may not have for the *Monthly* that little poem of yours that was read in Thirteen to-day? There are some changes in four of the lines, and if you'll come over to my room this afternoon, I want you to make them yourself so that there will be as little as possible of my scribbling in it. Hoping to see you,
>
> DITTO ARMANDALE, *Monthly Board*,
> ROOM 11, MACEFIELD HOUSE."

"Why, Peggy, do you remember that Ditto Armandale we met that day last year while you were standing under the waterfalls? And it was the sight of her and all those other Hampton girls that first made you want to come here! Miss Armandale invited me to come and see her that day, when I should get to Hamp, and she said you were just the sort that ought to come here—oh, isn't it *fine*, Peggy!"

"Yes, but look here," said Peggy, who was still reading over her note, "she says 'changes in four of the lines.' There were only four lines *in* it, Katherine, you remember."

“That’s queer. But I’d go anyway.”

“Of course I will,—I don’t suppose she’ll remember me, but I’m glad she’s the one, she looked so nice and considerate that day.”

“What are you going to wear?”

“It’s an invitation house. I suppose a person ought to be awfully dressy,” Peggy said doubtfully.

“I don’t know,” murmured Katherine. “I shouldn’t think it would be necessary to dress much if you were just one of the multitude like me. But being one of the youngest authors in college, it’s different with you.”

With arms around each other’s shoulders, the room-mates strolled back across the campus toward Ambler House. The sunlight shone over the campus and over the moving army of girls going in every direction across it, for it was just at the end of recitation hour. None of them wore hats, so that the light gleamed down on their hair. Most of them wore white sweaters or sport coats, and under the arm of each was tucked a notebook or a stack of study volumes.

All of them walked in pairs, as Katherine and Peggy were doing, or in laughing groups that gathered numbers as they went on.

Peggy and Katherine began to have an intimate sense of belonging to it all. Hampton was becoming *their* college in a way it had not been before. This campus and those red brick buildings, those laughing crowds of girls, their hair blowing in the wind—these things were to represent their whole world for four years, and, tightening their hands on each other’s shoulders, they were glad it was to be so.

And Peggy held crushed in her free hand a tiny wad of paper, the tangible evidence that this first year promised success to her.

CHAPTER IV—NEW PAINT AND POETRY

A summons to visit an invitation house!

And on such a gratifying mission! Peggy smiled as she slipped into her rose-colored taffeta, and Katherine, watching her with pride, decided that “the poet’s look” had come back.

“Well, good luck, room-mate,” she called as Peggy went out the door, and she received one radiant glance in answer from the departing young bard.

The pleasantly warm tone of the rose-colored taffeta buoyed up the new genius’ spirit all across the campus until she came out into Green Street and beheld the imposing reality of Macefield House directly before her.

She had the fleeting and snobbish wish that all the girls of her class could see her turning thus assuredly up the walk to the famous senior house. To be sure, she couldn’t help casting a cold look of disapproval at the porch—it was the messiest porch she had seen anywhere in Hampton, but she supposed the celebrity inhabitants of Macefield were all too busy with their dinners and dances and social duties generally to notice how careless and extremely—impromptu—the approach to their home appeared.

The campus house porches all had chairs out on them and comfortable magazine tables—there were still a lot of hot fall days to look forward to—but on the Macefield House porch there was nothing. And somebody had carelessly left an old ladder lying down right in front of the steps! Peggy had a very hard time scrambling over it. Perhaps it was just as well the other Freshman girls weren’t there to see her after all. She must admit there was considerable loss of dignity involved in scrambling over an old paint-specked ladder that was so completely in her way.

Her face was flushed to the color of her dress when she finally climbed the steps. Even in her confusion she noticed that the porch floor looked strangely *new* and that it seemed to have a tendency to cling a little and impede her footsteps.

“It’s probably because I’m getting scared that I imagine my feet stick to the boards,” she mused uncomfortably. “I don’t know how a person should act at an invitation house. Whether you’re supposed to walk right in or——”

That part of her problem was settled immediately, for she found the door locked. Gathering what self-confidence she could, she pressed the bell.

Uneasily she shifted from one to the other of the sticking feet. No one came. She knew it was rude to ring twice, but she felt she would never have the heart to come again if she didn’t see the great editor of the Monthly now and get everything arranged. So she pressed a shaking finger nervously against the bell, and held it so until she heard a rustling inside the house. The door opened—just a crack—and a surprised head poked itself into view. Peggy had a jumbled and confused impression all at once. She was aware of the speechless amazement in the eyes, also that the face was not that of a girl at all, but belonged to a rather severe looking and decidedly middle-aged woman.

With a little jump of her heart she realized that she was meeting the gaze of the matron of Macefield House. Campus house matrons were regarded in the light either of common enemies or motherly souls, whose hearts responded to all college-girls’ troubles. But what might the

matron of an invitation house be like? Peggy thought she must be something incomparably greater.

“Is Miss Armandale in?” she asked weakly.

“She may be, but she’d be up in her room,” answered the head ungraciously enough, while its owner apparently did not intend to admit the enemy within the fortifications, since no move was made to open the door wider.

“Well——” murmured Peggy, with a sudden realization that she was standing in wet paint, —“shall I—go up—and—and find out?”

“By the back door if you wish,” said the head witheringly. “If you came in this way, you’d TRACK IN THE PAINT.”

Peggy’s heart leaped. A crimson tide went over her. She shut her eyes before the accusing and indignant gaze of the matron.

So that was what the ladder had been for, and any stupid but she would have known! With dread she looked back along the porch the way she had come and there, sure enough, was a procession of marring footprints in the new grey of the flooring!

She had climbed with great difficulty over the barrier that had been deliberately placed there to prevent such a thing.

And Ditto and the other girls of the house would have to have the porch all done over on account of a silly freshman. For the girls in the invitation houses carried their own expenses, leasing their houses and then conducting them like any tenants.

“I will go ’round the back way, then,” she gasped to the glowering matron. Her one thought was to escape the baneful glare of those eyes.

Her feet stuck firmly when she tried to go and as she was lifting them up with a generous accompaniment of Macefield House paint, the door banged behind her and she was left to make her humiliating way back as she had come, with the ladder to be surmounted again, and her eyes so full of tears of embarrassment that she could hardly see to walk.

She had no intention of going around the back way. Her only desire was to get home.

She must face again the guns of the enemy—for that wonderful poem mustn’t be lost to the *Monthly*—but she would make her charge after she had rested once more in the trenches of Suite 22, and had equipped her army of one with a new uniform.

For that was the plan that was already taking shape in her mind. She would return in disguise. She had sallied forth in her brightest and best. Well, she would go back as meek as a freshman should, in plain clothes—and who would know she was the young stupid who had scaled the step-ladder and marred the new grey paint of the invitation house?

“Well,” said Katherine, yawning up at her lazily from the couch, when she was once more within the home walls, “how did it go, room-mate?”

“How did what go?” inquired Peggy, kicking off her pumps hastily and sliding them out of sight, under the dressing table.

“Why, the interview with the great Ditto. You make me tired, Peggy—acting just as though you were bored by the best thing that’s happened to either of us yet. And really and truly, you’re just as glad as I am for you. Admit that you are.”

“Not—so wildly,” Peggy made a little grimace, as she flung the rose-colored silk dress into a

corner. A moment later her muffled voice came from the bed room, where she was fumbling among her dresses. “I never can find anything I want.”

“Are you looking for your kimono? Going to rest a while, before we get dressed for dinner? Your kimono’s under the bed, Peggy; I saw the blue edge sticking out. Hurry back in here and tell me the news; I’m consumed with curiosity.”

Peggy came back into the study, wearing a blue serge skirt, her head lost to view in a middy blouse in the process of being slipped on. She struggled to the top at last and peered out with pleading eyes.

“Will you go over there with me, Katherine?” she said in a tone she strove to make indifferent.

“Go over there with you? Haven’t you been?”

“I want your company,” Peggy stammered with difficulty, unable to tell the fib that would have been a direct answer to her room-mate’s question.

“Well,” said Katherine, getting up slowly and stretching her arms, “I should say I will.”

And so Peggy, her army reinforced, began her march on Macefield House a second time.

If Katherine was surprised at her simplified costume, she made no comment, but held her arm chummily all the way over, and Peggy felt that victory was in sight.

“Look, they’ve painted their porch,” she said in assumed surprise, when they came in sight of the fateful ladder.

“So they have,” cried Katherine, “and we can’t get up *that* way.”

And then she began to titter.

“What’s the matter?” demanded Peggy quickly.

“Somebody—somebody—*did* go up anyway,” Katherine laughed delightedly. “There are footprints all over it! Oh, mustn’t the Macefield House girls be furious?”

Peggy was silent.

“Don’t you think that’s funny?” her room-mate insisted, still laughing.

“Perfectly *simple*,” returned Peggy. “Some people haven’t a bit of sense. I imagine it was some—some delivery boy, don’t you?”

“More likely a freshman. Delivery boy with those little feet? How ridiculous—as if he’d wear high heels!”

“Katherine, you’re a regular Sherlock Holmes,” Peggy protested.

“I believe I could ferret out the criminal,” persisted Katherine. “I’ve thought of a good clue.”

“How would you do it?” Peggy’s voice was little more than a whisper.

“Look on the bottoms of all the freshmen’s shoes for paint,” announced her friend.

“Katherine!”

“Yes?”

“Last year you and I were detectives and we found out things together, which did people good. But do you think—after our partnership then, it is right for you to go—looking things up all by yourself without me, now?”

“How perfectly silly of you,” laughed Katherine; “of course you’d have to help. You could look at the shoes of the girls on one side of the campus, and I’d take our side. Anyway it’s all in fun. I suppose we’d better go around the back way, don’t you think so?”

Peggy thought so, decidedly. In a few moments they were climbing the dark back stairs to the room of the great *Monthly* editor on the second floor.

The door of Number 11 stood part way open and showed a delightful and luxurious confusion within. Peggy and Katherine got a glimpse of tall red roses, Oriental couch cover, and a profusion of pillows, old bronze bric-a-brac, green leather banners, scattered books and manuscripts, with the inevitable Mona Lisa enigmatically smiling down at it all from the opposite wall of the room.

Peggy and Katherine, after a light knock, advanced into the room and seated themselves on the inviting couch.

“A book-case and a dictionary,” murmured Peggy. “Such funny things to have at college.”

“But there’s a tea table, too,” reminded Katherine. “In fact, I never saw a room that had such a varied assortment of things—and all in harmony.”

“I like that leather peacock screen,” Peggy went on.

“Oh, I love it all—but don’t you think it’s the least bit oppressive? That incense smell lulls my senses to sleep. I don’t see how Ditto can be the fresh, breezy sort she is,—perfectly matter-of-fact and everydayish,—and live in an opium den of a room like this.”

“It isn’t just what her character would lead you to expect,” admitted Peggy.

Just then, a girl drifting aimlessly by in the hall paused at the door, and glanced in curiously at the two freshmen sitting so stiffly, toes out, hands clasped in their laps, awaiting the all-important Ditto.

“Dit know you’re here?” she asked, with friendly brevity.

Both girls shook their heads.

“I’ll get her,” said the other, disappearing, and an instant later they heard, up and down the hall, the loud cry, “Dit-to! Di-i-t Armandale! Somebody to see you!”

From the third floor came a scrambling noise, then the sound of light feet tapping on the stairs.

“Well, you really did come, you children,” gasped the owner of the room, coming in flushed from her hasty descent and blowing a wavy strand of golden hair from her face.

She plumped down between them on the couch and looked from one to the other with an air of delighted proprietorship.

“And you’re beginning just right, too, as I knew you would. Thirteen is the open road to glory, here, and you certainly were courageous, handing in a poem first thing.”

Her hand reached for Peggy’s knee. “How do you like everything, now you’re here, and why haven’t you been over before?”

“We didn’t think you’d remember us,” said Peggy.

“There was so much water that day you saw us, at the picnic last year——”

Ditto threw back her head and laughed. “Yes, there was plenty of that,” she agreed. “I never saw anything so moist as you were. And you—Katherine Foster—yes, I remember your names, too,—I chose you for a friend of mine that day. And I’m positively insulted that neither of you accepted my invitation to come to see me, until I dragged you here on business. Your poem, Peggy,—here it is, I kept it out for you——”

She had risen and lifted the blue-folded paper from a pile of thick stories and “heavies” on the table. And Peggy, watching the nonchalant way she handled the sacred *Monthly* material, felt her admiration increasing.

“Now,” said Ditto, bending over the page with complete concentration, “let’s see just what we want to do—I thought that possibly——”

And her sturdy little blue pencil crept mercilessly through word after word, while Peggy felt the blood pounding into her face and tried not to mind the kindly criticism of her effort.

Peggy was consulted tactfully about each change and asked for suggestions, until, under the skilful guidance of the more experienced writer, the fledgling really developed a verse that would not mar the *Monthly* pages. Then Ditto gave her a pen and some paper to write it all out again, in the copy that was actually to go to the printer.

Katherine talked to Ditto about her room-mate, while the latter was carefully rewriting her masterpiece.

“You know you’ve got good material for freshman president, there,” said Ditto with something of senior condescension. “An Andrews girl usually has it, and she’s the right type. She isn’t very self-conscious, she’s lots of fun and ready for anything. You can tell that. Why don’t you put her up? Your elections are this week, aren’t they? Honestly, I’ve heard of nothing but Peggy Parsons, Peggy Parsons, from all the freshmen protégées of the girls in this house.”

Katherine caught fire. “It would be great,” she said. “Think of rooming with the class president. Oh, I did a clever thing in bringing her to Hampton. I can shine in reflected glory through the whole four years.”

“You do it,” urged Ditto, “get her elected, I mean. I’ll help.”

She nodded carelessly toward the huge vase of roses. “I have quite a few little freshmen friends whom I’ll—tell about Peggy.”

When Peggy handed back the poem with a rueful smile at its many changes, Katherine got up from the couch and took her room-mate’s arm. It would never do to linger, though it was hard to leave the great Presence.

Peggy’s look as they left the house held simply pleasure and gratitude, but Katherine’s brimmed with meaning.

“You don’t know what I know,” she hummed.

“Then why not tell me?” laughed Peggy.

“I know who’s going to be freshman president!”

“Who?”

“Shan’t tell you—but I suppose you’ll find out when it happens.”

“Well,” retorted Peggy unexpectedly, “I know already.”

“What’s—her—name?” gasped Katherine.

“Gloria Hazeltine,” answered Peggy.

Katherine stopped and caught her shoulders. Facing her, she studied her calm expression of certainty.

“Why, Peggy,” she couldn’t help saying, “it was going to be _you_, and I was going to start this very day to campaign for you.”

“Me!” scoffed Peggy. “I couldn’t even *look* like a president. The freshman president stands for the whole class, and the sophs and juniors and seniors are apt to judge us a good deal by the one we choose for that office. They’d think what flyaways the freshmen are if you had any one like me. Or rather they’d never notice us at all, but would sever diplomatic relations. But Gloria now ——”

The vision of the tall, radiant young Westerner, with her red-gold hair and her wide, laughing, blue eyes—the way she talked, the way she wore her clothes, her charm and sincerity of manner —rose vividly in Katherine’s mind. She compared this vision with the actual striking little figure of her room-mate, with the flickering dimples showing and disappearing and the warm light that always lay in the depths of her black eyes.

“I—don’t—know,” she said honestly. “Gloria is wonderful—but you, Peggy, you’re so dear.”

“I’ll give all I have to the class,” cried Peggy, opening her arms, as if to embrace every girl of the four hundred and fifty freshmen, “but I don’t have to be set up in the post of honor to do it.”

“But Andrews usually has the presidency,” ventured Katherine in a troubled tone. “Ditto Armandale reminded me that our school has always carried off everything, Freshman year. It’s *expected*.”

“We’re not Andrews now, we’re Hampton,” said Peggy gravely. “Don’t you remember the signs in the moving picture shows, from Wilson’s proclamation? Something about ‘whatever country you came from, you are an American now.’”

“Well, the president-elect is dead, long live the president-elect,” capitulated Katherine reluctantly.

“Good. I really feel that I owe her an awful lot for taking you away from her,” smiled Peggy, grown light-hearted once more. “Being president wouldn’t half make up.”

Katherine laughed her gratified surprise and began to plan how to draw the solid Andrews vote, in favor of a girl who was not from Andrews.

“I’m going to have a party for Gloria,” Peggy mused, “and invite every single freshman in the catalogue. You’ll have to help me write the notes to stick up on the bulletin board. And we’ll say, ‘To meet the freshman class president,’ and freshmen are such sheep, they’ll think she’s as good as elected.”

“Sheep yourself,” flared Katherine. “I think putting anything like that in would be terribly crude. But the rest of the plan I like.”

“And I’ll dress in my very best and make an impression for her sake,” Peggy went on, thinking aloud.

“Wear that rose-colored dress and those cute pumps,” suggested Katherine, interestedly.

“No, *not* the rose-colored dress, and *not* the pumps,” Peggy returned with a slight shiver.

The first thing she did, when they reached their room, was to drag the pumps from their hiding place and wrap them carefully in a sheet of newspaper.

“What in the world——?” began Katherine.

“I’m—I’m going to take them to be resoled,” murmured Peggy hastily.

CHAPTER V—MORNING GLORY

Freshman elections began with a babble.

Everywhere the insistent voices of the lobbyists were heard. Upper-class girls had come in to impress the freshmen as to the proper name to write on the voting slips.

“She’s a *dandy* girl,” was shouted confidentially into Peggy’s ears so many times, while she didn’t know *who* was nor *why* she was, that she couldn’t help having a high opinion of her class altogether. Every girl in it seemed to be “dandy” in somebody’s judgment.

“Will you vote for Myra Whitewell?” some friend was imploring.

“No,” said Peggy, suddenly, “let me alone. Every one is after me so hard to vote for other people that I haven’t had any time to work for my own candidate.”

And she forced her way through the throng, shouting into each bewildered and crimson ear, “Vote for Gloria Hazeltine! She’s a *dandy* girl.”

“Peggy, *Peggy*, listen a moment,” said Katherine’s agonized voice. “What do you think the Andrews girls are doing? Going back on us at the last minute. They say they will put up Florence Thomas for president if neither of us will run, and that you and I are traitors to try to elect some one not from our own prep school.”

“Well,” said Peggy, gritting her teeth, “we can elect Gloria without Andrews.”

“Oh, but, Peggy, we will be voting against our own school! If they insist on putting her up this way, won’t we have to vote for Florence?”

Peggy shook her head and went on through the thick crowds of freshmen. “She’s a *dandy* girl,” Katherine heard in Peggy’s clear tones.

Here in this giant recitation room was assembled a class in the process of being welded together into an organization having one heart and one mind. It was a conglomeration of more or less uncertain and dazed girls now. Some were actively working up sentiment, but for the most part they stood in groups, each group a stranger to the others, four hundred and fifty girls, many of whom had never seen each other before this day, trying to realize that they were of one college flesh and that out of this roomful must be made the dearest friendships of a lifetime.

There was nothing coherent about them as yet. They held aloof from each other, partly in timidity and partly in pride, and their interests were in conflict rather than in unison.

Once pledged to a name for president, they clung to it desperately as if that particular girl had been their best and oldest friend. And they hated all the other girls who had been put up.

Slips of paper were passed around and, with a feeling of deep importance, each freshman wrote the name of the girl she wanted for her president.

With much rustling the slips were collected in hats by freshmen appointed by the pretty Junior who presided.

Then with more rustling they were counted, while the freshmen's eyes popped out of their heads in eagerness to learn how good a showing their favorite was making.

The silence was most respectful when the pretty Junior took up the counts the freshmen had made and read in her sweet, serious voice, "Myra Whitewell 200, Gloria Hazeltine 101, Florence Thomas 99, Corinne Adams 50."

The ignorant freshmen remained breathless, waiting to be told whether any one was yet their president or not.

"It is necessary, according to the by-laws, to have a two-thirds majority for a candidate before she can receive office," the presiding Junior informed them in those dainty and precise tones of hers. "Therefore another vote will be cast, in the hope of bringing about more unanimity."

With joy the freshmen wrote again on slips of paper. But the vote came in again identically the same! The pretty Junior, whose name was Alta Perry, raised her eye-brows in surprise. Tirelessly the appointed freshmen passed out new voting slips.

"When a candidate has too few votes to be really in the running," protested the Junior mildly, "the voting would get on faster to give those votes elsewhere. The idea is not to show your loyalty to any one girl, but to elect a president for the freshman class."

Peggy took council with her henchman, Katherine.

"If those Adams votes go to Florence Thomas, I suppose Gloria will be sacrificed sooner or later," she said. "If they go to Myra Whitewell—I think she's the haughty little thing yonder wearing the Mrs. Castle head-ache band,—why, then Gloria's out, too. The only thing to do is to get them for Gloria."

She sped away to the Andrews group, where Florence Thomas, who had always taken life pleasantly and coolly, was the flushed and eager center of ninety-nine supporters, both those from her own school and the others who had rallied to her cause.

"Girls," said Peggy, "we're two ahead of you. Please be reasonable——"

But she saw the curious star-like quality of Florence's eyes. And she hadn't the heart to go on.

The plain, kindly, everyday, comfy Florence to light up and shine like that! Well, if she had known in time how honors could bring that girl out, perhaps Peggy would have considered her a perfectly suitable president from the beginning.

"If *you* had wanted it, Peggy, I wouldn't have stood a chance," Florence breathed down to her from the window seat on which she was perched so as to overlook her adherents. "The girls only put me up because you and Katherine failed them."

Failed them! Peggy's heart skipped a beat. The cold glances of the other girls let her guess only too plainly how she was viewed by the Andrews contingent, the members of her own school.

"If you give up something that most anybody would want and feel just right about it, then somebody comes and takes the joy out of life by seeing you as a villain still," mused Peggy aloud.

She didn't try to get the Corinne Adams votes for Gloria, she didn't argue with a single Myra Whitewell enthusiast.

And the vote came in again so nearly the same that the pretty Junior was vexed, and looked at her wrist watch and thence out to the waning sunlight over the campus. Really an afternoon spent with her own somewhat intelligent juniors would be greatly preferable to this monotonous and stubborn concourse of freshmen who seemed to have set their hearts on making an election impossible. Corinne Adams had lost seven votes to Myra, and now tragically arose and

announced her withdrawal from the contest. Many voices murmured protestingly “no, no,” as she came forward and went toward the door, but these sympathizers had not voted for her when they had the chance.

“I never knew anything so heart-breakingly mixed up,” said Peggy. “That Junior’s mad, the freshmen are near to tears and the candidates are all wobbly.”

And then suddenly an idea lifted her right up out of the depression and doubt that was settling over the room. She stepped over to the desk and held a confab with the Junior and the freshmen vote-collectors.

Alta Perry snatched eagerly at the chance to bring order out of chaos.

She arose and rapped for attention. Immediately all the despairing whispers ceased.

“Some one has suggested that the girls would like to see the candidates,” she said, “so that they’d know who they’re voting for.”

A wave of approval swept her audience.

“So I’ll ask the girls who are still up to come forward to the platform so that—everybody may see them.”

The crowd parted, while from three corners of the room the candidates came.

The Junior smiled apologetically as she ranged them before the class. This was vastly amusing to her, but she realized that all the voters were staring forward with hero-worship in their eyes waiting to see which was the girl for whom each had been so religiously voting, ballot after ballot.

“Myra Whitewell,” introduced Alta Perry, nodding toward the first girl.

The girl acknowledged the introduction with an abrupt lifting of her chin. She was small and dark, with snapping brown eyes and a fine, slender, somewhat selfish face with no color in it. Her lips were full and red.

A pretty, wilful, egotistical picture this first candidate presented to the freshman class. Myra was the sort of girl who would always have blindly devoted followers willing to put up with her whims and ill-tempers because they believed her to be of finer clay than the rest of the world.

She herself was superbly conscious of this extra fineness. She scanned the eager faces of the crowd with quick glances, haughty, like a young princess reviewing her humble but faithful subjects.

“And this is Florence Thomas,” continued the Junior, her eyes sparkling just a bit with the fun of the little drama.

And the class saw Florence Thomas for just what she was—a nice, ordinary, typical girl like most of them; possessed of a good deal of executive ability if it was forced into action, neither markedly self-centered nor self-sacrificing.

She had a little round face, with wavy dark-brown hair around it. They got no very distinct impression of the second candidate further than this. She was without the rare gift of personality that “gets across,” and hence her undoubted, sterling qualities had little opportunity for appeal.

Her face was flushed with her sudden prominence, and there was a trace of embarrassment in her smile.

Peggy’s thought raced back over Florence’s characteristics while at Andrews. Florence was just

the type to have an important place in a small school, where each individual girl could get to know her and love her. But here among these hundreds there was nothing about her striking enough to hold their attention at first glance.

A warm feeling of affection surged up in Peggy's heart for her last year's comrade.

Just for a moment she would have forced Florence down their throats whether or not, if she could, without regard for the fact that she believed another girl was infinitely better fitted for the post.

That other girl's name was now being spoken by the Junior.

"This is Gloria Hazeltine," she announced to the monster class.

And just as the moon and stars fade out of view when the sun comes up, so the less vivid attraction of Myra and Florence dimmed into insignificance beside the appealing radiance that was Gloria's.

"O-oh, isn't she sweet!" breathed a girl near Peggy. "I never saw anything like that hair in my life. For goodness' sake, somebody lend me a knife to sharpen my pencil so that I can vote all over again for her!"

If she were nothing besides sweet, argued Peggy to herself, she would never have been put up. Most of the girls were that. But she understood that the rapturous tribute of her neighbor meant far more than the words she had chosen.

The quality of graceful and unconscious leadership seemed stamped in Gloria's face, as she smiled out on the freshmen, who were all beginning to go wild over her at once.

The slips were passed again while the three candidates faced their different constituents.

All anxiety had passed from Peggy's mind. She was *sure* who had won.

The slips rustled triumphantly when they had been sorted after the voting and were passed up to the Junior again.

"Twenty for Florence Thomas," she read aloud without raising her eyes from the papers. "Fifty for Myra Whitewell, and—all the rest for Gloria Hazeltine—Miss Hazeltine is elected president of your class!"

With that announcement something happened to the class. Instantaneously the fusion took place.

There were no longer separate groups, shy and a little suspicious of each other: they were one class. They had elected a president. She was the president of all alike.

At the same instant they all burst forth into the same song:

"Oh, here's to Morning Glory,
Drink her down!
Oh, here's to Morning Glory,
Drink her down!
Oh, here's to Morning Glory,
Whom we'll love till we are hoary;
Drink her down, drink her down,
Drink her down, DOWN, down!
Balm of Gilead, Gilead,
Balm—Of—Gilead—
Way down on the Bingo Farm!"

And then they turned and looked at each other with wonder, for the little rhyme in the middle had come with unanimous harmony to all, and each had sung this cheer song just as loudly as she could, although a few minutes before many would have said they didn't even know the tune.

Peggy was thrilled to her finger tips. She squeezed Katherine's arm. Gloria's beauty and ability had been enhanced twenty fold, for every girl present, by this spontaneous tribute. And Peggy could think of nothing more desirable in the world than that she should some time hear this song laden with her own name.

The other officers were elected with expedition, the vice-presidency being offered to Myra Whitewell, who indignantly refused it, declaring she would be first or nothing—thus maintaining a single discordant note in the general happiness and good humor. The despised office was then hesitatingly tendered to Florence Thomas, who was almost too pleased to speak, but made the remark in acceptance that this office, while still too big for her, was nearer her size and she'd do just everything she could to deserve their trust and faith in her.

Myra Whitewell edged her way out of the room, with a slight sneer distorting her pretty lips.

But Florence shook hands with all who came forward and received their kisses with pleasure that made every one love her.

The class went singing home in every direction from its election. An enormous hysterically happy crowd flocked in the wake of Gloria. Peggy and Katherine were in the outskirts of this crowd, and they looked from the heroine of their making into each other's radiant faces.

"Well, thank goodness, her looks elected her," sighed Peggy thankfully. "As soon as I thought of a 'seeing is believing' test, I knew we'd won."

"All the girls are saying she's the prettiest president a freshman class ever had," laughed Katherine, "and the joke on them is that they have a regular person as well as just a beauty."

"We've certainly done our duty by the class," agreed Peggy.

Katherine turned and looked consideringly at her room-mate.

"You *know*, Peggy, that you could have been the center of that crowd this minute, if you had wanted to. Dit Armandale did a good deal to work up sentiment and—you are the best known freshman of any—or were an hour or so ago. I think you'd have been just as good a president as Gloria,—and if I do say it myself, a lot better even—and—and just as pretty——"

"No matter who you room with," trilled Peggy remindingly and ungrammatically, "you're for Hampton now."

"That Wilson idea again?"

"The very same."

"Well, anyway, Peggy, you *could*——"

"Don't!" said Peggy suddenly and almost sharply. "Do you think I am some kind of *angel*?"

"Ye-es," drawled Katherine affectionately with a slow smile, "sort of."

But Peggy looked away from her laughing eyes, and shook her head quickly as if she expected to shake out of it some unwelcome thought.

Later in the day—just before dinner time, she and Katherine gathered in the quantities of notes and invitations that had come to Gloria and Florence Thomas. It seemed that every girl in college, no matter what class she was in, had taken immediate occasion to sit down and write her

congratulations to the freshman president.

When they stopped to deliver their burden at Gloria's door, they found her room fragrant with American beauty roses, and sweet with violets and spicy with pink carnations. A huge orchid nodded coolly in a Japanese vase which the girls had never seen before, and an array of dainty little leather-covered books on every subject from "Friendship" to "Ibsen" were strewn on the table by the window.

Three new pictures in black walnut frames stood leaning against the couch with the waiting picture wire beside them.

Gloria came to meet them, flushed with pleasure.

"Oh, I never knew it would be like this," she exclaimed, quite frank in her delight. "And what have you brought me? Oh, so many notes—aren't they all *dear*? I didn't imagine college—or anything—could be so nice."

She sat down on the couch while Katherine and Peggy poured their harvest of congratulations into her lap. Her fingers felt them over and sifted them before she unfolded any, and she looked up to laugh her happiness into her friends' eyes.

"Your room looks wonderful," breathed Katherine, looking around, "just like a senior's, all of a sudden."

"Doesn't it?" echoed Gloria. "I've solved the mystery of Ditto Armandale's room seeming so unlike her, as you said it did,—her furnishings are all gifts from people for getting elected to things."

Two dimples of satisfaction dented Peggy's piquant little face. She ached from head to foot from the hours of standing and of forcing her way back and forth through the crowds while she made her brief campaign appeals. But it had turned out wonderfully. Her candidate had won, and was this same radiant and beautiful Gloria looking so joyously at her now.

"Listen to this," Gloria was saying, reading one of the tributes from the note-room; "this is a darling one:

> "'*Dear First Lady of the Freshmen*:
>
> "'Please allow an old, old Junior to express her joy over you and her envy of you. Once a long time ago—two whole years—she herself heard the Balm of Gilead song in honor of her own election to the heights you have attained to-day.
>
> "'I don't think I ever felt so lofty over anything. And all the college experiences that have come since have never dimmed the thrilling feeling of that day or made it seem one bit less the best thing that ever happened to me.
>
> "'But I was afraid as well as glad: afraid that maybe I wouldn't know how to do everything just as I should and that I might in some way disappoint the girls who were mentally carrying me about on their shoulders. In case you ever feel that way, little First Lady—and this is the reason for my note being written—I want you to know that you'll be very welcome to come to the veteran—and get the advice or bolstering up she may be able to give you as a result of having learned from her own mistakes.
>
> "'Remember the juniors are just in college to be big sisters to the freshmen, and I hope you will come and claim the relationship the first free minute you have.

“‘Love and congratulations,
“‘Mary Marvington.’”

“Oh,” said Peggy, clasping her knees, “isn’t that a lovely one?”

“Well, it’s hard to realize that you are one of the great ones, now, Morning Glory,” sighed Katherine whimsically, “so that even ex-presidents will be flattered when you go to see them. And the condescension is all yours! Because a brand new freshman president is more in the college public eye than an ‘old’ junior who used to be once what you are now.”

“Great ones,” Gloria was repeating to herself.

“Do you suppose I really am?” she asked artlessly.

“Yes, you are,” Katherine said. “A few hours ago you weren’t half as much as Peggy—and didn’t have the outlook she had, but now——”

Peggy and Gloria simultaneously clapped their hands over Katherine’s mouth, and in her quick movement Gloria’s mass of folded notes scattered over the floor like a sudden storm of Luther Burbank snow-flakes.

When they had gathered these together again and had helped Gloria sort out the most interesting-looking ones to read first, they each kissed her and went home, leaving her well absorbed in her overwhelming correspondence before they were even out of sight.

There was a reception in honor of the officers that evening in the Students’ building. The freshmen were tired from their strenuous day, but they looked charming, nevertheless, in their soft silks and batistes as they drifted down the walk to the scene of festivities.

“There’s Peggy Parsons!” a cry went up as soon as the pair from Suite 22, Ambler House, entered the building.

Peggy was immediately surrounded and borne off toward the receiving line, down which she was marched with nearly all the Andrews crowd and ever so many others in her wake. It did her heart good to hear every Andrews girl telling Gloria Hazeltine that each had voted for her from the beginning—and they believed it, the happy enthusiasts, Peggy could see that.

Then Peggy was swept on by the mob and was soon in the middle of a seethe of dancers, all girls, fox-trotting, one-stepping, waltzing and bumping into each other in brilliant lavender, pink, blue and white confusion. How many dances she danced, nor what they were, she never could remember afterwards. For as soon as one girl left her another carried her off; juniors, seniors, sophomores and freshmen, she couldn’t tell which. But every one knew her name and hailed her as Peggy as if they had known her all their lives.

“I never knew anything so funny,” she said, when she was limping home later, with Katherine in the moonlight. “It was just all a kaleidoscope. I feel a good deal like a moving-picture that has been run too fast.”

“I think you were the director of the picture,” smiled Katherine, glancing affectionately at her dishevelled room-mate. “You wrote the scenario for the election, and directed it, even if you did have to be in the picture yourself.”

“Katherine, you’ve got an awfully horrid room-mate,” mused Peggy in answer to this eulogy.

“I’ve got Peggy Parsons,” Katherine refuted.

“Well, she’s the one I mean,” Peggy laughed.

“You’d be ashamed of her if you knew. Katherine, what do you think I almost wished when we

were taking all those notes over to Gloria?”

“It wouldn’t be so strange if you’d realized they might all have been for you,” Katherine defended her. “They might, you know. It was just your crazy generosity that gave them up and deprived me of rooming with a freshman president. Did you really wish you were president? I hope you *did*, because if you didn’t you’re more than human and I don’t like such people.”

“There!” cried Peggy, abruptly stopping in her homeward limp, and throwing her arms around her room-mate’s neck, “I’m not half so ashamed of it now that it’s been dragged out into the light of day—the light of moon, I mean. It’s funny how much better it makes a person feel to confess something mean and be sympathized with for it.”

“Anyway,” said Katherine, as their tired feet climbed the steps of their house, “you were the *dea ex machina*, Peggy Parsons.”

“The—the what?” demanded Peggy, startled. “Oh, it’s mean to spring anything like that on a trusting room-mate who hasn’t any Latin dictionary along. I’ll be driven to using a trot for your remarks, if you keep on.”

Their laughs rang out inside the huge dimly lighted hall, and the matron, in curl-papers and a purple wrapper, strode forth from her room noiselessly and confronted the culprits.

“Hush, hush,” she said. “At this time of night! Please go up to your room without any more of this unseemly laughter.”

“Yessum, yessum,” whispered Katherine and Peggy meekly, and together they stole up the broad stairway to their rooms, where they snapped on the light and looked at each other and laughed again—but this time silently.

CHAPTER VI—AS OTHERS SEE US

Bang! Bang!

“My-y goo-oodness, is it time to get up?” Katherine sat up sleepily the morning after the freshmen officers’ reception, and tried to get some response from the little log-like Peggy in the bed across the room. But Peggy’s face was toward the wall and she presented a perfect picture of deep sleep.

The banging continued and Katherine felt it incumbent upon her to locate it. Gertie Van Gorder, who had kindly taken upon herself the task of waking up the entire second floor at whatever hours its individual inhabitants specified, never thumped like that. She always came quietly in and laid icy cold wet wash cloths over their faces, and informed them calmly, “Your tub is ready, girls; I’ve left my violet ammonia in there for you.”

So it wasn’t Gertie.

“Peggy,” yawned Katherine fretfully, “can’t you wake up and help me think what that is?”

But Peggy, accustomed to so much more efficient means of awakening, never stirred.

“Come in,” invited Katherine unwillingly and experimentally to the banging, and Hazel Pilcher entered, with Myra Whitewell in her wake.

“Lazy!” cried Hazel. “You’ve missed breakfast!”

Katherine moaned and hunched her shoulders in her pink-ribboned nightgown. “What’s become of Gertie?” she demanded. “We can’t wake up by ourselves, can we?”

“Gertie’s in Boston; didn’t you know? Went for the week-end,” and Hazel sat down on the foot of the sleeping Peggy’s couch and laughed until she was hoarse. “Now that just shows that what Myra and I are getting up is a real necessity,” she giggled. “If there wasn’t a crack o’ doom of some kind, I suppose the whole second floor of Ambler House would snooze right through the three days until Gertie gets back. It’s—it’s ludicrous,” she finished, after fishing around for a good word.

“You’re sitting on Peggy,” pointed out Katherine lackadaisically when the laughter of her guests had died down.

“Wake up, Peggy,” cried Hazel, shaking the rounded shoulder. “Wake up and quit being sat on.”

“You spoke of a plan,” drawled Katherine, when all had seen that the only effect on Peggy was a tossing of her golden curls on the pillow. “Was it something to take Gertie’s place? If it were, I don’t think anything could; Gertie will get up at any hour to call us, and says she likes it, too. I’m too loyal to Gertie——”

“Nonsense,” snapped Myra Whitewell, who had not forgotten that one of the room-mates had been largely instrumental in electing her opponent at elections the day before. “This is a fault party that we’re going to have to-night, in Hazel’s room. Just freshmen, except Hazel. You two must be sure to come.”

“A fault party?”

“Yes, every house ought to have one. Hazel says this house did last year. Each person tells the others their faults, you know, and then we can improve. Everybody is very frank and it really is good for you to know.”

Myra glanced somewhat bitterly at the inattentive form of Peggy, and Katherine hastily turned a little surprised laugh into a sneeze.

“Oh, so she wants to tell Peggy her faults,” mused Katherine. “Peggy of all people! Why, she hasn’t any.”

“I don’t want to come,” a muffled voice came from the erstwhile sleeper. “It hurts people’s feelings.”

“It shouldn’t,” interposed Myra sharply. “If it does, *that’s* a fault, and somebody can bring up that. Everybody ought to be glad to know what’s the matter with them. Why, the idea!” she burst out, “there isn’t one of us who hasn’t seen something to correct in the others, and instead of just keeping it to ourselves and being hypocrites, isn’t it a thousand times better to tell the person right out?”

“I don’t think the person would like that,” the muffled voice protested.

“Well, all the freshmen must come,” Myra persisted. “Come at nine-thirty to-night, in case we don’t have another chance to tell you.”

“That’s a funny thing,” said Peggy, rubbing her eyes when the two had gone. “Do you know any faults of any of the girls, Katherine? I don’t. Let’s see, there are eight freshmen in this house altogether,—and Hazel taking part makes nine. Why, Katherine, I think we have wonderful people here.”

“That part won’t matter so much,” hinted the wise Katherine. “They want to do the telling, I think.”

“I’ll watch the girls all day whenever I’m not at class, and if I see anything the matter with any of them, I’ll have something to report on.”

“I know some for Myra myself.”

“Some way I hadn’t thought of that,” answered Peggy. “I believe I do, too. But here’s a good idea, Katherine,—you and I live together, and did all last year, and we ought to know *slews* of faults about each other. So when we are called on we can just show each other up at a great rate—drag each other out to be ridiculed”—Peggy rocked in bed with the merriment of the thought. “We can make up the most wild faults of all, and please everybody,” she laughed.

“You wouldn’t be gloating over foolish things like that if you knew we’d missed breakfast,” interrupted Katherine. “And, my goodness, woman, there’s the chapel bell!”

The room was a confusion of flying clothes, waving hair-brushes and dodging figures, for some ten minutes thereafter. Then the pink and white cretonne bed covers were smoothed quickly over two couches that had each been made up in a single swooping motion, including sheet, blankets, comforter and all. The fat pillows were stuffed into their cretonne covers and thrown at the head of the beds, and then two well-dressed, well-groomed appearing girls, with their notebooks under their arms, emerged and tore down the broad stairway, flying across the campus lawn, just in time to be shut out of chapel, while the first welling notes of the organ came out to them, as they stood panting at the door.

“You know that girl down the hall who keeps saying ‘all things work together for good,’” said Katherine. “Well——”

“What do you mean?” asked Peggy, but she had already cast one fleeting glance towards the Copper Kettle just outside the campus.

“It’s just a question of whether we can get breakfast in twenty minutes and be in time for our first class,” went on Katherine. “And I’m starved, and I—don’t mind having missed chapel, after all. That’s what I mean.”

Laughing, Peggy caught her arm and the two took a short cut out of campus and across the road to the little tea room.

“Nothing is served till nine o’clock,” they were informed, for provision was made against just such a feeling as Katherine had expressed. The two ran around the corner to the nearest drug store, and regaled themselves with two egg chocolates each.

“Goodness,” murmured Peggy on their way back to recitation, “I certainly wish Gertie were back, bless her heart. If anybody at the meeting to-night finds any fault with *her*, while she’s away, they’ll have me to deal with.”

But when the freshmen were assembled that evening, no word was said against Gertie, nor was her name so much as mentioned, for there is little satisfaction in scoring an absent friend, when you have just received license to make a present one squirm.

Two candles were lit in Hazel’s rose-and-old-blue room. There was no other light. On the couch and here and there about on the floor sat the Ambler freshmen, in silk kimonos of Japanese or French design. Florence Thomas was wearing a pale blue with big gold dragons, Peggy noticed as soon as she came in, for the candle light flickered over it, and the dull gold threads gleamed.

Myra’s kimono was of midnight blue crepe de chine without any relieving color tone whatever. Her face shone above it more pale and proud than usual.

“The reason we are here,” began Myra, rising and standing gracefully before them, with her dark eyes taking in every one of the group, “is to see if we can’t be of some help to each other in weeding out the most glaring faults of the Ambler House freshmen. Hazel is here as a sort of referee, and each girl is to tell—quite without reservation—any criticisms she may have for the rest of us. Now begin, somebody.”

She sat down again with a little silken rustle, and Florence Thomas leaned forward, her pleasant face serious with the weight of her self-imposed task.

“There’s one thing I’ve noticed,” she said slowly. “Doris Winterbean and May Jenson don’t seem to mingle with the rest of the house as they might. Now I don’t want you two girls to get mad,” turning to her victims, “but you have an awfully ungracious air when any one comes to your door, and you always lay a book face down as if you could hardly wait to take it up again. You aren’t exactly snobs,—maybe it’s only that you’re too studious. You never have any eats in your room, and yet you are always going to call on other people when you hear they have. And that’s about the only way any of us can entice you into our rooms——”

Doris and May wilted perceptibly under this attack, and their mouths opened in astonishment to see the way they had been impressing these girls whom they had supposed were their generous friends. But instead of making them more gentle when it came their turn to uncover faults, they threw discretion to the winds, and heaped up accusations, forgetting that another morning was coming and they must go on living among these girls throughout the year.

The atmosphere of friendship which prevailed when the girls arrived in Hazel’s room, was changed now to one of animosity.

One after another, the girls criticized each other’s gowns, table manners and personality. Each new victim of attack blanched, drew a sharp breath of horror and surprise to see in what esteem she had been held, and then bided her time to “get back.”

Faith in friendship died in that college room. Listening to the deeply serious voice of her critic, each girl had some fleeting memory of that same critic—bursting laughingly into her room for an exchange of confidences, or protesting admiration and liking in a sunny, hearty fashion.

A girl named Lilian Moore came in for the worst of the drubbing. Hardly a girl present but had discovered some glaring defect in her.

“You’ll pardon me, but your clothes have absolutely no style, and Ambler House can’t help wishing you were a little more modern. It hurts a house to have to claim a girl that will not dress properly—it destroys the tone of the whole house.”

“Your hair—this is awful—but it really ought to be washed more. It ought to be fluffy and done with some care, and not—just wadded up as you do it.”

“We like you—Doris and I were saying the other day what a nice girl you were—but we both said we’d like you so much better if you didn’t say ‘indeed’ all the time.”

“You have absolutely no faculty for making friends.”

“Your room is so unattractive—there’s nothing in it, really, and you can’t expect girls to want to go to see you.”

“You don’t walk right—you stoop.”

Those were some of the things that these dainty freshmen had been thinking about her since the first day she had appeared among them, shining-eyed and shy, anxious for their approval, fearful lest she, with such limited advantages, should fail to measure up to their wonderful standard! And then, oh, glory of life, and happiness undeserved, they had seemed to care after all! They had seemed to want to talk to her, had passed her their candy, had often come to her to be helped with difficult algebra problems!

No one even asked her if she had any fault to find in return. What could she have found to criticize about *them*? So she was passed over at last, and allowed to sink back in silence, miserably conscious of her cotton crepe kimono that she and her mother had made with such pride and such appreciation of its becomingness. Her cheeks burned a tortured red, but there was nobody to notice her.

The hilarity with which Peggy and Katherine had meant to accuse each other of colossal faults had died. They sat quietly in the candle dusk, holding each other’s hands while indignation showed in their faces.

“And Peggy Parsons——”

It was the cold, diamond-hard voice of Myra Whitewell speaking. “Peggy Parsons, I’ve felt it my duty for quite a while to tell you how thoroughly conceited you are——”

Katherine, who had shifted uneasily when the speech began, gasped now and would have laughed in her relief, for it seemed to her that if there was one thing in the world everybody must know that Peggy was *not*, it was conceited. Myra was wide of the mark, Katherine felt, and she did not even press her room-mate’s hand that still lay passively in hers.

“You feel as if you have to dip into everything,” went on Myra, with a voice in which spite was veiled in a grave tone of carrying out a disagreeable duty. “You felt you must run the elections ——”

“Ah,” thought Katherine, “I knew that was the reason.”

“As if the freshman class couldn’t get along without you! You made yourself very forward and, it seemed to some of us, bold, by going up and advising Alta Perry how to do things. And Alta the

junior president! It wasn't respectful, and it was taking a good deal on yourself!"

Here Florence Thomas, astonished that any one should dare arraign Peggy, got up, the golden dragons flaming in the dim light, and moved deliberately toward the door.

She found the door locked, and the key gone. She turned angrily.

"Until we're through, nobody ought to go," explained the high-handed Myra Whitewell. "As I was saying, Peggy, your egotism——"

"Back it up, back it up," protested Doris Winterbean.

"Well," Myra accepted the challenge, "that poem of yours in the *Monthly*——"

"How did you know?" cried Peggy and Katherine, simultaneously.

"Why, I read the foolish thing in the *Monthly*," snapped Myra, surprised.

Peggy, her eyes alight, and Katherine, dawning credulity in her face, turned and met each other's gaze in slow triumph.

"It's *in*?" asked Peggy breathlessly.

"Of course—how else——?" murmured Myra.

"Girls!" cried Peggy, radiantly, "my poem is in the *Monthly*! I didn't suppose they'd really use it—oh, I would have told you all, if I'd been sure. Are the new *Monthlies* down on the table now, Myra?"

"Yes, they're downstairs."

"I'm going to sneak down just as I am and get mine," breathed Peggy, "and then shall I read it to you, girls?"

Faults, depression, lost faith—all forgotten in the frank joy that was Peggy's.

She pattered across the floor, begged prettily for the key, took it from Hazel Pilcher's reluctant hand, and fitted it in the lock.

A moment later they heard her trailing down the hall.

There was complete silence while she was gone.

The outraged feelings were subsiding, and the girls, who a few moments before were almost hating each other, now waited in pleasant anticipation the reading of the poem.

There was no warning of her return. They were simply watching the door, which she had left open, and all of a sudden she stood framed in it, the soft candle glow lighting her lovely face and blue-clad figure, and the tan cover of the *Monthly* which she held clasped to her heart.

"I—can't come back in," she whispered. "I met our house-mother on the stairs, and she made me promise to go right to my own room if she'd let me creep down and get the *Monthly* from the table. It's after ten, and all the lights are out down the hall. Good-night, girls; I've had a lovely time," and she really believed she had.

Katherine followed her, with a backward wave of the hand, and what more fault finding went on after their departure they never knew.

"I s'pose it isn't much to any one else," said Peggy deprecatingly, "but I just feel as if this was the

nicest number of the *Monthly* ever gotten out!”

And Katherine answered loyally, “I do too.”

The cretonne couch covers they had smoothed up in such haste that morning were carefully folded back, and Katherine climbed into her bed, and with a little tired sigh was fast asleep; but Peggy, after carefully fixing the screen around her room-mate’s couch so that the light shouldn’t trouble her, propped herself up with pillows in her own bed, the College *Monthly* on her knees.

She found her name in the index, “Margaret Parsons,” and was thrilled by the formality of that. Then she fluttered the leaves over—just as any one might, she told herself, until she came, to her intense surprise, of course, to her poem.

This she proceeded to read. And when she had finished, she tried to read one of the stories or a poem by some one else, but somehow nothing seemed interesting after that—nothing had for her quite the vividness or charm, so she shamefacedly yielded to the temptation to read hers all over again.

But before she had finished, a curious sound disturbed her.

From somewhere down the hall came the unmistakable sobs of a person crying out her heart in heedless abandon. It was not very loud, but was penetrating and alarming.

Peggy listened, hardly able to believe her ears. When she and Katherine were so happy in college, was it possible any girl would have cause to cry like that?—right here in Ambler House? —the nicest dorm on Campus?

Sighing, she slid her feet into her slippers, dipped her arms into her kimono again, laid the precious *Monthly* on the dressing-table, turned out the light and was soon in the fearsome hall, with those sounds echoing down it, and no light but the tiny globule of red at the other end, which indicated the fire-escape.

She went on toward the unwinking light, until she was sure she stood before the door through which the crying emanated.

It was Lilian Moore’s room. She had a small single room and was apparently drowning herself in tears there.

The recklessness of the crying, the absolute indifference as to who heard or knew, made Peggy hesitate for just a minute before she turned the knob of the door and went in. She was not exactly afraid, and yet she felt very much alone with something too painful for her to cope with, as she felt her way into the darkness.

She felt her foot sink into a soft pile of clothing, then immediately after, she stumbled against some large and solid object that she never remembered having seen in the middle of Lilian’s room, and for which she failed utterly to account.

Lilian was throwing herself about on the bed now, and Peggy did not know whether she realized there was any one in the room or not. She felt for the light, and, after much fumbling, found it, and snapped it on.

The freshman’s room was in a state of complete confusion. An open trunk half packed was what she had run against in the darkness. Piles of clothing and books were strewn round about it on the floor, ready to go in. Lilian, herself, fully dressed, started up from the bed with a cry, as the glare of light flooded everything, and dropped back moaning when she saw that it was Peggy who had come.

“Now,” said Peggy quietly, sitting down on the bed beside the tossing figure, “let’s be real still or the matron will hear us.”

This obvious common sense thrown like cold water over her misery had an immediate effect on the other girl, who had expected sympathy.

The sobs shuddered down to long-drawn painful breaths, and Lilian covered her swollen eyes with two weak hands.

“I’m sure it isn’t just the way you think,” said Peggy, after a few minutes. “It couldn’t be as bad as all that.”

“What couldn’t?”

“Why, whatever is the matter.”

There was a pause and then came a smothered, “Yes, it could. It is. Oh, and I wanted to come to college so—I wanted to come!”

“Well—and you came, and here you are with all of us,” Peggy reminded.

“That’s just it,” the confidences came now pouring over each other for utterance. Lilian clasped Peggy’s cool fingers with a fevered hand. “I wish to goodness that I hadn’t ever come. I don’t belong. The girls showed me that to-night. Oh, when I think of how my mother kissed me good-bye—and—and gave me up for all this year—just for—this——”

“For what?” helped out Peggy.

“To have the girls make fun of my room, my clothes—and me. Listen, Miss Parsons. We lived in a small town where nobody was very well-to-do. And mother—wanted something better for me than she had ever known. When she was a girl she used to dream of going to college——”

Sobs choked the narrator and she struggled for a moment before she could go on.

“And—when I began to grow up, she decided that I should go—oh, Miss Parsons, when I came away she said to remember that I was going for both of us!”

Peggy’s fingers tightened around the feverish hand, and she could see very clearly in her mind the face of this girl’s mother with its wistful yet self-sacrificing expression, and the tears came suddenly to her eyes.

“She saved, my mother did, for years so that there would be enough—for me—to come on Campus like the other girls,” a trace of bitterness crept in here. “But I didn’t know how they dressed at a place like this and how they all fixed up their rooms. I didn’t realize there would be anything besides the tuition and board—and—I—didn’t—know—they couldn’t—love me——”

Peggy tore her hand from the other’s grasp and went and stood by the desk with her back to the bed. Her eyes fell on a blotted and tear-stained letter which began, “Dear Mother.”

“Listen, Lilian,” she said, going back to the couch, “I haven’t any mother at all. That will seem strange to you, who have seen me laughing around here, happy and singing most of the time. But I haven’t,—and I know that nothing ever will quite make up. That letter you have begun—just try to realize that no matter what happens to me,—whatever hard thing I may have to go through, I can’t write such a letter as that.”

Lilian stared at Peggy in surprise. Why, she had supposed the little Miss Parsons had *everything*.

“You are the one to be envied after all,” said Peggy. “No matter how many of the girls like you, or how much they care, it isn’t anything to the way a person’s own mother cares. And if you want them to, the girls will care, too. We’ll begin now to *make* them.”

“It’s too late—I’m going home.”

“Going home after your mother saved to send you?—going home without the least little bit of a try to bring things your way?—going home and taking away your mother’s chance to enjoy college through you?—oh, no, you’re not going home!”

“Well,” hesitancy showed in Lilian’s manner, “I’ve been packing my trunk. I made up my mind that the girls would never have to see my homely clothes any more.”

“Stay a week and—try, will you?” pleaded Peggy. “Katherine and I would miss you awfully if you went home now.”

“You and Katherine? Would you really?”

“Yes, really and truly. Why, when we first knew you here, we said you were the kind of girl we wanted for a friend, and that we were sure we were going to like you,” fibbed kind little Peggy, striving to find in her memory a record that they had noticed her at all.

“Then it isn’t everybody in the house that feels as some of those girls do?”

“Nobody really,” stoutly maintained Peggy. “Even the ones who talked too much didn’t feel that way. They had all just been rubbed the wrong way by some one else—and you were an unresisting object to fire away at in their turn. And don’t you suppose some of the rest had just as horrid things said to them as you did? And they aren’t crying about it either. They are protected by being more egotistical and sure of themselves and they’re just thinking ‘how ignorant that critic of mine was,’ that’s all.”

“If you want me to,” said Lilian suddenly, “I’ll stay—for you.”

“Stay for the mother,” corrected Peggy, “and for your own satisfaction, too.”

“Very well, I will,” came the determined voice at last.

“Then good-night,” said Peggy, “and don’t you think about it again to-night—will you?”

“No,” said Lilian sturdily, “I’ll think only about to-morrow when maybe, if I come to see you, you’ll read me your poem in the *Monthly*.”

“Why, you *dear*,” said Peggy, and, since she was a very human little girl, she made her way back to her room in a state of pleasant warmth and contentment.

CHAPTER VII—CINDERELLA

As a college morning dries all tears and wipes out all resentments of the night before, the freshmen were only slightly haughty in their demeanor toward each other next day, and none of the upper classmen had reason to suspect that they had been going through a period of stress and disillusionment all by themselves.

Lilian came down to breakfast, ate hurriedly and scurried off to class, after casting one quick glance of adoration toward Peggy.

Peggy and Katherine became conspirators as soon as she was well out of the house.

“You have time this first hour to-day, and I have the third,” said Peggy. “So you go down and buy some green and white cretonne and some silk for pillow tops, and I’ll sew them up when I come in.”

In the afternoon they hung a “Busy” sign on their door for the first time, set the percolator perking coffee to inspire them and plunged into the green and white material in earnest.

“These cretonne curtains will be nearly as pretty as ours, don’t you think so?” asked Peggy, “and ours were made at the store. I’m getting very proud of us as seamstresses, Kathie.”

The plain silk was made into pillow tops of red, blue and yellow.

“The red one will brighten things so,” approved Katherine, when she came to stitch it over a plump pillow, one of three that the room-mates hadn’t needed this year for themselves.

Like culprits, they sneaked down the hall, their gay offerings wadded as closely as possible in their arms, and knocked in fear and trembling at Lilian’s door. If she had called “Come in,” they would have run. But they received no answer, so Peggy cautiously opened the door, and thrust her curly head inside.

“It’s all right,” she whispered in relief to Katherine a moment later, when she saw that Lilian had not returned from class.

The friends worked quickly, and soon the green and white curtains were hung at the windows, and the three bright pillows were ranged along the couch.

“But she hasn’t any couch cover at all,” wailed Peggy, standing off to look at the result “And the white bedspread does look so hopeless showing through those gay cushions. What shall we do, room-mate?”

Katherine’s forehead was wrinkled. “You know that old green denim curtain that hangs before the clothes closet in our bedroom, Peggy? Don’t you suppose that would be better than nothing? It was there when we came, but it isn’t so very ancient looking, and it would be inconspicuous anyway—and just about the kind of thing you see in lots of rooms.”

With ruthless hands they tore down the big green curtain in their own suite, snipped off the rough end with scissors, and bore it back in triumph to Cinderella’s apartment.

“I’m going to run over to Gloria’s,” said Peggy then, “and ask her to part with one or two of those

pictures she got for being elected. She has two Home-keeping Hearts that I know of, and several pictures that look like photographs that can't mean much to her, and would just cheer up our protegee wonderfully, and make her room pass muster with any guest."

Peggy's tireless feet carried her blithely across the campus to Gloria's room, and it didn't take her twenty minutes to pick out what she wanted, with Gloria's help.

"Of course I'm glad to have your little friend have them," said the obliging freshman president. "And if you want me to, I'll come over and see her some time and bring a lot of girls from my house—junior celebrities and senior dramatists and people like that, and it might have a good effect on those Amblerites that tried to snub her."

"It looks like a different place," Peggy and Katherine congratulated themselves later when they had done what they could in the way of changes. "It's changed from a poor little apology of just a place to sleep, into an inviting and cozy college room—with the brightest cushions a person could imagine," they summed up boastfully.

Lilian came dragging home from classes, tired circles under her eyes after the strain of the evening before, and a return of hopelessness toward her situation. She had Peggy and Katherine for her friends, but after all these two joyous freshmen went very much their own way, and were too busy with engagements with more important people, to think of her much—the girl with the horrid clothes and the wadded-up hair—and the unattractive room. So she reasoned disconsolately.

She opened her own door listlessly and entered the room.

And then she thought that she had made a mistake. It couldn't be her room—of course it wasn't—and yet, when she turned in bewilderment to leave it she beheld her own books on the rickety little table.

Well, it was magic! However it had happened, she accepted it with a queer choking sense that she was really to live in a room like other rooms hereafter. College had suddenly come close.

She parted the green and white cretonne curtains and looked out on a new world; she stroked the bright silk cushions with a new sense of comfort and luxury.

Then she went over to the dresser and drew out the tear-stained letter that began "Dear mother," and tore it into bits. A few minutes later her pen was flying over some clean, fresh sheets in a glowing description of college, of her room, of her friends.

It was the sort of letter to make a mother think with a sigh of gladness when she read it, "Well, she is having it all. How nice, that my daughter can draw about her such friends. How lovely, that she is so pleasantly situated in such a delightful room—and how, best of all, that she should not have been deprived of college."

An interested group of girls clustered around the house bulletin board on the stair landing, and read many times the latest sign that was pinned there:

"Looks like a nice party to me," speculated Doris Winterbean. "But May and I haven't a chafing-dish. May, go and borrow one from some sophomore, because I'm curious, and after last night I certainly want something cheerful."

Peggy herself knocked at Lilian's door a few minutes later.

"I've got a sign up for a party to-night," she said as soon as a welcoming voice had called to her to enter, "and I thought maybe you'd like Kay and me to fix your hair for it—it's pretty hair—and I thought——"

Lilian tried to say something about the benefits she had already received at their hands, but

Peggy hurried on.

“We have a new electric hair dryer, and Kay has some marcel irons—an amateur kind, you know—and if you’d like to have us practise them on you,—I think the result would surprise the girls and send them right down to Gibot to have theirs done.”

“I can’t let you,” stammered Lilian. “I never *could* fix my hair well, but I wouldn’t let you bother with it for the world.”

“Just time before dinner,” Peggy insisted, whipping a towel from the dresser and beginning to fasten it around the reluctant shoulders of the other freshman.

She was led down the hall and Peggy experimented with all the Suite 22 hair-dressing implements. Egg shampoo, alcohol, bay rum, electric dryer, special French orris powder, and finally the hot curling iron.

Then Katherine dexterously did it up for her—not in an original style at all, but in the mode that had swept the entire college: so that when their work was finished and the victim was handed an oval ivory mirror, she exclaimed with wonder, for there was reflected a nice-looking-girl just like a hundred others in Hampton, with wonderful ripples of soft gleaming hair, that made you want to follow the waves with your fingers.

“Is that me?” asked Lilian.

“We’ll forgive you for being ungrammatical, since it’s all in recognition of our efforts,” said Peggy delightedly. “It is very much you—the way you ought to have been all along, and will, I hope, continue to be, now that we’ve shown you the way. Mercy, Kay, she does look wonderful! If you and I ever get poor, we’ll know of one talent we have at least whereby we can hope to make an honest living.”

So Lilian came that night to the party, very much elated, and entirely self-confident, instead of shrinking and conscious of making an inferior appearance.

Those who had chafing-dishes had brought them, those who had not had borrowed them. Beside each chafing-dish, the hostesses had arranged a little set of materials.

“Now, two chafing-dishes are prepared to make fudge, one sea-foam, and one chocolate marshmallow. Will the freshmen kindly pair off and choose what they want to make? Here are the materials for white taffy over here, as a prize for the ones that get done first.” Peggy made the announcement, and the girls lit the chafing-dishes and started in with great zeal.

This was the kind of party to please them all. Nothing but candy—and all they could make and eat of that!

“This is an anti-climax party,” explained Katherine, when the fudge was bubbling with its rich delicious odor, in the chafing-dish chosen by Florence Thomas and herself. “Peg and I thought of the awful faults we all found in each other last night”—*they* hadn’t done any of the finding, but the others didn’t notice that they painted themselves blacker than they were—“and we have a suggestion to make as to how to cure them.”

The girls were a little displeased—more of that criticism business? they wondered. Even the tempting odor of the cooking candy couldn’t quite appease them.

“It’s just a way to wipe out the faults as soon as possible,” said Peggy with her funny and irresistible little smile. “I thought if we each cured the faults of the others in our own minds, why—where would they be?”

There was an alarming simplicity to this.

Doris dropped her fudge spoon.

“What do you mean, Peggy?” she demanded.

“Well,” laughed Peggy gleefully, delighted with the discovery she and Katherine had made, “that party last night did no good, some way. Everybody went home feeling disgruntled and out of sorts —and overwhelmed more or less with their own imperfections. If each fault-finder just—doesn’t find fault, you know,—even in her own mind, there won’t be any fault pretty soon to be found.”

“Don’t see it,” said Myra Whitewell.

“If *you*,” Peggy turned to her patiently, “if *you* just wiped out the notion you had about me—and stopped letting it torment you—that I wanted to run things, you know,—why, why—then you wouldn’t see me like that, would you? Pretty soon every one in Ambler House would be praising every one else, and loving every one so much that the other houses would begin to notice, and would catch the infection. I think it’s better to let our enemies find fault with us, if they must, but not our friends.”

“Ambler House would get a wonderful reputation for having the best freshmen on Campus if we all boosted our house and our classmates everywhere, I can see that,” ventured Florence Thomas eagerly.

“Well, shall we try?” urged Peggy, “shall we just try it out as an experiment?”

Because it was Peggy, and because the idea was new, and because the candy was just ready to eat now, and very tempting, the good-natured freshmen light-heartedly promised to try her plan —and to follow it faithfully until it had had time to show either some result—or no result at all.

This was the beginning of an attitude of mind that later became habitual with that group of freshmen. It wasn’t many weeks after this anti-fault-finding party in Peggy’s room that, if a first-year girl heard that another lived in Ambler House, she was filled with wistful envy; for the good times the Amblerites had, their gay and loyal friendship became matters of common college discussion.

Myra Whitewell would not have worked into the system if she could have helped it. But the others, very much in earnest under the stimulus of Peggy’s sunny example, refused to give heed to her grouches, or to be hurt at her snubs,—and they never failed to speak well of her outside, so that this praise of theirs came to her ears at last, and filled her heart with warmth in spite of herself, and she could not do less than give them her friendship—yes, and even her warped and selfish love,—in the end.

There was candy enough left after the spread that night for each freshman to take a plateful to her particular junior or senior friend.

As they were leaving, their faces glowing with appreciation of the pleasant evening they had just spent, and in anticipation of the junior’s or senior’s delight at their offering, Doris Winterbean drew Peggy aside and whispered in her ear:

“Well, I don’t know, Pegkins, it’s rather wonderful, but I’ve tried your plan ever since you spoke of it and it’s had an uncanny effect. Why, do you know, I already see the greatest difference in that Lilian girl? Honestly! Peggy, her hair looks *pretty* to me now, and I thought it was horrid last night. And her face and manner—she just seemed as happy and confident as anybody, instead of so shy and uncomfortable. It’s—magic, Peggy, and you may not believe me, but I really do see her altogether differently.”

And Peggy burst out into a little laugh of enjoyment, and her eyes followed Lilian with pride. But she did not think it was necessary to disabuse the mind of Lilian’s new admirer by telling her that the “magic” had a very material foundation.

CHAPTER VIII—INDIAN SUMMER

Glory lay over the whole college world.

The sun blazed upon an earth more beautiful than Peggy and Katherine ever remembered to have seen it. The woods, when the two took their walks, were as red with burnished leaves as if they had been on fire.

And a golden haze came in the morning and at sunset.

The mystery, the still power, and the vague melancholy of autumn, crept through the veins of the Hampton girls, and they walked and picnicked on Leeds rocks, and sang away the glorious afternoons far into the twilight, when the sudden coolness warned them of what they would forget—that these days were going, and that winter would soon be upon them.

Peggy and Katherine saw their first autumn at college dissolving in that golden haze almost before they had begun to enjoy it and to realize that all this was really theirs—this life among seventeen hundred girls, all young, all having identical interests, all happy and congenial.

There came a Saturday afternoon too lovely to be spent at home.

“What shall we do to-day, Katherine?” Peggy asked. “Let’s just go somewhere by ourselves. Do you want to drive, or walk, or have a bacon bat or take some books down by Paradise and read?”

A day like that one suggests many ways for enjoyment, but if there is one thing more absolutely satisfying than another, and just-the-thing-to-do on such a Saturday afternoon, it is to tramp over to the cider mill, with a jug and a capacity-appetite for new cider and ginger cookies.

So it was inevitable that Peggy and Katherine should decide on this as the ideal adventure, after they had exhausted all the possibilities.

“That cider mill seems just as much a part of the college as Seelye Hall,” laughed Katherine. “Peggy, can’t you taste that wonderful cider now? Let’s go right away,—I think we can walk over and back, don’t you?”

That would mean about a nine-mile jaunt.

Somebody in the house had a gallon jug, and the room-mates promptly and unceremoniously “borrowed” this and, with silk sweater coats, and a ribbon tied around their heads to keep their hair from blowing, started off into the wonder of Indian summer, their hearts full of joy over every one of the nine miles that lay before them.

The road was dusty, the jug was heavy, the day was hot. After two miles they were warm and thirsty—and hungry, too, and their feet dragged a little.

“Oh, that cider, that cider,” laughed Katherine. “I wish it could come part way to meet us!”

“Never mind, room-mate,” cheered Peggy, with mock heroism; “only a mile and a half to go now, and then the lovely cider will be running into our jug, and we can get several glassesful to drink there. And ginger cookies to your heart’s content, Kay.”

“Can’t we—speed up a little?” urged Katherine on the strength of that; “if we just double our steps, we’ll get there sooner.”

So the dust clouded up more thickly under their hastening footsteps, and the mile and a half dwindled and disappeared, until there before them was the cider mill itself, keeping guard over a little stream that gurgled into the mill and out again.

“At last, room-mate!” hailed Katherine.

“Katherine,” hesitated Peggy, right in sight of their goal, “have you—have you thought how much heavier the jug will be to carry back when it is full?”

Katherine cast at her one withering glance, seized her arm, and the two ran now, the jug bumping as it would against their knees, and the perspiration bright on their foreheads.

“It looks like a deserted castle,” panted Peggy when they turned up the worn pathway to the entrance of the mill. “And isn’t it quiet? Doesn’t it usually make some kind of noise?”

“You’re thinking of the planing mill, infant,” mocked Katherine.

“Well,—I—anyway, Katherine, the door is shut.”

“It won’t be hard to open,—why can’t you—?”

“Yes, I can open it,” Peggy answered, stepping into the entrance hall where the glasses of cider and the little packs of ginger cookies were usually sold, “but there’s no one here now that we’re in, and it looks more deserted than ever and there isn’t even a *crumb* of a ginger cooky—and I’m starved, nor a *sip* of cider—and I’m *thirsty*!”

“Why, this is Saturday, too. What do you suppose is wrong, Peggy? I’m absolutely dead, if I must confess it. I can’t possibly walk home without a cool drink of cider to brace me up. I never was so hungry and tired in my life.”

“That’s his house, I think,” Peggy nodded across the road toward a comfortable-looking farm house.

“Do you suppose the cider man would be home?”

“Anyway,” Peggy said faintly, “his wife would, and she might have some ginger cookies.”

They hurried down the walk and shuffled across the dusty road, feeling that if they were disappointed now they could scarcely bear it.

They went to the side door of the farm house and knocked timidly.

“Oh, Peggy, they’re *eating*!” gasped Katherine. “I feel like a tramp. I almost wish I was one, too, and then maybe they’d invite us in. But isn’t it a late time to be having dinner?”

The cider man’s wife stood in the doorway now, smiling at them somewhat impatiently.

“Did you come for cider?” she asked. “Well, about ten others have been here before you to-day, on the same errand, but he didn’t make any to-day. And there aren’t any ginger cookies. We didn’t have anything for the other girls, either. I never saw anybody like you college girls—a person feels guilty if he rests one day,—what with you all being hungry and thirsty just the same. I’m real sorry.”

“We—we brought a jug,” said Peggy pathetically.

“Brought a jug? Ernie!” (raising her voice, and calling back into the room where the table was).

“They brought a jug.”

Ernie called back something, and a smile flitted across his wife’s face.

“He says if you want to wait till he’s through dinner, he’ll go over and make some,” she interpreted. “We’re very late getting dinner to-day—we’ve had so many interruptions. But if you want to wait———?”

“We’ll wait!” cried Peggy and Katherine in the same breath.

“It will be about an hour,” said the woman, closing the door.

“An hour!” Peggy and Katherine exchanged glances with deep sighs, and trudged down the steps, and slowly back toward the mill.

The cider mill was an important institution to Hampton girls—and to Amherst boys, if they cared to walk so far. The man who owned it seemed to feel an especial responsibility toward college girls—as every one does near a college town—and so he kept a counter in the entrance hall over which he sold as much cider as a girl wanted to drink, for five cents. One of his stalwart young helpers would fill her glass as many times as she wished, for the single first payment.

Then there were the ginger cookies, done up in oiled paper, in packages of a dozen, that his wife had made, and these the hungry young invaders could purchase at ten cents a package. They seemed so much a part of it all that cider never tastes quite perfect to Hampton graduates, to this day, without ginger cookies. Any of the Hampton girls would have been surprised to visit any other cider mill and find that their order for ginger cookies was not understood.

Opposite the mill, on the same side as the farmer’s house, but farther back, and screened all around by a circlet of trees, so that it sparkled in the midst of them like a Corot painting, was the cool mill-pond, with reeds and rushes growing out into it, and shady branches overhanging it.

Drawn toward this now in their search for something of interest to while away the time, Peggy and Katherine parted the bushes and young birch trees, and found themselves looking into the very heart of beautiful things, with all the world of dust and disappointment and fatigue behind them.

“That water looks cool,” murmured Peggy gladly.

“Yes; I don’t know as it’s safe drinking water, but I think we might *wade* in it.”

“If we have time.”

“An hour?—why of course there’s time. What else can we do to amuse ourselves?”

They were as entirely hidden from the road and the farm house as if they had been in another world. Without more argument, the two sat down and Katherine slipped out of her grey pumps, and flung her grey silk stockings after them. Peggy was wearing tan oxfords and tan stockings.

“O-oh, who would dream there could be anything so cold on such a warm day?” gasped Peggy, trying it with her toes.

“I like this reedy, weedy part,” laughed Katherine, her feet dipping in up to her ankles.

They sat, thus, side by side, dangling their feet like happy children, seeking to fathom with their eyes how soon the water got deep enough to drown them, should they step out farther, and watching idly the patterns made by the sea-weed strands near the shore.

“What if a fish should come?” cried Katherine suddenly, and laughed at the expedition with which Peggy’s feet came glistening up out of the water. “Don’t be silly, Peggy,” she giggled, “fish can’t

bite anything but flies and worms."

"Maybe the kind that would live in a mill-pond could," said Peggy, comfortably sliding the reassured feet back into the still water. "And anyway, who wants to dispute habitation with a fish?"

With all manner of the gayest and most idiotic prattle they whiled away that endless hour, and if any one had stood just outside the fringe of little trees and had heard their voices without seeing them, he would never in the world have guessed that such inconsequential conversation was being indulged in by two freshmen in good standing of the largest woman's college in America; girls who would be candidates for the degree within four years and who were even now in the process of being moulded into "intelligent gentlewomen."

"Hasn't that bird a funny whistle?" asked Katherine suddenly. "Listen! He whistles just like a person!"

And as soon as the words were out of her mouth, she was covered with confusion, for the realization came to her that it was a person,—somebody going by on the road, probably, and they had so far forgotten the world outside their own green hedge that it had startled them.

"I'm going to peek out," said Peggy. Thrusting the leaves aside, she made a tiny opening,—large enough for her eyes to get a clear view of the road.

And then all of a sudden she sprang up, her face hot with excitement, and made as if to burst through the thicket to the road itself. She would have accomplished this had not Katherine caught her dress and dragged her back so violently that she sat down, breathless, on the bank of the pond, exclaiming over and over in gladness, "It's Jim! Katherine, it's Jim!"

"Your shoes and stockings, child," urged Katherine. "Put them on, quick."

But Peggy seized one grey and one tan stocking and on they went over her wet feet. Then she stepped into her tan oxfords and flew out from shelter.

Katherine looked helplessly after the retreating Peggy, and then down at the assorted pair of stockings left for her. "There seems to be nothing to do but put them on," she sighed resignedly. In a few minutes she emerged from the shadows with as much dignity as she could assume.

And there down the road was Peggy, the full blaze of the autumn sun on her golden head, her eager face uplifted and aglow, and towering above her two good-looking young men, apparently oblivious to everything except this strange and vivacious little apparition that had burst so suddenly upon them.

One, Katherine recognized at once as Jim Huntington Smith, the grandson of old Mr. Huntington, whom they had known last year at Andrews, and through whose generosity Peggy had been enabled to come to college.

The two girls had been the means of discovering Jim's relationship to the owner of "Gloomy House," as the old Huntington place was known, and of re-uniting these two members of the same family.

So they regarded Jim as very much their property; as they might look upon some handsome older cousin.

Peggy was waving an arm back towards the pond, and the boys were laughing. Then as she went on with her gesticulations they looked up and saw Katherine.

Katherine had been shrinking back against the trees that lined the water, very conscious of the one tan stocking and the other grey one. She was trying to make up her mind whether to go forward and divert Peggy some way so that she would let these boys go, and would come back

and change stockings, or whether she should go back and hide, and run the risk of having the whole joyous trio down the road charge upon her unexpectedly.

It was all settled for her now.

Jim swung his cap in the air and started toward her, while Peggy and the other young man followed more slowly. And even at such a time Katherine couldn't help noticing the funny little way Peggy's eye-lashes kept sweeping down and up again, and how pretty and pink her face was.

"Oh," smiled Katherine to herself, "if she should suddenly wake up and notice her own feet."

"Well, Katherine Foster, how are you?" Jim was saying, wringing her hand heartily. "This is certainly fine. Bud and I walked over from Amherst to get some cider, but found there was none to be had. But meeting you people compensates for it all."

"Oh, but there's going to be some cider, too," Katherine informed him; "that's what we're waiting for. The man is just finishing his dinner and he promised to come over and make some for us. I hope he'll let us watch him—I never saw any cider made."

"We'll stick around."

"Do—and maybe———"

"Well?"

"Maybe you'll help us carry our jug home. It's just inside the trees there."

"I should say we will. It turns out to be mutually lucky that we met; we have the advantage of cider being made and you get your jug carried home. How's Hampton anyway? Like it as well as you thought you would? Peggy has sent me a post-card now and then, but they all say the regulation thing: 'Having a glorious time, the cross is our room,' 'Perfectly lovely up here, nice weather for ducks,'—you know the kind."

Katherine laughed. She remembered the day she and Peggy had picked out a complete set of post-cards with Hampton views, and how they had been in the habit of dispatching them with the most bromidic messages they could think of, to their friend at Amherst.

"We just did it for fun," she told him now. "We wanted to embarrass you before the other fellows by having a perfect flood of the usual type of post-cards coming in from a girls' college. We thought you'd know. Why, we even signed them all sorts of different things—'Essie,' and 'Jennie' and 'Millicent' and——"

"And Marmalade," added Jim with a twinkle in his eye. "I have them all, making a border around my room. The other boys are green with envy. They——"

At this moment Peggy and her companion reached them, and Peggy interrupted Jim in perfect unconcern.

"Katherine, I want you to meet Mr. Bevington, of Amherst college; Mr. Bevington, this is Miss Foster, my room-mate."

"Awfully pleased to meet you," murmured the Bevington youth over Katherine's hand.

"You may not be when you know what your friend, Jim, has volunteered for you," laughed Katherine.

"It couldn't make any difference."

"He's promised that you and he will carry our cider jug home for us when we get it filled."

“Has he?” cried Peggy delightedly. “Oh, that’s going to be lovely. It was awfully heavy, Mr. Bevington, when we were dragging it over here. At first it seemed as light as a feather, but before we had traveled a mile it became as heavy and awkward as a cannon ball.”

“So you see,” Katherine turned and laughed up at Bud Bevington, “there’s an awful task ahead of you.”

But of course both young men were delighted to carry any burden for two such charming young ladies, and as they started back toward the mill the talk veered to other subjects and ranged from sports to house dances, when the owner of the mill came up to them.

“Are you the college girls that wanted the cider?” he asked jovially.

“Two of us are,” Peggy answered primly. “But all of us would like to come and watch you make it if we may.”

“You can help,” answered the man.

So with that delightful prospect ahead of them, they entered the rambling building, dim except where the sunlight found a crack between the dusty boards and streamed weakly in.

They followed the man up a winding stairway, that was like climbing to some quaint old attic. There was one place where they could look down and see the black, gold-specked water rushing away under the stairs. It gave Peggy a creepy feeling. The specks of gold were dots of light that fell into its darkness.

“It—makes an awful roaring noise—kind of subterranean sound,” murmured Katherine, but nobody heard her, because of the rush of the stream.

When they reached the loft above, they stood to one side waiting for the man to begin.

“The young ladies are going to make the cider,” he said.

“Oh,” cried Peggy, “that’s fine, but how do we begin?”

The man hauled over several large sacks of apples, lifted a round cover in the floor, bringing to view a kind of chute.

“Pour them apples down there,” he invited.

With the assistance of the boys, they lifted the sacks and the apples went tumbling down through the opening. But Peggy and Katherine were aghast to see what kind of apples they were.

“Why, some of those I poured down were just—*awfully* bad,” declared Peggy. “In fact, quite decomposed,” she added facetiously.

“Don’t they get sorted out down below?” Katherine inquired anxiously when the last of the sacks had been emptied.

But the cider man only laughed.

When they went down, the apples fell into a kind of wagon without wheels, which moved slowly by machinery, till it reached a certain place, where heavy weights came down from above and slowly crushed the fruit. Very soon a small stream of clear amber juice ran down a trough and into a large hogshead.

The cider man filled their jug, and then gave them each a glass, and told them to drink all they wanted from the hogshead, without additional charge, since he had made the cider just for them.

Sweet, clear and refreshing as any cider in the world, this came to their thirsty lips. And yet—the girls thought they had never enjoyed cider less. The memory of that collection of apples that had gone hurtling down the chute!

The boys, however, were enthusiastic, because Peggy and Katherine had made it, and they praised it highly enough so that the kindly owner of the mill did not notice the heroic efforts of his two feminine guests to seem appreciative.

Out into the sunlight again the little party came, Jim carrying the jug nonchalantly on his shoulder.

“Rebecca at the well,” he laughed; “here she is in moving pictures.”

And the others laughed, too, and began the long walk toward Hampton, as refreshed as if they were just starting out for the day.

The farmer stood in the doorway of his mill, and watched the departure with a friendly smile.

There is nothing so wonderfully satisfying as college Saturday afternoon, with all lessons forgotten—and only a restful Sunday in the immediate future. And such a perfect fall day as this!

The friends strolled leisurely along, enjoying the brilliant coloring of the trees, and the beautiful golden sunlight of a late October afternoon.

They had nearly reached Hampton village and Katherine was beginning to think that Peggy would reach Ambler House without discovering her mistake about the stockings when, with a thrill of horror, she heard her say, “Look at my feet, how *dusty* they are—you couldn’t tell *what* color shoes I had on.”

“But, oh, dear, if they aren’t blind they can tell what color *stockings*,” moaned Katherine to herself.

Politely Jim and their new friend glanced down at the dusty oxfords.

Jim gave a start and was about to speak, when Katherine saw him suddenly look at her feet, too. His eyes twinkled.

“Is that a—new fad?” he asked finally. “A fellow would never dare adopt anything so radical.”

“Is what a new fad?” demanded the unconscious Peggy, and then she looked down and saw.

Her face burned with a quick red, but she laughed infectiously. “We—we went wading, and I suppose I did this when I saw you, Jim, so it’s all his fault. Kay dear, can you forgive?”

Jim and Bud laughed with her, and of course the devoted Katherine forgave on the spot.

Young men are not allowed to linger in the grounds at Hampton, so the adieus were quickly said and Peggy and Katherine hurried across the campus to Ambler House.

No sooner had they reached their room than word went down the hall that there was cider in room 22, and one by one the girls on the second floor found excuses to drop into Peggy’s and Katherine’s room. They were most generously supplied with cider, as they hoped they would be, and Peggy and Katherine had no wish to keep any of it for themselves, after they had seen the sort of apples that went into it.

“Funny thing,” said Peggy sadly as they were dressing for the evening later, “I don’t believe I’ll ever like cider so very much again.”

“No,” agreed Katherine, “the safest way to do, if you want to keep your enthusiasm for anything,

is not to know how it’s made.”

“You’re right. I’ll shut my eyes more after this,” laughed Peggy, “but anyway, dear room-mate, we had an awfully nice time, didn’t we?”

“Oh, so, so,” answered Katherine noncommittally.

CHAPTER IX—THE HOUSE DANCE

It seemed no time at all to Peggy, after the Indian summer passed, that winter rushed upon them and shriveled them up on their way to classes, and blew powdered snow in their faces when they went for their walks.

“There’s only one thing I can think of to brighten things up,” wailed Doris Winterbean one day, “so that we’ll all carry away pleasant memories of the place for Christmas.”

“Well, what’s that?” asked Peggy, without interest, for each day of hers was as full of good times as it could be, and she thought she wouldn’t need pleasant things to remember over the holidays anyway, because she would be enjoying herself so much during them that it would crowd all thoughts of past and future, too, out of her head.

“A house dance,” said Doris thrillingly.

Peggy was all interest now.

“Would they—could we get one up before Christmas?” she asked. “But then,” the brightness faded from her eyes, “I have to lead half of the time and I’m not tall enough, so it really doesn’t matter as much to me as it might.”

“Oh, pshaw,” exclaimed Doris, “I didn’t mean that kind of a dance. Not just girls, you know.”

“No-o?” said Peggy cautiously.

“Of course not.”

“Well, whom then?”

“Oh, people from Amherst or Williams—or Dartmouth or wherever we can get them.”

“You mean a *man* dance?”

“Yes.”

“Well, let’s have it right away.”

“I don’t know anybody to ask, except a young prep school boy, but——”

“Oh, I’ll have Jim bring over a lot of people from Amherst, and we can decorate the room with purple in their honor, and then we can all sing their songs when the dancing is over.”

The plans for the dance were soon being elaborately laid by every Amblerite. The matron said it must be in the afternoon. So they set a convenient Saturday, and dispatched their invitations informally over the telephone. Jim responded so nobly to the appeal Peggy made to him, that he rounded up half a dozen football stars and glee club men for the partners of the girls who didn’t know anybody within telephoning distance.

“I’ll bring the whole frat, if you say so,” came Jim’s cheerful voice over the wire. “Half of them can’t dance to amount to anything, but they can stand around and be ornamental—and fetch and

carry ices."

"Well, our dancing isn't a thing of beauty and a joy forever either, but that won't keep us off the floor. Bring anybody you like, that is, of the kind I mentioned, but they must be willing."

"*Willing*? Can you take care of all Amherst if I bring it?"

"*Yes*," responded Peggy enthusiastically. "*We* could, but there wouldn't be ices enough."

"Oh, well," laughed Jim, "you can't expect us to come without ices."

"I suppose not."

"Well, you expect us Saturday. Six of us anyway. I'll bring the crowd over in my machine."

"Oh, *Jim*! Have you a machine?"

"Better believe I have. And some day, when the weather is fine, I'll take you riding."

"Oh, goody! What kind is it?"

"A Ford."

And Peggy hung up the receiver on the laugh that drifted to her over the wire.

She climbed to her room and sank silently down on the window seat.

All the recitations of Saturday morning dragged unaccountably whenever an Ambler House girl was called on.

They were too eager for classes to be over and the time for the dance to come, to take a great interest in dative and accusative cases, or in the sum of the angles of right angle triangles.

"I'm going to dress as carefully as I *can*," said Peggy, scrubbing her happy face until it shone.

"Yes, do, dear, and please take time to put on stockings that are mates," laughed Katherine as she laid a dainty afternoon dress upon the bed and removed her pumps from their shoe-trees.

After many little pats on ruffles and curls Peggy and Katherine were dressed at last, and stood before their mirrors almost satisfied.

Then Katherine went downstairs to see if the girls needed any last help with the decorations.

Hazel Pilcher stuck her head in at Peggy's door.

"Ready?" she called.

Peggy swung from the mirror and bowed to her, laughing.

"As ready as I can be," she said. "Hazel, you look simply wonderful. You look—like somebody in the movies or on the stage."

"Well," said Hazel easily. "*You* might look prettier than you do, Peggy; you don't make the most of yourself."

Peggy turned her disappointed gaze back to the mirror.

"Come down to my room and I'll just fix you up a little," said Hazel.

Now Hazel's ideas of dress, and those of the rest of the girls in the house, widely differed. For she always bought the most extreme styles in hats and suits, and she always adopted the most exaggerated new mannerisms of walking and talking.

So Peggy was inclined to be doubtful of the value of her assistance, but Hazel urged her, so she finally went down to her room.

Here, Hazel uncorked several delightful-looking little jars.

"You'd better shut your eyes," warned she, and a minute later something cool was sliding along Peggy's eye-lashes, and then she felt it again, going over her eye-brows.

She knew in a horrible moment just what was happening, but the foolish wish to look as wonderful as possible, held her silent, and prevented the protest that had sprung to her lips.

"And now," said Hazel, in a matter-of-fact way, "your lips."

And Peggy watched fascinatedly in a hand-glass while the dainty, scented little red pencil made its crimson imprint on her mouth.

"And—just a touch on your cheeks," said Hazel again.

"No," said Peggy, "that would be too absurd; I won't——"

"Well," conceded Hazel, laughing, "you don't really need it; your face is as red as fire now. You seem to think your looks are very much changed. But they're just improved. Everybody will still *recognize* you, you know, Peggy, infant."

"They're here; they're here," an excited buzz went through the second floor, at the word of some generous messenger, who had run up for a minute from below, to spread the news.

Peggy forgot everything in the haste she made to get down to greet the boys, for she was responsible for the coming of a large number of the guests, and she thought how peculiar Jim would think it if she were not even there to welcome them.

"Jim," she cried, holding out her hand. "I'm awfully glad to see you. And Mr. Bevington, too. No, you're not a bit early. We've been upstairs twiddling our thumbs and wondering why in the world —we thought the Ford must have broken down, you know," she added as she opened the door into the big reception room, which looked very lovely with its many purple banners.

With the handsome Amherst contingent at her heels, Peggy carried her small curly head high while a pardonable pride shone in her eyes.

A gasp went up from the groups of girls, who were standing about in different parts of the big room, talking to the few guests who had arrived before the Amherst men.

"Look what Peggy Parsons has with her," murmured Doris Winterbean to Florence Thomas, while the small princess advanced, chatting with her subjects.

Never had such a fine set of young men descended upon Ambler—or any other campus house, for any occasion except the incomparable annual occasion of Junior prom.

"Doris, let me present Mr. Bevington, who plays on the football team; and Mr. Mason, the president of the dramatic club, and Mr. Brown, the one who wrote that article we were all so crazy about in their paper."

Thus the introductions went on, and the girls who met these heroes would have been tongue-tied before such greatness had not Peggy, before she left them, raised them also to eminence. Miss Winterbean was the one who had invented the Lilian Walker waltz the girls would teach their

guests that afternoon; Miss Thomas, of course, was the vice-president of the freshman class —“the best class——” Peggy leaned over and whispered it, so that the girls who were not members of it shouldn’t hear,——“the best class that had ever come to Hampton.” Miss Pilcher was the house entertainer, and could play anything that was written, for a piano.

Hearing themselves thus praised, the girls took heart and laughed happily up into the faces of the men as the music began.

“My Little Dream Girl” caught them up into its delightful, sweet rhythm, and with such partners as they had not enjoyed before in college, the Hampton girls were swung out across the floor.

To Peggy, laughing up at Bud Bevington, it seemed that the whole world was dancing. He knew so many funny steps, and threaded his way so dangerously among the other couples, doubling the time, and then going even faster, until their one-step was simply a run-step as fast as they could go.

“You—you think—this is a football field,” gasped Peggy, when she could speak at all. “I—I’m half dead—I know now how it feels to be a football.”

“You mean I’ve been kicking you,—did I hit your foot, really?”

Bud was contrition itself.

“N-no, certainly you didn’t; how could you when they went so fast? I mean you have been making a goal with me.”

“I hope the goal is a long way off,” laughed the football man.

They had gone around nearly twice more, when he bent and said suddenly in Peggy’s ear, “Who is our cross-looking friend in the doorway with the Charley Chaplin scowl?”

“Man or woman?” asked Peggy.

“Woman,” he answered.

“Well, I see quite a group of our house-matron in the doorway—but she is probably only one, but if you don’t stop running with me so fast I can’t be really sure whether there are ten of her or just one.”

Noticeably slackening his pace, he glanced again toward the matron.

“Still looks ominous,” he warned.

“You must come over and meet her—but let’s go very slowly for a while, till the atmosphere clears a little.”

When they finally approached the matron, she smiled at Bud Bevington—who could help it? And Peggy was able to get her breath, while the two talked for a few minutes.

Peggy danced every dance, sometimes in the large reception room with all the others, and sometimes in the alcove parlor off at one end, where new steps could be tried without any onlookers, if failure resulted.

She noticed that several of her partners looked at her rather intently, and she fervently hoped it was because she looked very nice. But there was usually a fleeting smile that baffled her. No, it was something besides admiration—or a new kind of admiration or something—oh, she would give up trying to account for it, and just have a good time.

So she danced with every guest and enjoyed her ices, and said good-bye to the boys with great

reluctance, and pressed her nose against the window pane to see the last of them.

Jim, glancing back, as he started the machine—which wasn't a Ford at all—saw her and waved.

The machine chugged off, and she went upstairs with a happy sigh and a little regretful that their house dance was over.

When she reached her room, Katherine, who had preceded her, gave her one startled glance, and then burst out laughing.

"Oh, you look awful, child," she said, "whatever happened to you?"

And Peggy rushed to the mirror.

Horror of horrors—what—and then she remembered! Those eye-lashes and eye-brows that Hazel had put on so carefully—and those lips, too—had run! The black wavered down greasily from her eyes, making weird dark lines. The mouth with which she had so carelessly eaten ices was—a good deal to one side now.

"I forgot," murmured Peggy, and that was all she was able to say, and this she repeated miserably at intervals, while Katherine dipped a towel in the water pitcher and began applying it to the beautifiers.

"Don't tell me until you want to," said Katherine, trying to keep the giggles back, and to speak sympathetically. "It isn't so very bad—just kind of—wavy."

"Well," moaned Peggy, "Hazel Pilcher put it on. I can't think how I came to let her, and—it must have been awfully poor make-up and got so—warm——!"

Her explanation ended in a sob and she jerked away from Katherine's ministrations, and flung herself a crying heap upon the couch.

"Oh, Katherine! and I thought I looked so nice! Oh, they all saw and *knew*, and the ones I just met to-day couldn't know but I marked up my face like that always. It's—it's awful—I wish I had never come to college—I wish I'd never seen an Amherst man—or Hazel Pilcher either. What shall I do?"

"Jim knows," Katherine soothed.

"B-but he'll be ashamed of me," moaned Peggy.

"He won't either. He'll just think it's funny," Katherine tried to comfort her.

"Funny! Oh, dear, and I suppose it is—but not to me. And Bud Bevington—every time he's seen me there's been something—r-ridiculous about me!"

Peggy shook with sobs, and hid her face in the cushions of the window seat, sure that she would never take any pleasure in life again.

She wouldn't go down to dinner, so Katherine had it sent up on a tray, and though Peggy felt that she really wasn't the tiniest bit hungry, she ate all that was brought to her, and almost wished she had decided to go down after all, because then she might have asked for a second helping.

Katherine and the other freshmen made up an impromptu party to go to a picture show that evening, but Peggy could not be persuaded to join them.

"I never knew her to sulk before," said Florence Thomas. "What in the world is the matter with her?"

“Sulk,” cried Katherine indignantly, “why Peggy doesn’t know how to *sulk*. She—she just had a very sad thing happen to her, and you’d cry, too, if it happened to you, only you wouldn’t get over it as soon as Peggy will.”

The picture show wasn’t a great deal of fun for Katherine when most of her thoughts were drifting back to her poor room-mate. The rest of the girls laughed and cried at little Mary Pickford’s pathos and drollery, but she felt it difficult to keep her attention on the screen, and was almost glad when it was over, and they could hurry back to Ambler House.

The door of Suite 22 stood open, all the lights blazed forth, the sound of happy laughter came to her ears and the unmistakable perfume of American beauty roses greeted her nostrils.

“Peggy!” she cried, as she entered the room, to find every available vase full of the most gorgeous roses she had ever seen, and an appreciative sophomore and junior court listening to the tale of Peggy’s sad experiences of the afternoon.

“You little wretch,” she said, shaking her fist at her room-mate in mock rage, “when you get *me* to sympathize with you again, you’ll know it. It’s just a joke now, isn’t it, but, girls, she was crying her eyes out over it an hour or so ago.”

“Th-that’s just what I’ve been telling them,” cried Peggy, “and now I can’t think how I could.”

“Well, what’s made the change?” Katherine demanded.

Iva Belmington and Hazel Pilcher waved magnificently toward the overladen vases and water pitchers. “Those,” they said simply.

And at the same time Peggy poured a shower of cards into her lap, and, taking them up, she read, one after the other, the names of all the six boys from Amherst who had come to their dance that afternoon.

“Wasn’t it *lovely*?” cried Peggy. “They evidently left the order at the florist’s when they drove through the town. Look at Jim’s card, Katherine, he wrote something on it.”

From the assortment in her lap, Katherine selected the card which read Mr. James Huntington Smith, and there sure enough across the top of it were the words in pencil, “With appreciation for a very jolly afternoon.”

“Well,—but they must have seen, just the same,” hinted the practical Katherine.

“Oh, but they didn’t *mind*!” returned her radiant room-mate.

CHAPTER X—TINSEL AND SPANGLES

“My mother is coming.”

Lilian Moore made the announcement to Peggy in a tone of mingled joy and reluctance.

The Christmas holidays were over and the fearsome midyear examinations were things of the past. The dullest of the three terms had settled into full swing—day after day of white earth and grey sky.

The Ambler House girls had been having a Wednesday evening frolic down in the parlor, with the piano banging and gay voices shouting out their musical defiance of dullness in general.

“She writes that she’s coming for just a day to see a little bit of college for herself,” went on Lilian. “Peggy—she’ll—be disappointed in—my grandeur. You see, I raved so about everything when I was home at Christmas time. I guess it may hurt her feelings to see that I’m not—one of the foremost people in my class.”

Lilian essayed a laugh that broke into a sob.

Myra Whitewell, who stood near, impatiently turned away. “I never knew anybody to be so incessantly humble in my life. You really do make me tired, Lilian. Haven’t we all liked you for a long time——? You young Stupid, don’t you know that we all have to take *some* steps toward popularity ourselves? Don’t you know that we are *all* outsiders when we come here, and it depends at least *partly* on ourselves whether we ever become insiders? You are always bringing up the same thing.”

Peggy laughed at these two who had never learned to become entirely reconciled to each other even after all the close association of living together in the same house. Myra was so impatient and so proud; so well equipped with a good opinion of herself, while Lilian was almost maddeningly willing to be trodden under foot on every occasion.

“Mother says maybe she can absorb a little of college for herself,” Lilian mused, not heeding Myra’s cutting comment, for she had grown used to them.

“When is she coming?” asked Katherine, who glanced around the room of singing girls, and tried to imagine what impression it might make on one who was not a girl any longer, and was seeing it for the first time.

“To-morrow,” answered Lilian, with that same note of doubt in her voice.

“Well,” said Katherine, her eyes still on the shouting young women who rocked to the music they sang, while the piano did its best to be heard above them, “I think we can show her a good time.”

“Will you help me, girls?” cried Lilian, brightening in sudden gratitude.

“Why, of course,” said Katherine, “any guest of any of us is a guest of the house—that is, if the one who is entertaining wants it to be so.”

“I haven’t much for to-morrow,” said Peggy quickly. “I know you have several recitations, Lilian, —we’ll see that she is taken care of every minute from the time she arrives until she leaves us,

weeping."

Peggy's enthusiasm was beginning to carry her away.

"Let's go and plan out the hours," she said to the rest of the group—"just like those schedules they publish in the papers of the way certain great people—and criminals—spend their days: thus, 9 a. m., has breakfast on tray; 10 a. m., sees dressmakers and milliners; 11 a. m., rides in automobile, under guard——"

Lilian was laughing, all her doubts vanished.

Even Myra entered into the plans with spirit.

And never had a celebrity been met by a more enthusiastic crowd than was gathered at the Hampton station to meet the frail and fluttering little woman who stepped down from the 9:10.

Her eyes, shy and yet full of anticipation, were searching for Lilian, who fairly flew down the platform, the happy bevy of girls keeping close behind.

After Lilian had kissed her mother, each girl, as her name was spoken, wrung her hand with such goodwill and welcome that poor little Mrs. Moore realized that she would probably have rheumatism in her fingers for days, as a result. But her worn cheeks flushed with pleasure.

Whose would not, at such a reception when she had expected to be merely a spectator during her single day's stay?

She was borne first to Lilian's room.

Entering Ambler House, her eyes glowed, and she turned her head to look after a merry group that came running down the steps, their books under their arms. Through the great hall, the floor shining and smooth, with handsome rugs to give color here and there—and up the broad stairs the little procession wended its way.

And Lilian could hardly restrain a cry of surprise as she and her mother, followed by the faithful escort, stepped inside her room.

On the dresser was an adorable bunch of violets with inviting purple pins beside it.

"Some one has sent you flowers?" cried little Mrs. Moore, noticing these, even before she took note of the dainty green and white curtains, and the green denim couch cover, that Peggy and Katherine had been inspired to supply.

"No, they didn't," cried Peggy from the doorway. "They didn't send *her* the flowers,—look on the card!"

And when Mrs. Moore picked up the card that lay beside the pins, she read aloud, "For Mrs. Moore; welcome to Hampton, from one of Lilian's friends, Myra Whitewell."

If you could have seen the look of pleasure with which the little woman lifted those fragrant flowers, and with shaking fingers fastened them to her girdle! Oh, precious first impression of college! How it crept into her heart with the fragrance of those violets—quite the nicest thing that had ever come to her in her care-worn, workaday life!

Lilian's own face was suffused.

That Myra, of all people, should have been so dear and thoughtful! And, a moment since Lilian had been harboring a rather bitter and unkind thought against the black-haired freshman.

For Myra was the only one of the Ambler House "crowd" who had not been at the station to meet

her mother. Lilian felt hurt. But now, she remembered Myra's chemistry laboratory, that was in full session at this moment—and to her, also, a new feeling came with the odor of those violets.

She thought, with quick gratitude, that nothing she could ever do for Myra would be too much now to repay her for that glad and surprised light in her mother's eyes.

"And now, Mrs. Moore, you're going to be handed from one to another of us, hour by hour," laughingly explained Peggy. "Your daughter has some classes that she really feels she *must* attend. Ordinary classes we could all cut with pleasure, but Lilian's this morning happen to include math, and Lilian is—well, she doesn't know a triangle from a piece of fudge, Mrs. Moore ——"

She broke off, giggling, and fled down the corridor to escape Lilian, who pursued with pretended rage, at her daring thus to lay bare her mathematical shortcomings to her trusting mother.

"So," Katherine took up the story of the adventures that were to form Mrs. Moore's great day, "you are to walk with me, please,—if you will, down Elm street and down West street a bit, and Green street, and then you will have seen all the part of town that belongs to college life that is outside Campus—invitation houses, undesirables and all. Then at eleven I shall turn you over to Peggy and Hazel Pilcher, at the campus gate, and they will show you through the new library and chapel and the Art building annex. That's as far into the future as you are allowed to peep."

"It sounds very alluring," murmured Mrs. Moore, whose eyes were still bulging, from the sight of her staid and quiet Lilian pursuing and pounding the fair-haired Peggy.

The company of the girls was more to her than the sightseeing itself, and she found herself swept along by the gay hilarity of whoever happened to be her escort. She forgot that her hair was as grey as theirs was black or golden; she forgot that she had believed her time for gaiety was over.

In the big library she paused, hushed, before the sight of many graceful figures bending in silent absorption over the volumes that lay in their laps or before them on the massive tables. She could not guess, in her awe of such an intellectual atmosphere, that fully a third of these diligent readers were bowed over Arnold Bennett and Gilbert Parker, instead of the volumes of deep learning she fancied.

"I wonder if the matron will let me ask Mother to the House to lunch," puzzled Lilian, a little later, when she met them, after the tour of the campus was complete. "I haven't had time to ask her and there may not be a place."

"There will be lots of places, but your mother and we won't be there to fill them," said Peggy quickly. "Gloria has invited us down to Boyd's for a real party."

"Beef steak and French fried potatoes—and peas?" cried Hazel. "A real one?"

"That's just it," said Peggy, slightly disappointed that her friend had been so quick to guess. "How did you know? I was the only one with Gloria when she telephoned the order."

"How did I know!" scoffed Hazel, "as if anybody that knew what was best would dream of ordering anything else at Boyd's."

Boyd's was the popular restaurant, where the girls trooped in to luncheon whenever the allowance from home seemed to justify such a luxury, where they sat on Saturday evenings, their white shoulders gleaming above the white silk, green chiffon and blue crêpe de Chine of their very best dresses.

"Are we really—invited by—Gloria?" questioned Lilian, halting before the luminous name of the freshman president. "Isn't that wonderful of her to give a party for Mother!"

Gloria, adorable in white furs, met them at the doorway of Boyd's, and greeted Mrs. Moore with

her own delightful impulsiveness.

“I’m so glad to know you, Mrs. Moore,” she said with that pretty earnestness for which Gloria was famed throughout the freshman class. “It was awfully good of the girls to let me have you for a luncheon party. You know, mothers are scarce around these parts, and if we can’t have our own, we lie awake nights planning the best way to ensnare somebody else’s, whenever one comes visiting. So please excuse us if we act as if you belonged to us all instead of just to Lilian.”

And Mrs. Moore looked straight into the clear-blue eyes of the tall red-haired idol of the freshmen, and said she was only too glad to be adopted by any and all of her daughter’s friends.

Something went grey and blank in Gloria’s wonderful eyes before her searching gaze, and the lashes swept down. The tall, graceful figure drew itself more erect, as if she were on guard in some way. And Mrs. Moore dropped the warm hand she had been holding, with a sigh.

The beautiful hostess led the way upstairs into the dining room and was shown to a long table that had been reserved for her.

With much throwing aside of velvet coats and furs, the friends seated themselves around the guest of honor and leaned forward, their elbows quite frankly on the table.

Every girl was laughing and talking, with the single exception of Gloria herself. As the little luncheon progressed, with the whole table in a happy uproar, Gloria’s abstraction became more and more noticeable.

Celebrities are entitled to their moods. So no one spoke of Gloria’s for some time.

Then Peggy leaned over and whispered, “Come back to us, won’t you?”

And Gloria’s face was swept with sudden color.

She turned startled eyes on Peggy’s laughing face. Then she shook her shoulders as if she might free herself from some unpleasant thought.

“I—wouldn’t be anywhere else—for a farm,” she said.

“Oh, well,” murmured Peggy to herself, “it wasn’t anything but my imagination. What could Gloria possibly have to bother her? Maybe she didn’t have her history or her Greek to-day. She’s just the one to mind it a lot, if she didn’t always excel in the classroom.”

After the wonderful ice-cream and the dear little French pastries had been consumed, with much delight by the girls and with wistful enjoyment on the part of Mrs. Moore, the check was laid by Gloria’s plate, with the deferential air the waitresses always used to a very good customer.

Gloria, without glancing at the total, motioned for a pencil, and scribbled her name and the name of her house across it.

Then she slid into the soft coat Katherine held for her, and while Peggy and Hazel and Myra were still busy patting Mrs. Moore into her things, she moved idly toward the stairs, her eyes glancing over the crowded dining-room as listlessly as if she were not a celebrity at all. Hushed groups watched her pass and admiration and affection shone in fifty pairs of eyes.

“Honestly, girls,” she caught a distinct murmur, “I just can’t talk while she’s going by. Did you ever see anything so wonderful?”

“She’s the best-looking girl in college,” came the rapt answer from another girl at the same table.

But this incense drifted past Gloria without making any particular impression.

The first few days of her presidency she had enjoyed with a frank egotism that had pleased Peggy and had caused Katherine many amused smiles.

But she was accustomed to it all now. There is no class in college so breathlessly eager to bestow devotion as the first class, and when the admired person is one of their very own, an added quality of loyalty and unswerving devotion creeps in.

“I just don’t believe that girl ever did a mean or silly thing in her life,” the voice followed Gloria as she started downstairs, with the rest of her party in her wake.

“I don’t believe she’d have any use for a *minute* for a girl who didn’t live right up to her ideals. You know, she’s one of the advantages of college,—she and girls like her—we can see what we *might* be anyway, even if few of us really come within a mile of it.”

Was there a trace of bitterness about that vivid and gracious mouth of Gloria’s? Did she really hurry a little to be out of earshot of those praises that, however ridiculous, would once have been sweet?

At the foot of the stairs she waited for Mrs. Moore. She bade her good-bye prettily, saying she must remain downtown for some shopping, and that she hoped they’d all see Mrs. Moore in Hampton again—a great many times.

“My dear, I want to thank you for a *beautiful* luncheon,” Mrs. Moore smiled up into the lovely face with that quaint way she had. “I do indeed wish I might stay right now, and live in town somewhere so that I could get to know the girls better. And I think a sort of Everybody’s-Mother would be a good thing for many of the students.”

But if she had hoped to bring a hint of the desire for confidence from Gloria she was disappointed.

Gloria’s eyes took on that odd grey blankness again, and though she nodded politely and pressed Mrs. Moore’s hand warmly, there was not a trace of that electric circuit between them which it was so easy to establish with Peggy and Katherine or most of the other girls.

“She’s very cold—and proud,” mused Mrs. Moore, glancing in a puzzled way at the retreating back of Gloria.

Lilian was the sort of girl any one could understand. When she felt badly she would cry, when she didn’t she’d laugh. If she liked any one, she showed it, and if she disliked any one she nearly made faces at them, her distaste was so apparent.

Gloria Hazeltine was a new specimen to Lilian’s mother. She discovered with her woman’s intuition that something was troubling the young girl. She wanted so much to help her. But she could do nothing before such icy reserve.

“What—happens to me now?” she turned to Peggy and said, as they went to the outer door of the restaurant. “I suppose we go back to the college?”

“No,” said Peggy, peering anxiously down the street outside. “No, your sightseeing goes on from here. But I don’t see—what ought to be here.”

“Have you ordered a machine, Peggy?” asked Lilian in awe and happy expectation.

Peggy’s laugh rang out. “Well, not exactly ordered it,” she explained, “but hinted for it. It’s Jim’s, and he promised to bring it over from Amherst and meet us here at 2 o’clock. He’s five minutes late. That’s—oh, there he is. Come on, Mrs. Moore, come on, Lilian and Katherine and Myra Whitewell and Doris Winterbean. Hazel, I’m sorry you have classes.”

Unselfishly she handed Mrs. Moore into the front seat beside Jim, sure that it would add to the

interest of everything for her, to have this good-looking young man explain things and deferentially point out new attractions.

“Only an hour and a half, Jim. I want to get Mrs. Moore back to go to Thirteen with me, and Lilian has biology at that time. You don’t think that’s so good a show class as Thirteen, do you, Lilian?”

“Mercy, no,” hastily answered Lilian. “Not so good a show class as any other. You don’t want to see grasshoppers cut up, do you, Mother?”

Mrs. Moore protested that she had no interest in grasshoppers under any circumstances, so the plan to hear Thirteen stood.

“We just want to show you as many of the dear places we love to visit as possible,” said Katherine, crossing her arms on the back of the seat Mrs. Moore occupied. “We could never walk to more than one, but with the machine you can see a number. Only you mustn’t suppose that we have machines when we see them. No, indeed, we walk or we hire a nice old poky horse and runabout from the livery stable. The horse may be almost an extinct animal in other places, but he’s still a great favorite up here.”

Thus she was whirled along the river road, through their favorite picnic spots, from hamlet to hamlet while tea-house after tea-house flashed into view and were pointed out with accompanying tales of affectionate or funny reminiscences by the Hampton girls.

At one, a large and ugly cat was always to be expected at every party. The woman who ran the tea-house had taken for her motto, “Love me, love my cat,” and its baleful green eyes watched hungrily every mouthful that passed through the patrons’ lips.

Doris remembered an afternoon when she and Gloria and the great Mary Marvington, of the Junior class, had taken tea there, and Gloria had unwittingly put her foot on the cat’s tail under the table, the cat howled, and Gloria sat stonily, her face white, trying to think what that *awful* sound could be.

“The cat *wouldn’t* stop howling, of course, because Gloria *didn’t* lift her foot, and Mary Marvington was in *hysterics*, so I leaned under the table and removed poor Gloria’s foot from the poor cat’s tail, and I think old Tabby is running yet.”

Lilian, Katherine and Peggy screamed with delight at Doris’ very much embellished story.

Mrs. Moore’s eyes were sparkling now, and she almost had to pinch herself to realize that she was, for the first time in her life, in college.

When Jim set them down outside the big recitation hall, where she was actually to attend class with Peggy, she smoothed her coat with happy anticipation, and perhaps the full wonder of Thirteen came to this shabby little woman, with grey in her hair, as radiantly as it came twice a week to these Hampton girls, who picked up snatches of everything under the sun, and who learned without the miserable grind, an easy style of writing that set them apart from the girls who had never had Thirteen.

“If all their classes are like this,” thought Mrs. Moore, “I should think they’d rave in their letters about the school part of it more than anything else.”

But alas! Their classes all like that! Only one was like it. The others were too apt to be nightmares of mathematics or agonies of Greek tragedy and Lyric poets or merciless written lessons in medieval history.

Dinner at Ambler House was the next thing on Mrs. Moore’s program, and she listened to that roar of conversation and laughter that always began as soon as grace had been said in the dormitory dining-rooms.

Fifty-four girls, all talking and joking at once, and yet one never heard a loud voice.

“They are nice girls,” thought Mrs. Moore.

After dinner it had been planned that Lilian should have her mother alone until theater time, when they were all going to a musical comedy which happened to be in town that night, direct from New York.

But Mrs. Moore, who noticed that Peggy was already dressed for the theater, asked her quietly to come also.

“It’s about your friend; I hoped I’d have a word with you,” little Mrs. Moore began when she and her daughter and Peggy were comfortably propped against the cushions.

“Myra?” asked Peggy, doubtfully, for she was the only person who might possibly occasion the sad and foreboding expression in the older woman’s eyes.

“Myra!” echoed Mrs. Moore in astonishment, fingering the violets at her waist, which had been revived for wear to the play. “Myra! No, indeed. No, it was Gloria Hazeltine I was troubling over.”

Peggy laughed. “Oh, it would be very foolish troubling over *her*,” she said; “she’s freshman president, you know——”

“Yes, I know.”

“And the prettiest girl in Hampton.”

“Undoubtedly.”

“And she’s the best dressed——”

“Of course, my notions of dress are old fashioned, but even I could see that.”

“And she’s rich——”

“Well, I can’t help it, Peggy; I saw into that girl’s heart to-day—a mother can—even though I’m not her mother—and she’s not happy.”

“Mother!” cried Lilian. “Why, Gloria is simply bubbling with happiness. Don’t you think anybody would be perfectly *radiant* who had all she has?”

“I wonder if you couldn’t find it out, Lilian, and see if you couldn’t help her in some way—she ——”

Peggy brushed away the thought of the incongruity of Lilian Moore, very much one of the masses in Hampton, acting as confidante and comforter to the lofty Gloria, whose position set her up to twinkle before the worshipful freshmen, star fashion.

“I don’t think anything is really bothering Gloria,” she said gently, “and there’d be no way for any of us to find out what it was if there were.”

And she changed the subject to the entertainment before them.

Ambler House had taken the first row in the balcony, for from this vantage point the girls, their bare arms leaning on the polished rail, could stare down and pick out their faculty friends and their celebrity acquaintances, and, also, they got a better view of the stage, and could hear the music to better advantage than from any other seats.

One of the girls of the house was given an orchestra ticket and was thus bought off from her position in the theater's "rubber row," as their chosen place was most inelegantly called.

"Now, Mrs. Moore, I'll just take your coat and then you lean over and look at anybody you like. Nobody minds being stared at. Everybody's used to it, and if a girl downstairs is wearing an especially good-looking dress, she'll stand up and turn around and gaze about the audience for a moment so that we can be sure to get its effect. That's what *always* happens," Peggy explained blithely to their guest.

Mrs. Moore hadn't been to the theater often, anywhere. So that, in itself, was a pleasure. But to sit in a theater crowded with girls, all in evening dress as they would have gone to a ball, their throats and arms white in the glare of the electric lights, was a never-to-be-forgotten experience.

The play was a dashing affair, all beauty and melody, and the irrepressible audience hummed the catchy airs between acts.

Also there was the customary promenade during the intermission.

The girls from the balcony went downstairs, and, threading their way through the crowded aisles in which the girls were chatting, found the seat of some friend and leaned gracefully near her for a few moments.

And the talk usually ambled along something like this:

"My dear! Aren't you crazy about it? Honestly I never heard anything like that chorus—hm, hm, hm, hm,——"

"Those costumes! My dear, did you ever see anything so fragile? Perfectly hectic! But the colors —I'd give anything to have a winter suit made on that grey and silver *motif*——"

"Her voice!"

"His eyes!"

"That step they did was perfectly beautiful—don't you think we could work it out by ourselves? Watch carefully if they bring it in again; I can follow it all up to that little kick she does and the half turn in the air——"

"What a perfectly stunning gown! Why in the world didn't you save it for Junior Prom? Well, you may have others, but I'm sure I never saw you in anything more becoming—it's a *darling*, Dotty; look at Helen's *cute* gown!"

"They say this made an awful hit in New York—do you think it's true that May Hastings is really going on the stage when she graduates? Why, I should think her people would feel terribly. But it would be a thrilling life, wouldn't it?"

With a final burst of music, the entire company crowded the stage in one of those hurrahing finales, and the girls from Ambler House gathered up their wraps and made all haste for the stairs.

Outside Peggy summoned a taxi, and Mrs. Moore, Lilian, Katherine and herself climbed in.

"The station in time for the 11:10!" she called to the chauffeur, and in an instant Mrs. Moore was being whisked away from her one bright day of college.

For she had not felt like incurring the extra expense of staying longer, and Peggy and Katherine had been unable to think of a tactful means of arranging that part of it themselves. So they had simply crowded all they could for her into one day so that she would have a typical picture of the rush of college life to take back to her small town with her.

“Well,” said Peggy, holding up her face to be kissed just as the train came in, “how did you like college? What impression did it make on you?”

And little faded Mrs. Moore clasped her hands before her while her eyes shone mistily.

“Why, I think”—her voice came huskily mingled with the throb of the engine—“it is better than any of my dreams, and you dear girls have been the best of all.” And then she kissed Peggy.

CHAPTER XI

A SERIOUS DISCUSSION

> “Just one college,
> And that’s the college we sing to:
> Just one college,
> And that’s the college for us!”

The egotistical song of Hampton came out to Peggy from the door of Myra’s room when she stopped before it on her way home from class.

A comfortable fudge-eating group looked up from the Morris chair and the couch as she entered.

“’Lo, Peggy,” said Gertie Van Gorder, interrupting the song and waving with a piece of fudge towards an unoccupied chair. “Sit down, Peg.”

“Can’t,” said Peggy. “Is Katherine here?”

“Nope,” said Katherine’s voice from behind a pillow. “I’m up at gym having a—c-c—brr-r—” the pillow was made to shiver—“a cold shower!”

“Come on home, Kat, you wretch,” laughed Peggy; “I’ve had a present from Mr. Huntington.”

“*Who*,” demanded Gertie, impertinently, “is Mr. Huntington?—and why didn’t you have him to our house dance?”

Peggy and Katherine laughed.

“He’s an old man, silly,—and one of my very best friends; in fact, he sent me to college, and his grandson is Jim that you all met, because I *did* have him to the house dance.”

“Well, then,” pursued Gertie still inquisitive, “what was his present?”

“Something good?” inquired Myra, sliding to the edge of her seat.

“If it is, we’re all coming,” smiled Gertie graciously.

“Well,” Peggy admitted, “it’s—salted almonds. Five pounds of them—I suppose———”

But she was the last one in the room. The group had fled with a rushing sound down the hall and were already murmuring their appreciation in Suite 22.

“Save *some* for me,” mocked Peggy, when she overtook them.

“Nice Mr. Huntington,” said Gertie amiably, “nice, poor cheated Peggy. Her shall have one—just one, mamma said,—slap your wrists———”

“Gertie, I’m going to put you up on the hill one of these days,” laughed Peggy. On the hill was a certain state institution which visitors to the town were always annoyingly mistaking for the college.

“But then, visitors are always funny,” as Gloria had once explained. “One of them asked me where I came from and I said Iowa. She looked at me a minute and then said, ‘Will you please say that again?’ Obligingly I repeated ‘Iowa.’ ‘Isn’t that odd?’ she said then. ‘How strangely you *do* pronounce it. Now *I’ve* always heard it called Ohio.’”

At the thought of Gloria, the salted almonds became bitter in Peggy’s mouth, and she made a little face of distress.

“Kaddie, *do* you think Gloria isn’t as happy as she might be?” she inquired of her room-mate.

With the quick facility of college girls for jumping from the most inane and frivolous pleasantries to the most serious attitude of mind, Katherine answered thoughtfully.

“Peggy, how could she help being happy?”

This question certainly appeared a staggerer on the face of things.

“Happy?” trilled Doris Winterbean, “Why, I saw her yesterday going to vespers in the *loveliest* Belgian blue velvet suit mine eyes have ever beheld. Happy! My *dear*! I’m free to say that if my own friend Self had been clad in such Consider-the-Lilies raiment, *I’d* have gone to vespers *dancing*!”

“Don’t be silly,” said Peggy.

“Well,” finished Doris defiantly. “Please satisfy our curiosity and show us how such a suspicion ever crept into that woolly little head of yours.”

She dodged Peggy’s pillow as it came hurtling at her with good aim, and then sat pensively with hands clasped over her knees as if to listen to a tearful tale.

“I’d never have noticed it, I admit,” said Peggy.

“Of course not,” chorused the nut-eaters.

“You know,” interposed Katherine, “sometimes I think people who aren’t in college, you know,—like Mrs. Moore, just can’t imagine a life like ours, all happy and independent and so arranged that nothing serious could *possibly* creep in to trouble us. So if a girl seems abstracted, or just resentful of too close scrutiny, as perhaps Gloria was, she is apt to jump———”

“No, no, I can’t believe that,” said the foolish voice of Doris. “Mrs. Moore wouldn’t jump. Anything that is less a tax on our credulity, Kathie, but not that,—not *jump*.”

“Take the nuts away from that girl. They are beginning to have a bad effect, in fact, nutty,” shrilled Peggy.

“As I was going to say,” continued Katherine imperturbably, “people like Mrs. Moore jump at conclusions———”

“O-oh,” murmured Doris. “That explains it. I wish you’d said that before. It’s quite all right, Kathie, now that you’ve made yourself clear. The fault was all mine.”

“Doris,” snapped Myra Whitewell, pinching her, “will you be serious?”

“I’m so serious, I’m going home. You hurt.”

“Oh, Doris, do come back; don’t act like—like———”

“Like a freshman, I suppose? Well, I am a freshman. And I guess I will go back to my room and be serious all by myself.”

“You needn’t go and be mad, Doris.”

“Well, you needn’t pinch me.”

Such comic dismay was registered on the faces of the group that Doris’ intention to play the spoilsport fled in a burst of laughter from her pouting lips.

“*Gooses*!” she cried at them.

“Doris, you mean geese,” corrected Myra, “but it is no term to apply to a group of perfect ladies anyway.”

They were back again in the favorite freshman style of badinage, and the atmosphere that had threatened to become tense was eased perfectly.

“To go back———” began Peggy.

The rippling notes of irresponsible song came from Gertie.

“Do you think there’s any intelligence in this group of highly cultured persons?” complained Peggy. “Because I don’t. I wanted to have you girls help me about a real problem——”

“But not our problem, Peggy,” reminded Katherine; “in fact it’s none of our business.”

“It’s Glory’s, Glory’s, hallelujah’s,” chanted Doris as an apropos contribution to the talk.

“Oh, I never heard anything so perfectly baffling as you people,” cried Peggy in despair. “Here I was going to have a serious discussion——”

“Serious discussion!” gasped Gertie Van Gorder. “Quick, girls, pass Peggy some more of her own nuts.”

Even while the box was being passed, the irrepressible roomful took up the Hampton song where Peggy had interrupted them when she found them in Myra’s room.

“Just one college,
And that’s the college we sing to:
Just one college,
And that’s the college for us.
There’s neighbor Holyoke over the way—
There’s just one college for us!
But she can neither dance nor play,—
There’s just one college for us.
Just one college,
And that’s the college we sing to.
Just one college,
And that’s the college for us.
Oh, Vassar has a noble site—
There’s just one college for us!
But men, men, men are her delight—
There’s just one college for us!”

CHAPTER XII—THE AUCTION

“Peggy, look at that sign!”

The room-mates were standing before the students’ bulletin board down in the note-room.

“It’s bridge, I suppose,” said Peggy idly.

“Bridge! No, it isn’t. Look! it isn’t that kind of auction.”

Breathlessly then they read the alluringly artistic letters, and made out with difficulty:

Auction!
Big auction.
Everybody come.

> Beautiful clothes, evening dresses, lingerie, furs, everything for the wardrobe of the college girl to be auctioned off positively second-hand. Money must be paid on the spot.
>
> —— The Weldon House Girls.

“That’s Gloria’s house,” said Peggy.

“Yes,” said Katherine, “and all of those girls have so many clothes they don’t know what to do with them. I think it is an awfully good idea to sell some of them this way.”

“I’ve never been to one of those auctions before. Usually it’s just kept in the house. Each girl sells what she doesn’t want, and any other girl in the same house who has seen and envied that particular garment can buy it. Donna Anderson got some lovely evening slippers that way in her house for fifteen cents, and when they were cleaned they were just as good as new.”

“I can think of lots of Gloria’s things I’d like.”

“Yes, especially that Belgian blue velvet suit the girls were talking about.”

Both girls laughed at the idea of Gloria selling her new things.

“Don’t you worry about those girls,” said Katherine finally, “they’ll just auction rags and tatters and get good prices for them, too.”

“Have you got some spare money to go with?”

“A little—about seven dollars. At the rate some of those sales are made, I ought to be able to get quite a complete outfit for that.”

“And I’ve a little. I haven’t counted just how much. But of course we can get some more from the bank.”

When they trailed into Ambler House for luncheon they found the greatest interest and excitement reigning.

The auction was in the air, and nobody could think of anything else.

“Just little tiny no-account auctions,—why, some house is having one every day, but who ever heard of a wholesale kind like this?” cried Doris. “I certainly will be there.”

Since the sign, for all its artistic printing, had neglected to say what day the auction would be held, Ambler House sent a deputation over to Weldon to find out.

Weldon House sent back word, “Saturday afternoon, of *course*,” so that part of it was settled, and approved by everybody.

Peggy and Katherine went in no small state of excitement. It was a new kind of amusement so far as they were concerned.

The freshmen from Ambler House were almost the only members of the first class to attend.

The freshmen in other campus houses were not so precocious as this singularly self-confident crowd, and did not feel like rushing in where something was going on that was beyond their experience.

As soon as the Amblerites stepped inside of Weldon House, they noticed a conspicuous poster with a hand inked on it pointing, and the single word, “Upstairs.”

The matron of Weldon House was standing before the sign with a curious expression puckering her lips, when the gay little group swept by.

Once upstairs, there was another poster, a more helpful one, this time, “Go to Room 27.”

The upper hall was full of other anxious buyers plodding their way in the direction indicated by the guide-post. Room 27 belonged to a most gracious Junior, Zelda Darmeer.

It was characteristic of Zelda that her walls were decorated with the mottoes, “No studying aloud,” and “Never let your studies interfere with your regular college course.”

The auction was already in progress when Peggy, Katherine and their companions stepped inside.

It was being conducted on the most informal lines. Whenever a girl had anything to auction, she acted as her own auctioneer, and when the others thought she had taken enough time, one of them serenely set up in competition.

The chairs were piled with soft blue chiffons, dainty white under-garments, and plumed hats and mangey furs.

“Put this up, somebody. Who belongs to this? Put this up. I want to bid on it!” One of the guests was rudely waving a silver-spangled scarf that had slipped from a chair nearby and fallen at her feet.

“Yes, in a minute,” came a business-like voice, “that’s mine. Only been worn three years, and has got over two hundred perfectly good spangles left on it. Only eight hundred came off.”

Peggy and the others joined the guests already there, sitting quietly down on the floor in their midst. For floors are vastly more used at college than anywhere else except, perhaps, in the nurseries. Few people realize the solid comfort there is in floors. They are not simply objects lying flatly and dispiritedly beneath our feet to be trodden upon, but they make the most delightful divans and seats in the world, and possess a superior seating capacity.

At least that was the way the Hampton girls found it, and during vacation time they often outraged a parent or relative by proceeding to sit down and be comfortable, if it chanced that

every real chair was taken.

That the goods to be sold should repose in the chairs, and the customers should sit on the floor, seemed highly natural to Peggy and Katherine, and a very satisfactory economy of space all round.

“Now this,” Zelda was standing on the wabbly heap of cushions that constituted the platform, “*this* is my well-known blue chiffon dress. Everybody knows and can testify to its wearing qualities. This dress has appeared at every dance and reception since the opening of the term. It has shown up regularly about four times a week, and has been universally admired.

“Now this dress”—she held it up conscientiously so that the light shone through it and it was seen to be more or less in shreds in certain places, but still presenting a pleasing ensemble, nevertheless.

“There are the marks of honorable service about this dress. It has lots of good times to remember. I was never unhappy in it once, and that’s a boast that any gown might be proud of. Now, girls, I got this in Boston just before I came to college at the beginning of this year, and I went to Hollander’s for it and I paid eighty dollars. I’m tired of the dress now, but there are at least five good more wears out of it. It always *looks* dear and *sweet* once it gets on. The price of this dress is four dollars,” she wound up.

There were two ways of auctioning. According to them, you either set your own price and the bidders’ contest simply went on to see which would be the first, or you offered the object after the approved auction custom and the bidders ran up the price as high as it would go.

Zelda had a conscience. Had she not held the gown before the light in that frank fashion, the beauty of the frayed garment might have turned some freshman’s head to the extent of fifteen dollars or more, and it had served its purpose for Zelda—she wanted a few dollars spending money, and getting rid of her old things was a quick method of obtaining it.

When the price of the blue chiffon was named, Lilian Moore nearly fell over on the floor. She had been straining forward across Katherine Foster’s knee, her eyes covetous and hungry.

She had not come expecting to buy anything. She had merely “been dragged along,” as the girls said, and she had hoped to find enough pleasure in watching the others purchase the wonderful second-hands.

But that pleasure was gone now. Suddenly, as she realized that this wonderful, shimmering blue butterfly of a dress was within her reach, she burned with a sudden fire to have it.

For Lilian, who, under the Ambler girls’ teaching, had come to get together a fairly good school-day wardrobe at small cost, had never yet possessed a real evening dress.

She had gone to party after party, reception after reception and dance after dance, always meekly and shamefacedly arrayed in the white simplicity that had been her graduation dress at high school the spring before. Now, staring her in the face with soft blue intensity, was Opportunity, and she meant to seize upon it.

“Me,” she cried out, like a child in her eagerness. “I want it, Miss Darmeer. *Here’s* the four dollars!”

Her spending money for weeks was poured extravagantly into Zelda’s hand, and the wonderful gown was thrown lightly over her trembling arm.

For a little while at least—until the gorgeous thing actually dropped to pieces—she would appear as well-dressed, as beautiful and as fragile as the other girls, with her hitherto covered shoulders glistening charmingly into view and her arms bare and bright almost to the shoulder.

At this moment Gloria came in from her own room, her fair face flushed, and her arms laden. There was a curious hauteur, that was foreign to her accustomed manner, clinging about her, somehow.

And the very first thing that she put up was the wonderful suit of Belgian blue!

As she mounted the swaying pile of cushions, her expression never softened to the hilarity that the occasion had held up till now.

The light gleamed over the wonderful blue of the thing in her arms.

“A suit,” she began, in that voice the freshmen worshipped, “a blue suit. Tailored to fit me. Do for any tall girl. The lining is, as you see, a good quality taffeta,” she turned the coat conscientiously inside out, “and a blue silk underskirt goes with the skirt. I’ve worn this three times. I don’t think very many people saw it, for it was only to chapel and vespers and——”

A laugh interrupted her. That was rather scathing of her, those of her classmates who were present thought. For they were required to attend chapel and vespers and didn’t like the implication that they neglected their duty.

“Kaddie,” whispered Peggy, “do you suppose she’s got so many clothes—that—that three wearings is—enough?”

She gasped at the very idea of such a thing. The condition of the chiffon gown that Zelda had sold was more like her own things by the time she had done with them. She could not fancy any one parting with something they had scarcely become even used to yet.

“Maybe it isn’t becoming to her.”

“Oh, Kaddie!”

Katherine looked again at the figure of Gloria with her blue burden over her arm and saw that she had spoken carelessly.

The blue of the suit brought out the blue of the eyes in a dazzling fashion. The triumphant red and gold of Gloria’s hair and eye-lashes flamed more like those of a Norse goddess than ever.

“What am I offered? I can’t advertise”—(the ghost of a smile did quirk her lips here for an instant)—“as Zelda did, that this suit has known only happy times. It’s—had to take its chances. But such as it is—it’s ready for your offers.”

She stood expectantly, the suit lifted a little on her arm.

“Twenty-five,” lazily called a senior from the back of the room.

“I’m offered twenty-five,” said the auctioneer, “and I’m—still listening.”

“Thirty,” piped Hazel Pilcher eagerly.

“Forty,” jumped the senior’s voice from the back of the room.

“Forty-one,” hesitated Doris Winterbean.

There was no more bidding. Doris opened her check-book and wrote the sum which had purchased the shining wonder that had lately been the property of the freshman president. She knew that suit had never cost less than a hundred, and she was more than satisfied. Its former wearing rather lent it grace than detracted from its value, considering who the wearer was.

“I was going to buy a new suit and a spring coat for next term,” said Doris, “but this will have to

do instead of both now,—and I'd rather have it."

But nothing else that was put up by the others, or by Gloria herself, brought anything like that price—none even yielded so high a percentage of its original cost.

Gloria offered waists, which went for prices such as fifty cents, or, at the highest, a dollar. Then she held up an adorable kimono, direct from Japan, that all the girls had envied and coveted. But beautiful kimonos are luxuries, whereas suits of some kind are necessities. So her sacrifice met with no such fortune as the blue suit had called forth. Most of the girls didn't attend college auctions with their check-books. Doris Winterbean was a single foresighted exception.

"Isn't it terrible to see those beautiful things going for a few pennies?" said Peggy.

"It is," nodded Katherine. "What can that girl be thinking of?"

"Thinking of turning into a savage, I should say," Peggy speculated in answer. "You can see she isn't going to have many clothes left."

"She looks as picturesque as ever, anyway," sighed Katherine. "It's too bad there are not more of our classmates here to see her."

"Yes, she was certainly a lucky choice for president," agreed Peggy.

"Your choice."

"Well, my choice first and the class's afterwards, and I'm sure we're both proud of our good taste."

The radiant one was again holding up an article of apparel before their interested gaze.

"Now, this," she began her advertisement, "is all of handmade lace——"

An imperative knock sounded on the door.

Every girl in the room started nervously. For auctions, while not against any college regulation, were not exactly the sort of thing that would meet with a matron's approval when indulged in to the wholesale extent of this one at Weldon House.

Perhaps that puzzled and anxious matron they had seen downstairs had followed the directions on the sign and was even now upon the threshold. How annoying, when there were many delectable and unsold articles still lying negligently over the chair backs.

"Well," cried Gloria, in the midst of her harangue, "come in."

But the door opened only a crack and a muffled voice came through it.

Zelda Darmeer felt a certain responsibility since it was her room, but she would literally have had to wade through six rows of husky girls to get to the door.

She stood up anxiously.

"Peggy Parsons, go and see what it is, will you, please?" she begged, her face dark with annoyance.

Peggy, by clutching at the knees and then the shoulders of the girls on either side, arose with difficulty and went out into the hall.

What she saw there made her shut the door behind her.

The matron, just as they had feared, was outside the door. But there was another woman with her. A horrid-looking woman, Peggy thought, very different from any one usually seen in campus houses.

The matron's face was troubled, and Peggy felt instinctively that it was something more than their reckless auction that was causing her uneasiness.

The other woman's expression was sullen and aggressive.

She came forward threateningly as Peggy came out, but in a moment fell back with a scowl, as the light from the window at the end of the hall streamed more clearly over the little figure.

"That's not Miss Hazeltine," she said snappishly.

"No," murmured the matron, still with that look of doubt and distaste. "This isn't one of my girls at all. Are you—perhaps—a friend of Miss Hazeltine's?"

"I hope I'm one of her best friends," said Peggy quickly. "And"—with a quick smile that said it all—"I'm a freshman."

"Well, I—don't know," hesitated the matron.

The other woman frowned. "I want my money to-day," she demanded.

Peggy shivered as if she had suddenly been brought in touch with something ugly and sordid, something meant to remain without her share of experience.

She was torn between the feeling that she had no business, in justice to Gloria, to listen to any more—and the desire, the need to keep Gloria away from the menace of this woman's eyes.

She felt that Gloria was even less able to meet and cope with this strange un-college-like situation than she, Peggy.

For Gloria seemed of finer clay, and she herself—what was she but just an everyday young person, glad to be alive and curious about everything that life might hold,—happy or otherwise?

Perhaps Gloria would hate her for stumbling upon a situation like this which didn't concern her.

"I think," she said to the pained matron, "I think I'd better get Gloria. She's in there——" Then, with an inspiration, she turned suddenly upon the unpleasant woman.

"Won't you go down to her room," she questioned, "Number 20, and wait until she comes? I'm sure that would be better; then if she cares to see you, she can find you there."

"Oh, she won't want to see me," retorted the woman. "I'll just wait here. There ain't any other door to that room she's in, is there?"

Peggy's heart turned sick.

"I will send her out to you," she said quietly. "What is your name, please?"

"I'll tell *her* my name," answered the woman ungraciously.

"I think," observed Peggy in a low tone, "that you had better tell *me*—wouldn't that be best, Mrs. Ormsby?"

She appealed to the matron for confirmation.

"Certainly," agreed Mrs. Ormsby, catching a little of Peggy's quiet fire. "You shall at least send in

your name.”

“Well,” grudged the woman, with a hateful smirk, “just tell Miss Hazeltine it’s Hart and Bates’ Dressmaking Establishment.”

“All right,” murmured Peggy, and laid her hand on the door.

The matron bit her lip uneasily, and Peggy turned the handle and went back into the babble of bidding that was going on inside.

CHAPTER XIII—FEET OF CLAY

“My Morning Glory,” thought Peggy, in her heart as she stood among the auction guests.

A feeling of loyalty filled her as she found with her glance the subject of the disagreeable conversation that had just taken place outside the door.

The freshman president, all unconscious of impending disaster—or at least of its nearness—was in the act of taking off the wonderful high button shoes that she wore because one of the girls had expressed a desire to buy them.

She was laughing at the incongruity of it, and the light was dancing in her rose-shadowed blue eyes.

“The clothes off our backs,” she was saying gayly, “anything to please our customers——”

And Peggy looked at the beautiful silk stockings that gleamed on her feet when the shoes were removed.

“Look out, Morning Glory,” shouted a merry Junior, “there are some of your freshmen worshippers present—and they say all idols have clay feet!”

Peggy’s heart skipped a beat, and Gloria seized the shoes uncertainly as if to put them on again. The room burst into a shout of laughter, and Gloria ducked her flaming head gracefully and laughed with the rest.

“My shoes!” she cried, with the laughter still in her voice, as she held them up for sale, “right off the clay feet——”

“Gloria!” cried Peggy reluctantly.

“In just a minute,” answered the beautiful girl, “I’m busy selling *these*. Do you want to bid something? Then——”

“Gloria,” urged Peggy again, for she had caught a faint but impatient tap on the door at her back. She held the knob, and she felt it turn under her grasp. She knew she was not as strong as the horrible woman outside.

“There’s—somebody waiting to see you.”

Gloria paused, swaying on the uncertain heap of cushions, with a flush of annoyance coloring her face. Then all at once she looked directly into Peggy’s eyes, and understood.

“I’ll come,” she said, quickly, dropping the shoes with a thud on the floor, and descending from the teetering platform.

“You haven’t sold those shoes to any one yet,” reminded Zelda Darmeer; “they still belong to you.”

“That’s so,” assented Gloria abstractedly, and slipped into them.

With their button sides loose and flapping grotesquely against her silken ankles, she shuffled with what dignity she might towards the door. Peggy took her hand from the knob, and Gloria disappeared into the corridor.

There was silence in the room for a second after she had gone.

Then the babble began again, not of bidding this time, but of conjecture, laughter and jests.

“Mystery!” observed Zelda Darmeer, hunching up her shoulders.

“Who *is* out there, Peggy?” some one demanded. “Don’t keep us in suspense.”

“Yes, who’s there?” cried the others.

“The—the matron,” said Peggy, truthfully. “She came up and——”

“Well, she needn’t blame Morning Glory for this auction,” Zelda Darmeer started up; “I got up this auction, with two of the people from the first floor, to sell off our old duds. We didn’t even know Glory was coming into it, but when she heard it she seemed to be keen about it, so—but it isn’t her fault and I’ll tell Mrs. Ormsby so——”

She was forcing her way through the crowd in good earnest. The six rows of girls were stepped on and trodden under foot ruthlessly as she proceeded towards the door.

Peggy again sprang into position as guard. “Don’t,” she cried out, and then added in a more natural voice: “You’ve got us all here, now go on with the auction.”

“Oh,” said Zelda, mystified, but amenable, “all right. I suppose she’ll be back in a minute, and Ormsby can’t do much anyway.”

The auction went merrily forward, but Gloria didn’t come back.

After an hour or so, when Peggy was sure the woman must have gone and the trying interview, whatever it was, must be over, she slipped from the room and went fearfully down the hall toward Number 20.

She knocked on the door, and entered when a cold “Come” sounded.

Gloria was seated shoeless on the couch, her red-gold hair in disarray, a frightened, harassed look in her wide eyes.

“Gloria,” stammered Peggy, “do you want to talk to me?”

Gloria shot her a quick glance, searching, appealing and yet at the same time resentful.

“It depends,” said Gloria. “Do you like me very much?”

“Very much,” returned Peggy simply.

“Well, then,” flung out Gloria unexpectedly, “I sha’n’t tell you.”

“Sha’n’t tell me—because I like you?” cried Peggy indignantly. “Why, I never heard of such a thing!”

“Do you like me as well as you do Katherine?” the strange girl pursued.

A vision of Katherine, familiar, dear, loyal,—her own room-mate, rose mistily before Peggy’s eyes.

“No,” she said, truthfully, “of course not.”

“Oh,” Gloria answered, “then it isn’t like the rest. Perhaps I can talk to you anyway. I know that it was your efforts that made me president, though, in the first place. Why did you do that?”

“Because I knew you were the girl for the place.”

“But I wasn’t.”

“I think you have proved yourself to be all we hoped, and more.”

“But you don’t—know about things.”

“I know a good deal. The freshmen swear by you. They would follow your example——”

“My example!”

“Yes, and they couldn’t have a better pattern, Gloria.”

“Oh, well, you are as bad as the rest. Please go and leave me. There’s no use. I haven’t anybody—go quickly, please——”

“Now, Gloria, you’ve been saying the strangest things. From your very odd remarks I gather that if I—didn’t like you much, you’d think that made me a better confidante. Now, I can’t hate you even to please you. I like you—awfully much—and did from the moment you came into our room at the beginning of the year——”

“It has nothing to do with my being president?”

“Not a thing in the world!”

With a little shuddering sob, Gloria reached for Peggy’s hand, and in an instant her shaking shoulders were held fast in Peggy’s reassuring clasp.

“Everybody looks up to me so——”

“Yes,” said Peggy, “and they ought.”

“They ought not! Peggy, it wasn’t good for me, such sudden prominence! At home where I lived I was just one of a good many. I went abroad and traveled around and did not have an opportunity to establish much of a place for myself with any group. My father and mother are indulgent, but I’ve often heard my mother say she wished I didn’t have red hair. And here the girls are crazy about it——”

Peggy smoothed the radiant hair in question, while a sudden smile curved her crooked little mouth.

“Oh, Gloria, child,” she laughed, “I can see your trouble isn’t going to be such a bugaboo after all. Go on and tell me now.”

“And I’ve never managed my own money——”

“Now we’re coming to it,” thought Peggy.

“And, Peggy, you may not believe it, but we aren’t so very rich, after all. I know that everybody says I’m a millionaire, but—we haven’t anything so very much, really. And I was always the first one asked to contribute to everything—and I had to give quite a bit as president——”

“Ye-es,” mused Peggy, “I never thought of that side of it.”

“And I was expected to wear the most wonderful clothes—I heard the girls make the remark that

Glory Hazeltine never wore the same evening dress twice—and—and I was vain. I've seemed indifferent, Peggy, I know, but in my heart I was vain. I'm just beginning to find myself out."

"You've found yourself out wrong," mused Peggy aloud, "and you are no vainer than any other girl would be in your position and with your assets."

"Well, then, I'm sorry for the others."

"Your story is that you were fiendishly extravagant, isn't that all?"

"All? Oh, Peggy!"

"Well, most of us have that failing to fight—and some have reasons to make it harder to win. But anyway, girlie, that doesn't seem very awful, after all. You know how the stores are? The dressmaking shops run after the popular girls and beg for their trade and offer them special prices and say, 'Oh, my dear, I shouldn't bother about paying now—just let it go on the account.' And the account seems so elastic—and you just order a gown or suit whenever you imagine you need one, and they are forever calling you up by phone and saying they have something extra nice——"

"I don't know," said Peggy thoughtfully; "I've found most of the stores in this town wonderfully lenient. They will carry an account on and on, and if you pay once a year they're satisfied. It must be a great inconvenience to them to handle such erratic accounts, but they know the college girls are *all* honest and will pay sometime."

"And I could have paid *sometime*—but I dare not tell dad. He would think running such accounts was awful. This dressmaking place is not like the other concerns. They—they hound—you——"

Terror filled the baby-blue eyes.

"Well, you should have told somebody when you found it getting beyond you. I have quite a bit of money each month, and I don't know anything I'd rather——"

"Oh, but I shall not need it now." Gloria even smiled in her realization. "You see, I've sold everything I had for what it would bring, and—it made enough, I am thankful to say."

"Did you tell the woman?"

"Not how I got it, no. I endorsed Doris' check and handed it over to her as if I had been a princess——"

"I know your manner. Was she properly overcome?"

"Well, no. In fact she said, 'This is but a drop in the bucket. I'll have you persecuted.'"

"She must have said 'prosecuted,' Gloria."

"Well, one or the other, the effect is the same. She *has* been persecuting me."

"Well, and then did you give her the rest?" asked Peggy, desirous of hearing all of the story.

"Yes, I poured into her hands the full amount the bidders had given me in return for all my beautiful kimonos, gowns, waists and underwear."

"Sounds like an elevator call in a department store."

"Doesn't it? But she didn't know. She counted it out and returned me two dollars and said I'd given her too much. I was thankful there had been enough. Oh, Peggy, Peggy, Mrs. Ormsby saw it all. She is a brick. But I feel so mean, so mean——"

“You needn’t. Now you’ve learned, and you can go around here in sackcloth and ashes and you will be the ‘freshmen’s handsome president’ still. That’s what the upperclass girls call you. So it will come out all right. And nobody guessing anything.”

“You know,” Gloria was laughing through her tears, “the reason I wouldn’t tell you was because I couldn’t bear to risk seeing your stare of disillusionment and loss of faith—in case you felt about me as some of the others do. I don’t know why they should, but they act as if I were sort of superhuman. And all my worry about your attitude for nothing! I’ve just been plain Gloria Hazeltine to you all the time, haven’t I, Peggy? And to Katherine. I’m—kind of glad. It’s awful to have people holding such ridiculous ideals about you.”

“No, it isn’t. When you’re graduated, you will look back on it as something very precious—and very wonderful. It is one of the best things that can come to any one—such idealization as you have met with at the hands of our class. And the only way to do is to live up to it, to make it as true as truth.”

“That’s what I was doing, in a way,” explained Gloria woefully. “But only to the most material side of it. I wanted to live up to their ideal of me in wonderful clothes—in generous subscriptions, and all that kind of thing.”

“Well, young lady, now you right-about face and live up to the other side of it. They would follow you and love you if you were as shabby as our wash-lady. So you can go as simply dressed as you want, and they will do nothing but imitate you. It’s a wonderful power you have, Gloria.”

Gloria brushed back the straying hair from her tear-stained face.

“I never thought of that, really, Peggy,” she said. “Do you suppose there is really a little something worth while in me to call forth such feeling on the part of the class?”

“A good deal,” said Peggy. “But not—exactly what they think. You can be even finer than they believe, though, if you’ll set about it.”

“I wish I were like you, Peggy,” wailed Gloria.

“Like me! Now, Gloria Hazeltine, you know you don’t. Nobody expects me to be anything very remarkable. They love me but they have to love a lot of faults along with me. So they love me and look *down*, and you and look *up*.”

“You’ve helped, Peggy. Instead of being sorry and ashamed of myself and realizing that I’m not as nice as they think, I’m going to turn that energy to *being* as nice. Do you think I can do it?”

“I’m not from Missouri—but I cling to their motto, and I do believe you can fulfill it for me.”

“All right, I *will* show you. You and all of them. I’m going to surprise you, Peggy Parsons!”

Peggy left her room with a little sigh.

“I’ve come to collect Katherine,” she poked her head into Zelda Darmeer’s abode and said.

Katherine came hastily out to her, and the two made their way to Ambler House, the several purchases they had made carried loosely in their arms.

When they were comfortably enwrapped in the dear, restful, homelike atmosphere of their own suite, Peggy gave Katherine a sketchy report of her interview with Gloria.

“We’ve had to have our finger in two college pies of very different flavors, Kathie,” she mused when the tale was done. “Our first case was a girl who didn’t have recognition *enough*—was swamped under the weight of indifference and criticism that met her here. The other has too much and couldn’t stand it. She fell to pieces under the burden of worship the girls insisted on

placing on her. It’s funny, isn’t it, Katherine?”

“Such weeps, such weeps,” laughed Katherine, not without sympathy in her tone. “If only everybody in college could have things evened up for them as we have. We’re neither too high nor too low. We have a lovely suite—each of us has a—nice room-mate” (Katherine smiled as she flung this little inclusive compliment at herself), “and people like us a good deal, but not so much that they expect more of us than is humanly possible.”

“But I don’t think we’d be any different in any situation,” judged Peggy. “Do you know, friend room-mate, I’m afraid we’re hopelessly commonplace.”

“I believe you’re right,” Katherine agreed stoutly, “and I’m glad *of* it!”

CHAPTER XIV—SPRING TERM

It is worth while having come through months of winter, full of varying fortunes, to wake at last in the glory of Spring Term.

Spring Term! Those of us who have had it,—what wouldn't we give to be able to drift backward for a moment and feel the wonder of Spring Term around us again? Sweet with its apple-blossoms, prodigal of its sunshine, giving away New England in a strange manner, showing that she possesses a wildness and radiance of youth that for three-fourths of the year she denies.

For Spring Term is satisfaction. There is enough of it. When its magic first comes to the freshman she thinks there will be eons more of Spring Terms.

But there will not be. Only four of them in a lifetime—during those years when the newness of life is fresh, when the power to respond sings through every girl's heart its most exultant tune.

A more or less bony livery horse, perked up for spring, with the inevitable runabout, stood before each campus house's back door in those days.

When his hirers came down from their rooms, they undid the knot about the hitching post and, picking up the reins, slapped them on the beast's back and careened away, out into the wonderworld their Hampton had become.

Red canoes began to flash across the bright and shallow waters of Paradise.

Rubber-soled shoes slapped their way to the tennis courts, and their wearers sat for hours without any alleviating shade, just to have possession of a court at last for sixty minutes.

"I don't know *what* I've ever done to deserve it," said Peggy, leaning on her window-sill beside Katherine, while the two looked out on it all.

"I've heard the upperclass girls tell some of our freshmen when they were homesick, 'Wait till Spring Term.' Now I understand what they meant," returned Katherine slowly.

"Oh, room-mate, I am glad I belong to such a world. Wouldn't it be—wouldn't it be *terrible* to have Spring Term come along and be a senior—or an *alum*?"

"Seniors graduate—I suppose they don't realize it's all for the last time—maybe they do, though. But alums!" Katherine caught her arm and pressed it in an odd panic. "Do you suppose we will actually some day be—that?" she asked with a shudder.

Peggy laughed out into the sunshine. "Not for ages and ages. Three years more—why, that's almost the same as forever. Katherine," she changed the subject suddenly, "I wish we had a canoe! Watch those adorable ones on Paradise—see the drops sparkle off that paddle—oh, Kathie, let's have one, h'mm?"

Katherine was immediately beside herself with joy.

"We can get one second-hand from a girl down at Weldon House," she said joyously. "I heard about it the other day."

Peggy demurred. “I don’t want a second-hand one,” she declared decidedly. “I want a new one, that nobody has ever adventured in before us. I don’t know how to paddle though, do you?”

“No, except that the girl at Weldon that wants to sell this one I mentioned took me out in hers and sort of advertised it by letting me experiment with the paddle awhile. I nearly tipped us over and she was so anxious to have me buy the boat she never said a word.”

Within the next few days Peggy and Katherine wrote to Canada to see about the prices of canoes. They labored long and hard in the gymnasium pool and took the swimming tests that were necessary for a college permit for canoe ownership.

And then, sad, and sickening disappointment, they found that freshmen weren’t allowed to own canoes at all!

They left the boat-house with downcast eyes, but the glory of the day soon made them lift their gaze, and the first thing they saw was a joyous crew of their classmates going to sea in a moist-floored row-boat.

In a moment life was as full of promise as ever and the two plunged down the boat-house steps and gave their gymnasium numbers in to charter the first craft of a similar kind that came along.

“The water’s just as—wet, under this,” laughed Peggy as they finally pushed off.

“And the oars are just as hard to use as a paddle,” cried Katherine, who had just dropped one overboard. “Oh, thank you,—yes, we can manage it all right; yes, *indeed*, we’ve had our swimming test!” This last was to the boat-house boy who rescued the oar and who seemed overly concerned for their safe voyage.

“Paradise,” breathed Peggy softly, a little while later, as they drifted under the shade of the overhanging trees and looked up toward the glowing green campus and the bright and exotic botanical gardens of Hampton. “Only the river is named that—but it’s *all* paradise. Oh, Katherine, Katherine, I think we’ve had a happy year, don’t you?”

But Katherine was not inclined at the moment to be either poetical or retrospective. “Mercy!” she cried out sharply, “now I’ve caught my oar on a root!”

The bright days sped all too fast. A few walks around Hospital Hill, a climb up Mt. Tom, a number of evening street-car rides when the girls sat on the front seat outside the car just back of the motorman with the wind blowing through their hair, a jaunt or so to a distant tea-house, a drive behind one of the bony mares, a few negligible recitations and examinations—and—poof!—they were gone like smoke.

The freshmen were urged to gather up their belongings and hasten home as soon as possible so that the campus rooms would be vacant for that greatest drama of the spring soon to be staged at Hampton—the commencement exercises for the senior class.

“And you and I aren’t to see a bit of it,” grieved Peggy to her room-mate. “I suppose they are keeping it all a mystery from us until we get nearer it ourselves. Don’t forget to write to me often and *often* this summer, Kathie,—it seems strange I’m not going to see you for so long a time.”

“Yes, I’ll write, of course, child. I’ll miss you and I’ll miss Hamp, but I’ll be glad to be home for a while, at that. My mother wants me and so do the rest of the dear folks. I’m so eager to get there I don’t know what to do—and yet my eyes are all full of tears at leaving, at the same time.”

“Well, we ought to be laughing instead of crying—neither of us got any conditions or low grades except——”

“Now you needn’t remind me of that. I got that low grade in botany because I couldn’t draw, not because I didn’t know the lessons. It’s funny if you have to be an artist for every course——”

“Never mind, Kathie, I barely came out on the safe side of math. I’m going to have a bonfire of my trigonometry and my old higher algebra as soon as I get off the train at home. *They* shall never cause anybody else such misery.”

“I’ll give you my botany book to throw in with them.”

“All right, your botany book is elected to the conflagration.”

“I know one thing that *won’t* go in.”

“What’s that, my dear?”

“A certain number of the *Hampton College Monthly*.”

A quick color swept over Peggy’s face.

Laughingly she caught her room-mate’s arm and started with her on an expedition to round up the freshmen of the house for a last half day together while they still enjoyed their lowly state.

Florence Thomas, Myra Whitewell, Doris Winterbean, Gertrude Van Gorder, Lilian Moore and May Jenson they summoned out onto the campus where they were all content to stroll, arms intertwined, meeting other groups who were, like themselves, bidding Hampton farewell for the summer.

It was late afternoon, with the sun streaming over everything and the houses and trees casting their long quiet shadows over the grass, when there drifted by a group of seniors, singing idly one of their senior songs.

The music of it caught Peggy’s heart and she shut her eyes against the tears. There were senior celebrities in that group—girls whom she had known very well by sight—whom she would never see again. Part of college they had been, and now they were humming their senior song for the last time across that dear old campus.

How could they bear to leave—when it was to be shut on the outside of the college gates always—except as they flitted back through the years in the doubtful and unenviable role of alumnæ?

With a full heart Peggy was glad she was just beginning, glad that she would shout for her class’s red lion emblem at basketball matches and polo ground for three years more, glad that she was to return and buy, in the pride of her sophomoreship, her little red canoe, glad that college was still brimming over with experiences for her, as yet untried and unguessed.

“Come quickly, Peggy,” cried Gloria Hazeltine, passing the Ambler girls on a run, “Glee club’s having a sing over by Seelye Hall. Hurry, or you’ll miss some of it.”

Glad of the opportunity to be with so great a number of girls once more before vacation, the Ambler freshmen began to run too, and soon the voices of the glee club carried to them.

Through the crowd that had gathered they caught glimpses of the singers’ white dresses.

“They’re singing ‘Where-oh-where,’” cried Katherine.

And as the words of the familiar song were wafted out to them, Peggy and Katherine smiled their queer pride and happiness into each other’s eyes, since for the first time the song applied to THEM.

> “Where, oh, where are those verdant freshmen?
> Where, oh, where are those verdant freshmen?
> Where, oh, WHERE are those verdant freshmen?
> Sa-afe *now* in the Soph’more Class!”

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