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Title: Hope Benham: A Story for Girls

Author: Nora Perry
Illustrator: Frank T. Merrill

Release date: May 14, 2011 [EBook #36105]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Heather Clark, Mary Meehan and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at http://www.pgdp.net (This file was produced from images generously made available by The Internet Archive)

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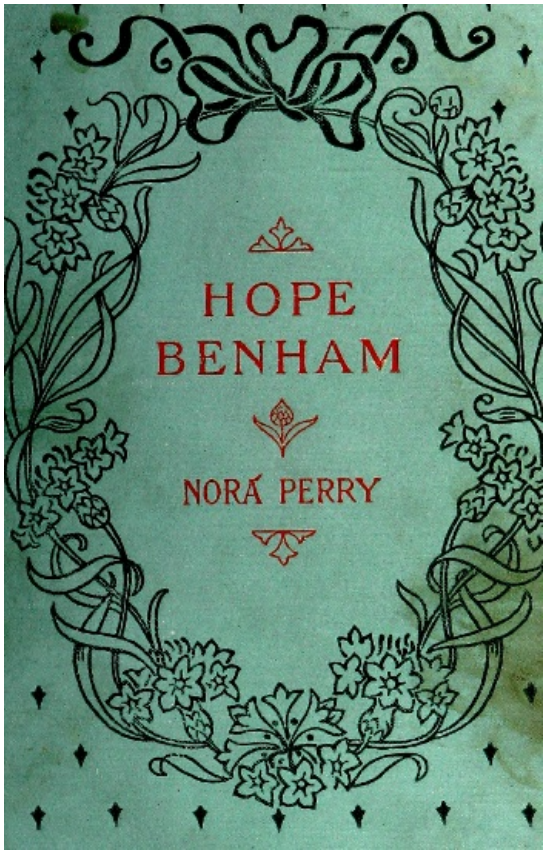

HOPE BENHAM.

A Story for Girls.

By NORA PERRY

AUTHOR OF "LYRICS AND LEGENDS," "ANOTHER FLOCK OF GIRLS," "A ROSEBUD GARDEN OF GIRLS," ETC.

**Illustrated by
FRANK T. MERRILL.**

BOSTON:
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.

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Printers
S. J. Parkhill & Co., Boston, U. S. A.

"Ten cents a bunch"

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HOPE BENHAM.

CHAPTER I.

"Ten cents a bunch! ten cents a bunch!"

A party of three young girls coming briskly around the southwest corner of the smart little Brookside station, hearing this call, turned, then stopped, then exclaimed all together,—

"Oh, how perfectly lovely! the first I have seen. Just what I want!" and they pulled out their purses to buy "just what they wanted," just what everybody wants,—a bunch of trailing arbutus.

"And they are made up so prettily, without all that stiff arbor-vitæ framing. What is this dear little leafy border?" asked one of the young ladies, glancing up from her contemplation of the flowers to the flower-seller.

"It's the partridge-berry leaf."

"Oh! and you picked them all yourself,—the arbutus and this partridge-berry leaf?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" repeated the young lady, giving a stare at the little flower-seller,—a stare that was quickly followed by another question,—

"Do you live near here?"

"Yes; very near."

"But you don't find this arbutus in Brookside?"

"No, in Riverview."

"In Riverview! why, I didn't know that the arbutus grew so near Boston as that."

"We have always found a little in Riverview woods, but this year there is quite a large quantity."

Riverview was the next station to Brookside. In Riverview were manufactories, locomotives, and iron-works, and in Riverview lived the people who worked in these manufactories. But in Brookside were only fine suburban residences, and a few handsome public buildings, for in Brookside lived the owners of the manufactories and other rich folk, who liked to be out of the smoke and grime of toil. The railroad station of Brookside, as contrasted with that of Riverview, showed the difference in the residents of the two places; for the Brookside station was a fine and elegant stone structure, suited to fine and elegant folk, and the Riverview station was just a plain little wooden building, hardly more than a platform and a shelter.

"But you don't live in Riverview, do you?" was the next question the young lady asked of the flower-seller, about whom she seemed to have a great deal of curiosity.

"Yes; I live in Riverview," was the answer, with an upward glance of surprise at the questioner and the question. Why should the young lady question her in that tone, when she said, "But you don't live in Riverview?"

The next question was more easily understood.

"You come over to the Brookside station to sell your flowers, don't you, because there are likely to be more buyers here?"

"Oh, yes; I couldn't sell them at Riverview."

Just then other voices were heard, and other people began to gather about the flower-seller, who from that time was kept busy until the train approached. As the cars moved away from the station, the young lady who had been so curious looked out of the window, and then said to her companions,—

"She has sold every bunch."

"What? Oh, that flower-girl! Why in the world were you so interested in her?" one of the girls asked wonderingly.

"Why? Did you look at her?"

"I can't say that I did, particularly. What was there peculiar about her?"

"Nothing. Only she didn't look like a poor child,—a common child, you know, who would sell things on the street. She was very prettily and neatly dressed, and she spoke just like—well, just like any well-brought-up little girl."

"Did she?" politely remarked her friend, in an absent way. She was not in the least interested in this flower-girl. Her thoughts were turning in a very different direction,—the direction of her spring shopping, a gay little party, and a dozen other kindred subjects.

In the mean time the little flower-seller, with a light basket and a lighter heart, was waiting for the down train. It was only a mile from Brookside to Riverview, an easy walk for a strong, sturdy girl of ten; but all the same, this strong, sturdy girl of ten preferred to ride, and you will see why presently. The down or out-going train from Boston passes the in-going train a short distance from Brookside, and she had only five minutes to wait for it. This five minutes was very happily employed in mentally counting up her sales, as she walked to and fro upon the platform. She had brought twenty bunches of arbutus in her basket, and she had sold every one. Twenty bunches at ten cents a bunch made two dollars. She gave a little hop, skip, and jump, as she thought of this sum.

Two dollars! Now, if she should go again this very afternoon to the Riverview woods and gather a new supply, she might come back to Brookside and be ready when the 5.30 train brought people home from the city. So many people drove down to the station then to meet their husbands or fathers or brothers,—ladies and children too. It would be just the very best hour of all to sell flowers. Yes, she would certainly do it. It was only half-past one. She would have ample time, and then perhaps she would double—Cling-a-ling-a-ling, went the electric announcement of the coming train, and pouf, pouf, pouf, comes the train down the line, and there is her father looking out for her from the engine cab. He nods and smiles to her, and in another minute she has been helped up, and is standing beside him.

"Well, Hope, how did the flowers go?"

"I sold them all,—twenty bunches. Now!" The last word was thrown out as a joyful exclamation of triumph. Her father laughed a little. "And, father, I want to go to the woods again this afternoon for more flowers, and come back here for the 5.30 train,—there's such lots of people on that train."

The father looked grave.

"Oh, do let me, please!"

"I don't like to have you hanging around a station so much."

"But Brookside is different from a great many stations. There are no rough people ever about;" and with a brisk little air, "It's business, you see."

Mr. Benham laughed again, as he said, "Two dollars a day is pretty good business, I should think."

"But it won't last long,—only this vacation week. 'T isn't as if I were going to make two dollars every day all through the season."

"That is true. Well, go ahead and 'make hay while the sun shines.' You'll be a better business fellow than your father if you keep on. But here we are at Riverview. Mind, now, that you leave Brookside to-night on the six o'clock train, no matter whether you've sold your flowers or not."

"Yes, sir." There was a joyful sound in this "Yes, sir," and a happy upward look at her father, which he did not catch, however, for not once did his eyes move from their steady watchfulness of the road before him.

CHAPTER II.

"There he comes!" and Hope ran forward out of the little garden to meet her father, as he came down the street, while her mother turned from the door where she had been waiting and watching with Hope, and went back into the tiny dining-room to put a few finishing-touches to the supper-table. Mr. Benham nodded as he caught sight of Hope. Then he called out,—

"How's business?"

"Two dollars more!"

"Well, well, you'll be a big capitalist soon at this rate, and grind the poor."

"Poor engineers like John Benham!" and Hope laughed gleefully at their joint joke.

"Yes, poor engineers like John Benham, who have extravagant daughters who want to buy violins. But, Hope, you mustn't get your thoughts so fixed on this violin business that you can't think of anything else. Your school, you know, begins next week."

"Yes, I know. I sha'n't neglect that. I wouldn't get marked down for anything."

"You're going to learn to be a teacher, you know; keep that in mind."

"I do; I do. Oh, father dear, don't worry about the music! 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,' you said the other day. Now, music is my play. Some of the girls in my classes go to dancing-school, and do lots of things to amuse themselves. They don't seem to neglect their lessons, and why should I, with just this one thing outside, that I like to do?"

There was a twinkle in John Benham's eyes, as he looked down at his daughter.

"Who taught you to argue, Hope?"

"A poor engineer named John Benham," answered Hope, as quick as a flash.

John Benham laughed outright at this quick retort; and as he opened the gate that led into the little garden in front of his house, he put his arm over his daughter's shoulder, and thus affectionately side by side they walked along the narrow pathway. They were great friends, he and Hope. He used to tell her that as she was an only child, she must be son and daughter too, and he had very early got into the habit of talking to her in a confidential fashion that had the effect of making her a sort of little comrade from the first.

The young lady who had wondered at the little flower-seller's looking and speaking just like any other well-brought-up little girl would have had further cause for wonder if she could have followed the engineer and his daughter into their home, and seen the good taste of its pretty though inexpensive furnishing and arrangements. Locomotive engineers were unknown persons to this young lady. They belonged to the laboring-class; and that in her mind included all mechanical workers, from the skilled artisan to the ignorant hod-carrier and wielder of pick and shovel. She knew that the latter lived poorly, in poor quarters, crowded tenement houses, or shabby little frame cottages or cabins of two or three rooms. As the difference in the different work did not occur to her, neither did the possible difference in the manner of living.

There are older people than this young lady, this pretty Mary Dering, who are almost as unintelligent about the workers of the world, and they would have been almost as astonished as she, not only at the good taste of the simple furnishings, but at the signs of intelligent thought in the collection of books and magazines on the table. If pretty Mary Dering, however, could have seen all these things, she would not have wondered so much at Hope's speaking and looking like any well-brought-up little girl.

Hope *was* a well-brought-up little girl, as you will see,—as well brought up as Mary herself, or Mary's sister Dolly, who was just Hope's age. If you had said this to Mary Dering, she would have told you that she could not imagine a well-brought-up child selling things on the street. Dolly would never have been allowed to stand in public places and cry, "Ten cents a bunch! ten cents a bunch!" under any circumstances. But Mary did not know how much circumstances altered cases; and for one thing, if she *could* have seen Dolly in Hope's place for one half-hour, she would have had to own that Hope was much the better behaved of the two, for in spite of Dolly's bringing up, she was the greatest little rattler in public places, calling down upon herself this constant remonstrance from each one of her family, "Now, Dolly, do try to be quiet, like a lady!"

"But why, why, *why*," you ask, "did Hope, with such a nice, intelligent father, who could buy all those magazines and books,—why did she need to earn the money herself, to buy a violin?"

I'll tell you. To begin with, all those books and magazines were not bought by Mr. Benham; they were, with one or two exceptions, taken from the Boston Public Library. Mr. Benham's salary was only fifteen hundred dollars a year, and it took every cent of this to keep up that simple little home, and put by a sum every week for a rainy day.

Hope loved music, and she loved the music of a violin beyond any other kind. One day when she was in Boston, she saw the dearest little violin in a shop-window. What possessed her I don't know, for she knew she hadn't a penny in the world; but she went in and asked the price of it with the easiest air imaginable.

"Twenty-five dollars," the shopkeeper told her.

"Oh!" and Hope drew in her breath. Twenty-five dollars! It might as well have been twenty-five thousand dollars, for all the possibility of her possessing it.

"Don't—don't they have cheaper ones?" she asked timidly.

"They have things they *call* violins for ten, fifteen, twenty dollars, but they'd crack your ears. If you're going to learn to play, this is a good little fiddle for you to begin with, for it's true and sweet;" and the shopkeeper lifted it up and drew the bow across the strings, in a melodious, rippling strain that went to Hope's heart.

The man thought that she was going to take lessons; and she could, if she only had an instrument, for Mr. Kolb, an old German neighbor of theirs, who had once been the first violin in a famous orchestra, had said to her more than once when she had listened to his playing with delight: "Some day your fader will puy you a little violin, and I will teach you for notting, Mädchen; you have such true lofe for music."

But twenty-five dollars! Oh, no! it could never be! and Hope went out of the shop with her plans laid low.

A few minutes later, as she was walking to the station, she heard a boy's voice, crying, "Ten cents a bunch! ten cents a bunch!"

She looked up, and saw that he held some very meagre little nosegays of arbutus,—meagre, that is, as to the arbutus, but made sizable by the border of stiff arbor-vitæ. Then, all at once, the thought flashed into her mind. Why shouldn't she turn flower-seller? She knew where the arbutus grew thick, thick; and why, why—There was no putting the rest of her thoughts into words; but right there on the street she gave a little jump, and hummed the rippling strain she had just heard drawn from the good little fiddle.

Twenty-five dollars! What was that now with "Ten cents a bunch! ten cents a bunch!" ringing in her ears with such alluring possibilities?

Mr. Benham at first would not hear to the flower-selling plan; but when he saw that Hope's heart was set upon that "good little fiddle," when he heard her say to her mother, "If father can't buy the fiddle for me, it seems to me he might let me try to buy it for myself," he began to relent; and when the mother and he had a talk, and the mother said, "Of course you can't afford to buy it, John, for we are a little behind now, with your and my winter suits, and the new range to pay for yet; but as I really think it will be a good thing for Hope to learn to play the violin, I don't see why it wouldn't be a good thing for her to earn it herself," he relented still more, and when the mother said further, in answer to his objections to having Hope hanging around in public places, as a little peddler, "John, you can trust Hope; she is a sensible child," he relented entirely; and the next week after, Hope entered upon her business as a flower-seller.

The success of that first day was a surprise to her father, and he warned her not to expect anything like it on the succeeding days, telling her that the weather would very likely turn chilly and rainy, that fewer people might be going and coming from town, and that even these might not stop to buy flowers. He did not want to discourage her; he simply wanted to prepare her for disappointment. But Hope was not doomed to disappointment in this direction. The succeeding days proved both pleasant and profitable; especially profitable were Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, when so many ladies went in to the matinée performances. Yet with all this success, this pleasantness of weather, and steady increase in her sales, there was something very *un*pleasant for Hope to bear,—something that she had not in the least looked for, because she had never before met with anything like it.

CHAPTER III.

It was on Wednesday that a little party of girls came hurrying into the Brookside station, as if they had not a minute to lose, when one of them exclaimed: "Why, our train has gone; look at that!" pointing to the indicator. "The next train goes at 1.40. We shall have only twenty minutes to get from the Boston station to the Museum."

"Time enough," answered Mary Dering; "we always go too early. But there's our little girl. We shall have ample opportunity now to buy all the flowers we want. Dolly," to her younger sister, who was marching up and down the platform with a friend of her own age, "Dolly, don't you want to buy some flowers?"

"Flowers? Oh, yes!" and Dolly came racing up, calling out in a loud whisper, as she joined the group, "Say, Mary, is that your wonderful flower-girl?"

"Hush, Dolly; don't!"

"Don't what?"

"Don't whisper so loudly; she can hear you."

Dolly laughed. "What if she does? I didn't say anything that wasn't nice."

The group of girls pressed around Hope, and bought lavishly of her stock. Dolly and her friend Lily Styles were the latest of the buyers, for coming up last they were on the outside of the group. As they stood alone with Hope, they picked and pecked first at one bouquet, and then another. This was fuller, and that was bigger, and still another was prettier and pinker. At last they made a choice, and Hope breathed a sigh of relief at the thought that now her exacting purchasers would leave her to herself. But Dolly Dering had no notion of leaving Hope to herself. No sooner was the purchase concluded than Miss Dolly, lifting her big black eyes with a curious gaze to Hope's face, asked abruptly,—

"Do you like to sell flowers on the street?"

Hope flushed hotly. "I don't sell flowers on the street."

"Well, in a station, then. I should think that was just the same as on the street; it's out-of-doors in a public place."

Hope made no further reply. She would have moved away if she could have done so easily, but the two girls stood directly in front of her, completely shutting her into her corner. Perhaps, however, they would go away if she busied herself with her flowers, and she began to re-arrange and spray them with water. But Dolly, at sight of this operation, began with fresh interest, "Oh! is that the way you keep 'em fresh? How nice! let me try it, do!" and before Hope could say "yes" or "no," she had seized the sprayer out of her hands. Her first effort, instead of benefiting the flowers, sent a sharp little sprinkle directly against Hope's light cloth jacket. Hope started back with an exclamation of dismay.

"Oh, it won't hurt it!" cried Dolly. Then, as she saw Hope rubbing the wet place with her handkerchief, she asked, "Will your mother punish you if she finds the jacket spotted?"

"Punish me?" exclaimed Hope, looking up at the questioner.

"Yes, punish you; whip you, perhaps."

"My mother—whip me?" ejaculated Hope, staring at Dolly, as if she thought her out of her mind.

"Yes, whip you; I didn't know—"

"Would *your* mother whip *you* if you got spots on *your* jacket?" inquired Hope, in a sharp, indignant voice.

"*My* mother? No."

"Then why should you think *my* mother would whip *me*?"

Dolly was not a very sensitive young person, but she could not blurt out exactly what was in her mind,—that she thought all poor people, working-people, whipped their children when they offended them in any way. Her ideas of poor people were very vague, and gathered partly from the talk of her elders about the North End poor that the Associated Charities assisted. In this talk a word now and then concerning the careless way in which these people beat their children for the slightest offence impressed her more than anything. Then Bridget Kelly, who had been Dolly's nurse, had often related stories of her own childish naughtinesses, for her—Dolly's—benefit, and she had almost invariably wound up these stories with the remark, "And didn't my mother beat me well for being such a bad girl!"

Dolly had put this and that together, and come to the conclusion that poor people were all alike,—a good deal as her sister had included all mechanical workers together. But if Miss Dolly couldn't blurt out all that was in her mind, she had very little tact of concealment, and when she replied to Hope's question something about people's being different, and that she knew that some people beat their children for doing things they didn't like them to do, she unwittingly made things quite clear enough to Hope, with her fine, keen intelligence, so clear that she comprehended at once the whole state of the case. What would have happened when this moment of comprehension suddenly came to Hope, what she would have said if there had been time to say anything, it is needless to conjecture, for there wasn't an instant of time for a word, as at that very moment, pouf, pouf, pouf, the train steamed into the station, and Dolly Dering and her friend Lily ran scampering down the platform.

Hope looked after them, with eyes blinded by hot, angry tears. The last few minutes had been a revelation to her of the thoughtless misunderstandings of the world. To think that she—Hope Benham—should be ranked with that vast ignorant class of "poor people" who "lived anyhow," all because she was selling flowers in a public place! "They might have known better, if they had any sense; they might have known at a glance!" And with this indignant thought, Hope went into the ladies' waiting-room, and surveyed herself in the mirror that hung there. What did she see? A bright-faced girl, clean and fresh, with neatly braided hair; clothed in a little fawn-colored jacket, a brown dress, and with a pretty plain brown felt hat upon her head. To be sure, she wore no gloves; but her hands were nicely kept, the nails well cut and rosily clean. To mix her up with poor people who "lived anyhow"! Perhaps they fancied, those girls, that the fawn-colored jacket and the brown dress and the hat were given to her,—gifts of charity! Yes, that was what they fancied, of course. They had talked her over. "Is that your wonderful flower-girl?" she had overheard the younger girl say to the older. She had been called this because she was dressed

decently, because she behaved herself decently. They couldn't understand—these rich people—how any one who sold flowers, who sold anything—*on the street*—yes, that was what they called it—could be decent. Oh, it was they who were ignorant,—these rich people! They didn't know anything about other people's lives,—other people who were not rich like themselves.

Hope's little purse was full of shining silver pieces as she went back to Riverview, but her heart was fuller of bitterness.

"You look tired, Hope," said her mother, anxiously, as Hope walked into the house. But Hope declared that she was not in the least tired, that it was only the tiresomeness of some of her customers,—fussy folk, who picked and pecked and asked questions. Not a word more did she say. She was not going to worry her mother, hurt her feelings as hers had been hurt with the foolish, ignorant talk of those foolish, ignorant, rich girls,—not she! So she comforted herself by counting up her silver pieces, and reckoning how much nearer she was to the "good little fiddle." She tried to keep the little fiddle and the sweet strain the shopkeeper had drawn from it, continually in her mind, as she stood in the station again that night on the arrival of the 5.30 train. The good little fiddle, with the sweet strain, should be the shield against tormenting questioners and questions. But she was not to be tormented that night by any one.

Dolly Dering did not even look at her, as she skipped by. Dolly was too eager to secure a place beside her father on the front seat of the carriage, as they drove home, to see or think about anything else. Even Mary Dering did not find time, as she went by, to cast an interested glance towards that "wonderful flower-girl." There were plenty of purchasers, however, without the little matinée group,—ladies and gentlemen just returning from shopping or business,—plenty of purchasers; and Hope went home with only the sweet sense of success stirring at her heart,—a success unalloyed by any new bitterness. She had not needed a shield against tormentors. Thursday and Friday were equally pleasant and fairly profitable. Saturday would, of course, be the best day of all, and bring her sales up to almost if not quite the desired amount. But she dreaded Saturday, for she was quite sure that "that girl" would be at the station, and she could not help keeping a nervous look-out from the moment she took her stand in her chosen corner. The 12.35, the 1, and the 1.15 trains, however, went in, and Dolly was not to be seen. If she was not on the 1.40 train, there was little danger, Hope thought, that she would be there at all, for the 1.40 was the last early afternoon train. The next was 3.30, and Hope would be back at Riverview by that time, preparing another stock of flowers for her 5.30 sale. Just before the 1.40 steamed in, Hope heard a gay chatter of voices. There she was! But no; a glance at the party sufficed to show that Dolly Dering was not one of the party, and Hope drew a deep breath of relief. The week would end without further annoyance, and with *such* a heap of bright silver pieces.

CHAPTER IV.

Forgetful of everything disagreeable, Hope stood in her corner for the last time, softly humming the sweet little strain she had heard from the good little fiddle. She was earlier than usual,—ten, fifteen minutes earlier. "Tum, tum, ti tum," she was softly humming, when—

"Do you stay here all day?" asked a clear, confident voice. She turned her head, and there stood that girl,—Dolly Dering.

"No," answered Hope, politely, to this question, but with a coldness and distance of manner that was meant to check all further questioning. But Dolly Dering wasn't easily checked.

"My sister says that you live in Riverview, and that you get your flowers in Riverview woods," was her next questioning remark.

"Yes."

"What other kinds of flowers are you going to sell when these arbutus are gone?"

"I'm not going to sell any."

"Why not?"

"Because I—I don't want to."

"I should think you would. You must make a lot of money."

No answer.

"To be sure, I don't suppose you'd make so much with garden flowers, but there are ever so many kinds of wild flowers coming on by and by, aren't there?"

"I suppose so."

"Perhaps you go to school, do you?"

"Yes."

"Oh! and this is vacation week at the public schools; that's why you can be here. I see. What you

earn must be a great help, isn't it?"

Hope's patience and dignity were giving way. She looked up with a fiery glance.

"A great help in what?" she asked.

"Why, why, in your home, you know,—in buying bread and things,—you know what I mean."

"Yes, I know what you mean," burst forth Hope. "You mean that you think because I am selling flowers here in the station that I belong to poor people, who live anyhow,—poor, ignorant people, who are helped by the missions and the unions,—poor, ignorant people like those at the North End."

Dolly Dering stared with all her might at the flushed, excited face before her.

"Why—why—you *are* poor, aren't you, or you wouldn't be selling things like this?" she blunderingly asked.

Hope, in her turn, stared back at Dolly. Then in a vehement, exasperated tone, she said,—

"I didn't think anybody *could* be so ignorant as you are."

"I! ignorant! well!" exclaimed Dolly, in astonishment and rising resentment.

"Yes, ignorant," went on Hope, recklessly, "or you'd know more about the difference in people. You'd *see* the difference. You'd see that I didn't belong to the kind of poor folks who live any way and anyhow. My father is John Benham, an engineer on this road, and we have a nice home, and plenty to eat and drink and to wear,—and books and magazines and papers," she added, with a sudden instinct that these were the most convincing proofs of the comfort and respectability of her home.

"What do you sell flowers on the street for, then, if you are as nice as all that?" cried Dolly, now thoroughly aroused by Hope's words and manner.

"Because I wanted to buy something for myself that my father couldn't afford to buy. Don't you ever want anything that your father doesn't feel as if he could buy for you just when you wanted him to?"

"Well, if I did, I shouldn't be let to go out on the street and peddle flowers to earn the money," replied Dolly, with what she meant to be withering emphasis.

"And I shouldn't be *allowed* to say 'let to go,' like ignorant North Enders," retorted Hope, with still more withering emphasis.

Dolly reddened with mortification and anger; then she said haughtily, "I don't happen to know as much as you seem to, how ignorant North Enders talk."

"No; I told you that you were ignorant, and didn't know the difference between people."

"How dare you talk like this to me! You are the most impudent girl I ever saw," cried Dolly, passionately.

"Impudent! How did *you* dare to speak to me as you did,—to ask me questions? You didn't know me; you never saw me before. You wouldn't have dared to speak to a girl that you thought was like yourself. But you thought you could speak to *me*. You needn't be polite to a girl who was selling things on the street."

Hope stopped breathless. Her lips were dry; her heart was beating in hard, quick throbs. As for Dolly she was for the moment silenced, for Hope had divined the exact state of her mind. Other things, too, had silenced Dolly for the moment, and these were the evidences of respectability that Hope had enumerated. She was also faced by these evidences in Hope's speech and manner, as those fiery but not vulgar words were poured forth from the dry, tremulous lips; and the effect had been confusing and disturbing to those fixed ideas about working-people that had taken root in her—Dolly's—mind. She was not a bad girl at heart, was this Dolly. She was like a great many people without keen perception or sensibility, and thoughtless from this very lack. The youngest of a prosperous family, she had been petted and pampered until her natural wilfulness and high spirits had made her heedless and over-confident. She had not meant to insult Hope. She had meant simply to satisfy her curiosity; and she thought that it was a perfectly proper thing to satisfy this curiosity about a poor girl who sold flowers on the street, by asking this girl plain questions, such as she had heard her mother ask the poor people who came to get work or to beg. But Hope's plain answers had at first astonished, then angered, then enlightened her.

In the little breathless pause that followed Hope's last words, the two girls regarded each other with a strange mixture of feeling. Hope's feeling was that of relief tinctured with triumph, for she saw that she had made an impression upon "that ignorant girl." Dolly, humiliated but not humble, had a queer struggle with her temper and her sense of justice. She had been made to see that she was partly, if not wholly, in the wrong, and that she had wounded Hope to the quick. In another minute she would have blunderingly made some admission of this,—have said to Hope that she was sorry if she had hurt her feelings, or something to that effect,—if Hope herself had not suddenly remarked in a tone of cold dislike,—

"If you are waiting to ask any more questions, I might as well tell you it's of no use. I sha'n't

answer any more; so if you'll please to go away from this corner and stop staring at me, I shall be much obliged to you."

Scarlet with anger, all her better impulses scattered to the winds, Dolly flashed out,—

"You're an ugly, impudent, hateful thing, and I don't care if I *have* hurt your feelings, so there!"

It happened that John Benham had exchanged his hours of work for that day with a fellow engineer on the 5.30 train that came out from Boston. Dolly, watching the train as it came to a stop at the Brookside station, saw something that interested her greatly. It was an exchange of glances between that "ugly, impudent, hateful thing" and the engineer, as he stood in his cab.

"So that is her father, is it,—that smutty workman! She'd better set herself up and talk about her nice home!" was Dolly's inward comment out of the wrath that was raging within her.

"What is the matter with Dolly?" asked Mr. Dering, fifteen minutes later, as Dolly, red and pouting, and with a fierce little frown wrinkling her forehead, sat in unusual silence beside him on the front seat of the carriage. Matter? and Dolly, finding her tongue, poured forth the story of her grievance. With all her faults, Dolly was not deceitful or untruthful; and the story she told was remarkably exact, neither glossing over her own words, nor her humiliating defeat through Hope's cleverness of speech.

Mr. Dering seemed to find the whole story very amusing, and at the end of it laughingly remarked: "I don't think you had the best of it, Dolly."

Her mother, from the back seat, was mortified and shocked that Dolly should have been so vulgar as to quarrel on the street.

"But Dolly began it by asking such questions," spoke up Mary Dering. "Dolly is such a rattler. I'm sure that flower-girl would never have spoken to her first."

Then Mrs. Dering wanted to know what Mary knew about "that flower-girl," and Mary described Hope as she had seen her.

"She said her father was an engineer on this road, did she?" asked Mr. Dering, turning to Dolly.

"Yes, papa."

"It must be John Benham. He is one of the best engineers on this road,"—Mr. Dering was one of the Directors of the road,—"yes, it must be Benham. I should think he might have just such a child as that."

"Why, papa?" asked Mary Dering, leaning forward.

"Well, because he's a proud sort of fellow, rather short of speech; doesn't give or take any familiar words. But he's an excellent engineer, excellent, and is full of intelligent ideas. He saved the road from quite a loss last year by a suggestion of his. He's always tinkering, I've been told, on one or another of these ideas,—has quite an inventive faculty, I believe; and some of these days I suppose he hopes, as so many of these fellows do, to make a fortune out of some invention. Hey, what do you say to that, Dolly?" turning from this graver talk, and pulling one of Dolly's black locks. "What do you say to your impudent little girl turning into a millionaire's daughter one of these days?"

"I'd say 'Ten cents a bunch' to her!" cried Dolly, vindictively.

Mr. Dering flung back his head, and laughed.

"Do you *really* think he may make a fortune in that way?" asked Mary, interestedly.

"Well, no; really I don't, Mary," her father replied. "Such things don't happen very frequently. Most skilled mechanics, like Benham, make inventive experiments in their peculiar line, but it's only one in a thousand who is a genius at that sort of thing, and produces anything remarkable or valuable enough to bring them a fortune. Benham is a clever, industrious fellow, but he isn't a genius; so we won't make a hero for a story out of him, my dear." And Mr. Dering nodded with a smile at Mary,—a smile that brought a blush to Mary's cheek, for she knew that papa was making fun of what he called her sentimentality.

CHAPTER V.

Almost at the very moment that Mr. Dering was asking Dolly what was the matter, John Benham, speeding along in his cab, was mentally asking the same question in regard to Hope; for, as he caught that glimpse of her as the train stopped, he saw at once that something was amiss. There was a strained, excited look about her eyes, and a hot, uncomfortable color in her cheeks. Had any one been troubling her? His own color rose at the thought. Why had he allowed her to take such a position? But, thank Heaven, this was the last night. Two hours after this he put the question to Hope in words. What was the matter?

Hope had not meant to tell. She would be brave and keep her annoyance to herself. But the suddenness of the question broke down her defences, and she burst into tears.

"My dear, my dear, what is it? Who is it that has been troubling you? There, there!" taking her in his arms, "have your cry out, then tell father all about it."

Hope was to the full as honest and truthful as Dolly, and her story was as exact; but she did not, for she could not, do full justice to Dolly, from the fact that she had not caught the faintest idea of that good impulse that she herself had nipped in the bud; and without this impulse Dolly's share in the story looked pretty black, and John Benham, as he listened to it, did not laugh, as Mr. Dering had done. It was not amusing to him to hear how his sweet little daughter had been hurt by all that impertinent questioning. He saw better than Hope that the impertinence was not malice, and that the ignorance it proceeded from was that old ignorance that comes from the selfishness that is born of long-continued prosperity. In trying to convey something of this to Hope, and to show her that she must not let her mind get poisoned by dwelling too much upon the matter, he said,—

"Try to put it out of your mind by thinking of something else."

Hope lifted her head, and a faint smile irradiated her face.

"I'll push it out with the good little fiddle," she answered.

"That's my brave little woman!"

That very night Hope carried her resolve into action by going over to see Mr. Kolb to arrange for the purchase of the violin. She had told him at the first, of the shop where she had seen the instrument that had taken her fancy, and of her flower-selling plan to buy it.

"Yes, yes; it was a very good shop," he had told her, and the plan was a very good plan, and some day he would go with her to look at the little fiddle.

He was quite astonished, however, when, on Saturday night, she ran in to tell him that her plan had succeeded so well that she wanted him to go with her on Monday afternoon to buy the little fiddle.

"What! you haf all the money?" he asked incredulously.

"Yes; I earned all but two dollars, and that my father gave me."

The old German threw out his hands with a gesture of surprise. "Ah! you little American mädchen," he cried, "you do anything!"

But when, on Monday afternoon, the two set out on their errand, Hope began to have a misgiving. Perhaps she had made a mistake. Perhaps, after all, it wasn't a good little fiddle, and she looked anxiously at Mr. Kolb when he entered the shop with her, and took the instrument in his hands, for Mr. Kolb would know all about it. And Mr. Kolb *did* know all about it. He knew at the first sight of it; and when he lifted the bow and drew it across the strings, his eyes were smiling with approbation.

"He lifted the bow and drew it across the strings"

"A good fiddle! ach! it is a peautiful little fiddle!" he exclaimed, as he ceased playing. Then he complimented Hope by saying: "You haf the musical eye, as well as ear, Mädchen, to put your heart on this little fiddle, and we shall haf so good a time, you and I, learning to play it."

That night, just after supper, Hope took her first lesson. As she tucked the little fiddle under her chin, and drew the bow uncertainly and awkwardly across the strings, her heart beat, and her eyes filled with joyous tears. The little fiddle for the time quite pushed Dolly Dering and everything connected with her out of her mind.

While she was thus happily occupied, her father was busily engaged with what looked like a toy engine. He was tinkering over one of those ideas of his, that Mr. Dering had spoken of. This particular idea was something connected with the speed of the locomotive and the economy of fuel at one and the same time. Two years before, certain improvements in this direction had been made, but they were not fully successful, because they did not combine harmoniously,—what was gained in one direction being partially lost in another. John Benham's idea was to invent something that should combine so harmoniously that a high rate of speed could be attainable with a minimum of fuel.

When he first started to work out this idea, he was quite confident that he could carry it through to success; but he had been at it now for months, and the harmonious combination still evaded him. What was it? What had he missed? Over and over again he would ask himself this question, and over and over again he would add here or take away there, and all without achieving the result he desired. So many failures had at length beaten down his courageous confidence not a little, and he had begun to think that he must be on the wrong track altogether, and might as well give up the whole thing.

He was thinking this very strongly that Monday night when he sat in his workshop,—a long, low room he had arranged for himself at the end of the house. The night was warm for the season, and through the open doorway he could hear the quavering, uncertain scraping of the little fiddle.

"Dear little soul!" he thought; "I hope this good time is paying her for that bad time of hers."

If he could only have known how thoroughly it was "paying her,"—that at that moment the bad time was pushed completely out of mind by the good time! He hoped that she was comforted; that was the most that he expected. For himself, nothing had put the story she had told him out of his mind; and while he sat there adjusting and readjusting the little model, it was half mechanically,—his thought being more occupied with his child's painful little experience, and all that it suggested to him. He was not a bitter or a violent man. He did not think that the poor were always in the right, and the rich always in the wrong in their relations with each other, as a good many working-people do. No; he was too intelligent for that. But what he did think, what he *knew* was, that the rich were not hampered and hindered by the daily struggle for existence, for the means to procure food and clothing and shelter from week to week. He knew that his own abilities were hindered and hampered by the necessity that compelled him to work almost incessantly for the necessaries of life. If he could have had only a little of the leisure of the rich, a little of their money, he could have had constantly at his hand, not merely the books that he needed, and the time to study them, but various other ways and opportunities would have been open to him to follow out his strong taste for mechanical construction. As it was, he had been obliged to grope along slowly, working at odd times after his labor of the day, and generally at some disadvantage, either in the lack of proper tools, or needed books of reference directly at his hand. All these thoughts bore down upon him that night with greater force than usual, because of Hope's story; for here it was again in another direction, that difference between the rich and the poor. And while he thought these thoughts, scrape, scrape, went Hope's bow across the strings.

"Do you hear that, John?" asked Mrs. Benham as she came into the workshop.

"Yes, I've been listening to it for some time." There was an absent expression in John Benham's eyes, as he glanced up. His wife noticed it.

"You look tired, John. I wouldn't bother over that"—with a nod at the engine model—"any more."

"No; I've about made up my mind to give it up. I don't seem to be on the right track with it, anyhow."

There was a depressed, discouraged note in the husband's voice that his wife at once detected. It was a new note for her to hear in that voice. She regarded him anxiously a moment, and then, smiling, but with a good deal of real earnestness, said,—

"Don't fret about it, John. Hope, maybe, 'll make all our fortunes yet. Mr. Kolb told me that she had a wonderful ear for music, and would be a fine performer some day."

"Fortunes! 't isn't money only, Martha; I hate to give up a thing like this. I felt so sure of myself when I started; and—and—it is failure, you see; and failure is harder to bear than the hardest kind of labor. I've always thought, you know, that I was cut out for this sort of thing,—this inventive business,—but it looks as though I had been more conceited than anything else, doesn't it?"

"No, no; it doesn't, John. Your worst enemy couldn't say that you were conceited. But you've had

so little chance, so little time; that's what's the trouble. But you haven't come to the end yet, and I didn't mean that I wanted you to give up trying. I only meant that I wouldn't bother over *that*. You must start something new; that's all I meant, John," cried Mrs. Benham, full of affectionate sympathy and repentance.

"Oh! I understand, Martha; I understand. What you said didn't discourage me. I dare say I shall tinker away at something again by and by; but *this* thing"—striking the model a little blow with his hand—"is a failure."

At that moment the door-bell rang, and Mrs. Benham hurried away to answer its summons. Left alone, her husband stretched out his hand towards the model, and opened the door of its fire-box. There was still a tiny bed of coals there.

"We'll have a last run," he said, with a half-smile; and opening the steam-valve, he saw the beautiful little model start once more on its way along the rails he had laid for it upon the work-bench that ran around the room. As he had constructed a self-acting pressure that should close the steam-valve at a certain point, the model was under as perfect control from where he stood as if it were of larger proportions, and he were managing and directing it from its engine cab. A look of pride, followed by an expression of sadness, flickered over the builder's face, as he watched it. Where *had* he failed?

Round and round the course the pretty thing sped, not at any headlong speed, but at the pace that had been set for it, to prove or disprove the effectiveness of the combination. Click, click, how smoothly it ran! everything apparently perfect, from the wheels to the wire-netted flues. If only—But what—what is that? and John Benham starts forward with sudden eager attention. His quick ear has caught a slight sound that he had not heard before, so slight that only *his* ear would have detected it. The machine was on its finishing round; three seconds more, and the self-acting steam-valve has shut, the engine slows up to a stop, and its builder, with a quickened pulse, bends eagerly forward.

CHAPTER VI.

Perhaps it is five minutes later that the wife opens the door again. "John, who do you think has just called?" She receives no answer. "Dear me!" she says vexedly to herself, "he's worrying at that machine again. I wish he'd give it up. John!" Still no answer. Mrs. Benham walks into the room. "John, I wish—" But as she catches sight of her husband's face, which is pale, and changed by some strong feeling, she forgets what she was about to say, and exclaims in a troubled tone, "What is it? What is the matter, John?"

He starts and turns to her. Matter? A half-smile stirs his lips, and he points to the engine without another word.

Mrs. Benham is frightened. She thinks to herself: "This constant worry over that thing is turning his head; he will lose his mind. Oh, John!" she cries, "if you would only come away and rest and give this up, if only for a little while! I—I—" and poor Mrs. Benham's voice breaks, and the tears rush to her eyes.

"Martha, Martha, you don't understand. My worry is all over,—all over. The thing is a success,—a success, Martha, and not a failure!"

"What—why—when I went out—"

"When you went out a while ago, I'd given it up, and I thought I'd say good-bye to it in a last run, and on that run I heard a new sound. Look here, Martha, do you see that link in the valve gearing? I thought I had taken every pains to suspend it properly. Well, it seems I hadn't. I suspended it in the usual way, and it worked in the usual way; but it turns out that wasn't the way to work with my new injector, and there is where the hitch was. Do you remember when I brought my hand down on the machine when we were talking? I must have displaced this delicate little bolt or pin that you see here, at that blow, and in that way put the link—it is what is called a shifting link—into the right position to work my injector combination. This little change of position makes everything clear as daylight, and I can put this little beauty into fine shape now; fasten the bolts and pins permanently instead of temporarily, for I don't need any more changes. It will do its double work of speed and fuel-saving every time; for see there!"—and the exultant builder pointed to some almost infinitesimal figures in two different portions of the engine. They were the registers that proved the result of this last triumphant run, and the complete success of his invention.

The tears were still in Mrs. Benham's eyes, but they were tears of joy. "It seems too good to be true," she faltered.

"And I thought the other thing—the failure—too bad to be true," he returned. Then smiling a little, "I shall name it 'Hope,'" he said.

"And it is Hope that will make our fortunes, after all; for this will make a fortune, won't it, John?" inquired Mrs. Benham, looking up into her husband's face eagerly. But he didn't hear her. His thoughts had gone back to that valve gearing, and the link that had been so happily put in place.

She touched his arm, and repeated her question.

"Fortune?" He turned from his loving contemplation of the thing that he had builded. It seemed almost human to him. "Fortune,—I don't know," he answered absently.

Mrs. Benham did not repeat her question again. She saw, as she glanced at her husband's face, that it would be of no use, for she saw that just for the present he was all absorbed in the delight that had come to him, in the successful accomplishment of his undertaking. This was joy enough for him at the moment. He had often said to her when she had advised him not to tire himself out pottering over things that might not bring him a penny, that he loved the work for itself, independent of anything else. And it was the work that he was thinking of now, not the possible financial results. But by and by—and Mrs. Benham's thoughts went wandering off into that by and by, when these results would take tangible form. Her ideas, however, were extremely modest. This fortune that she had in her mind, that she saw before her at that instant, was very limited. Harry Richards, an old friend of her husband's, had made a comfortable little sum out of an improvement upon car-window fastenings, and it was some such comfortable little sum that Mrs. Benham was thinking of. A little sum that would be sufficient, perhaps, to pay at once what mortgage there was still left upon their little home, to buy a new carpet for the parlor, and the books her husband needed, and to give Hope all the instruction she wanted upon the violin, from Mr. Kolb, or any other teacher, at the teacher's price.

Just at this point of her thought, a quick, flying step was heard, and a quick, humming voice,—a little sweet, thready sound, as near like a violin tone as the owner could make it,—and the next minute Hope appeared in the workshop rosy and radiant.

"Mr. Kolb says," she broke out, dropping her humming violin note, "that I shall make a very good little fiddler some day if I 'haf patience,'" gayly imitating the old German's pronunciation. "He says—" But something in her father's absorbed attitude, in her mother's expression, stopped her. "What is it? what has happened?" she inquired, looking from one to the other.

"Your father has got the little engine all right."

"It does just what he wanted it to do?" asked Hope, eagerly.

"Yes, just what he wanted it to do."

Hope danced about the room, humming her little thready violin note. Her father, roused from his reverie, looked up at her, and smiled.

"Well, Hope, the little fiddle was a success, eh?"

"And the little engine too;" and the girl danced up to her father, humming her note of gladness.

"Yes, the little engine too."

Mrs. Benham, looking across the work-bench at her husband and daughter, nodded and laughed at them.

"You're just alike,—you two," she said. "There's nothing now but the little engine and the little fiddle. But how does it happen, Hope, that Mr. Kolb could give you such a long lesson? Didn't he go in to play at the concert to-night?"

"No; he has a cold, and his nephew, Karl, is to take his place. It is Karl, you know, who teaches at the Conservatory; and Mr. Kolb says that some time, when he gets too old and rheumatic to go out in the evening, he may give up orchestra-playing altogether, and take to teaching like Karl."

"Well, he'll have to get more profitable pupils than Hope Benham in that case," said Mrs. Benham, laughingly.

"Mother, do you think—is it taking too much—from—"

"No, no, Hope," interrupted her mother. "I don't think anything of the kind. Mr. Kolb meant what he said when he told you he'd like to give you lessons. Don't you fret about that; father will pay him some time."

"Perhaps *I'll* pay him when—" But Mrs. Benham did not stop to hear the end of her daughter's sentence. A patter of rain-drops caught her ear, and she hurried away to close the upper windows. Hope turned to her father with her new idea; she was aglow with it.

"Farver," she began, using her old baby pronunciation, as she was in the habit of doing now and then,—"Farver, Mr. Kolb says if I practise hard, I may get to play the little fiddle at a concert some day, and earn money, and then—then, I shall pay Mr. Kolb for teaching me, farver."

"Oh! that is your plan? Hope, the little fiddle has done a good work already. It has pushed all that bad time out of your mind, hasn't it?"

"Yes, yes, it has pushed it away—away—oh! ever so much further; but, farver," and Hope put her head down on her father's shoulder, "I—I—don't ever want to see that girl again."

"Yes, father knows;" and drawing her closer to him, John Benham stroked his daughter's sleek brown head with a soft caressing touch.

And father *did* know. He knew that the little daughter was having her first experience of the

world, and the way it made its separations, its class distinctions between rich and poor and high and low. He was not envious or jealous or bitter, but he was very observant and thoughtful, and he could not help seeing how ignorantly made were some of these distinctions, and how unchristian. He knew that his little Hope was intelligent and refined,—the fit companion for any refined child, however placed in the world; and he knew that he himself was a fit companion for intelligent, thoughtful men, however placed,—for, though obliged to be a hard worker since he came a boy of fifteen from his father's farm, he had found time to think and read and study, and he was conscious that he had read and studied and thought to some purpose, and that his thought was worth something; yet because of this way that the world had of separating people without regard to their real natures or their real tastes, but solely in regard to the accidents of poverty or family influence, he was debarred from acquaintanceship on true, equal terms with many who would naturally have been his companions and friends, and whose companionship would have been of service to him, as his would have been of service to them, from the different knowledge that had come to each, from their different experiences. And here was Hope—he looked down at her as his thoughts came to this point—here was Hope, his cherished little daughter, so fine, so sweet. Was that girl of the world's so-called higher class, whose blunt speech had hurt so deeply,—was *she* a fit companion for his little daughter?

He bent down and put his lips to the sleek brown head, as he asked this question. Then he saw that the child was asleep; but his movement roused her, and, stirring uneasily, she murmured in her dreams, "Ten cents a bunch!" then, half awakening, cried, "Farver, farver, I don't ever want to see that girl again."

"No, no, you sha'n't. It's all over, dear. We're not going to have any more of that 'Ten cents a bunch!'—never any more of it," he repeated consolingly, but with an emphasis of indignation and self-reproach.

But he was mistaken. Neither he nor Hope had heard the last of that "Ten cents a bunch!"

CHAPTER VII.

To be a pupil in Miss Marr's school was a distinction in itself. "Why don't you give and write your name 'Mademoiselle Marr,' as you have a right to do?" asked one of Miss Marr's acquaintances, when the school was first started.

Miss Marr laughed; then she answered soberly, "When my father came to America, he made himself a legal citizen of the country and he fought in its battles. He never called himself, and he was never called by any one, 'Monsieur.'"

"Because he bore the title of General."

"Not at first,—not until he had earned it here. But I—I was born and brought up here, and I have been always Miss Marr here. Why should I now suddenly change to Mademoiselle?"

"Because it would be of benefit to your school. Americans are attracted by anything foreign, and Mademoiselle Marr's school would sound so much more distinguished than Miss Marr's school."

"Oh!" and Miss Marr flung up her hands impatiently; "I am a better American than these foolish people who like foreign titles so much. But they shall come to me, they shall send their children to Miss Marr's school. I am not going to begin with any little tricks,—to throw out any little bait to catch silly folk, for it is not such folk's patronage that I want. I am going to keep an honest school, and I shall start as I mean to go on."

The acquaintance sighed, and shook her head, and told all her friends how obstinate Miss Marr was, how she had been advised and how she had gone against the advice, and that the school wouldn't come to anything, would get no start as Miss Marr's school, whereas as Mademoiselle Marr's it would at once impress everybody.

But Miss Marr went on in her own way, and at the end of five years there was no school in all New York that had the kind of high reputation that hers had. It was, in a certain sense, the fashion, and yet it was not fashionable.

"It's that French way of hers, after all," said the acquaintance whose advice had not been taken; "it's that French way that she inherited from the General. Nobody had finer manners than General Marr, and he had the qualities of a leader, too, in some ways,—though he never could keep any money; and these qualities also his daughter inherits."

Miss Marr laughed at this explanation when she was told of it,—laughed, and declared that the only secret of her success lay in the fact that she liked her work, and put her whole heart into it. And I'm inclined to think she was right. If she got a start at first because she was General Marr's daughter, she held it and made much of it because she had character and purpose. She put her heart into her work, and that meant that she put the magic of her lively sympathy and interest into it; and if she had not possessed this character and purpose, she couldn't have done what she did, even if she had been the daughter of an even more distinguished man than General Marr. She had said in the beginning: "I am not going to model my school after any fashionable pattern, for I don't care to have what is called a fashionable school, and I don't solicit fashionable

patronage. There are plenty of quiet, cultivated people in New York and elsewhere who, I am sure, want just such a school as I mean to have,—a sensible, honest school, that shall give a sensible, honest, all-round education." And she was right, as events proved. The quiet, cultivated people came forth at once to her support; and then the queerest thing happened,—the fashionable folk began to come forward too, and in such numbers that she couldn't accommodate half of them, and they, instead of accepting the situation, and going elsewhere at this crisis, patiently bided their time, waiting until a vacancy occurred. It will readily be understood that when things had come to this pass, it was considered a most decided distinction to be a pupil at Miss Marr's school.

It was just at the climax of this popularity, just before the beginning of a new year, that a certain young lady said to her younger sister,—

"Now, Dorothy"—

"Doro*thea*! Doro*thea*! I'm going to have my whole name, every syllable of it, to start off in New York with."

"Well, Dorothea, then; you must remember one thing about Miss Marr,—she won't put up with any of your flippant smartness."

"She needn't."

"But, Dorothea, you won't be punished, and you won't be allowed to argue, as you did at Miss Maynard's. It will be like this,—Miss Marr will let you go on and reveal yourself and all your faults without a word of comment, as she would if you were a guest; then if she finds that you or your faults are of the kind that she doesn't care to have in her school, she'll send you home. She says, you know, that her school is neither an infant school, nor a reform school,—that by the time girls are fifteen, they are young ladies enough to have some idea of good breeding, and if they haven't, they are not the sort of girls that she wants in her school. Now remember that, Dorothea."

"I never heard of a school-teacher putting on such airs as this Miss Marr does, in my life. It's always what *she* wants, what *she* expects, what *she* is going to do. I know I shall hate her!"

"Well, if this is the spirit that you propose to start with, it is very easy to foresee the result."

"I don't care."

"Now, Dorothea, you *do* care. Just think—your name has been on the list for a whole year for this vacancy; and it was your own idea, you know. Nothing would satisfy you but to go to Miss Marr's."

"Oh, I know, I know; don't preach, you dear Molly Polly! I'm not going to fly at Miss Marr and call her an old cat, if I think she's one."

"No, I should say not, but you mustn't fly at a good many things,—at certain rules and regulations, for instance,—and you mustn't take any saucy little liberties, such as you have been in the habit of taking at Miss Maynard's."

"Oh, not a liberty!" smiling and nodding at her elder sister. "I shall pull my face down like this"—drawing down her lips and lowering her eyes—"when I meet the great Miss Marr, and I shall say, in a little bit of a frightened voice like this, 'Oh, Miss Marr, Miss Marr, *please* don't shut me up in a dark closet and put me on bread and water, whatever I do.'"

"What a goose you are, Dorothy!" but the elder sister laughed.

"Doro*thea*! Doro*thea*! remember now it's to be Doro*thea*, and you must write Doro*thea* on the envelopes of your letters to me," was the swift protest.

Three days after this conversation, Dolly, or Dorothea Dering, sat waiting with her mother in a handsome but rather old-fashioned-looking parlor in a rather old-fashioned house in New York, for the appearance of its hostess, Miss Marr. Dolly had been fidgeting about, examining the ornaments on the tables and the pictures on the walls, with a mingled expression of curiosity and irritability on her face, when she caught the sound of a firm even footfall on the polished oak floor of the hall. The girl made a little face at this firm, even sound, and said to herself, "It's just like her,—old Madam Prim!"

In another moment the footsteps came to the threshold of the parlor, and Dolly looked across the room to see—Why, there was some mistake! This was one of the pupils, and no Madam Prim; and what a stylish girl, what a stunning plain gown! thought Dolly. The minute after, "the stylish girl in the stunning plain gown" was saying, "How do you do, Mrs. Dering?" and Mrs. Dering was saying, "How do you do, Miss Marr?"

Dolly almost gasped with astonishment. "*This*, Miss Marr! Why, she didn't look any older than Mary."

The fact was, that Miss Marr was seven years older than Mary Dering, who was only twenty-three; but Angelique Marr was one of those persons who never look their age. Though not childish or immature, she had a fresh girl's aspect. In looking at her, Dolly forgot all her little plans for saying or doing this or that. Miss Marr looking at *her* said to herself: "Poor child! how shy and awkward and overgrown she is!" and forthwith concluded that it would be better not to

notice her much for a time, and therefore gave all her attention to the mother, bestowing a swift fleeting smile now and then upon the girl,—a *young* smile, like that of a comrade in passing. Dolly was out of all her reckoning; her program of word and action which she had so carefully arranged being completely destroyed by this surprise of personality,—this substitution of the "stylish girl in a stunning plain gown" for an old Madam Prim. So absorbed was she in these thoughts, she heard but vaguely what her mother was saying, and was quite startled when the moment of parting from her came, forgetting all the fine little airs and good-bye messages she had arranged. She was so dazed, indeed, that she seemed stupid, and impressed Miss Marr more than ever as shy and awkward and overgrown; and it was out of pity for this shyness that Angelique Marr, as the door closed upon Mrs. Dering, turned to Mrs. Dering's daughter with her sweetest and friendliest of young smiles, and said to her,—

"Would you like to come up to my little parlor and have a cup of chocolate with me before I show you your room?"

As Dolly accepted the invitation, she had an odd subdued sort of feeling, as if she had been invited to lunch with one of Mary's fine young lady friends; and this feeling, instead of wearing off, increased, as she found herself in the little parlor drinking the most delicious foamy chocolate from a delicate Sèvres cup, while her entertainer helped her to biscuit or extra lumps of sugar, telling, as she did so, a droll little story about her first lesson in chocolate brewing from an old French soldier,—a friend of her father.

Dolly listened and laughed, and felt more and more that she was being treated in a very grown-up way by a very grown-up young lady, and that she must be equal to the occasion; so she sat up in her chair with a great deal of dignity, and endeavored to say the proper things in the proper places, with a delightful sense that she was doing the thing as well as Mary. It was at this moment that some one knocked at the door; and at Miss Marr's "Come in," there appeared a tall youth, who cried out as he entered,—

"Well, Aunt Angel!"

"What! Victor?"

Then followed embraces and inquiries; and Dolly began to feel out of place, and the stranger that she was, when Miss Marr turned, smiled, begged her pardon, and introduced her to her nephew, —Victor Graham, who was just back from his vacation at Moosehead Lake. With the grace and tact that people called "that French way" of hers, Miss Marr managed to include Dolly in the conversation, and, finding that she had spent several summers at Kineo, the Moosehead Lake region, drew her out by clever questions to tell what she knew about it. And Dolly knew a great deal about it; she had paddled a canoe on the lake, she had caught fish and helped cook them on the shore, and she had camped out in the Kineo woods.

Victor Graham, tall as he was, was only sixteen,—a real boy who loved out-of-door sports,—and, delighted to find somebody who was so familiar with the charmed region he had just reluctantly left, was soon in the full swing of reminiscences and questions. Had she been to this place, did she know that point, etc., etc.? In short, he felt as if he had met a comrade, and he treated her as such,—as a boy like himself; and Dolly for the moment responded in the same spirit, and forgot her stiff dignity and young lady manners, patterned after her sister Mary's.

Miss Marr sat back in her chair, looking and listening and smiling. Dolly had not the least idea that she was reading, as one would read in a book, a little page of Dorothea Dering. But she was. Dolly, in talking to Victor, forgot, as I have said, her dignity and young-lady manners, and was the Dolly Dering who romped and raced and paddled and cooked at Moosehead Lake.

"Not so very awkward, and not shy at all, but a big overgrown girl, who may one day be an attractive woman, when she is toned down and less crude and hoydenish."

This was part of Miss Marr's reading as she looked and listened; and as Dolly, getting more excited with her subject, went on more glibly, her silent smiling listener thought,—

"A good deal of a spoiled child evidently, who has been used to having her own way and been laughed at for her smart sayings until she is quite capable, I fear, of being rude and overbearing, if not unfeeling on occasions. But I think there is good material underneath. We'll see, we'll see."

What would Dolly have said if she could have heard this criticism of Dorothea Dering? What would Mrs. Dering have said if she could have heard her daughter called capable of being rude and overbearing? What would Mary have said to the whole summing up,—Mary, who was not of the kind ever to have been spoiled by indulgence, who was finer and had better instincts than Dolly? Mary would have said, "Oh, Dolly, Dolly, what have I always told you?"

Just as Miss Marr came to the conclusion of these reflections, she looked up at the clock on the mantel, and gave a quick start. Victor, following the direction of her eyes, stopped the story of camp-life that he was telling, and jumped to his feet, saying,—

"Do excuse me, Aunt Angel; I'd no idea it was so late."

Dolly's face fell like a disappointed child, and she burst out impatiently,—

"Oh, finish the story, finish the story!"

Victor Graham gave her a glance of surprise; then, flushing a little, said gently,—

"This is Aunt Angel's busy hour; I'll finish the story some other time."

The blood mounted to Dolly's forehead. That glance of surprise pricked her sharply. It angered her too. Who was this boy to set his priggish manners above hers? And in hot rebellion, she cried out flippantly,—

"No, no, tell it now, tell it now! Ten minutes longer can't make much difference."

She had been accustomed to persist in this fashion at home; and beyond a "Dolly, how impolite!" or "Be quiet, Dolly!" spoken at the moment by father or mother or Mary, not much further notice was taken of her offence. But neither Miss Marr nor Victor made the slightest suggestion of a reproving comment now. They made no comment whatever. The boy simply stared at her a second, then lowered his eyes, showing clearly that he was embarrassed by the girl's rudeness. Miss Marr looked at her with an expression of wondering astonishment that was in itself a shock and a revelation to Dolly. There was not a particle of personal resentment in this expression; it was the wondering astonishment of a person who is regarding for the first time some strange new species of development. Dolly had hitherto gloried in her impertinence, as something witty and audacious. Now all at once she was made to see that to another person, and that person this "stylish girl in a stunning plain gown," this audacious impertinence looked vulgar. The shock of this revelation was so sudden to Miss Dolly that all self-possession deserted her, and again Miss Marr saw her apparently shy and awkward and speechless. The deep red flush that overspread her face at the same time added to the appearance of shyness, and pleaded for her more than words would have done.

"She'd be a jolly girl, if she didn't break up into such Hottentot ways. I wonder where she came from?" was Victor's inward reflection. His concluding reflection, as he went out of the house, was, "Wonder what Aunt Angel will do with her."

Aunt Angel wondered, too, as she accompanied Dolly up to the room that had been arranged for her; and as she wondered, she could not help thinking, "How glad I am the girl is going to have a room to herself, and not with any one of the other girls!"

The room was small, but it was charmingly furnished,—a little pink and white chamber, with all sorts of pretty contrivances for comfort and convenience. As Dolly looked about her, when Miss Marr closed the door upon her, she thought of what her mother had said, after inspecting the room the day before: "It isn't in the least like a boarding-school,—it is like a visitor's room, Dolly, as you will see."

And Dolly did see, but she was in no mood to enjoy the pretty details just then, for the sense of humiliation was weighing heavily upon her. In vain she tried to blow it away with the breath of anger,—to call Miss Marr "old Madam Prim," and Victor "that prig of a boy." Nothing of this kind availed to relieve her. Never in her life had she been so impressed by anybody as by Miss Marr, and she was also sure that she had also begun to impress Miss Marr, in her turn. And now and now!—and down on the pink and white bed Dolly flung herself in a paroxysm of mingled regret, rage, mortification, and disappointment, and, like the big, overgrown, undisciplined child that she was, sobbed herself to sleep.

The short October afternoon had come nearly to an end when she woke; and she looked about her in dismay. It must be late; and, springing up, she glanced at her watch. It was half-past four. At this moment she heard, in the hall outside, a murmur of girls' voices. One called, "Miss Marr;" and another said, "The Boston train was delayed, or I should have been here earlier."

Then followed a soft tinkle of laughter, a little tap of heels, and an opening and shutting of doors. Dolly, listening, knew what this meant,—knew that these girls were the late arrivals, the returning pupils.

"And they all know each other," she commented rather lonesomely and enviously, "and I shall dress myself and get down before them. I'm not going to enter a room full of strange girls, if I know it!"

Dolly's taste was generally excellent. She knew what to wear and when to wear it; but some mistaken idea of outshining those strange girls at the start took possession of her, and instead of putting on a gown suited to the occasion, she donned a fine affair,—a combination of old-rose cashmere and velvet, with rose ribbons at her throat. As she left the room in this finery, she saw a door farther down the hall open, and a tall slender girl, dressed with the severest simplicity, come forth.

One of those strange girls! And Dolly, as they met, stared at her, with her head in the air. But the strange girl, with a matter of course manner, gave a little courteous inclination of greeting as she passed, whereat Dolly grew rather red. "I wonder if that is the girl who talked about 'my train,'" thought Dolly. "I'll bet it is. She has a look like that girl I saw one day last spring with the Edlicotts at Papanti's dancing-school. I wonder what her name is."

As the girl ran lightly down the stairs, one of the maids came up. Dolly stopped her and asked, "Is that one of the pupils?"

"Yes, miss."

"What is her name?"

"Miss Hope Benham."

CHAPTER VIII.

Miss Hope Benham! It was five years since Dolly's encounter with Hope in the Brookside station, and four years since she had heard her or the name of Benham referred to. This later reference was made by Mr. Dering one morning at the breakfast-table.

"Well, Dolly," he had suddenly said, glancing up from his newspaper, "that little flower-girl who got the better of you last season is in luck."

Dolly looked up with a puzzled expression.

"What! you've forgotten the little girl at the Brookside station who told you how ignorant and bad-mannered you were?"

"Oh, Ten-cents-a-bunch!" shouted Dolly.

"Yes, little Ten-cents-a-bunch. Well, her father, the engineer, is on the high road to fortune by a certain successful invention of his. Now, what do you say to that?"

"Ten-cents-a-bunch," repeated Dolly, laughing.

"Oh, that Mr. Benham, the engineer you told us of last season?" asked Mary, with interest.

"Yes, that's the man. He has procured a patent on a valuable invention of his, and is going to be a rich man by means of it. He's a much cleverer fellow than I thought. I heard him speak the other night before the Scientific Mechanics' Association, and it was a very intelligent speech, full of scientific knowledge, and showing a great deal of ability."

"And last year, father, you laughed at me for asking you if he had this ability."

Mr. Dering shook his head with a comic smile.

"Oh, well, Mary, we are all liable to mistakes. I've seen so much of this inventive ambition that came to nothing, I've grown to be cautious in my judgments."

"Of course he isn't running an engine now?"

"Bless you, no. He's off to Europe this month. He's made some contract with a firm in France for the use of his invention. They had heard of it through a former fellow-workman of Benham's,—another clever fellow, yet not a genius like Benham, though he has gained for himself quite an important position as an inspector of locomotives abroad; but there is an account of the whole thing in the morning's paper."

Dolly listened to this talk with a very divided attention. She had a big picnic on her mind, and all other matters were of very little importance beside that. It was thus that Ten-cents-a-bunch and the name of Benham were quite overborne for the time by this interest. After four years more of picnics and other pleasurings, Dolly heard the name again without the slightest recognition, and in the tall young girl of fifteen, with her womanly face and her hair wound into a knot at the back of her head, she received no suggestion of little Ten-cents-a-bunch.

And how was it with Hope? Hope remembered. The last four years of her life had been passed abroad, most of them in France, where she had been at school in Paris, while her father and mother were established near by,—her father taking advantage of the great opportunities Paris offered him for scientific study. It was a happy time for all of them, and in this happy time Hope forgot some earlier deprivations and discomforts, or at least forgot the smart of them; but she never forgot that encounter at the Brookside station, which was to her her first close experience of the world's class distinctions. Neither had she ever forgotten the face of "that girl;" and when, coming out of her room at Miss Marr's, she looked down the hall and saw those big black eyes and that confident expression, she at once, in spite of the change in Dolly's height and breadth, recognized her.

But the five years had matured and educated Hope so much that the thrill which accompanied this recognition was not that shrinking of fear and dislike which had once overcome her. It was now the ordinary pang of repulsion that one feels in meeting something or somebody connected with what was once painful; and there was an expression of this feeling in her face, as she entered the library downstairs. Two or three girls were already assembled there; and as Hope responded warmly to their affectionate greetings, one of them exclaimed,—

"There! now you look like yourself. When you came in, you had a stand-off sort of air, and a little hard pucker between your eyes, as if you were expecting to confront an army of enemies."

Hope laughed; and presently the whole group were off on a regular girl chat, telling the story of their long summer vacation in the most animated manner. They were in the thick of this, when some one pushed the portière aside, with the uncertain touch of a strange hand, and a strange voice asked constrainedly,—

"Is this a private sitting-room?"

The girls all turned to look at the speaker, and there was a half moment of silence. Then Kate Van der Berg answered politely,—

"Oh, no; it is the library, where we all come when we like."

"Oh, I didn't know where to go;" and Dolly came forward, trying to look indifferent and at her ease, and succeeding only in looking rather huffy and uncomfortable. The first glance she had received was not reassuring. The four girls whose chat she had interrupted were all dressed in the simplest manner, with no frills and furbelows anywhere; and that first glance of theirs at the new-comer's fine gown was a glance of surprise that there was no mistaking. The fact of it was, every girl of them, as she caught sight of Dolly, supposed for the moment that she was a guest of Miss Marr's; and when enlightened to the contrary by Dolly's own words, every girl of them involuntarily gave another glance of surprise.

They were well trained, however, and presently endeavored to make the new pupil feel at home; but it was rather up-hill work naturally. Luckily at this crisis, Miss Marr appeared, to adjust matters.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, glancing brightly at Dolly, "you found your way down all alone. I went to your room a little while ago; and as you were asleep, I didn't disturb you."

Then, with the same bright look and manner, she introduced the girls to Dolly, and stood talking with them all for a few minutes. When she turned to leave them, a general protest arose, Kate Van der Berg crying out,—

"Oh, no, no! don't go yet, Miss Marr! Just think, we haven't had a sight of you for three months, and we are positively hungry for you, aren't we, Hope?" appealing to Hope Benham, who was standing near her.

Hope made no reply in words, but she gave a quick upward look and smile which spoke more eloquently than any words. Dolly, observant of everything, saw not only this look and smile, but the answering look and smile in Miss Marr's eloquent face; and instantly a little sharp feeling of something akin to both jealousy and envy disturbed her. Not to lead off and take a first place was a new experience to Dolly, and she did not enjoy it. At home in Brookside or Boston she had always easily led off in this way, partly on account of her belonging to a family whose acquaintance was large, and partly on account of her dominant desire. But here she found herself for the first time amongst strangers, who knew nothing about her, and to whom she was of no importance. An uneasy sense of all this had begun to assail her before she left Miss Marr's little parlor. It deepened as she entered the library and met the three pairs of eyes turned upon her and her fine gown. It deepened still more as she saw that swift exchange of tender glances between Miss Marr and Hope; and the little imp of jealousy straightway sprang up with its unreasonable suggestions that she was not treated with sufficient consideration, that she was, in fact, neglected, and left out in the cold, when she should, as the new-comer, have received assiduous attention. That she, the daughter of the Hon. James Dering, should be thus coolly set aside! It was at this climax of her resentful feeling that Miss Marr happened to look across at her. She caught at once something of the true state of things,—not everything, but enough to show her that the girl felt awkward and uncomfortable.

"Poor thing!" she thought; "she doesn't get on well at all. I must ask Hope to help me with her. She, if anybody, will be able to make her feel easier and more at home."

There was no opportunity to speak with Hope then, for down the hall came tap, tapping, another little company of heels, and presently the portière was flung aside, and a troop of girls entered, and rushing up to Miss Marr, claimed her attention, with their gay and affectionate greetings. No, no time then to speak to any one privately and specially, only time to mention Dolly's name, —"Miss Dorothea Dering, girls,"—only time for this before the clock rung out the hour of six; and at the last stroke Miss Marr turned her head from the girls, who were flocking about her, and looked back at Hope Benham.

"Hope, will you take Dorothea—Miss Dering—in to dinner?"

Miss Marr did not see the change in Hope's face,—the sudden stiffening, as it were, of every feature; but Kate Van der Berg saw it. It was the same kind of stiffness that she had noticed when Hope came into the library,—the rigid stiffness that she had called a "stand-off sort of air," and there was that little hard pucker again between the eyes.

"Hope will take her in to dinner and be as polite to her as a Chinese mandarin, but she won't 'take' to her in any other way," was Miss Kate's shrewd reflection.

The position was not an agreeable one to Hope, but she bethought herself that it might have been much more disagreeable if Dorothea had remembered. That she did not, was perfectly apparent. But if she had remembered! Hope shuddered to think of what might have happened if this had been the case. How, with that incapacity for understanding sensitive natures unlike her own, this girl would in some abrupt way have referred to that past painful encounter,—painful, not because of the different conditions of things at that time, but painful because of that first cruel knowledge of the world that had come through it.

Kate Van der Berg was not far wrong when she prophesied that Hope would be as polite as a Chinese mandarin to the new-comer. Hope was very polite. You could not have found fault with a single word or action. Even Dolly saw nothing to find fault with; but all this politeness did not

warm and cheer her, did not make her feel any easier or more at home. In sitting there at the dinner-table in the bright light she felt more uncomfortable than ever, for by this searching light she saw now very clearly the extreme plainness of each girl's attire; and as she caught every now and then the quick observing glance of one and another, she saw that she had made a great mistake,—that, instead of producing a fine impression by her fine dress, she had produced an unfavorable one, and was being silently criticised as rather loud and—oh, horror!—vulgar.

Miss Marr, looking across the table, did not fail to see that Hope was not so successful as usual in charming away the awkwardness and discomfort of a stranger. Presently she caught two or three little set speeches of Hope's,—polite little speeches, but perfectly mechanical,—and said to herself as Kate Van der Berg had said, "Hope doesn't take to her."

It was generally the custom for the girls to meet in the library before and after dinner for a few minutes' social chat; but on this night most of the girls, having just arrived, excused themselves, and went directly upstairs to unpack their trunks and settle their various belongings. Hope was very glad to make her excuses with the others, and escape to her room, that for a few days she was to occupy alone. She was busily engaged in putting the last things in their places, when there came a light tap on the door, and to her "Come in," Miss Marr entered, with a little apology for the lateness of her call, and an admiring exclamation for Hope's quick dexterity in arranging her belongings. After this she sat a moment in silence, with rather a perplexed look on her face; then suddenly she broke the silence.

"Hope," she said, "I am afraid I gave you an unpleasant task to perform to-night."

Hope reddened.

"You didn't find it easy, I perceived, to talk with the new pupil."

"N—o, I didn't," faltered Hope.

"She was hard to get on with, wasn't she?"

"I—I don't know. I—talked to her—I paid her what attention I could."

"But she was disagreeable to you?"

"She didn't intend to be—I—I didn't fancy her, Miss Marr."

Miss Marr looked the surprise she felt. She had never known Hope to take such a sudden dislike.

"I didn't fancy her, and I suppose I was stiff with her; but I tried—I tried to be polite to her."

"Of course you did. I'm not finding fault with you, dear. You did what you could to help me, and it was kind of you. I'm sorry you feel as you do, but don't trouble any more about it; it will wear off, I dare say; and now make haste and go to bed,—you look tired."

"Miss Marr," and Hope put a detaining hand on Miss Marr's arm. "What is it—what else is it you were thinking of—of asking me to do?"

"Never mind, dear."

"Tell me, please, Miss Marr."

"I was going to ask you to let Miss Dering occupy the other bed in your room to-night. Some one left the water running before dinner in the room over hers, and the bed and carpet are drenched; but I will make some other arrangement for her now,—you sha'n't be troubled with her."

"But the other rooms are full."

"Yes, but I will have a cot put up in the little parlor. Good-night;" and with a soft touch of her hand on Hope's cheek, Miss Marr left the room. She was half-way down the hall when Hope ran after her.

"Miss Marr, Miss Marr, don't—don't put up the bed in the little parlor. It is nine o'clock. Let her come to my room."

"My dear, go back; don't think any more about the matter."

"No, no, let her come to my room, *please*, Miss Marr."

Miss Marr looked at the pleading face uplifted to hers, and understood. At least she understood enough to see that Hope was already accusing herself of being disobliging and selfish, and that she would be far more uncomfortable now if left alone than she would be in sharing her room with the obnoxious new comer; and so without more hesitation she yielded the point, with a "Very well, dear; it shall be as you say," and went on down the hall to Dorothea.

CHAPTER IX.

"I am very sorry to have intruded upon you," said Dolly, as Hope met her at the door of her room.

Dolly meant to be very dignified and rather haughty, but she behaved instead like what she was,—a cross, tired, homesick girl. Hope, seeing the red, swollen eyelids, forgave the crossness, and saying something pleasant about its being no intrusion, pointed out the little bed behind the screen that Dolly was to occupy, and went on with the work of regulating her bureau drawers, that Miss Marr had interrupted, begging to be excused as she did so. If Dolly had done the proper thing, the thing that was expected of her, she would have retired behind the screen and gone to bed then and there. But she had no idea of going to bed, so long as there was a light burning, and anybody was stirring; so she dropped down into an easy-chair that stood near the door, and took up a book that was lying on the table. It was a copy of "Le Luthier de Crémone,"—a charming little play by Francois Coppée. Miss Dolly turned the leaves over a moment, then put the volume down, and cast an interested, curious look at Hope, who at that moment was busy arranging her boxes. Dolly had studied French sufficiently to enable her to read some very simple stories, but "Le Luthier de Crémone" was quite beyond her power, and her glance at Hope was compounded of envy and admiration. Hope, without apparently observing her, was yet nervously conscious of every movement, and thought to herself,—

"Oh, dear! why *doesn't* she go to bed?"

Putting down the book, Dolly's eyes next turned to a certain oblong case that was lying upon a chair near her.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "do you play the violin?"

"Yes, a little," answered Hope.

"So do I. May I look at your violin?"

Hope hesitated a second, then lifted the instrument from its case. It was not the good little fiddle that she had earned for herself five years ago. That was safely packed away. This was a much more costly fiddle, and had been purchased in Paris for her by a brother of Mr. Kolb, who was an extensive dealer in violins Dolly had taken lessons of an excellent teacher, who was also an excellent judge of a violin, and had chosen hers for her. She had at various times heard him talk about some of the famous old violin-makers, and recognized their names when she heard them spoken. As she took Hope's violin from her hands, she said,—

"Oh, yours is about the size of mine. Mine is English, but it is modelled on the famous old Stradivari pattern of Cremona, my teacher said. You know Stradivari was one of the most famous of the Cremona makers," looking up at Hope with an air of wisdom.

"She took Hope's violin from her hands"

Hope nodded.

"But this is a pretty little violin,—sort of quaint-looking," went on Dolly, amiably. She was fast

recovering her spirits, forgetting her grievances and homesickness in her present interest, with her accustomed alacrity.

"Yes, I think it is pretty," Hope answered quietly.

"Very pretty; I really think it is prettier than mine, and what a nice red color it has! Who made it, do you know?"

"An Italian named Montagnana."

"Oh! does he have a shop in London? Did your teacher get it for you there?"

"No, I don't think he was ever in London, even when he was living. But he died a great while ago. He lived in Cremona first, then in Venice."

"In Cremona! How long ago?"

"Well, he was a pupil of Stradivari, and he lived in Cremona in the year 1740, and after he had studied for a time with Stradivari, he went to Venice, where the manufacture of violins was very flourishing."

"What! this is a real Cremona violin?" cried Dolly. "Why—why, Mr. Andrews, my teacher, said that they were very rare, and when you did succeed in getting hold of one that it took a lot of money to buy it."

Hope made no response to this speech; and Dolly, looking up at her, caught the expression of her face, and hastened to say,—

"I didn't mean that I didn't believe it was a Cremona violin; but I was so astonished, you know, because I'd heard Mr. Andrews go on so about Cremona violins."

Hope was old enough now to see that Dolly was honest in her excuse,—that she had really meant no offence,—and, relenting a little, replied,—

"Yes, I suppose it *is* hard to find a genuine old Cremona; but my first teacher was an old German musician, and his brother, who is a dealer in violins in Paris, procured this for me."

"But didn't it cost a lot of money?"

"It was expensive."

Dolly would have given a great deal to know just how expensive was that beautiful little instrument, with its nice red color; but even she couldn't bring herself to ask the question outright of that tall, reserved girl, who was so perfectly polite and yet so far off from her. Who was this girl, anyway, she thought,—this girl, no older than herself, whose father could and would buy a Cremona violin for her? Her own father—the Hon. James Dering—was a rich man, and a generous one, but he would have laughed at the proposition of buying a Cremona violin for his daughter. Why, Cremona violins were for professionals—when they could get them—and enthusiastic collectors. But perhaps—perhaps this girl was going to be a professional. With this new idea in her mind, Dolly gave another glance at Hope. A professional? No, that could not be. A girl who was preparing to be a professional wouldn't be here at Miss Marr's school. But a Cremona violin! Dolly wouldn't have been at all astonished if a girl had shown her a fine watch-case set about with diamonds. Mary had a very valuable watch of that kind, and she herself had the promise of one like it when she was as old as Mary. It didn't occur to her that a Cremona violin was a piece of property that was yearly advancing in value; that it was, in fact, a better investment, as the phrase is, than diamonds even. She had heard her father say often that diamonds would always bring their market value, and that they were therefore very safe property to hold, though not bringing in any interest. That a violin of any kind could have this property value did not enter her head, and Hope's possession grew more and more puzzling to her. Hope all the time had a keen sense of her companion's wonder and curiosity, and was half amused, half irritated by it. But she succeeded very well in concealing the state of her feelings, and was as polite as ever, even when Dolly nearly dropped the precious Cremona, only giving utterance to a little gasping "Oh!" Dolly herself was rather frightened at the possible accident, and was glad to hand the instrument back to its owner. As she did so, she asked suddenly,—

"Have you lived abroad? Did you take lessons abroad?"

"Yes, I have lived abroad, and I took lessons nearly all the time I was away."

"Where were you,—in Germany?"

"No, in Paris part of the time and part of the time in London."

"How jolly!"

"Yes, it was rather jolly sometimes, though both my French and English teachers were very exacting, and made me work hard."

"Oh! I don't mean the work,—the violin lessons; I mean the living in London and Paris," answered Dolly, frankly.

Hope couldn't help laughing at this frankness.

Dolly laughed a little too, but she was quite in earnest, nevertheless, and began another string of questions,—what Hope saw, where she went, what she bought, etc.

Hope's answers did not open the field of entertainment that Dolly expected, for galleries and museums and music and quiet pleasures of that kind were not what Dolly was thinking of in connection with Paris and London.

"But didn't you visit people, and go to theatres and things, and have fun?" she asked at length.

Hope smiled a queer, amused smile that Dolly didn't understand, as she answered: "I didn't go abroad to have fun of that sort, but I had a beautiful time."

"I suppose you had a beautiful time slaving away at that violin."

"I did, indeed," answered Hope, laughing outright.

"What a lot you must know about a violin!"

"I? Oh, no, no!"

Hope at that instant was putting a pile of music upon a little music-rack. Dolly caught sight of the upper sheet.

"What! you play those things of Bach? Well, you *must* know a lot!"

"No, I *love* a lot, and I've studied hard, that's all."

"I should say so; and here," turning over the pages, "are Mendelssohn and Beethoven and Chopin. Why, I should think you were studying to play in public. Oh! but here is something more frivolous, more in my style," pouncing upon a waltz. "Oh, I just dote on waltzes; try this now, do."

"Oh, no, not now; it is too late. We must have our lights out by ten, and it is fifteen minutes to ten this moment."

"Oh, bother!" and Dolly wrinkled up her forehead. "I hate to go to bed."

Hope's only reply to this remark was, "Then, if you'll excuse me and turn out the gas when you are ready, I'll say good-night, for I'm very tired;" and hastily retreating behind her screen, she left Dolly to her own devices.

Tired as she was, however, it was a long time before Hope could sleep. Dolly, too, lay awake for a while, thinking over the many incidents of the day. But her thoughts were not perplexed thoughts like Hope's. She had no hurt remembrance of the past to perplex her. She had not by any means entirely forgotten the little flower-girl, though she had forgotten her name; but the memory of her was a latent one, and was not for an instant stirred by her present companion's personality. Hope was quite a new acquaintance to her. It never occurred to Dolly that she had ever seen her before, unless she was really that girl whom she had seen with the Edlicotts last spring. It was one of Dolly's characteristics not to brood long over anything disagreeable; and lying there in the still darkness, and reflecting upon the incidents of the day, the little surprises and mortifications began to give way to a sense of interest and anticipation, the principal point of interest at the moment being Hope and her violin. Oddly enough, from the time that Dolly had seen Hope coming down the hall, and had received that courteous little greeting from her, she had been attracted towards her. The rather stiff politeness that had followed, if disappointing, had not been repelling, and the subsequent bedroom chat, with its revelation of musical accomplishments and foreign experiences, to say nothing of that wonderful Cremona violin, had made a fresh impression upon Dolly of such power that even Miss Marr's attractiveness became quite secondary in her mind.

Hope could not but see something of this. She was not flattered by it, however, for as she thought over it, she said to herself,—

"It is not the real Hope Benham who attracts her, but a young lady who has lived abroad, and who is rich enough to own a Cremona violin, and to play Bach and Beethoven studies upon it. If she knew that I was the girl who sold her the flowers at the Brookside station, things would be quite different."

CHAPTER X.

It was the next morning just after breakfast that Miss Marr, coming out of her little parlor, met Hope in the hall, and said to her,—

"I'm afraid you did not sleep well, my dear; you look heavy-eyed."

"No, I didn't sleep very well," answered Hope, coloring slightly.

"Did Miss Dering keep you awake?"

"Y—es, I suppose so—but—it wasn't so bad as I expected."

Miss Marr laughed. "Oh! it was not so bad as you expected. She wears better on further

acquaintance. I'm glad to hear that, but I am afraid she's a great chatterer. However, her room will be in order to-night, so you won't be together again."

Hope drew a deep breath of satisfaction, and her face showed unmistakable signs of relief. Miss Marr took note of these signs, and thought,—

"It is not like Hope to take prejudices against people. I wonder what it is that she finds so unbearable in this girl. It might help me a good deal if I knew."

A few guarded questions at once revealed Miss Marr's state of mind to Hope, and she immediately hastened to say,—

"I'm afraid I've given you a wrong impression; it is only a personal feeling with me, Miss Marr. I—I met this girl, Dorothea,—they called her 'Dolly' then,—five years ago, when I was only ten years old. She has forgotten me, but I never forgot her, for she spoke so rudely, so unkindly to me at the time, that I can't get over it. That's all. I dare say the other girls will like her, and I—I've nothing else against her."

Miss Marr touched Hope's cheek with her finger,—a caressing way she had at times, and said gently,—

"Thank you, Hope, for being so honest; I can always trust you."

Hope had been with Miss Marr for the past year, and had won her confidence and love by the fine sweet strain of her character.

"She's such an upright, sympathetic little soul, I can trust her with anything," the Frenchwoman had said to her friends.

It was one of these friends,—the wife of a scientific man,—that the Benhams had become acquainted with in Paris, who had suggested Hope as a pupil to Miss Marr, and told her something of John Benham's career.

"Such an interesting man," the friend had said, in summing up her account of him,—"what we call a self-made man, because he has had to cultivate his tastes by books and private study unhelped by the schools; but God-made after the finest pattern if ever a man was, and with a nice sensible wife and this dearest little daughter, whom they have so wisely determined to send home to their own country to complete her education."

Angelique Marr recalled these words as she looked at Hope. It was just at that moment that a door farther down the corridor was energetically flung open, and Miss Dorothea Dering appeared with her arms full of books. Hope started, and was turning away in the other direction, when Dolly called out,—

"Oh! Miss—Miss—er—er—Benham, wait a minute; I want to ask you something."

Hope waited, putting a detaining hand at the same time upon Miss Marr, who made a movement to step back into her parlor.

"I wanted to ask you," said Dolly, as she hurried up, "if you would let me practise with you sometimes. You play a great deal higher kind of music than I do, but I *can* play better things, and I've got a lovely violin duet that I want awfully to practise with somebody; and if you only *would*!" with an appealing glance at Hope.

There was a slight pause, in which Miss Marr regarded Hope with a little curiosity. Hope Benham's violin-playing was known throughout the school as something out of the common, and the best of the piano pupils felt that they were hardly up to playing her accompaniments; and here was this new-comer proposing a violin duet with her! What would be Hope's answer to this proposition? There was only the slightest possible pause; then came this answer,—

"My violin practice is very rigidly confined to the studies that my teacher gives me, and he is very unwilling that I should play anything else."

"Oh, music-teachers are always that way! *I* don't mind 'em," cried Dolly, airily; "and anyway, you can try some things with me in off times, can't she, Miss Marr?"

"Oh, I never encourage pupils to disobey a teacher," answered Miss Marr, a little amused at Dolly's density in appealing thus to her.

"Of course not. I forgot; you don't seem like a teacher or anything of that sort yourself to me; you seem somehow like one of us," said Dolly. Then turning again to Hope, with a confident nod,—

"You just ask your teacher if you can't play with me at off times, won't you?"

Hope murmured something vague in the way of reply, but Dolly had no doubt that her proposition would be carried into effect in due season. In the mean time, as it had not yet been decided about her own violin lessons, she determined to practise what she could by herself, and at odd intervals after this there was heard issuing from her room a variety of shrill scrapings, at which the girls would shrug their shoulders, and shake their heads at one another. One day Kate Van der Berg accosted Hope with this question,—

"When do you begin practising that duet with Miss Dering?"

"Oh, how did you hear about that?"

"Not from you, Miss Closemouth."

"But Miss Marr, I know, didn't speak of it."

"No, Miss Dorothea Dering herself told us that when things were all settled, the classes arranged, etc., you were going to practise a violin duet with her."

"She spoke to Miss Marr and to me about it," answered Hope, evasively.

"Oh, she spoke to Miss Marr and you about it, and Miss Marr and you didn't say 'Yes,' and you thought that would be enough of an answer; and it would, ordinarily, but it won't in this case, you'll see, my dear. Miss Dorothea Dering is used to having her own way, and, Hope, I'm of the opinion she'll have it now."

Hope straightened her slim figure, and that little pucker came into her forehead that Kate Van der Berg knew so well, whereat Kate laughed, and said gayly,—

"How ungrateful you are, Hope!"

"Ungrateful! how am I ungrateful?"

"Not to embrace your opportunities and respond to such overtures. Hope, what is it that you dislike about Dorothea Dering? I saw from the first that you had taken a dislike to her."

Hope flushed uncomfortably.

"And she seems to admire you immensely. What is it? What have you seen in her? what do you know about her?"

"I don't know anything about her for anybody else, only I—It is entirely my feeling; it needn't prejudice anybody else," cried Hope, dismayed.

Kate Van der Berg was a warm-hearted, demonstrative girl, and at the trouble in Hope's voice and in her face she flung her arms around her, and said,—

"There, there, never mind about her or what I said. It's all right; or *you* are all right, whatever she may be."

Hope put her cheek down upon Kate's shoulder for a moment; then suddenly lifting her head, she burst out,—

"No, no, you mustn't think as you do, that there's anything very bad that I'm holding back. I mustn't let you think so; it would be wicked in me. It is only just about myself,—something that she said to me long ago,—five years ago. She's forgotten it; she's forgotten me. I only met her for a few minutes, two or three times."

"The disagreeable thing! I shall hate her!" Kate cried impulsively.

"No, no, don't say so. I dare say you would have liked her if I—if I could have kept what I felt to myself, and I thought I did, I thought I did. Oh, dear!" and Hope stopped abruptly, as she realized that her own excitement was making matters worse.

"Liked her! Not if she could have said anything bad enough to hurt you like this,—to have hurt you for five years."

"It doesn't hurt me as it did then, but I remember it."

"Well, that shows what a hurt it must have been."

"What she said was out of ignorance. She didn't know any better," Hope went on, determined to do the honorable thing by her childish enemy.

"I don't believe she knows much better now. Oh, you needn't try to smooth it all over to me, you little conscientious thing; it's of no use."

"But, Kate, promise me one thing,—that you won't—you won't talk to the other girls about it."

"Yes, I'll promise you that I'll be as mum as an oyster."

"And you won't—you won't be—"

"Disagreeable to her?" interrupted Kate, laughing. "Well, I'll try not to be; I'll take pattern by you, and be so politely fascinating that she'll ask me to play duets with her."

Hope could not help laughing at this, but all the time she felt disturbed and troubled. Kate Van der Berg had playfully jibed at her for her conscientiousness. Kate thought she was over-conscientious, and she might have been sometimes, for she was a sensitive creature, with high notions and ideas of truth and justice and honor, and her father had developed these ideas by his advice and counsel. One of the things that he had impressed upon her was never to take advantage of any one, especially any one that you had had a quarrel with. "Fair play, my dear, always; remember that, and so you must remember to be open and above board after you've had any differences with people, and never let yourself say or hint damaging things about them, to prejudice others," was one of his favorite pieces of counsel, put in one form and another, at

various times. Hope thought of these words even when she joined in Kate Van der Berg's laughter. She thought of them after Kate had left her, and all through the rest of the day they would start up to torment her. At last she said to herself: "This is over-conscientious, for *I didn't mean* to prejudice any one against Dolly Dering. I tried not to show how I felt, and if I didn't succeed, it isn't my fault; but I'm a great goose to fuss so. Kate will keep her promise, I know, and Miss Dorothea Dering won't be unpopular because of anything I have said."

So the matter rested, and the days went on, the school arrangements settling into order, and the school companionships falling into the usual adjustment by personal choice. When everything seemed to be running smoothly, Dolly came forward again with her proposition. It was one afternoon when she heard the sound of a violin floating down from the music-room. It was the first time she had heard it, and obeying her headlong impulse, she ran swiftly up the stairs and knocked at the door. A voice called out, "Come in;" and obeying it, she found herself not only in the presence of Hope, but of Kate Van der Berg, Myra Donaldson,—Hope's lately returned room-mate,—and Anna Fleming. Myra was seated at the piano, a sheet of music before her, waiting for Hope to signal to her. All the girls looked up and bowed as Dolly entered, but no one spoke. They were intent upon watching Hope, who, bow in hand, was carefully testing the strings that she had just tightened.

Dolly came round and stood beside Kate Van der Berg at the back of the piano, which was a parlor grand placed half-way down the room. She started to whisper, "What is it they—" but was checked by Kate's "Hush! hush!" and just then the bow was brought to bear softly upon the strings, as Hope began playing the sonata in F major by Beethoven. Once or twice as the music progressed, Kate glanced at Dolly with a new interest. What was this cool intruder—for such Kate dubbed her—thinking as she listened to these exquisitely rendered strains? Was she properly astonished and ashamed of herself for proposing to join such a performer in a violin duet? Dolly's face betrayed nothing, however. She simply stood perfectly still, leaning a little forward against the piano, her big black eyes fixed in a steady gaze, now upon Hope's violin bow, and now upon Hope herself. She stood thus until near the close, when the difficult and delightful passages approach the climax. Then her eyes wandered, her features relaxed, and when the end came, she was ready with a little outburst of vigorous applause, which she followed up with,—

"You ought to play in public at concerts. But how you *must* have worked! I'm not up to the classic, and I can't play like you, anyway. What I like, what I *love*, is dance music,—waltzes,—and I've got the loveliest duet in that time. It'll be as easy as A B C too. I'll run and get it now, and my violin, and you just try it with me, and—oh, say, have you asked your teacher what I told you to? You haven't? Well, never mind for anybody's permission. 'T won't take you long; I'll—"

"You really must excuse me, but I can't play any more now," interrupted Hope's voice, as Dolly turned to go for her violin.

"Oh, dear, I wish I'd come sooner, before you had started off on that long thing. But will you play with me to-morrow about this time? Or why not to-night after dinner?"

"But," with a queer little smile, "I haven't asked my teacher's permission yet."

"No, and I don't believe you care two pins about that," answered Dolly.

"Well, I don't believe it would be of any use," responded Hope, guardedly.

"Then say to-night after dinner."

"To-night after dinner I had promised to read French with Kate Van der Berg."

"Oh, well, there'll be time enough for that too; and you won't mind, will you, if she plays with me first?" addressing Kate.

"Mind? I shall mind a great deal," Kate made haste to reply. "I know how it is when these musical people get started; they never know when to stop. No, she's promised to me to-night, and I'm not going to let her off."

All this was said in a bright, laughing way, that hadn't an atom of unfriendliness in the tone of it; and Dolly had not the faintest idea that her proposition was being decidedly snubbed, as she listened. The other girls were wiser. The moment that Hope refused to play in the way she did, they knew that the proposition was distasteful to her; and when Kate Van der Berg came to the support of this refusal with that quick, bright decision, they knew that *she* knew more than they did why the proposition was distasteful.

Anna Fleming, who was Kate's room-mate, said to her a little later,—

"Kate, didn't you think it was rather disobliging of Hope Benham not to play that duet with Dorothea Dering?"

"Disobliging! Well, that is a way to put it. I think it was the most forward, presuming—what my brother Schuyler would call 'the cheekiest thing' for that girl to take it for granted that such a violinist as Hope Benham would want to practise her little rubbishy waltzes with her."

"But she didn't know probably what a splendid player Hope was, when she first asked her."

"She knew, didn't she, after she had heard the sonata?"

"Yes, I suppose she had some idea, but she might not have been a very good judge. She said, you

know, at once that she couldn't play like Hope, anyway."

"Yes, I heard her; so kind of her to say that," cried Kate, sarcastically.

Anna laughed. Then, "What's the matter with 'that girl,' as you call her?" she asked.

"Matter! well, I should think you could see as well as I that she is a forward sort of thing; that's all I've got against her," Kate concluded hastily, remembering her promise to Hope.

"Hope must have taken a great dislike to her."

"Why should you think that?"

"Because I never knew Hope Benham to set herself up on her violin-playing before, and refuse to play with anybody."

"Nobody has ever asked her to play a violin duet. It is she who has asked one of us to play an accompaniment for her now and then. You know that *we* should never have thought of going forward and offering to play for her."

"Oh, well, we knew all about her playing from Miss Marr. But you say nobody has ever asked her to play a violin duet. How about that little Vernon girl who left last term? Hope used to play with *her* a great deal, and Milly used to ask her too. Hope didn't care particularly for Milly Vernon."

"But she wanted to help her."

"And she wanted to be obliging too. Hope Benham has always been one of the kindest and most obliging girls in school."

"And she is now, but she has some sense and spirit, and probably doesn't mean to have a new-comer like Dorothea Dering take full possession of her on short acquaintance."

"Yes, it *is* a pretty short acquaintance," responded Anna, thoughtfully.

"That last remark of mine was a happy hit," thought Kate, triumphantly. "It has disposed of all the surmises about Hope's dislike, but," she further thought, "I wonder how this violin business is going to end. I prophesy that Miss Dorothea Dering will carry the day, and Hope will play that duet with her yet."

CHAPTER XI.

The first two months at school generally pass very quickly; after that, the time is apt to move a little slower. The first two months at Miss Marr's school passed so quickly that the girls all confessed themselves "so surprised" when December came with Christmas scarcely more than three weeks away. Miss Marr gave a vacation on Christmas week, when the boarding-girls, as those who were inmates of her house were called, could go to their homes, if not too far off, and return by New Year's eve, for it was a fixed rule that they must all be back by that time, and not one of them but was delighted to obey this rule, for not one of them would have lost Miss Marr's New Year's party, which, according to Kate Van der Berg, was the best fun of the year.

"But what do you do, what *is* the fun?" inquired Dolly Dering, who was present when Kate made the above statement.

"What do we do?" answered Kate. "Well, in the first place, on New Year's eve, we have a jolly little party of just ourselves,—we girls in the house, none of the outside girls, the day pupils,—and we play games, sing songs, tell stories, do anything, in fact, that we want to do, and at half-past ten there is a little light supper served, such as ices, and the most delicious frosted sponge-cakes, and seed-cakes, and then there is bread and butter, and hot cocoa for those that want it. After this we feel as fresh and rested as possible, and all ready to sit the old year out and the new year in."

"Oh, you *don't* do that?" cried Dolly, delightedly, for to sit up late was one of her ideas of happiness.

"We do just that"

"Well, and then?"

"Then," went on Kate, laughing, "we begin to grow a little quieter. We tell stories in lower voices; we watch the clock, and as it strikes twelve, we jump to our feet and all break out singing a New Year's song or hymn. Sometimes it is one thing and sometimes it is another. Last year it was Tennyson's

> "Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky:
> The year is dying; let him die."

"And Hope's violin playing," exclaimed Myra Donaldson here. "Don't you remember how Hope played the violin last year? She just made it talk; don't you remember?"

"Oh, yes," went on Kate, hurriedly. "Hope played, and then we all wished each other a 'Happy New Year,' and went to bed. The next day—"

"What did she play?" asked Dolly, breaking in upon Kate here.

"Oh, she played—she played—"

"Robert Franz's 'Good-night' song and Behr's 'Good-morning,'" struck in Myra again, impatient at Kate's hesitation.

"Oh, I know Franz's 'Good-night,' and doesn't the 'Good morning' go like this?" asked Dolly, beginning to whistle the air of Behr's.

"Yes, that is it, and I played the accompaniment," answered Myra. "It was just delicious. We all cried, for it seemed as if the violin sang the very words."

"I never heard either of them on the violin, but my sister sings them both," said Dolly.

"I think these were arranged for the violin by Hope's teacher, specially for Hope," exclaimed Myra. "I think Hope—"

"Don't you want to hear what we did the next day and the next evening?" called out Kate, exasperated at Myra's harping on Hope and her violin to Dolly.

"Oh, yes;" and Dolly brightened up expectantly. Myra, at that moment receiving a sharp little reminder under the table from Kate's foot, and another reminder from Kate's warning look, subsided into silence, while Kate took up her story of New Year's day and evening.

"Of course, after that midnight watch, we breakfasted late,—oh, so late! and the best part of it was, we breakfasted in our rooms."

"In your rooms?" exclaimed Dolly.

"Yes, at ten o'clock, tap, tap, came on our doors, and enter Susette with a tray, on which was a delicious breakfast for two, and a dear little bouquet of flowers for each of us. Isn't Miss Marr a dear to think of such things?"

"Will she do the same this year?" questioned Dolly, eagerly.

"Oh, yes; she has always done the same in the main things,—the evening luncheon or little supper on New Year's eve, the sitting out, then the breakfast, and the reception party New Year's night. She only varies some of the details."

"Oh, you have an evening party New Year's night?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Who is invited? Who comes?"

"Well, I can tell you one thing,—that everybody comes who is lucky enough to be invited, and the invited are all the outside girls and one friend of each; that is, each girl can invite one friend. We boarding-girls have the same privilege. I always invite one of my relations, and isn't there a scramble amongst them to see which it shall be?"

"And what do you do at the party?"

Kate looked a little disgusted at this question. "What do we do? We do what most people do at a party," she answered rather tartly.

"Well, what I meant was, do you dance?" asked Dolly, in a half-apologetic tone.

"Dance? I should think we did, and we have music, and at the very end the best fun of all."

"I shouldn't think it would be such great fun, just to dance with girls."

"You are not obliged to dance with girls."

"What! You don't mean—that there are young fellows—men?"

"There are *boys*,—that's what I call them,—boys like my brother Schuyler. Schuyler is seventeen."

Dolly gave a long drawn "Oh!" It was evidently an "Oh" of relief; but directly she asked, with demure mischief,—

"Can't you have 'em over seventeen?"

Kate laughed. "Well, we can't have regular grown-ups, you know, and we don't want them. But we can have them all the way from fifteen to eighteen, I believe."

"How odd! Doesn't Miss Marr think we are up to conversation with grown-up young gentlemen?"

"She thinks probably that 'grown-up gentlemen,' as you call them,—gentlemen out in society,—wouldn't care to come to a school-girl party, and that it is much more suitable to have boys of our own age,—boys we all know, or most of us know, at any rate, and who have something the same interests that we have,—school interests, and things of that kind. For my part, I shouldn't know what to say to gentlemen so much older than myself."

"Oh, wouldn't you?" cried Dolly, with an air—a knowing sort of air—that exasperated Kate. "I have a grown-up sister, and I've seen a good many of her gentlemen visitors. I never found it hard to talk to them," went on Dolly, with a still more knowing air.

"And I have a grown-up brother," retorted Kate, "and I've heard him tell how men go on about half-grown girls and their forwardness and boldness and pertness, and how they—the young men—disliked that kind of thing, or else amused themselves with it for a little while, and then made fun of it."

Dolly's face had flushed scarlet at these words, and at the end she burst forth angrily,—

"I suppose you mean that when I talked with my sister's, I must have been forward and bold and pert."

It was Kate's turn now to flush. She saw that in her irritation—Dolly was apt to irritate her—she had been unwarrantably rude, and swallowing her mortification, she at once made haste to say,—

"I beg your pardon, I—I shouldn't have spoken as I did. I am very sorry."

Dolly gave a quick glance at the speaker, hesitated a moment, as if waiting for something further, then jumped up and flounced out of the room with an angry impetus that there was no mistaking.

"Well, that is interesting, I must confess," ejaculated Kate. "I begged her pardon; what more did she want?"

"She wanted you to say that you hadn't the least idea of *her* in your mind,—that you didn't mean that *she* was forward or pert, and you said nothing of the sort; you only begged her pardon for having *spoken* as you did," explained Myra Donaldson, giggling a little.

"And that is what I meant,—just that,—that I was sorry for having spoken—"

"Your thoughts," said Myra, giggling again.

"Dorothea is generally a good-natured girl," spoke up Anna Fleming here, with a kind impulse to be just.

"Oh, *I* like Dorothea very well. I should like her better if she didn't bounce and flounce so. You can't say that her manners are as nice as they might be, can you?" said Myra, looking appealingly at Anna.

"N—o, I can't say that her manners are really nice," answered Anna.

"*I* think she is vulgar!" Kate suddenly snapped out, with a vehemence that quite startled the other two girls.

"Vulgar! why, Kate, she's one of the Boston Derings."

Kate made a little face, and then in a sarcastic voice, "Who are the Boston Derings?" she asked.

"Now, Kate, you know perfectly well that the Boston Derings belong to the best society in Massachusetts, and that they have always belonged to it from the first," protested Anna, getting things rather mixed in her eagerness.

"From the first!" repeated Kate, laughing derisively. "I suppose you mean from the time of Adam."

"Now, Kate, you know perfectly well what I mean. The Derings came from an old family."

"Like Sandy MacDougal."

"Eh—what—who is Sandy MacDougal?"

"Our gardener. He came straight to us from Scotland, and he's as proud as a peacock of his family. He says the MacDougals have been first-class gardeners for generations."

Myra Donaldson gave another of her giggles, but Anna did not join in her levity. Instead of that she said with dignity,—

"What *I* mean is an old family like the Van der Bergs."

Kate flushed rosy red. This was "a retort courteous," and for a moment she was dumb; but a moment after, she sat up in her chair, and cried laughingly,—

"The Van der Bergs are not proud, except of one thing in their family history."

"What's that?" inquired Anna, quickly.

Kate laughed again. "It is the performance of a long-ago ancestor,—a Dutch boatman named Van der Berg. It was in that early time when the Netherlanders were struggling against Spain to establish their own liberty and independence. William the Silent, Prince of Orange, you know, who had been the Netherlanders' best friend when he was at the head of their commonwealth, was dead, and his son, Maurice, Prince of Nassau, was working with John of olden Barneveld to help the Netherlanders, as his father had been doing, to become strong enough to get altogether out of the clutches of Spain. But how ridiculous of me to talk history to you like this, just because of that old story! To change the conversation, what is it you are knitting, Anna,—a shawl or a

cape?"

"No, no, we don't want to change the conversation," protested Anna and Myra, who knew quite well what a delightful story-teller Kate was, and never more delightful than when she was "talking history,"—telling "true stories," as they expressed it. Neither of the girls was very fond of *studying* history, but they were very fond of listening to Kate whenever she would "talk it," or whenever she would pick out of it its—to them—labyrinthine mazes some stirring incident, and read it to them. So their protest now was very decisive against any change of conversation; and thus urged to go back to her subject, Kate went on with the story of her ancestor. She had not gone far, however, when she stopped short again, saying,—

"But wait! Motley tells the story so beautifully in his 'United Netherlands;' let me read it to you in his own words. It's too bad to try to tell it in *my* words; and here's the book right on this lower library shelf."

"IT WAS THE WORK OF A MOMENT TO POSSESS HERSELF OF THE BOOK"

It was the work of a moment to possess herself of the book; and the girls, settling themselves comfortably in their chairs, gave themselves up to the pleasure of listening to the following spirited narrative:—

CHAPTER XII.

"The fair and pleasant city of Breda lies on the Merk,—a slender stream navigable for small vessels, which finds its way to the sea through the great canal of the Dental. It had been the property of the Princes of Orange, Barons of Breda, and had passed with the other possessions of the family to the house of Châlons-Nassau. Henry of Nassau had, half a century before, adorned and strengthened it by a splendid palace-fortress, which, surrounded by a deep and double moat, thoroughly commanded the town. A garrison of five companies of Italian infantry and one of cavalry lay in this castle, which was under the command of Edward Lanzavecchia, governor both of Breda and of the neighboring Gertruydenberg. Breda was an important strategical position. It was, moreover, the feudal superior of a large number of adjacent villages, as well as of the cities of Osterhout, Steenberg, and Rosendaal. It was obviously not more desirable for Maurice of Nassau to recover his patrimonial city than it was for the States-General to drive the Spaniards from so important a position.

"In the month of February, 1590, Maurice, being then at the castle of Voorn, in Zeeland, received a secret visit from a boatman,—Adrian Van der Berg by name,—who lived at the village of Leur, eight or ten miles from Breda, and who had been in the habit of supplying the castle with turf. In

the absence of wood and coal-mines, the habitual fuel of the country was furnished by those vast relics of the antediluvian forests, which abounded in the still partially submerged soil. The skipper represented that his vessel had passed so often into and out of the castle as to be hardly liable to search by the guard on its entrance. He suggested a stratagem by which it might be possible to surprise the stronghold. The prince approved of the scheme, and immediately consulted with Barneveld. That statesman at once proposed, as a suitable man to carry out the daring venture, Captain Charles de Heraugiere,—a nobleman of Cambray,—who had been long in the service of the States, had distinguished himself at Sluys and on other occasions, but who had been implicated in Leicester's nefarious plot to gain possession of the city of Leyden, a few years before. The advocate expressed confidence that he would be grateful for so signal an opportunity of retrieving a somewhat damaged reputation. Heraugiere, who was with his company in Voorn at the moment, eagerly signified his desire to attempt the enterprise as soon as the matter was communicated to him, avowing the deepest devotion to the House of William the Silent, and perfect willingness to sacrifice his life, if necessary, in its cause and that of the country. Philip Nassau, cousin of Prince Maurice, and brother of Lewis William, Governor of Gorcum Dorcum and Lowenstein Castle, and colonel of a regiment of cavalry, was also taken into the secret, as well as Count Hohenlo, President Van der Myle, and a few others; but a mystery was carefully spread and maintained over the undertaking. Heraugiere selected sixty-eight men, on whose personal daring and patience he knew that he could rely, from the regiments of Philip Nassau and Famars, governor of the neighboring city of Hensden, and from his own company. Besides himself, the officers to command the party were Captains Lozier and Fervet, and Lieutenant Matthew Held. The names of such devoted soldiers deserve to be commemorated, and are still freshly remembered by their countrymen.

"On the 25th of February, Maurice and his staff went to Willemstad, on the isle of Klundert, it having been given out on his departure from the Hague that his destination was Dort. On the same night, at about eleven o'clock, by the feeble light of a waning moon, Heraugiere and his band came to the Swertsenburg ferry, as agreed upon, to meet the boatman. They found neither him nor his vessel, and they wandered about half the night, very cold, very indignant, much perplexed. At last, on their way back, they came upon the skipper at the village of Terheyde, who made the extraordinary excuse that he had overslept himself, and that he feared the plot had been discovered. It being too late to make any attempt that night, a meeting was arranged for the following evening. No suspicion of treachery occurred to any of the party, although it became obvious that the skipper had grown faint-hearted. He did not come on the next night to the appointed place, but he sent two nephews, boatmen like himself, whom he described as dare-devils.

"On Monday night, the 26th of February, the seventy went on board the vessel, which was apparently filled with blocks of turf, and packed themselves closely in the hold. They moved slowly during a little time on their perilous voyage, for the winter wind, thick with fog and sleet, blew directly down the river, bringing along with it huge blocks of ice, and scooping the water out of the dangerous shallows, so as to render the vessel at any moment liable to be stranded. At last the navigation became impossible, and they came to a standstill. From Monday night till Thursday morning those seventy Hollanders lay packed like herrings in the hold of their little vessel, suffering from hunger, thirst, and deadly cold; yet not one of them attempted to escape or murmured a wish to abandon the enterprise. Even when the third morning dawned, there was no better prospect of proceeding, for the remorseless east wind still blew a gale against them, and the shoals which beset their path had become more dangerous than ever. It was, however, absolutely necessary to recruit exhausted nature, unless the adventurers were to drop powerless on the threshold when they should at last arrive at their destination. In all secrecy they went ashore at a lonely castle called Nordam, where they remained to refresh themselves until about eleven at night, when one of the boatmen came to them with the intelligence that the wind had changed and was now blowing freshly from the sea. Yet the voyage of a few leagues, on which they were embarked, lasted nearly two whole days longer; on Saturday afternoon they passed through the last sluice, and at about three o'clock the last boom was shut behind them. There was no retreat possible for them now. The seventy were to take the strong castle and city of Breda or to lay down their lives every man of them. No quarter and short shrift,—such was their certain destiny, should that crippled, half-frozen little band not succeed in their task before another sunrise.

"They were now in the outer harbor, and not far from the water-gate which led into the inner castle-haven. Presently an officer of the guard put off in a skiff and came on board the vessel. Those inside could see and hear his every movement. Had there been a single cough or sneeze from within, the true character of the cargo, then making its way into the castle, would have been discovered, and every man would, within ten minutes, have been butchered. But the officer, unsuspecting, soon took his departure, saying that he would send some men to warp the vessel into the castle dock.

"Meantime, as the adventurers were making their way slowly towards the water-gate, they struck upon a hidden obstruction in the river, and the deeply laden vessel sprang a leak. In a few minutes those inside were sitting up to their knees in water,—a circumstance which scarcely improved their already sufficiently dismal condition. The boatmen vigorously plied the pumps to save the vessel from sinking outright; a party of Italian soldiers soon arrived on the shore, and in the course of a couple of hours they had laboriously dragged the concealed Hollanders into the inner harbor and made their vessel fast, close to the guard-house of the castle. And now a crowd of all sorts came on board. The winter nights had been long and fearfully cold, and there was

almost a dearth of fuel both in town and fortress. A gang of laborers set to work discharging the turf from the vessel with such rapidity that the departing daylight began to shine in upon the prisoners much sooner than they wished. Moreover the thorough wetting to which, after all their other inconveniences they had just been exposed, in their narrow escape from foundering, had set the whole party sneezing and coughing. Never was a catarrh so sudden, so universal, or ill-timed. Lieutenant Held, unable to control the violence of his cough, drew his dagger and eagerly implored his next neighbor to stab him to the heart, lest his infirmity should lead to the discovery of the whole party. But the calm and wary skipper who stood on the deck instantly commanded his companion to work at the pump with as much chatter as possible, assuring the persons present that the hold was nearly full of water. By this means the noise of the coughing was effectually drowned. Most thoroughly did the bold boatman deserve the title of "dare-devil" bestowed by his more faint-hearted uncle. Calmly looking death in the face, he stood there, quite at his ease, exchanging jokes with his old acquaintances, chaffering with the eager purchasers of peat, shouting most noisy and superfluous orders to the one man who composed his crew, doing his utmost, in short, to get rid of his customers and to keep enough of the turf on board to conceal the conspirators. At last, when the case seemed almost desperate, he loudly declared that sufficient had been unladen for that evening and that it was too dark and he was too tired for further work. So giving a handful of stivers among the workmen, he bade them go ashore at once and have some beer, and come next morning for the rest of the cargo. Fortunately, they accepted his hospitable proposition and took their departure; only the servant of the captain of the guard lingered behind, complaining that the turf was not as good as usual, and that his master would never be satisfied with it.

"'Ah!' returned the cool skipper, '*the best part of the cargo is underneath. This is expressly reserved for the captain. He is sure to get enough of it to-morrow*.'

"Thus admonished, the servant departed, and the boatman was left to himself. His companion had gone on shore with secret orders to make the best of his way to Prince Maurice, to inform him of the arrival of the ship within the fortress, and of the important fact which they had just learned that Governor Lanzavecchia, who had heard rumors of some projected enterprise, and who suspected that the object aimed at was Gertruydenberg, had suddenly taken his departure from that city, leaving as his lieutenant his nephew Paola, a raw lad, quite incompetent to provide for the safety of Breda. A little before midnight, Captain Heraugiere made a brief address to his comrades in the vessel, telling them that the hour for carrying out their undertaking had at length arrived. Retreat was impossible, defeat was certain death; only in complete victory lay their own safety and a great advantage for the Commonwealth. It was an honor for them to be selected for such an enterprise. To show cowardice now would be an eternal shame for them, and he would be the man to strike dead with his own hand any traitor or poltroon. But if, as he doubted not, every one was prepared to do his duty, their success was assured, and he was himself ready to take the lead in confronting every danger. He then divided the little band into two companies,—one under himself to attack the main guard-house, the other under Fernet to seize the arsenal of the fortress. Noiselessly they stole out of the ship where they had so long been confined, and stood at last on the ground within the precincts of the castle. Heraugiere marched straight to the guard-house.

"'Who goes there?' cried a sentinel, hearing some movement in the darkness.

"'A friend,' replied the captain, seizing him by the throat, and commanding him, as he valued his life, to keep silence except when addressed, and then to speak in a whisper.

"'How many are there in the garrison?' muttered Heraugiere.

"'Three hundred and fifty,' whispered the sentinel.

"'How many?' eagerly demanded the nearest followers, not hearing the reply.

"'He says there are but fifty of them,' said Heraugiere, prudently suppressing the three hundred, in order to encourage his comrades.

"Quietly as they had made their approach, there was nevertheless a stir in the guard-house. The captain of the watch sprang into the courtyard.

"'Who goes?' he demanded in his turn.

"'A friend,' again replied Heraugiere, striking him dead with a single blow as he spoke.

"Others emerged with torches. Heraugiere was slightly wounded, but succeeded, after a brief struggle, in killing a second assailant. His followers set upon the watch, who retreated into the guard-house. Heraugiere commanded his men to fire through the doors and windows, and in a few minutes every one of the enemy lay dead. It was not a moment for making prisoners or speaking of quarter. Meantime Fervet and his band had not been idle. The magazine house of the castle was seized, its defenders slain. Young Lanzavecchia made a sally from the palace, was wounded, and driven back with a few of his adherents. The rest of the garrison fled helter-skelter into the town. Never had the musketeers of Italy—for they all belonged to Spinola's famous Sicilian Legion—behaved so badly. They did not even take the precaution to destroy the bridge between the castle and the town, as they fled panic-stricken before seventy Hollanders. Instead of encouraging the burghers to their support, they spread dismay as they ran through every street. Young Lanzavecchia, penned into a corner of the castle, began to parley, hoping for a rally before a surrender should be necessary. In the midst of the negotiation, and a couple of hours

before dawn, Hohenlo, duly apprised by the boatman, arrived with the vanguard of Maurice's troops before the field-gate of the fort. A vain attempt was made to force this portal open, but the winter's ice had fixed it fast. Hohenlo was obliged to batter down the palisade near the water-gate, and enter by the same road through which the fatal turf-boat had passed. Soon after he had marched into the town at the head of a strong detachment, Prince Maurice himself arrived in great haste, attended by Philip Nassau, the Admiral Justinus Nassau, Count Solms, Peter Van der Does, and Sir Francis Vere, and followed by another body of picked troops; the musicians playing merrily that national air, then, as now, so dear to Netherlanders,—

'Wilhelmus van Nassonwen
Ben ick van Duytsem bloed.'

"The fight was over. Some forty of the garrison had been killed, but not a man of the attacking party. The burgomaster sent a trumpet to the prince, asking permission to come to the castle to arrange a capitulation; and before sunrise the city and fortress of Breda had surrendered to the authority of the States-General and of his Excellency.

"There, I ought not to have read all that long story,—I've tired you out, I know," exclaimed Kate, apologetically, as she closed her book.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Tired us out? No, indeed, you haven't," cried the girls in a breath; and one of the girls was Hope, who had come in softly just as Kate had begun to read, and who now added,—

"It's lovely to listen to anything when you read it, Kate."

"Isn't it!" took up Myra. "Miss Marr ought to pay Kate a salary for the good she does in this history business. I hate to *study* it; I always get all in a wabble with the dates and the names and the places, and by and by, when I try to tell about it or think about it, I get a fifteenth-century king into the sixteenth century just as likely as not. But when Kate picks out her little nuggets of gold from the mass, and sets them before me, I begin to see daylight."

"So do I, so do I!" cried Anna Fleming; "and another thing,—I am not ashamed to ask Kate ignorant questions."

"Nor I," declared Myra; and then they all laughed, and Myra followed up the laugh by immediately proceeding to ask two or three of these "ignorant questions,"—the first being, "If Spain had possession of Breda, what does it mean by the Italian infantry and cavalry being there to defend it?"

"It means that at that time," answered Kate, "Philip II., called Philip the Prudent, had possession of the better portion of Italy, with other territory that he had gobbled up, and so, of course, he made use of Italian soldiers."

"Who was Lewis William?"

"He was the stadt of Friesland,—Friesland was part of the Netherlands."

"Oh, and what became of the dare-devil skipper,—Van der Berg,—your ancestor?"

"Oh, he didn't come to anything wonderful,—he 'fought and bled' in freedom's cause like most of those Dutchmen, I suppose."

"But there was a family of Van *den* Bergs who were cousins to Maurice," here spoke up Hope. "Were these any relations to Van der Berg, the skipper?"

"Oh, no,—we didn't descend from princes and counts," laughed Kate.

"I don't believe but that it *is* the Van den you belong to, anyway," said Anna.

"Nonsense," cried Kate; "if we 'belong,' as you say, to a family of that early day, it is to the dare-devil Van der Bergs, and that's good enough for me. My brother Schuyler ought to hear you give preference to the Van *den* Bergs. He would be ready to fight a duel with you; for, from a little boy, he has been perfectly enchanted with that story of the dare-devil, and when we were all at home five years ago,—little things of ten and eleven and twelve,—we used to play the story, and we called it 'The Siege of Breda.' It was when we were up at our summer place on the Hudson. It was such fun. We had a queer little cottage on the place, that had a lot of gables and turrets. It was unoccupied, except as a sort of storehouse for fruit; and this cottage we called 'the castle.' A rather wide stream of water runs through the grounds, and broadens out into a sort of miniature lake at the foot of the garden. It was just across this broader part, where it was also quite deep, that the cottage showed its turrets and gables, and we got the gardener and one of the stable men to build up a sort of palisade of bricks and stones and boards all about it. Inside this we made a guard-house, and the arsenal was in the castle itself. Then we knew an old sailor who fixed up our little yacht, made a cabin and hold, where the boys crept in,—the boys who represented the attacking party, the seventy Hollanders,—and we packed around them a lot of dry moss we had prepared, to represent turf. Mr. Brown—our old sailor—also fixed up something

that did duty for a water-gate. Well, when we had got everything as near to our minds as possible, we dressed ourselves up in our costumes,—oh, yes, we had regular costumes. My uncle Schuyler said it was a real history lesson for us, and he should do all he could to help it along; and so he hunted up some books that had the illustrations of the costumes of that time, and we got mamma and a seamstress we had to help us make up suits for us."

"And did *you* take part?" asked Myra.

"Did *I* take part? Well, I should think I did. *I* was Captain Charles de Heraugiere, if you please. And oh, the cunning little suit I had,—a regular fighting suit of imitation leather and a rough-looking sort of stuff like frieze, and a sort of waistcoat of chamois skin, and then a dear little hat with a feather;—oh, and boots with tops that came 'way up to the knee-bend. We made the tops ourselves of mock leather, russet color, and sewed them to our russet shoes. Oh, it was *such* fun!"

"But your brother—what character did he take?"

"Oh, there was but one character that *he* would take, and that was the dare-devil boatman who stood on the deck and joked with the purchasers of the peat. You should have seen Schuyler as he did it. It was moonlight, for mamma and papa wouldn't let us play it as we wanted to on a dark night, for there might be an accident; but we ran the boat down by some sheltering bushes, and the boys who took the part of the purchasers from the castle stood in the lighter place where the moonlight fell, and that left the place where our hidden soldiers were quite dusky and mysterious. But Schuyler stood in the light, the moon shining straight in his face. His suit was a good deal rougher than mine, but a good deal like it; only he had a cap on, and that was pushed back, and he looked so handsome and bold when he joked and laughed and answered the purchasers. Then when we soldiers stole out of the ship where we were in hiding—What! how could I see Schuyler when I was hidden? Oh, I peeped through the moss. And how many boys had we? Oh, twenty in all,—about eight in the boat,—it wouldn't hold any more; but the eight of them made *such* a show in their costumes. They were all our neighbors and close friends, the whole twenty of them. Four were the Dyker brothers, and the Burton boys with *their* cousins who had come up a-visiting them from Philadelphia; and there were our boys and the Van Loons and Delmars to make up the twenty. But, as I was saying, when we soldiers stole up out of the vessel, and I marched at the head of my band, the dare-devil *would* lead the way. I told him it was all out of order, but he declared that Captain Heraugiere *couldn't* know the way as the dare-devil who had carried the peat so often must know it, and that of course he must be guided; so I had to give in.

"We started our play at the point where the officer of the guard puts off from the castle in a skiff, and comes on board our vessel; then, after that, we slip down through the water-gate,—of course we don't have any leak,—the Burton boys and the Van Loons come to the shore and drag us into the harbor and make the vessel fast, close to the guard-house. It was just after that, you know, that the dare-devil receives the purchasers, and goes through all that joking and sending the people off, saying that he was tired. And then I followed as Captain Heraugiere; and what do you think!—Schuyler at first wanted to be Captain Heraugiere too. He said he could easily manage it; but it was when he found he wouldn't be allowed to gobble up the two characters, he insisted upon showing the captain the way, and so he stuck to me all through, flourishing his wooden sword on the slightest excuse. But how we did lay about us! Whack, whack, we knocked over the Burtons, and all the rest of the Italians, with the young Lanzavecchia at their head; and then came the great end of the victory, the arrival of Hohenlo with the vanguard of Maurice's troops, and then Prince Maurice himself with his fine attendants,—his counts and admirals, and these were the Van Loons and the Burtons again, who had rigged themselves up in other clothes,—nice honest Dutch clothes to play the Netherlander parts. So we turned and twisted our twenty boys, just as they do on the stage, and you'd have thought there were a host of them. Well, when the vanguard arrived, we all joined together and marched into the town—that is, around our grounds and into the castle, the Dyker brothers, who are musical, playing the national air with a drum and fife and cornet, and some of the rest of us, breaking out now and then at the top of our voices into the chorus,—

'Wilhelmus van Nassouwen
Ben ick van Duytsem bloed,'

which means,

'William from Nassau,
I am from German blood.'

William from Nassau, you know, was the great Prince of Orange.

"And marching to this playing and singing, we entered the castle,—our cottage,—where a table had been set with a lot of Dutch dainties, made by our German cook, Wilhelmina, who had lived in Holland and knew everything about the dear little Dutch cakes and things they eat there. Then, after we had partaken of the feast, the table was carried out, and we danced to our heart's content. Oh, we did have such a good time, and we kept it up every year until we got too old for it."

"What fun it *must* have been!" cried Myra. "I wish I could have been there; but didn't you have any other girl but yourself in the play with those twenty boys?"

"No, not in the play; but we had plenty of girls as spectators and at the feast and dancing."

"And did you ever make a play out of any other historical incident?" asked Anna Fleming.

"Yes, several; and I think that is the reason why historical events became so fixed in my mind, and I got so interested in reading history. It began by accident, as you might say,—that is, by Schuyler's delight in the Van der Berg story, and insisting on playing it. It's the best way in the world, let me tell you, to play history like this,—it teaches you more than any ordinary study possibly can, and you find that through it you get events and epochs perfectly clear in your mind, and everything by and by spreads out before you like reality."

"I wish Miss Marr would let us have history lessons this way," said Myra.

"Perhaps she will, some time, if Kate tells her what she has told us," said Anna, hopefully; "and you *will* tell her some time, won't you, Kate?"

"Yes, I'll tell her, but I don't think it is the thing to do in school days; you ought to get it up in the summer, during vacations. It would interfere with other studies to go into all the preparation and work of such performances in school."

"Did you ever like any other of your plays as well as the Siege?" asked Hope.

"No, never; but what made you ask that, Hope?"

"Because it was so stirring and out-door-sy, and the boatman was so jolly and brave, I thought it wasn't possible that there could have been another story quite so playable as that."

"I said the Van der Bergs were proud of only one thing,—this performance of the boatman; but there was another of our ancestors of a later day who is very interesting, I think, and just as plucky and brave in another way."

"Oh!" ejaculated Anna Fleming, with such an air of anticipation that they all laughed, for they all knew Anna's weakness for ancestors; and this "Oh," said very plainly, "Now we are to hear of something more worth while than an old boatman, something probably about those aristocratic Knickerbocker ancestors of Kate's."

Kate herself, thoroughly appreciating Anna's state of mind, went on demurely: "This ancestor was my mother's great-great-grandfather. He was the son of a small farmer in England, and he came to New York a poor boy, with only a few shillings in his pocket; and with these few shillings he started, and, working at all sorts of things,—as a stevedore, and anything else he could find to do,—he at last worked his way up to a little clerkship in a little mercantile house, and from there he climbed step by step into a bigger clerkship, in the same little house, and then step by step into a clerkship in a big house, until after a while, after all sorts of working and waiting and hardships, he came to be at the head of the big house, and one of the first merchants of the day in New York. We have in our family now one of those English shillings that he brought over and saved for luck when he was working on the wharves, and we keep it for luck; and there is a packet of old letters and a diary he kept, telling the whole story, that we have too. Oh, yes, we are very proud of our great-great-great-grandfather, I can tell you," smiling up at the girls.

"But where did those lovely old shoe-buckles and gold buttons, and that old silver with the V. der B. engraved on it, that I saw when I visited you,—where did those come from, if that boatman was the only Dutch ancestor you had that you were proud of?" anxiously and disappointedly asked Anna here.

"Oh, they came from some of the later V. der B.'s; some descendants that had nothing specially interesting about them,—were not heroes of any kind, but just rich old burghers."

"But weren't they what are called the Knickerbocker families?"

"Yes; but you know how that name came to be given to them, don't you?"

"No, not exactly," answered Anna, shamefacedly.

"And *I* haven't the least idea. I know I ought to know, but I don't," burst out Myra, blithely and boldly; "so do tell us."

"Well, it came about in this way. Washington Irving wrote a burlesque history of New York,—that is, it was a burlesque on a pompous handbook of the city, that had just been published. He called it 'A History of New York from the beginning of the world to the end of the Dutch Dynasty, by Diedrich Knickerbocker.'

"He made up the name of Knickerbocker probably, as people now make up a name for a *nom de plume*. But at the time by a facetious advertisement, such as Hawthorne might have written at a later day,—an advertisement 'inquiring for a small, elderly gentleman, dressed in an old black coat and cocked hat, by the name of Knickerbocker, who was said to have disappeared from the Columbus Hotel in Mulberry Street, and left behind a very curious kind of a written book,'—he fooled some of those Dutch ancestors of mine into thinking that this was a veritable Dutch name, and that this old gentleman was a veritable owner of the name, and writer of the History of New York, which they thought was meant for a veritable history. Then some of them finding it was a burlesque were seriously offended, and made a great fuss about it; but in spite of all this, the name stuck, and as it was really meant as a sort of interpretation of the aristocratic Dutch character, it was after a while accepted as a title for the descendants of the old Dutch burghers,

and so grew into a term for the gentry or aristocratic class. That is all there is to it."

"Well, then, that proves that you *are* from the Dutch gentry,—an old Knickerbocker family!" exclaimed Anna, in a tone of satisfaction, that brought forth a perfect shout of laughter from Kate, and after the laughter the immediate answer, "Oh, yes; and the New York head of this old Knickerbocker family of mine kept a shop down near the wharves, where he bought and sold flour and molasses, just as that dear old Joris Van Heemskirk did in Mrs. Barr's dear, delightful story, 'The Bow of Orange Ribbon.' In trade, you see,—shopkeepers!" and Kate nodded her head and laughed again, as she looked at Anna, who had a silly way sometimes of talking as she had heard some English people talk of "people in trade."

But Anna, who did not like to be laughed at, any more than the rest of us, retorted here: "It will do for you to go on in this way about family, and ancestors, and all that. *You* can afford to tell the truth because you *do* belong and *have* belonged, or your family has belonged, for years to the upper class; but if you had only just come up from—from—"

"Selling flour and molasses," struck in Kate, mischievously.

"No, I did not mean that, for I suppose things were different then; but if you belonged to new rich people,—people who had just made money, people who had been common working-people, mechanics, or something of that sort,—you wouldn't talk like this, you'd keep still."

"Yes, if I belonged to common working-people, people whose minds were common and vulgar; but how if I belonged to working-people like George Stephenson, the father of English railways, and the locomotive? Oh, Anna, *don't* you remember we had to study up about Watt and Boulton and the Stephensons last term in connection with our applied-science lessons?"

"Last term!" cried Anna; "you can't expect *me* to remember everything I studied up on, last term. Things like that don't stick in my mind as they do in yours."

"Well, you ought to remember about George Stephenson, who was the son of a fireman of a colliery engine in England, and how he worked up, and educated himself, and finally constructed the steam locomotive that made him famous, and led to his being employed in the construction of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway. And there was his son Robert, who followed in his father's footsteps and became an authority on everything connected with railways and engines; and then there was James Watt, who preceded them as the inventor of the condensing steam-engine for manufacturing purposes, which led the way to Stephenson's locomotive. Watt was only a poor boy, the son of a small trader in Scotland, and was an apprentice to a philosophical-instrument maker, where he worked so hard and lived so poorly that he nearly lost his health. Do you think that men like these wouldn't dare to talk about their humble beginnings? Do you think *they* would keep still, or do you think their families would keep still, because they were ashamed of the humble beginnings? No, no, not unless they were miserable cowards and didn't know what to be proud of, and that indeed would make them dirt common and vulgar, and not deserving their good fortune."

"Well, I wasn't thinking of geniuses, of course. I don't suppose that anybody who was connected with such people as you speak of would be ashamed exactly of the 'humble beginnings,' as you call them,—the people *I* mean are the ordinary people, who have just come up from nowhere, with a lot of money made out of—"

"Flour and molasses; yes, I see—you think the molasses sticks to them, and they pretend to ignore it. Well, all I've got to say is that I do so hate cowardice, I think, if I were in their places, with the molasses so new and sticky, that I should blurt out, 'Molasses! molasses!' if anybody so much as *looked* at me attentively. But goodness, girls, do you know what time it is?"

"Half-past eight," guessed Myra and Anna, confidently.

"Half-past eight! you geese, it's half-past nine."

There was a chorus of "Oh's" and "Ah's," and then a general good-night and scampering off to bed.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was very late before Hope fell asleep that night. Generally sleep came to her quickly while Myra dawdled and pottered about, until the lights were put out. But on this night Myra, from her little bed in the opposite corner of the room, heard her usually quiet room-mate tossing and turning in a very restless fashion.

"What in the world is the matter with you, Hope?" she asked her at length. "Are you ill?"

"Ill? Oh, no; I'm only a little restless," Hope answered. "I am sorry I disturbed you,—I'll try to be quieter."

"Oh, you didn't disturb me, Hope,—such a little thing as that wouldn't disturb me,—but I thought you must have something the matter with you, you are such a mouse generally. You're sure there isn't anything the matter?"

"Yes, quite sure."

"Not even Dorothea?"

"Not even Dorothea? What do you mean?"

"Well, I didn't know but you had Dorothea on your mind,—that you might be worrying over her persecution of you,—her determination to make you play that duet with her," said Myra, laughing.

"Oh, no, I don't worry over Dorothea," answered Hope, laughing a little herself at this suggestion.

"How Kate *does* dislike her!" exclaimed Myra.

"Dislike Dorothea?" cried Hope, startled at this strong assertion.

"Well, I should say so; and you don't like her any better, either, Hope-y dear. *I* think that you and Kate know something about her that the rest of us don't, for I've noticed from the very first that you were very distant to her."

"'Know something about her!' Now, Myra, just because I was not pleased with Dorothea's ways and have held off from playing duets with her, you take that extraordinary notion into your head. 'Know something about her!' Of course, you mean by that, something to her disadvantage. I know just what you all know, that she is the daughter of the Hon. Mr. Dering of Boston. What I know to her disadvantage is her lack of good manners, and that you all know. There, if that isn't enough —"

"Oh, it is, it is, Hope-y, do forgive me, that's a dear; I was only half in fun, anyway. I feel just as you and Kate do about Dorothea; her manners are horrid, horrid,—so forward and consequential."

"But I do hope *I* haven't influenced you to feel in this way, Myra; that is, that my manner—"

"No, no, I didn't like her ways at the very first,—they are so domineering. I dare say the outside is the worst of her, though, and that very likely she may be good-hearted. But there's Kate Van der Berg, *she's* good-hearted, and has good manners too; and isn't she jolly, Hope? Wasn't it fun to hear her go on with Anna about the flour and molasses? And, Hope, I do believe that she would do just as she said, if *she* were a new rich person,—that is, if she were the kind of girl she is now. She would just come right out with the flour and molasses,—talk about everything perfectly frankly, because she hates anything that looks like being ashamed, anything that looks like cowardice. Yes, I do believe she would. But *I* couldn't, could you?"

There was no answer to this question; and after a moment or two, Myra looked across at the motionless figure clearly outlined in the moonlight, and thought, "She's gone to sleep."

But Hope had not gone to sleep. She was never more widely awake in her life than she was when Myra asked her question,—never more widely awake and never more unhappy; for as she lay there motionless and silent, she knew that she was acting a lie because she did not want to answer that question,—a question that was almost the same that she had been asking herself ever since she had listened to Kate's emphatic arraignment of cowards; for from that moment she had said to herself: "I wonder if I am not just this kind of a coward, because I have kept silent before these girls,—have not told them that I belonged to the new rich people,—that my father was a poor mechanic, and that I—had sold mayflowers at the Brookside station? Kate would have told them long ago, I suppose, if she had been in my place. She'd say I was 'dirt common' and vulgar not to speak of father,—that I ought to be so proud of him that I couldn't help speaking. And I *am* proud of him,—I am, I am, nobody could be prouder,—it isn't that I'm in any way ashamed of anything,—of *anything*,—the engineer cab, the workman's clothes, or the flower-selling; but—but, oh, I couldn't talk about it to those girls,—they have never known what it was to live differently from the way they live now, and they would stare at me, as if I were a curiosity, something unlike themselves, and they'd have so many questions to ask, because it would all be so odd to them; and then there is Dorothea now, to make it worse,—Dorothea would take all the dignity out of anything; and how she would go on about the mayflowers and our quarrel, and exclaim and wonder and laugh! No, no, I can't bring all this on myself,—it may be very cowardly of me, but I can't, I can't."

Agitated by thoughts like these, it was not strange that sleep failed to come quickly to Hope that night, and that, in consequence, she should look heavy-eyed and pale the next morning, and that, in further consequence, Miss Marr, who was very observant, should say: "What is the matter, Hope? You don't look well." And when Hope had no answer to give but that she was restless and didn't sleep very well, Miss Marr glanced at her rather anxiously, and said admonishingly, "I'm afraid you've been studying too hard, Hope. You haven't? Then you must be homesick." But when Hope assured her that she couldn't be homesick in *her* house, Miss Marr, laughingly declaring that she was a little flatterer, came to the conclusion that there was nothing amiss that the week's vacation so near at hand and the New Year festivities would not rectify.

Where Hope was to spend her week's vacation had been a matter of some consideration. She would have gone to her grandmother Benham up in the New Hampshire hills if the distance at that season of the year had not been an objection. Miss Marr, too, would gladly have kept her little favorite with her; and there was Kate Van der Berg pining for her company, backed by Mrs. Van der Berg's cordial note of invitation; and the Sibleys also—the friends whom the Benhams

had met abroad, and who had spoken to Miss Marr so admiringly of John Benham's "dearest little daughter"—had entreated her to come to them. Another invitation was from the Benhams' old neighbors and friends,—the Kolbs. All these invitations had been received by Hope early in November, and she had immediately sent them to her parents in Paris, with a little note of her own, that simply said, without a word of her own personal preference: "I want you to tell me which place you would rather I would choose. *I* like them all."

Mr. and Mrs. Benham laughed as they read these words. They laughed because this was so like Hope. When she was quite a little girl, her mother had thought it would be a good plan to teach her to be careful in her selections, by making her choose entirely for herself what she would like, and abiding by that choice for the time being. Hope was delighted with this plan at first. She fancied that with such liberty she was going to have a very happy time; but after she had made several mistakes, had chosen what had brought her, if not serious disappointment and discomfort, a knowledge that she had much better have chosen differently, she hit upon a little change of plan; and this was to submit to her mother and father whatever was set before her for her choosing, with the provision that they should give her the benefit of their opinions, while still leaving her her own liberty of choice. They were very much amused at this proposed change, but readily consented to its being tried; and the trial, on the whole, had turned out very satisfactorily, the child only upon rare occasions, when greatly tempted by some special predilection, going against the parental opinion. The odd plan thus childishly begun had settled into a fixed habit, though as Hope had grown older it had become little more than an interchange of opinions. On the present occasion, however, the girl had very evidently gone back to her first idea, for it was quite plain to both father and mother that while she had some special predilection for *one* of these invitations, she did not want to betray it, as she wanted a perfectly unbiassed opinion from them,—or, in other words, wanted to know *their* preference before she acknowledged her own; and this Mr. Benham decided at once not to give. "I will write to her that she must make her choice quite independent of us," he said to his wife. "There can be no harm in her accepting any one of these invitations, but what we want to know now is the bias of her own mind."

John Benham, as well as his wife, had tried, from the very first of their change of fortunes, to keep Hope untouched by the temptations of sudden wealth; and one of their fears in regard to the New York school had been that Hope would meet there girls whose influence might be of a worldly and fashionable nature. But Miss Marr's reputation for right thinking and right doing had carried the day over all these fears, and they had seen no reason from term to term to regret this decision. It was with no little curiosity, then, coupled with some anxiety, that she and her husband awaited Hope's choice of invitations. She had now been a pupil of Miss Marr's a year, a year in close association with the young people in the school. The parents had seen her twice in this time, and she had seemed to them the same child Hope. Her letters, too, gave them very satisfactory accounts of her school life and companions. In all these accounts the name of Kate Van der Berg held a prominent place, and they could see that this friend was of more importance to Hope than any of the other girls. When, therefore, they pondered over Mrs. Van der Berg's invitation, with its hints of luxurious entertainment, they thought it quite natural that any girl should choose to accept it. Then, too, there was Mrs. Sibley, with *her* offer of hospitality in a fine house where the visitor would be petted and made much of. If not to the Van der Bergs', would not any ordinary girl choose to go to this delightsome place? The Kolbs could offer nothing like this hospitality. Their house at Riverview was small, their means not large, and their acquaintance, outside the musicians with whom the old violinist was brought in contact, very limited, and in this limited acquaintance there were no young people, except Mr. Kolb's nephew and his little German wife. But the old violinist's heart was full of warm regard for the little mädchen whom he had taught for love five years ago, and what he did offer was out of the fulness of this regard, as the following quaint letter will show:—

> My dear little Mädchen,—The good frau and myself have wondered for long time if the little mädchen remembers the Christmas Day when she stood beside Papa Kolb, to help him strip the Christmas tree; and if she remembers, the good frau and myself wonders if she would not like to stand by Papa Kolb again and strip a Christmas Tree that shall grow up purposely for her if she will come to Papa Kolb's house for the holiday week that is near at hand. The good frau will take best care of the little mädchen. She shall have the blue and white chamber with the little porcelain stove, and the good frau will herself make for her the little cakes she likes so well, and Papa Kolb will make his violin sing the music that they both love.

"How *can* the child resist this letter?" exclaimed Mr. Benham, as he laid it down after reading it twice over.

"Yes; but you might have asked the same question after reading Mrs. Sibley's and Mrs. Van der Berg's, with their cordial offers of Christmas dances and performances," said Mrs. Benham.

"Yes, I might, but I didn't," replied Mr. Benham, with a smile.

"No, you didn't; but you must remember though, John, that to Hope, Christmas dances and matinée performances in a big city must naturally be more attractive than they are to you."

"Oh, yes, yes, of course; and it's of course, I suppose, that any young girl would naturally prefer the fine gay things that fine gay people can offer to the more humdrum things that the Kolbs can give."

It will readily be seen, from this little conversation, where John Benham's preference lay in this question of invitations; and as a matter of fact, Mrs. Benham's interests were in the same quarter. They both leaned very strongly to Papa Kolb's affectionate home offer, but they were both agreed in their resolve that they would say nothing to Hope of their feeling.

In this way they looked to find out the natural bias of the girl's mind, and ascertain exactly the direction that her tastes and inclinations were now taking. But as Mrs. Benham read over again the notes from the Van der Bergs and Sibleys, she felt that it was absurd for her to expect that a young creature like Hope would turn from such attractions to the Kolbs, and she told her husband so. Like the man of sense that he was, Mr. Benham admitted the truth of his wife's conclusions. It was but a step from this admission to a final agreement that Hope of course, thus left to herself, would choose the New York gayeties, like any other girl; and when her next letter arrived, Mrs. Benham ran her little pearl paper-cutter through the envelope, with the remark, "Now we shall hear all about the fine preparations for the fine doings at the Van der Bergs', for I am quite sure it will be to Kate Van der Berg and not to Mrs. Sibley that the child has chosen to go; and I do hope that Miss Marr has seen to her preparations, and helped her to choose some new things, if she needs them. And she must need a new gown or two, and gloves, and perhaps a fresh wrap, going about as she will with the Van der Bergs to the holiday entertainments. I told Miss Marr when we came away, to order anything that Hope needed, if at any time—"

There was a sudden cessation of Mrs. Benham's voice; then after a moment: "John, John, what do you think!—"

Mr. Benham looked up from his desk, where he was busy studying the plan of a new French locomotive.

"What do you think, John? She isn't going to the Van der Bergs'!"

"She prefers the Sibleys, then; well, they'll be very good to her."

"No, she doesn't prefer the Sibleys,—it's the Kolbs, after all. Do listen to her letter!" and Mrs. Benham read aloud:—

> Dear Papa and Mamma,—I'm going to the Kolbs'. I wanted to go the minute I got Papa Kolb's dear kind invitation; but when on the very same morning I received the two others, I thought I would send them all off to you, hoping that you would say that you would like to have me go to the Kolbs'. But when your answer came, and I knew that I must make my own choice quite independently of you, I wrote at once to Mrs. Van der Berg and to Mrs. Sibley, that I had had an invitation from some old friends who had known me from a little child and been very kind to me, and I loved them very much, and felt that I must go to them.
>
> I told Kate what I had written, and I told her something about the Kolbs, and that Papa Kolb had been my first teacher; and she laughed, and said that nobody need expect to get me away from a fiddler. And she is quite right when the fiddler is Mr. Kolb. I love Kate Van der Berg dearly, and so would you if you knew her; and if you had heard her talk the other day about the right and the wrong kind of pride of ancestry, you would admire her very much. And I love Mrs. Sibley too, and if there had been no invitation from the Kolbs, I should have been very glad to have gone to her or to Kate. But the Kolbs are like—well, like—like my very own. They have known me so long and I have known them so long that I feel at home with them all the time; and then the fiddles and the music and the Christmas Tree—everything there is what I love best.

Mr. Benham forgot for the moment the locomotive plan that lay before him, as he listened to this portion of his daughter's letter; and when his wife put the letter down and said, "We needn't be afraid of Hope's being spoiled by these fine people, John," his eyes lighted up, as he replied smilingly,—

"Hope is set to a home tune, Martha, that she is never going to forget."

CHAPTER XV.

Dolly Dering was beating time with her fan to the closing passages of the Mendelssohn concerto, when she suddenly caught sight of Hope Benham, three seats before her. Dolly's quick start, and a smothered "Oh!" excited the curiosity of her companion,—a young cousin of hers,—Jimmy Dering, who, following the direction and expression of her eyes, whispered,—

"What's the matter with her, Dolly?"

Dolly made no reply, but continued to stare, and, Jimmy repeating his question, Dolly whispered back: "'Matter with her'? That girl I was looking at? Nothing; what do you mean?"

"You looked so astonished I thought she was a ghost, or that something was the matter with her."

Dolly giggled under her breath, and whispered: "No, it's only that I was so surprised to see her here in Music Hall. She is one of the girls from my school,—Hope Benham. I thought she was

going to stay in New York this week with the Van der Bergs,—awful swells! I wonder who she's visiting here."

"Some other 'awful swells,'—Boston swells, I suppose. She looks that way herself. Why didn't you invite her to stay with you, Dolly?"

"I should as soon have thought of inviting Bunker Hill Monument,—though I like her,—sort of—she's stiffish, but fascinating, and plays the violin like—*Oh*!" with an emphatic emphasis, to convey the inexpressible.

"Like 'Oh'! You must waylay her and introduce me to her, Dolly. I want to know any girl who plays the violin like 'Oh.' I never heard it played like that. Say, Dolly—"

"H—ush!" breathed Jimmy's mother, Mrs. Mark Dering, shaking her head at the two whisperers, as the violin solo began. Jimmy, who was enthusiastically fond of the music of the violin, was now quite willing to be hushed, and, leaning back, gave himself up to silent enjoyment. Toward the close of the exquisite strains he happened to glance at the girl three seats in front of him. Her lips were slightly parted, her eyes were shining, her whole attitude expressive of the deepest delight.

"How she *does* like it, and how she knows music!" thought Jimmy. "I'd like to hear *her* play the violin. I wonder if I can't manage it. I mean to make Dolly introduce me to her."

Hope was pulling up her little sealskin cloak at the end of the concert, when she heard a voice say: "How de do, Hope? I never was so surprised in my life as when I saw you here. I thought Kate Van der Berg had invited you to stay with her through the vacation."

"How de do, Hope?"

The "deep delight" on Hope's face vanished as if by magic as she heard this; and as she turned to the speaker, Jimmy said to himself:

"My! how she *does* dislike Dolly!"

When, in the next breath, Dolly repeated, "I thought Kate Van der Berg invited you to stay with her," Jimmy, who was a little gentleman with much tact and taste, groaned in spirit: "How could she; oh, how *could* Dolly put the thing in that way? As if—as if a girl had only to be invited by a Kate Van der Berg to accept! As if she couldn't refuse a Kate Van der Berg, or anybody—such a girl as this!"

But the next instant Jimmy's groan had become a chuckle as he heard this girl say: "Yes, Kate invited me to spend my vacation with her, but I had older friends than the Van der Bergs."

Not much in the words, but, oh, the way they were spoken,—the tone, the little straight stare at Dolly! Jimmy, little gentleman though he was, had a wild desire to throw up his cap and "hurrah"

as he looked and listened. "It was all such a set-down for Dolly," as he told his mother later. But Dolly didn't seem to mind it much. She colored a bit, and then she laughed, and then before Hope could make a move away from her, she was introducing her to "my cousin, Jimmy Dering;" and Jimmy, tactful little fellow, began to speak in his soft, sweet voice that was like the G string of a violin, of the music they had been listening to; and he spoke so intelligently and appreciatively that Hope could not but be interested; and when, by the greatest good luck in the world for him, he asked her if she had noticed the beautiful expression on the face of the first violinist when he played, and then proceeded to tell her that this violinist was a German, and that his name was Kolb, and that he was a real genius, Hope turned such a radiant face towards the boy that he was quite taken aback at the first start; then he thought to himself, "She appreciates old Kolb as well as we do;" and delighted at this, was going on to say more, when Dolly's voice again broke in with,—

"Hope, I want to introduce you to my aunt, Mrs. Dering. This is Miss Hope Benham, auntie, one of the girls at my school."

"*My school!*" Jimmy groaned again when he heard this; and as he observed Hope's sudden stiffening and coolness, he inwardly exclaimed: "I shall never hear this girl play if Dolly goes on like this, with '*my* school,' and that my-everything-way of hers!"

But when Mrs. Dering came up with that pretty manner, and said that she was always glad to meet one of Miss Marr's girls, Jimmy breathed easier; and when she asked Hope if she was fond of music, and Dolly burst out, "Fond? You wouldn't ask that question if you could hear Hope play the violin," Jimmy took courage and said,—

"Mother, if Miss Benham would only come to our Monday night musicale!"

"Yes, to be sure," cried Mrs. Dering, delighted at the suggestion. If Hope was a musical genius, she might perhaps be interested to help them, for the musicale was for a charity. That she was one of Miss Marr's girls spoke for her desirability in all other ways. It had got to be a sort of voucher to be one of Miss Marr's girls.

"And if you have your violin with you—she's got a wonderful violin, auntie—and will bring it, and play something for us—it's for a charity, you know—"

"Yes, if you would, it would be so kind of you; the charity is such a worthy one,—a little kindergarten bed at the children's hospital," took up Mrs. Dering, persuasively.

"I haven't my violin with me; and—"

"Oh, well, that needn't make any difference. I have two, and you can have one of mine," interrupted Dolly, with perfect confidence.

"And I have an engagement on Wednesday to another musicale, or rather a concert," said Hope, finishing the answer that Dolly had so confidently interrupted.

"But can't you come and see *me* some day and—if you'll tell me where you're staying I'll call on you—I'll call and fetch you any day you'll say, and Jimmy'll come, and we'll all play together—Jimmy plays very well."

Dolly, with this, pulled out a little tablet, and fixing her eyes on it in a business-like way, said, "Now, then, give me your address; and—"

"It would be of no use, I cannot come to you, for I return to New York Thursday morning."

"But it's only Saturday now—there's four days to Thursday—if you'd say Monday or Tuesday."

"I am engaged Monday and Tuesday,—you must excuse me—Ah!" with an air of relief, "there's Mr. Kolb, I must bid you good-by;" and with a very polite bow, including the three,—Mrs. Dering, her son, and Dolly,—and with a very small smile, Hope made her escape, and hastened towards Mr. Kolb.

"She *knows* old Kolb, after all," exclaimed Jimmy, in astonishment.

"She knows all the musical people that were ever born, *I* believe," snapped out Dolly; "stiff as she is, she's just crazy over musical folks. But did you ever see anybody so stiff and offish as she was?"

"I never saw anybody so persistent as *you* were, Dolly; you fairly pushed her into stiffness and offishness. You asked her to help in the musicale as if it would be simply a privilege for *her*, and then, when anybody could see with half an eye she didn't want to come and didn't mean to come, you went at her in the same way about coming to *you*, whipping out that tablet with a 'Now, then, give an account of yourself' air that was—that was—" But Jimmy could find no words to express adequately his feelings on this point, and finished up suddenly in his wrath and disappointment, "Dolly, you are the biggest bully I ever met. If you were a boy amongst boys, you'd get a licking!"

"Children, children, stop quarrelling, right here in public!" admonished Mrs. Dering, in a low, shocked tone.

"'Tisn't me that's quarrelling," said Dolly, regardless of grammar and in a tearful sniffle. "Jimmy's always setting me up to do things for him, and then he's al-al-always finding fault with the way I do 'em," Dolly went on, in a still more tearful sniffle.

"Setting you up to do things for him? What did he set you up to do now?" asked her aunt.

"To introduce him to Hope. He wanted to know her, he wanted to hear her play; and I"—sniff, sniff, sniff—"I—"

"Well, there, never mind; tell me when we get into the carriage," broke in Mrs. Dering, mindful of the proprieties, as she saw several persons observing Dolly.

"Yes, don't cry on the street,—you might get taken up for a nuisance, Dol; a policeman's got his eye on you now," growled Jimmy, with a savage little grin. Dolly had a queer, childish way of accepting everything seriously sometimes; and the startled seriousness of her face at this was too much for Jimmy's gravity, and he burst into a fit of laughter that cleared the atmosphere not a little, and made Dolly herself forget to sniffle. She forgot also to air her grievance against Jimmy, when, as they were seated in the carriage, her aunt said animatedly,—

"Benham—I wonder if this girl is the daughter of a Mr. and Mrs. Benham I met when I was in Paris."

"Her father and mother are in Paris now; that is the reason why Hope doesn't spend her vacations with them," said Dolly.

"This Mr. Benham was a distinguished scientific man of some sort, I believe. He was distinguished for *something*, I know, and he was with scientific men. I met him at Professor Hervey's, and he came into the room, I remember, with two or three English gentlemen of note. I recollect it, because I know I felt quite proud at the time that he was an American,—he looked so manly and earnest,—and some one told me he had just had a fortune come to him."

"Well, Hope's father must have a lot of money, for she's got a violin that cost enough. It's a regular Cremona."

"No!" exclaimed Jimmy, incredulously.

"Yes; she told me it was made by an Italian who was a pupil of Stradivari and lived in Cremona."

"You don't say so!" cried Jimmy, excitedly. "How I should like to see it, for I tell you to see a real old Cremona would be worth while. Lots of people think they've got a Cremona, when it's only an imitation. Karl Myerwitz, who makes violins, and knows all about them, told me that if everybody who claims to have a Cremona violin, *really* had one, the number of them would count up to twice as many as had ever been made."

"Well, all I know is that Hope told me that her violin was made in seventeen hundred and something by a pupil of Stradivari."

"Where did her father get it, do you know,—did she tell you that?"

"An old teacher of hers got it,—a German who has a brother who deals in rare violins in Paris."

"How soon did she begin to take lessons?"

"Oh, when she was quite a little girl."

"What kind of music—whose compositions, I mean, does she play?"

Dolly rattled off what she knew of Hope's repertoire.

"Well, she *must* have been at it from a small youngster," ejaculated Jimmy, emphatically, at the list Dolly gave. "And she must have a great—a *great* taste for music. The idea of your thinking I would play with any one who was up to what she is!"

"But you play very well,—you play better than I do."

"What's that to do with it? You don't mean to say that you think—that you propose—" But Jimmy stopped short, remembering the recent outbreak of sniffles and tears. But he had gone far enough for Dolly to understand, and she took up his words, not tearfully, but indignantly, as she replied,—

"I do mean to say that I propose to play a duet with Hope at school this very winter."

"Is it a school arrangement,—Miss Marr's plan? I didn't know that you studied the violin at Miss Marr's."

"Well, we do, if we wish to. There is a teacher, a very fine teacher, who comes in from the outside for that, as there is for the harp, or any other special accomplishment."

"Oh! and Miss Benham wants you to practise with her,—I suppose you can help each other,—I see," remarked Jimmy, demurely.

"I didn't say she wanted me to *practise* with her. I said that I proposed to play a duet with Hope sometime this winter."

Jimmy made no further remark concerning the matter, but he said to himself: "Yes, that's it; Dolly has had the nerve to *propose* to play a duet with that girl, and my opinion is that she'll get snubbed. Miss Hope Benham isn't going to stand Dolly's impudence,—not a bit of it."

"What concert is it, Jimmy, that comes off on Wednesday?" suddenly asked Mrs. Dering here.

"I don't know of any except that affair at the Somersets'."

"Oh, that for Mr. Kolb! I wish I had been told of that earlier. I only heard about it at the last minute, and then I couldn't get any ticket for love or money."

"Mamma tried to get tickets too," said Dolly, "but they seemed to be all snapped up at the very start by that Somerset clique. I think it was real mean. There are other people in Boston, besides the Somersets, that know about music, and can appreciate—"

"But there was a limit of tickets,—there had to be; for Mrs. Somerset's parlors, big as they are, can only hold just so many," put in Jimmy, in explanation.

"Your young friend may be going to this concert," suggested Mrs. Dering, reflectively.

Dolly bounced up like an India-rubber ball at this suggestion, and cried out,—

"Why, of course that's where she's going, I might have known it." And then Dolly leaned back discontentedly, and reflected upon the good fortune that seemed to attend Hope Benham at every step. There was Kate Van der Berg lavishing all sorts of attentions upon her; and here was this testimonial concert that the Somersets had got up for Mr. Kolb, and that everybody was pining to go to, open to her! "Wonder who she is visiting, anyway," Dolly pondered, in the course of these reflections,—"perhaps the Somersets themselves,—'twould be just like her luck."

And while Dolly pondered these things, Mrs. Dering mused with regret of what her musicale had lost, and Jimmy chuckled anew as he recalled "that girl's" high and mighty manner with Dolly. But his chuckle ended in a sigh, as he thought: "It's of no use for me to expect to hear that girl play; Dolly has spoilt all that."

CHAPTER XVI.

It was "New Year's night" at Miss Marr's, and every girl was as bright and fresh as if the night before she had not watched the old year out and the new year in; for the happiness of it all, and the long morning rest had been like a tonic.

"*Didn't* we have a good time last night!" exclaimed Myra Donaldson, in a sort of general questioning tone, as she stood with a group of the girls by the big hall-fire, just before the hour appointed for the guests to assemble.

"A tip-top time, for that kind of a time," answered Dolly, speaking first, in her usual forward fashion.

"What do you mean by 'that kind of a time'?" asked Myra.

"I mean a girl-party. It was the best girl-party I ever went to; but I like parties best with boys in 'em, just as I like cake best with currants or raisins in it."

The girls all laughed; and Kate Van der Berg called out: "The boys then stand for the currants and raisins with you, Dorothea?"

"Of course they do. I hate to dance with a girl; that's one reason I don't like a girl-party. I never can remember which I am, the boy or the girl, when the figures are called, and I'm just as likely to prance out in the square dances as a girl when I'm taking the boy's place, and to set off in a waltz with the wrong foot, and muddle things generally. Then we girls see girls all the time, or we see so much more of girls than we do of boys that we like a change, or *I* do. I dare say the rest of you," making up a defiant little face, "don't feel like this at all. I dare say you had just as lief dance with girls, and wouldn't care if you never had boys at *your* parties."

"Oh, yes, we would; *we* like currants and raisins in our cake, too, don't we, Hope?"

"Yes, indeed," laughed Hope.

"You'd have thought so last year if you could have seen Hope with my youngest brother, my little eleven-year-old," continued Kate, merrily. "He thought Hope was just perfect, and the way he followed her up! He wasn't in the least bashful, like some of the older boys, and he didn't have the slightest hesitation in trotting after her. *I* believe he asked her to dance every dance with him. I know I had to interfere and curb his ardor, or Hope wouldn't have danced with anybody else, for she really encouraged him in his attentions in the most decided manner."

"He was such a dear little fellow," said Hope,—"he told me I was just as good company as a boy."

When the laugh that this called forth had subsided, Dorothea said rather soberly, "I didn't know that you had such *young* boys."

"Look at her, look at her!" cried Kate. "Did you ever see such a worried, disappointed face? But cheer up, Dorothea, cheer up; we *do* have a few older ones. My brother Schuyler will be here this year."

"Oh!" exclaimed Hope, with a falling inflection to her voice, "and not Johnny?"

"And not Johnny," laughed Kate; "one at a time, you know."

"How old did you say your brother Schuyler is?" asked Dorothea.

"Seventeen,—quite old, you see, for a boy. He'll do for you to dance with, won't he?"

"Johnny dances beautifully; one couldn't have a better partner," said Hope.

"Oh, 'tisn't only a dancing partner Dorothea wants," spoke up Bessie Armitage, a keen-eyed, keen-witted girl, whose quiet observation was never very much at fault. "Dorothea wants a talking partner as well."

Dolly gave a little conscious giggle, and simperingly declared, with a toss of her head: "Oh, I know what you mean. You mean that I want a flirting partner; people are always accusing me of that, and I—"

"Flirting! how I hate that word, and how I hate the thing itself!" burst out Kate Van der Berg. "It's the cheapest word, and the cheapest thing to do; and for girls like us to put on such airs, and think we are doing something fine and grown-up. My brother Maurice, my oldest brother, has told me enough what young men think of half-grown girls who do such things."

"Oh, yes, I know; you told me, before I went away, how your brother made fun of young girls," cried Dorothea, angrily.

The hot color rose to Kate's very forehead, in her sudden shock of indignation. Then, as it slowly ebbed away, she said in a low, intense tone: "I told you that I had heard my brother tell how men either disliked the pertness of young girls, or else amused themselves by it for a little while, and then made fun of it,—that was what I said to you. He did not say that *he* made fun of them,—he couldn't do such a thing; and the reason he told me what others did, was to show me how such things were looked upon."

"And you told *me* because you thought *I* was one of those pert, forward, bold girls!" snapped out Dorothea.

"I was not telling *you* what he said, any more than the rest of the girls who were present; and what I told was brought out by something that was said at the time."

"Something that *I* said, *I* know. I was talking about my sister's gentlemen friends, and I said that I never found it hard to talk to *them*; and then you—"

"Hush, girls, there's the bell; the company is coming," broke in Myra Donaldson, "and we must get back into the 'drorrin'-room,' as Patrick calls it."

"Yes, it is high time we were all there," said some one here who was coming up from the lower end of the hall. It was Miss Marr.

"I wonder if she has heard any of this talk, and how much of it?" thought Hope.

But Miss Marr gave no sign of having heard anything of it. She came forward brightly, smiled on this one and that with equal sweetness, and playfully drove them all before her into the long flower-scented room.

The guests were all received in this room; then by twos and threes and fours, after a little interchange of greetings and introductions, they were conducted to the elevator and taken up to the great hall at the top of the house. It was an immense room that Miss Marr had had built several years ago, when her school plan had grown from its first modest limit to a promise of its present more liberal dimensions, and was intended at the start for a gymnasium and play-room. Later it was fitted up so that the gymnastic appliances could be easily removed, and a dance-room or recital-hall made of it upon short notice. On the night of the New Year's parties it always presented a most enchanting aspect, with its flower and fern and palm decorations, and its soft yet brilliant lights. Dolly, to whom it was all new and fresh, cried out enthusiastically as she entered, "Oh, how perfectly beautiful!"

"Isn't it?" agreed another new-comer, a visitor, who was following close upon Dolly's heels; and this visitor was no less a person than our friend Jimmy Dering, who had come on from Boston at Dolly's particular request and to his own particular satisfaction; for now, he argued, "I *may* stand a chance of hearing 'that girl' play on that Cremona violin."

It was Jimmy's ring at the door-bell that had interrupted that gusty little conversation in the hall. He was the first guest; and as he came into the drawing-room quite alone, and heralded portentously by the solemn butler's loudly spoken "Mr. James Dering," he might have been expected to flinch a little, especially under the battery of all those girls' glances; but Jimmy was not a self-conscious youth, and he had a happy knack of always adjusting himself to circumstances, and making the best of a trying situation. So now he came forward in his own modest, pleasant way, without a bit of awkwardness; and though he blushed a little, it was with such a confiding sort of manner,—a manner that seemed to say, "Now do be friendly to me,"—that every girl there, including Miss Marr herself, was his friend at once.

"He is charming," thought Miss Marr, "so modest and well-mannered, and with such a bright merry boyishness about him."

Even Dolly couldn't spoil the impression he made, as she put up her head and looked about her

with a self-congratulatory air, that said plainly,—

"Now, this is *my* guest and *my* cousin!"

No, even Dolly couldn't spoil Jimmy Dering's popularity. People liked him in spite of Dolly, and oftentimes they softened towards Dolly herself, and forgave her her blundering, domineering tactlessness, because she was Jimmy's cousin, as these girls did on this occasion, before the evening was over.

Kate Van der Berg, who had been very wroth at the start, very much disgusted with Miss Dolly, who had felt as if she never wanted to have anything more to do with her, before the evening was over began to say to herself,—

"Dorothea must have some good in her, and must belong to nice people—*really* nice, well-bred people—to have such a cousin."

And then when the other boy visitors appeared,—when Schuyler Van der Berg, Raymond Armitage, Peter Van Loon, and others of the New York youngsters were in full force,—it was found that they too were taken captive by Jimmy's pleasant ways.

"Nice little chap!" said Schuyler to his great friend, Peter Van Loon.

"Yes," responded Peter; "nicest *Boston* fellow I've ever seen. Don't like Boston fellows generally, they're so cocky."

"And this little chap *might* be cocky, easy. What do you think,—he's the quarter-back in the Puritan eleven!"

"No!" and Peter looked up with greater animation than he had shown since he came into the house.

"And he's coxswain in the Charlesgate boat-crew."

"I say now!" ejaculated Peter, with increased animation.

"Yes, and he plays the fiddle too,—knows all about music."

Peter rounded his lips into a whistling shape. Then, "How'd you find all this out?"

"His cousin—that big, handsome, black-eyed girl over there, I've just been dancing with—told me."

"That girl with the yellow gown and all those daffodils?"

"Yes."

"She *is* handsome, and she knows how to dance."

"Yes, she knows how to dance, but she rattles too much."

"But she knows how to dance," repeated Peter, "and I'm going to ask her to dance with me in the Virginia reel. I always get mixed up in those old-fashioned things; but this girl will fetch me through, I know."

And Peter was right. Dorothea fetched him through beautifully, and Peter didn't in the least mind her rattling. Indeed, he seemed to encourage it and to be amused by it; for Peter, I am afraid, was that kind of young man that Kate Van der Berg declared that her brother was *not*,—the young man who encourages rattling, to make fun of it. But whatever Peter did was very lazily done, and his fun-making was confined mostly to his own inward reflections, with now and then the dropping of a humorous word to some favorite companion. To be sure, this humorous word of Peter's had its full effect, for Peter was not a great talker, and as he was known to be a keen-witted fellow, whatever he did say was made much of. But Peter himself hadn't a bit of malice in him, and if he had his laugh now and then at some foolish rattler, I, for one, think the rattler deserved the laugh, and came off very easily at that; for, as Jimmy Dering said once of his cousin,—

"Girls of Dolly's sort have got to learn that people are not going to be careful of them and their feelings, unless *they* are careful, to begin with."

And I will add that girls of Dolly's sort teach all girls how *not* to do it,—how not to romp and rush and rattle, and make themselves objects of ridicule, in the fond delusion that they are objects of admiration, as Dolly did on this very night.

She began her rattle with Schuyler Van der Berg; she kept it up with Peter Van Loon and fine handsome Victor Graham, and concluded it at the end of the evening with Raymond Armitage, who was of a very different fibre from the others,—a harder, coarser fibre altogether.

But Dolly found Raymond Armitage the most interesting of the four, for it was Raymond who to her mind was the most polite, the most attractive in his way of doing and saying things,—his way of listening admiringly to everything she said, of laughing and applauding all her blunt speeches and frisky ways. If Jimmy had not been so popular, and consequently so necessarily engaged in responding to this popularity, he would have noticed how Dolly was "carrying on," and have tried at least to check her; but when Jimmy was not talking with a little knot of boys and girls about

boat-crews and foot-ball and the coming season's races, he was dancing with Hope, and in every pause of the dance he talked about music; and that entirely absorbed both of them. But there came at last the grand concluding dance that brought them all more closely together. It was that concluding dance that Kate Van der Berg had spoken of as the best fun of all. This dance had been introduced and taught by Miss Marr herself at the very start of her school, and was by this time perfectly well known to all her girls, and readily understood by any new guest of the evening under the guidance of his partner. It was an old French dance,—a "gavotte," so called. Miss Marr had told them its history. It was a kind of minuet that Marie Antoinette had introduced as a pendant to the minuet proper, adding other steps, and renaming it. She told them that another point in its history was, that the name was said to be derived from the town of Gap, whose inhabitants were called "Gavots" and "Gavottes," and that it was not unlikely that it was an old country dance of that region, and that Marie Antoinette made use of it in her re-arrangement, and also called it a *minuet de la cour*.

But wherever it had its origin, it was a charming dance, and Miss Marr had been taught it thoroughly in her early youth when she visited her French relations in France as a pretty French costume-party dance; and she in her turn had introduced various pretty changes, the prettiest and most novel being at the very end, where, swinging all around together, they pair off at last in regular appointed order, and pass through an archway of flowers, each pair receiving in this passing a beautiful little basket, its woven cover of flowers concealing two New Year's gifts,—one a pretty trinket, a ring or brooch or bracelet, sent by some member of the pupil's family for the pupil herself; the other a comic accompaniment in the way of a gay mirth-provoking toy, to be bestowed upon the partner,—the guest of the pupil on this occasion,—these latter being furnished by Miss Marr, and most choicely selected, some of them coming from Paris and Vienna. The girls were quite as much interested in these funny toys as in their own trinkets; and when all had passed the archway, there was a gathering together of the whole party, and a great frolic over the examination of the basket's contents; Kate almost forgetting the glow and sparkle of her new amethyst ring in the fun of the little gutta-percha man, who was made to wink and laugh and shake his fist at Victor when it was presented to him by Kate. And when Hope lifted her basket-cover and found beside the tiny Geneva watch sent to her by her father, the merry little figure of a girl playing a violin, while a woolly bear danced before her on a wooden stand, Jimmy, who was Hope's partner, with gay mimicry began to imitate the bear, and Kate cried out,—

"Wouldn't you, *wouldn't* you though, *really* like to dance to Hope's playing?" and quick as a flash, Jimmy answered, with a gallant little bow,—

"I'd like better to *listen*."

"You'd like to listen and to dance, too, if you could hear Hope play the Gungl' waltzes; you couldn't keep your feet still," added Kate.

"Oh, if I *could* hear you play, Miss Benham!" and Jimmy turned eagerly to Hope. "There are *no* waltzes I like so well as those. I'm coming in to-morrow afternoon to bring my cousin some music that I've brought on for her from her old teacher in Boston, and she is going to try it with me in the music-room here at half-past three o'clock. Miss Marr has kindly given us permission, and oh, would you, *could* you, Miss Benham, join us at four o'clock and play *one* of the Gungl' waltzes, just one? It would give me such pleasure."

"I—I don't know that Miss Marr would—"

"Oh, I am sure she would; I'll ask her.—Miss Marr," and Jimmy put out a detaining hand, as Miss Marr at that moment was passing, and in three minutes more his request was made and granted. Hope had her full permission to join the two in the music-room the next afternoon and play the Gungl' waltzes if she would like to do so.

"And you *will* like, won't you?" pleaded Jimmy, in his *naive* boyish way.

Hope hesitated a second; then, with a little laugh, assented to his pleading. All this had been a little aside, in the midst of the hum and buzz of the frolic; and then, just then, it was, that suddenly, over the ordinary clamor, Dorothea's voice rose in a noisy laugh above everything, and her exclamation, "I told you I'd get even with you!" was heard from end to end of the hall.

Jimmy started as he heard it.

"What *is* Dolly carrying on like that for?" he thought.

Miss Marr, too, started forward, with the same thought. And there was Dolly, still laughing loudly, and shaking a carnival figure of paper, free of the last scrap of its contents of sugary snow, over the person of Mr. Raymond Armitage, her gay threat of getting even with him the culmination of some joke that had passed between them. Miss Marr, as she started forward, had evidently an intention of putting a decided check upon Miss Dorothea then and there; but a look at Jimmy's face, and his half-uttered "Oh, if Dolly *would* think what she's about!" seemed to change Miss Marr's intention somewhat, as it tempered her feeling; for as she caught sight of the boy's face, she said to herself,—

"Poor little fellow, I won't add to his discomfort by speaking now."

And so Dolly went on in her wild way unchecked except by Jimmy's, "Don't, Dolly, don't! You 're making *such* a noise, and everybody's looking at you."

But Dolly only laughed at this. She was having a very jolly time. She fancied it was a very successful time, and that she was really the belle of the evening, because Raymond Armitage plied her with flattery, and because a good many of the others watched her with what she supposed were entirely admiring glances. Getting glimpses of herself, too, in a large long mirror occasionally, she saw that she had never looked better; and, in fact, she did look very handsome, with her clear, bright complexion, her silky black hair and brilliant eyes, framed in golden yellow, and "all those daffodils," as Peter Van Loon had said. Yes, she was looking very handsome; they all recognized this,—all these young fellows who looked at her, and laughed and chatted with her, and criticised her as "a rattler."

CHAPTER XVII.

The next afternoon at half-past three o'clock Jimmy made his appearance punctually at Miss Marr's, and was received with great satisfaction by his cousin.

"It's such luck that you got Hope to come and play with us. I must say you know how to manage people, Jimmy," cried Dolly, gleefully, after she had greeted him.

"Play *with* us! She's coming to play *for* us, or for me, the Gungl' waltzes."

"Oh, well, she'll play that duet with me now, and you'll play our accompaniment."

"I shall do no such thing. I am going to play *your* accompaniment now. Miss Benham isn't coming in until four, and after she plays the waltzes I shall go away. As if I should take advantage of her kindness in such a manner! And how *you* can think of doing it, I can't understand, Dolly."

"Yes, now begin to find fault with me!"

"Find fault with you! I should think I might. You do such things, Dolly. Last night, now, everybody was looking at you."

"Why shouldn't they? A cat may look at a king, and I had an awfully pretty gown, Jimmy;" and Dolly began to hum the closing bars of the gavotte.

Jimmy saw how she understood, or *mis*understood things, and burst out,—

"Look here, Dolly, don't you fancy now that those fellows were thinking of your good looks and nothing else all the time they watched you. I know fellows better than you do. I don't say they didn't *like* your looks, that they didn't admire you, but I *do* say they didn't admire the way you went on."

"'The way I went on'? What do you mean?"

"*You* know,—the way you giggled, and tossed your head, and 'made eyes,' as the French people say, at that Armitage fellow. I didn't happen to be near you to notice what you were doing until the last of the evening, but that was enough. I knew, by what I *did* see, how you'd been going on, for I've seen you at a party before, Dolly."

"Oh, I know what you mean; you mean that I flirt. I've heard that before, Jimmy. *I* can't help it if I have more attention than other girls, just because I'm lively, and know how to talk."

"Flirt! yes, that's what you call it,—that giggling, and tossing your head, and saying pert things. It's like a girl at a Park Beach picnic,—what you call 'flirting.' It is vulgar, and that's what all the fellows I know think of it; and while *you* think they are paying you admiring attentions, they're just having fun at your expense; and it makes me ashamed, for you are my cousin, and—"

"And you are the most conceited boy that ever lived. You think you know *everything*, and you don't know *any*thing about society. A girl is always older than a boy in all society matters; everybody says so; and though you're sixteen, and I'm only fifteen, I'm a whole year ahead of you, —you're just a *little boy* to *me*. One of my sister's friends, a *man* who knows, said to me, *this* vacation, that I seemed to be eighteen rather than fifteen."

Jimmy stared at his cousin for a moment in sheer astonishment; then he exclaimed,—

"Dolly! what *are* you thinking of, not to see—"

"Oh, I know what you're going to say,—not to see that it is I who am conceited."

"And where did you get all that stuff in your head about society; and what idiot told you you seemed to be eighteen rather than fifteen?"

"It was no idiot," triumphantly; "it was Mr. George Atherton."

"George Atherton. Oh, then it is you who are the idiot not to see that Mr. Atherton was poking fun at you, or else he meant that you *looked* eighteen with your height and size altogether. But it is of no use talking to you, I see that."

"No, it isn't of the slightest use. We've wasted time now,—the time we ought to be trying this nocturne; and, if you please, Master Jimmy," and Dolly bowed, with a patronizing air, "we'll begin

to play, or we sha'n't get through before Hope comes in."

Jimmy stared again. He was seeing Dolly in a new phase. Instead of flying into a passion, instead of turning upon him with tears and reproaches, she stood her ground with a semblance of cool superiority that astonished him. What did it mean? Was she getting so spoiled and puffed up by her vanity that the truths he had placed before her went for nothing against the flattery that she provoked? He knew that Dolly was not very finely sensitive, was what he called "dense;" but he had never thought that her good sense could be obscured by this density to the extent of making her positively impervious to criticism, as she seemed to be now. But such really was the fact. Not finely sensitive at the start, as I have endeavored to show, Dolly was full of self-confidence, and also full of animal spirits. With such a combination of qualities, it was not strange that she should be convinced that her own way was the only right way, and when led by her vanity through a little additional flattery, this conviction became so strong that no amount of criticism or opposition could move her. It would be only through some individual experience, some suffering in connection with this experience of having her own way, that Dolly would be likely to have her eyes opened to her own mistakes, and be able to see where she had blundered and what her blunders meant to others, as well as herself. Fresh, however, from what she thought her success of the night before, even Jimmy's words of protest, which usually moved her either to anger or tears, had no effect upon her. For the time she felt herself vastly superior to Jimmy in years and judgment, and from this standpoint she had met his criticism with a calmness that he could not at first understand. Of course this assumption of superiority was not a little irritating to Jimmy, modest though he was; and as he sat there playing the accompaniment to the nocturne, and pausing at almost every bar to correct Dolly's false notes, he was also pondering over her false notes in more important directions, and puzzling himself with suppositions as to her present attitude.

They were in the last passages of the piece, and Dolly was listening to his corrections in an absent-minded way that exasperated him, when the door opened, and there was Hope, with her violin, followed by Myra Donaldson, who was to play her accompaniment. Dolly did not wait to finish the bar she was scraping at, but jumped up at sight of Hope, with a "Oh, there you are, and you've got that dear little violin. Isn't it a beauty, Jimmy? See here!" and with one of her quick, confident movements, she took the instrument—one could almost say she snatched it—from Hope's hands, and held it out to her cousin, pointing to the shape and the beautiful red coloring with its dark veining, repeating, as she did so,—

"See! isn't it beautiful?"

She was turning it over, when Jimmy said, with a certain quick, sharp note in his voice,—

"I hope you'll excuse my cousin, Miss Benham; she has been so used to handling her own violin carelessly she forgets that other people may feel differently with regard to their instruments; and —"

"Jimmy is as cross as two sticks this morning, Hope; he's done nothing but lecture me ever since he came in," Dolly declared airily; but at the same moment she gave the violin back into its owner's hands, to the owner's great relief, who could not help glancing gratefully at Jimmy as she received it. This glance of gratitude did more to restore Jimmy's good-humor, that had been so sorely disturbed, than anything else could have done; "for," he said to himself, "she doesn't think I'm exactly like Dolly if I *am* her cousin, and, in spite of Dolly, I believe we should be first-rate friends if we saw more of each other."

He was still more convinced of this possible friendliness as he listened to Hope's playing,—as he saw how thorough an artist she was, how she loved and lived in her music, when the violin was in her hands. No silly little tricks about her, no showing off in her pose and expression like some girl-players he had seen,—like Dolly, for instance,—and yet how pretty she was, with that smooth, brown hair ruffling out around her forehead, and the color coming and going, and the brown eyes, too, coming and going, as it were, in their expression, as she played. As pretty as Dolly *and not thinking* about it,—not thinking about it a bit, as she stood there, an image of grace, her chin bent lovingly down to her violin, her skilful hands evoking such exquisite strains. And those waltzes! Were there any that were ever written fuller of perfect melody? So absorbed was Jimmy in all this listening and looking, he quite forgot that he had meant to run away directly after Hope had played. Dolly saw that he had forgotten; and while he was yet in the tide of his enthusiastic thanks for the Gungl' waltzes, she slipped the duet she had brought down with her on the music-rack, and said,—

"SHE STOOD THERE AN IMAGE OF GRACE, HER CHIN BENT LOVINGLY DOWN TO HER VIOLIN"

"Now, Hope, do just try this with me."

"Dolly—Miss Benham must be tired; she must want to rest," broke in Jimmy, his face flushing, his tone revealing his mortification.

Hope saw the flush, and noted the tone. She could not add to his mortification, and going back to the music-stand, she said quietly,—

"Oh, it is one of those pretty folk-songs. Yes, I'll try it with you; I'm not tired."

And so it was in this way that Kate Van der Berg's prophecy was fulfilled.

"I knew it would come about, I knew it, I knew it!" cried Kate, triumphantly, when Myra Donaldson told her what had happened, "for I never saw such a persistent girl in my life as Dorothea,—so persistent and so thick-skinned."

"But Hope couldn't help giving in to her," explained Myra; "she was so sorry for Dorothea's cousin."

"Of course. I do wonder if Dorothea was clever enough to see that,—to plan it, perhaps."

"No, I don't think she planned it, and I don't think she saw in the least why Hope gave in to her. She probably thought Hope had the leisure just then, and felt like it."

"Well, she *is* the queerest girl; but her cousin is a dear little fellow. My brother Schuyler and Peter Van Loon like him immensely. Schuyler likes him so much he wants to get him to come up and visit us this summer. I hope he will; he knows everything about a boat, and that means a great deal in the way of a good time with us."

"Why don't *you* invite Dorothea to come up with him?"

"Yes, why don't I?" and Kate laughed. Then all at once she burst out seriously: "How she *did* go on at the party; and look here, Myra, I'll tell you something if you won't speak of it to any one,—any one but Hope,—I've told Hope."

"No, I won't say a word about it."

"Well, you saw how she carried on,—flirted in that silly, loud way with Raymond Armitage?"

"Yes."

"Well, what do you think? She—she's carrying on the flirtation still."

"No—no, you don't mean it!"

"I do."

"*How* is she carrying it on?"

"The next day after the party, the next morning,—that's day before yesterday,—I was down early,

hunting for my carnelian pin; I'd dropped it somewhere, and I thought it might be in the reception-room, as I missed it soon after I had left the room to go upstairs the night before. I found it at last under a chair by the window. It was a little bent, and I stood at the window trying to straighten it, when I saw three or four of the Institute boys coming along on their way to school. One of them was Raymond Armitage; and as he passed by, I heard him say to the others, —

"'I have a note from my sister that I've got to leave here. Walk on slowly, and I'll catch up with you.'

"Ann was in the hall dusting, and so his ring was answered immediately; and as the reception-room door was ajar, I heard him say to her,—

"'Will you give this note to Miss Dorothea Dering?'

"Then I knew that he dropped something, some piece of money, into the girl's hand, for I could hear her say,—

"'Oh, thank you, sir, I'll go right up with it now,' which she did the instant she had closed the door."

"Well, if I ever!"

"Wait a minute; this isn't all. Just after luncheon that very day, mamma called and took me down town to be measured for my new jacket. After that was over, I sat waiting in the carriage, while mamma went into a shop to give an order. Michael drew up just beyond to make room for another carriage, and that brought us right in front of Huyler's; and there, through the clear glass of the door, I saw Dorothea Dering and Raymond Armitage laughing and talking together at the ice-cream soda counter."

"Of all—"

"But wait again; this isn't all. At the same hour after luncheon to-day, as I came along the corridor past Dorothea's room, I saw Ann standing at the open door, and whipping out from under her apron what I knew at once was a box of candy, and I heard her say, 'The same young gentleman as sent the note, miss.' Now, what do you think of all this?"

"I think it is perfectly disgusting. What are you going to do about it? Something ought to be done to stop it."

"What *can* I do?"

"Oughtn't you to tell Miss Marr?"

"Yes, I suppose I ought, if nothing else will do; but I hate to be a tell-tale. Boys never tell tales of each other. I've got brothers, you know, and I've heard them talk so much about that. I've heard Schuyler say that girls grew up to be women gossips because they tattle so much at school. If I thought it would do any good, I would speak to Dorothea; but she would resent it, and would very likely tell me, in her blunt way, that she could manage her own affairs, and that I'd better mind my own business, or something of that kind."

"Yes, I suppose that she would; but it *is* our business as well as hers, when she is doing something that is going to hurt the school. What did Hope say when you told her about it?"

"She said it ought to be stopped some way, just for that reason,—that it would hurt the school dreadfully, as well as Dorothea, and nearly kill Miss Marr."

"Of course it would; it's so vulgar and cheap. When did that cousin of Dorothea's go back?"

"Yesterday."

"He was staying with some relatives, wasn't he?"

"Yes, cousins, I believe."

"Why couldn't somebody tell *them*? They might stop it; and it must be stopped, or—you know what Miss Marr *might* do? She might, you know, send her home,—expel her at once."

"Yes, I thought of that; and that was one reason I had for not telling her."

"Oh, it's all so silly! What fun could there be in sneaking off to drink ice-cream soda with Raymond Armitage?"

"No particular fun in the soda itself. The fun to Dorothea was just the sneaking off. You can see she thinks she's having 'great larks,' as she'd call it,—is being independent and having adventures and being a great flirt, and that Raymond Armitage admires her for it. And Raymond Armitage is simply laughing in his sleeve at her. Oh, I should think any girl would have better sense, better taste; and Anna Fleming talks about her family."

"But she isn't the only one of her family. There's her cousin; look at him: he's a little gentleman if ever there was one. What would he say to her if he knew? And just think! there she was back again, playing on her violin with him as cool as you please, directly after her lark, and no doubt pluming herself on it."

"I wonder what excuse she made to get off as she did?"

"Excuse? You don't suppose she made any excuse? Not she. She just skipped out, in the rest hour, when Miss Marr and the other teachers were off duty; and she managed to come back at the right time. Oh, it makes me more and more indignant the longer I think of it, for it's a bigger shame because Miss Marr is so nice about our school parties and our receptions, and treats us like ladies, and trusts us to *be* ladies, and not to deceive her. But hark! it's striking six, and I must get ready for dinner."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Yes, I suppose that is the best thing for me to do; but oh, Hope! you don't know, you can't think how I dread it."

"Yes, I can *think*;" and Hope laughed a little.

"She'll be so angry she'll say horrid things to me."

"Yes, you may count on that."

"*When* would you tell her?"

"I'd go now and tell her this very minute, it ought to be done at once."

"Oh, dear! well, I'll take your advice, and you'll wait for me here, won't you?"

"Yes, I'll wait for you here and study up my history lesson."

"All right; and wish me courage and success." Then, with a little nod and a rueful smile, Kate Van der Berg went on her mission to Dorothea; for it had finally, after much consultation between the three friends, been thought best for Kate to go straight to Dorothea and appeal to her.

Dorothea was at the desk in her room writing a note as Kate entered,—a note she hastily turned over blank side up as she saw her visitor. There was a rather flurried look on her face, as Kate said, "Am I interrupting you?" though she answered readily enough, "Oh, no; I thought it was one of the servants when you knocked, that's all." Then, not very cordially, "Won't you sit down?"

This was not a very promising beginning, and Kate's heart began to fail her. At this point, however, she caught sight of a photograph. It was the photograph of Raymond Armitage, and her courage returned.

Dorothea had seen her glance of recognition, and remarked coolly: "Isn't it like him? He's very handsome, I think, don't you?"

"I—I don't know," stammered Kate; then, throwing all hesitation to the winds, she began to speak, and this she did at the start in the kindest, gentlest way in the world, telling of what she had seen and heard, as she had told Hope and Myra, and winding up with: "I felt that I ought to speak to you—to tell you what you might not know—how much all this would affect Miss Marr and injure yourself; that if—if she heard—if she knew—she might—might write to your parents, and ask them—to—to take you home."

"Oh, I see—expel me, that's what you mean. The old cat, she won't do any such thing! I never saw anything like the way you all go on over that woman. I like her well enough. I was tremendously taken with her and her tailor gowns when I first came, but I didn't bow down before her as the rest of you did, and I have never believed she was of so much consequence as she was set up to be; and as for her throwing away a lot of money by sending a girl off for being a little independent and having a little fun in her own way, she's too smart to do any such thing. My gracious! I should think I had tried to set the house on fire by the fuss you make! And what have I done? Just had a little sociable time with an acquaintance without asking leave of her High-and-Mightiness."

Kate had hard work to control herself. At the phrase "old cat," her very soul had risen up in revolt. To speak in such terms of Miss Marr!—Miss Marr, who was so fine and sweet, so considerate and sympathetic, who was indeed like an older girl friend to them all. And then, "What have I done? Just had a little sociable time with an acquaintance, without asking leave of her High-and-Mightiness." Kate lifted up her chin suddenly, as she recalled these words, and as coolly as she could, said,—

"I suppose you know that if you *had* asked for leave to write notes to Raymond Armitage, and to receive them from him, and to make appointments with him to go down town, and all that, it would have done no good,—that, of course, Miss Marr, or any head of a school, would not have given you permission."

"No, of course they wouldn't; but that's only one of the stiff little bars that boarding-schools set up."

"And you wouldn't want to do such things half as much if there were no bars against them."

"But what harm is there in 'such things,' as you call them? Suppose my cousin Jimmy was at

boarding-school, and took a notion to write a note to a girl, and to meet her down town and drink ice-cream soda with her, would any teacher think he had done such a dreadful thing,—a thing for which he deserved to be expelled?"

"They'd think he had done wrong in going against the laws of the school, but it *wouldn't* do him the harm that it would a girl, because a girl is supposed to be a little differently situated from a boy. If she has been brought up like a lady, she isn't expected to be planning meetings with young men on the sly. She is supposed to have a little dignity; and as everybody knows that no boy would think of proposing such silly out-of-the-way things to a girl unless he had been encouraged by her to dare them, so the girl who is found to have gone on in such silly ways is talked about as bold and unladylike, and that is an injury that may leave a black and blue spot on her forever; and you must see, if you will stop to think about it a minute, that such a girl would injure the school she happened to be in,—would leave a black and blue spot on that."

Kate had tried to be very forbearing at the start; but as she was confronted by Dorothea's density, as she saw how vain and foolish, not to say ignorant, were her estimates, her patience gave way, and she spoke the whole of her mind then and there, without reserve and without softening her words. It is needless to say that Dorothea was furious to be called by implication bold and unladylike, and a possible injury to the school. Out of this fury she burst forth,—

"I never, never in all my life heard of such impudence! *You* to talk of being brought up like a lady! You are the most conceited, meddling, *un*ladylike girl I ever met! What business is it of yours, anyway? Who set you up to manage this school? You think you can manage everybody, and that you know more about society and propriety than anybody else. You're nothing but a Dutch girl, anyway; and as for being expelled from this school, I'll expel myself if this kind of interference is to be allowed. I'm about tired, anyhow, of such a peeking, prying, puss-puss-in-the-corner place. Miss Marr is making you into a little lot of primmy old maids just as fast as she can; and I for one —"

But Kate did not wait to hear any more of this outburst. She did not dare, in fact, to trust herself to reply. Hope, who was sitting curled up in the library waiting, as she had promised, heard the quick, flying footsteps, as they came along, and said to herself, "She's had a horrid time, I know." But *how* horrid she had not imagined until poor Kate poured forth the story. It was a very honestly told story,—not a word of her own part in it omitted in the whole detail. But as she thus honestly, and with just her own peculiar lift of the head and emphatic way, repeated all she had said, Hope's lips began to twitch, and at last she began to laugh.

"How mean of you!" cried Kate. Then she joined in the laugh, as she realized how little adapted her words had been to soften Dorothea, and how fully adapted to rousing her resentment and rebellion.

"But I began beautifully, Hope. I was as mild and persuasive as possible; but when she called Miss Marr 'an old cat,' I *couldn't* keep on being mild and persuasive. How could I?"

"I think it must have been hard work, and I don't wonder you said just what you did; and perhaps, after all, the plain truth, though it makes her so angry now, will have the most effect in the end."

"Yes, in the end; but—but, Hope, what I've been afraid of is that she'll do something right away,—something reckless and daring, just to show she isn't afraid of anything and doesn't care."

"Oh, I didn't think of that; but I don't believe she will. She'll remember what you said about Miss Marr's writing to her parents, and that will stop her."

"I don't know," responded Kate, doubtfully. "She looked to me as if she would brave anything, she was so angry."

For a day or two the three—Hope and Myra and Kate—were on the *qui vive*, expecting some catastrophe; but as at the close of the second day everything seemed to go on as usual, and Dorothea, with the exception of holding aloof from them, was the same as ever, they relaxed a little of their apprehension.

Once or twice in these days they had noticed that Bessie Armitage had regarded Dorothea with a queer, quizzical sort of look,—"Just as if she knew something was or had been going on," Myra declared.

Hope laughed at this declaration. What could Bessie know? She was not a boarding-pupil, only "an outsider," as they called the girls who were the day pupils; and the outsiders never knew what was going on in the house unless some one of the boarding-girls told them, and there was certainly no one to tell Bessie about this affair.

"Perhaps Raymond may have told his sister," suggested Myra.

"Raymond Armitage!" exclaimed Kate. "Not he; there are brothers and brothers. Raymond Armitage is not one of the brothers who are confidential with their sisters. It would be much more his way to tell a boy friend,—to tell him and brag about it to him. That's just the kind of boy Raymond Armitage is, in my opinion. I like Bessie, but I never liked that brother of hers. I never like boys who have such awfully flattering ways with girls. Raymond Armitage is always paying compliments to girls, always agreeing with everything they say, or pretending to. He—he's—I don't know just how to put it—but he's too conscious all the time. Now, there's Peter Van Loon and Victor Graham and that nice Jimmy Dering, they're polite enough for anybody; but they treat

me as if I was a human being like themselves, and agree with me or disagree with me as they do with each other. They're honest, and that's the kind I like and trust, and I don't trust the other kind. I always feel as if these smiling, smirking, constantly agreeing kind were making fun of me."

"So do I," "And so do I," exclaimed Hope and Myra, in a breath.

CHAPTER XIX.

The next day was Saturday, and directly after a very early twelve-o'clock luncheon the girls were all going to the Park to skate. Miss Marr had a cold, and was not able to accompany them, as she usually did on these outings. She sent, in her stead, two of the under teachers,—Miss Stephens and Miss Thompson.

"And if we *can't* have Miss Marr, Stevey and Tommy are not bad," Kate Van der Berg declared, rather irreverently, as she ran up to her room to make herself ready. Several girls were following in her wake; amongst them was Dorothea, who suddenly retorted to Kate's words,—

"Perhaps *some* of us had quite as lief have Stevey and Tommy as Miss Marr."

It was the first time that Dorothea had responded even indirectly to any remarks of Kate's since their stormy interview; and though there was a sharp flavor in what was said, Kate held herself in, and did not reply to it. But one of the younger girls called out in protest,—

"Oh, how can you say that! There's nobody like Miss Marr. I never skate half so well with any one else as I do with her."

"Yes, but you are contented to skate *her way*, I suppose," flung back Dorothea, with a little disagreeable laugh.

"Course I am, because she knows just how; and so her way's better than mine," was the innocent answer to this.

"And I like *my* way best sometimes, and take it," returned Dorothea, with another disagreeable laugh.

Kate understood perfectly well that these flings were aimed at her, and not at little Lily Chester; but she was determined to take no notice of them.

Dorothea, however, in spite of this sudden outburst of rancor, seemed to be in excellent spirits, and laughed and talked with one and another of the girls with even more than her usual volubility. Arrived at the Park, however, her spirits seemed to flag. Kate, who had caught her quick, searching glance across the pond, thought at once: "She is disappointed in not finding somebody here that she expected. I wonder if it is Raymond Armitage?" But just at that moment a shrill halloo reached Kate, and wheeling about she saw Peter Van Loon, with her brother Schuyler and little Johnny, skating down the ice towards her, and Dorothea and her affairs vanished from her mind. It was some time later that she was curiously recalled to her, by Peter Van Loon suddenly exclaiming, "Hello, there's Armitage now, going off with the daffodil girl!"

"The daffodil girl!" What did he mean? Kate followed the direction of Peter's eyes, and saw Raymond Armitage with Dorothea, who had a lot of daffodils stuck in her belt,—a fresh offering, evidently, from her escort.

"But why do you call her the 'daffodil girl?'" asked Kate, wonderingly.

"Oh, you know she had such a lot of them when I first saw her—and with the yellow gown—she looked all daffodils, and I didn't know her name then."

"And so you called her 'the daffodil girl;'" and Kate laughed: this was so like Peter.

"Yes; so I called her the 'daffodil girl,'" assented Peter, smiling a little at Kate's laugh.

The pond by this time had become pretty well covered with skaters, and it was not easy to keep any one in view; but Dorothea was tall, and for a while the nodding plumes in her hat were distinctly visible to Kate and her companion, as they held on their way; but presently the nodding plumes turned in another direction, and they lost sight of them, and out of sight was out of mind again. In the mean time Hope, with Schuyler Van der Berg and little Johnny, was coursing about in the merriest manner, little Johnny proudly showing Hope how to use a hocky stick on the ice. In this absorbing occupation the two approached the spot where some of the attendants and chaperons of the different parties were made comfortable; and as they did so, Hope, to her surprise, saw Dorothea Dering leaving the ice in company with Raymond Armitage.

What did this mean? Dorothea was always the last one to leave the ice. But there was Miss Stephens—Miss Stephens would know what it meant; and skating up to her, Hope asked the question, and was told, in Miss Stephens's placid, easy way, that Miss Dering had got tired of skating, and Miss Bessie Armitage and her brother, who were just leaving, had taken charge of her to Miss Marr's.

Dorothea tired of skating at this early hour? Why, they had but just begun! And where was

Bessie? Miss Stephens had said, "Miss Bessie Armitage and her brother;" and she, Hope, had only seen the brother, Raymond Armitage. Perhaps, however, Bessie had gone on ahead; but—but—and a whole host of suppositions came crowding into Hope's mind. If it had been any other of the girls, none of these suppositions would have arisen. If Myra Donaldson or Anna Fleming had confessed to being tired, and had given out that she was going home under the escort of Bessie Armitage and her brother, who would have thought but that it was the most natural and proper thing in the world, and who—*who* would have thought of questioning the statement as it stood? But Dorothea, with her little plots and plans, had clearly shown herself another person entirely, and it was little wonder that Hope, under the circumstances, should suspect further plotting and planning.

"What is it,—what's up?" asked ten-year-old Johnny, as his companion suddenly forgot all interest in the hockey stick, and stood balancing herself on her skates, with a puzzled frown drawing her brows together.

For answer, Hope turned about with a "I don't know, Johnny, but we'll go and find Kate. I want to ask her something."

"All right;" and Johnny struck out to the left, where he saw his sister's Scotch skating-cap, with its glittering aigrette, shining in the sun.

"Tired of skating? Gone home?" cried Kate, when Hope told her story. "I don't believe it! Schuyler!"

"Oh, I wouldn't!" expostulated Hope.

"Yes, I'm going to ask Schuyler—I want to know—Schuyler, did Raymond Armitage come out in the same car with you?"

"Part way, but he left the car at Madison Square; he had ordered some theatre seats, and he stopped at the theatre to see if they were all right."

"Oh, and then he came on here to meet Bessie?"

"Bessie?"

"Yes; funny, though, I haven't seen her. Have *you* seen her?"

"No."

"And yet Hope says that Miss Stephens told her that Dorothea had got tired of skating, and gone home under the escort of Bessie Armitage and her brother."

"Miss Stephens?"

"Yes, Miss Stephens, one of the under-teachers, who is blind and deaf about some things,—a good, dear stupid, who thinks everybody is a lamb, and Raymond Armitage the Prince of Lambs, I suppose, and like the father of his country, and cannot tell a lie, and—"

"But perhaps Bessie was just ahead, and Miss Stephens *did* see her," put in Hope.

"And didn't take her for granted," scoffed Kate. Then, as she caught a look that her brother and Peter exchanged, she cried,—

"What is it? Peter!" bringing one little skate-clad foot down on the ice with an emphasis that sent out a shower of sparkles, "tell me instantly what you know. Don't you see, you two boys, that it's for the credit of the school,—of dear Miss Marr, of Dorothea (silly goose that she is), and all the rest of us,—that this kind of thing shall be nipped in the bud? Don't you see that you *ought* to tell what you know, that some of us can stop the foolishness, and save Dorothea from being sent home?"

"Come now, you don't mean that;" and Peter stopped short in that odd way of his.

"Yes, I do mean that Miss Marr would send Dorothea straight home if she heard of her going off for a lark with Raymond Armitage. She says at the start that her school is neither an infant school nor a reform school, and if she finds that girls of fifteen and sixteen don't know how to behave like ladies in the ordinary ways of good manners, they are not the kind of girls she wants in her house, and so she sends them out of it. There isn't any nagging or any little punishments. She advises us and talks to us in a nice friendly way at the beginning, and sometimes later; but she lets a girl alone enough to find out just what she is, and *then*, when she finds out that the girl has faults and habits that may injure the other girls, she won't have her in her school; and so now I want you to tell us—Hope and me—what you know about this going off with Raymond Armitage, so that—"

"You may go and tell Miss Marr, and have her pack the girl off home."

"Schuyler!"

"Oh, well, I didn't mean exactly that, of course; but what *do* you propose to do?"

"Stop the foolishness, whatever it is, that may be going on."

"Well, after what you told me the other day of your undertaking in that line with this particular

party, I shouldn't think you'd attempt anything further with her."

"But somebody must do it. I don't like Dorothea, I didn't from the first; but I want her to have another chance, and I do so hate to have things come to the pass of her being expelled; it would be perfectly horrid for all of us. But we're only wasting time if you won't help us by telling—"

"But what is it you want to know?"

"What *you* know; in the first place, if Ray Armitage said that he was coming here to meet his sister, and if he *expected* her to be here?"

"Well, no; he didn't say anything about his sister."

"Did he say anything about Dorothea?"

"Yes."

"That he was coming here to meet *her*?"

"Yes."

"And that he was going to take *her* with him this afternoon to the matinée?"

"Yes."

"Then, oh, Schuyler, you *must* come with me down to the Madison Square Theatre and head them off!"

"Head them off! They've got there by this time."

"No; they were going out on the other side, where they had just left Miss Stephens, because *that* was the way they would take to go straight to Miss Marr's. Don't you see? Ray Armitage's cunning! Now, if *we* go out on this side, and take the elevated, we shall get ahead of them, and—"

"Well, I just sha'n't do anything of the kind! I'd like to see myself playing private policeman like that! If the girl is such a blooming idiot as this, she won't pay any attention to you! No, I guess I don't try any such missionary work, to be laughed at by all the fellows in town."

"Laughed at!" A glance upward as she said this, and Kate caught the grin on Peter Van Loon's face, and burst forth: "Oh, that's all your manliness is worth! You're afraid,—afraid some other selfish fellows will laugh at you for doing your duty."

"'Tisn't *my duty*!"

"No, it isn't, Kate; he's right."

Kate turned about in astonishment, for it was Hope who had spoken, and Hope who went on speaking,—

"And *you—you* ought not to go, Kate; Dorothea would—would—"

"Be madder than ever. But what *can* be done?"

"*I'll* go."

"*You?*"

"Yes, with Mrs. Sibley. I've just caught sight of her; see, she is over there talking to Johnny. If I tell her how it is—what I want to do, she'll understand, she'll be glad to help; and Dorothea will listen to her, when she wouldn't to you or to me, I dare say."

"Well, that's a much more sensible plan than yours, Kate," commented Schuyler Van der Berg, as Hope darted off; "but all the same it's my opinion that Miss Dorothea Dering isn't going to be kept from that matinée performance, even if they catch her in time."

"Which they won't," spoke up Peter, as he looked at his watch.

CHAPTER XX.

And Peter was right; for, as Mrs. Sibley and Hope neared the theatre, they saw Dorothea's nodding plumes just disappearing through the wide open doorway.

"And we're too late," cried Hope,—"too late, after all."

"Too late to try to prevent the girl from going into the theatre,—yes, and I thought we should be when we started; there had been too much time lost before you spoke to me. We should have taken the car that preceded the one that we came in; but I doubt if it would have done any good if we *had* been earlier. But I'll tell you what we'll do now. We'll go in to the matinée ourselves. Miss Marr," smiling down at Hope, "would be perfectly willing that you should go under my chaperonage."

"Oh, yes, yes, of course."

"You see, in doing this, we may be able to help this foolish girl, after all, by taking her home under our escort, after the matinée is over. She will hurry out, naturally, to get home before dark, and I am sure even such a harum-scarum creature will see that it is wiser for her to go back to Miss Marr's in our company than with young Armitage."

"Mrs. Sibley, you don't think it is wrong, do you, for us to keep all this from Miss Marr,—to go on covering everything up from her while we try to get Dorothea out—out of all these queer ways of hers? It makes me feel as if—as if there might be something sly and underhand in going on like this,—something like being disloyal to Miss Marr, and deceiving her."

"You needn't worry about that, my dear. I know Angelique Marr, and I am sure it would be a relief to her to have Dorothea helped out of her queer ways, as you put it, by girls like you and Kate. Miss Marr knows perfectly well that a *teacher's* opposition wouldn't influence a girl like Dorothea favorably,—that it would be more likely to rouse a counter opposition. It is only girls of her own age who would be likely to influence her; and so, knowing this, the teacher has to be silent a good many times when she may suspect things that she would *like* to oppose; then, when the flagrant offence is forced upon her, there would be no alternative but to see that the offender was punished according to the stated rules of the school government, if the school itself was to be respected and to maintain its position."

Greatly comforted by these words, Hope followed Mrs. Sibley into the theatre. There had been no difficulty, even at this late moment, in obtaining very good back seats,—seats from which one could command an excellent view of the audience, if not of the stage; and Hope at once began a careful survey of this audience, her far-seeing young eyes roving rapidly from section to section in keen investigation. She was suddenly interrupted in this investigation by a whisper from Mrs. Sibley.

"Aren't you looking too far down in front? Isn't that the girl?"

"Where?"

"Two rows in front of us, to the right."

Hope looked in the direction indicated; and there, two rows in front, to the right, sure enough, was Dorothea.

She was laughing and whispering with her companion, evidently in the gayest spirits; and Hope's heart sank within her at the thought of what she had undertaken, as she caught sight of her. Why, oh, why, had she been so rash as to think of interfering with this girl in any way? For, as she regarded her there, she felt sure that she would look upon their suggestion of taking her home as an interference, to be resented and rejected. "Even such a harum-scarum creature will see that it is wiser for her to go back to Miss Marr in our company than with young Armitage," Mrs. Sibley had confidently declared. But Mrs. Sibley didn't know Dorothea, Hope now reflected, as there came crowding up to her, at the sight of that handsome, arrogant face, all her own bitter knowledge of her. And with this knowledge, why—why had she been so rash? And to have brought kind, sweet Mrs. Sibley here to be, perhaps, insulted; for if Dorothea *did* resent their suggestion, she wouldn't hesitate to express herself with her usual freedom. For a moment, overcome by all these thoughts, poor Hope had a mind to say to Mrs. Sibley: "Our plan won't be of the slightest use. Dorothea won't accept our offer, and we might as well give it up." The next moment, ashamed of her cowardice, she said to herself: "How can I be so mean? It's my duty to go ahead and try to carry out what I've undertaken. If I fail—if Dorothea does turn upon me, I must bear it,—that's all."

And with this resolve, she directed her attention to the stage. It was only when the curtain fell after the first act that she glanced again towards the pair to the right. She was just in time to see Mr. Raymond Armitage bowing with effusion to a party of ladies several seats in front; and then, evidently with a word of explanation and excuse to Dorothea, he jumped up and went forward to speak to them. The youngest of the party was a very elegant young woman, whose notice seemed to be much appreciated by Mr. Raymond Armitage, as he bent before her. The other ladies, too, were apparently of consequence to him. But when Hope saw him linger beyond the moment of greeting, her glance wandered back to Dorothea. What did Dorothea think of being left to herself like this by her fine escort? There might be the excuse of some message or other, for his leaving her for a moment, but to linger moment by moment *for his own pleasure*,—yes, that was it,—how would Miss Dorothea take this? A sudden turn of her head showed Hope pretty plainly how she took it, for in place of the gay satisfaction that had made her face radiant, there was a very unmistakable look of astonishment and mortification.

Mrs. Sibley, who had also been observant of this little by-play, here whispered to Hope,—

"How rude to leave her like that!"

"And how mortified she is—look!" responded Hope.

Several times after this they saw him make a movement as if to return to his place, but each time some word addressed to him by one of the ladies would be enough to detain him. When finally he did return, the orchestra was playing the last of its selections before the rising of the curtain again. That he was profuse in his apologies, the two interested observers could plainly perceive. They could also perceive that Dorothea was by no means disposed to accept these apologies in a benignant spirit. At last, however, he seemed to make his peace in a measure, for a half smile

began to hover about Dorothea's lips, and by the time the curtain had risen again, and the merry little play that was on the boards was again making everybody laugh, Dorothea was joining in the laugh as heartily as any one. The play ended in a little whirlwind of applause. In the midst of this, Mrs. Sibley noticed that young Armitage was hurrying his companion off in great haste, and whispered to Hope,—

"They are hurrying probably to catch the next car; and if we go put at once by the right aisle, we shall meet them face to face, and it will be quite easy for you then to propose to take Dorothea with us. She *must* see the point,—that it is much better for her to go back to Miss Marr's in our company, and be glad of the opportunity we offer her."

Hope nodded assent; but her heart quaked, as she followed Mrs. Sibley through the passages between the seats, and fancied that moment when she should meet Dorothea face to face and see her stare of astonishment, and then, oh, then, hear, perhaps, her scornful rejection of the opportunity offered her! But they were not to meet Dorothea face to face as they came out on that right aisle. A little delay in pushing through brought them behind instead of in front of the pair, and—

"No, I thank you, I can find the car by myself!" were the words that they heard on that instant; and the tone in which these words were delivered was sharp and angry, not the tone of friendly agreement. Evidently young Armitage had not waited for his companion to suggest that she had better return without his escort to Miss Marr's door, and evidently Dorothea had resented the fact that the suggestion had come from him.

"But you ought not to be angry with me," they heard him protest. "I shouldn't think of letting you go alone if it wasn't better for you. The car is on the line of your street, and you might meet—might meet—one of your teachers, you know, and that would make trouble for you. It's just to help you that I—"

"Oh, really, it's a pity you didn't think of this earlier before you said we would go back by the other line, where we shouldn't run the risk of meeting the teachers."

"Yes, I know; but as I have come to think it over, I see that the other cars will keep you out so much longer, I thought you would rather—"

"As you have come to think it over *since you met your friends*, you see that it will be more convenient for you not to take up the time by going round by the other line. Perhaps your friends want you to find *their* car for them. Anyway, whatever engagement you've made with them, don't keep them waiting for *me*; I can find *my* car by myself, as I said."

"Miss Dering!" in an expostulating tone, "I haven't made any engagement to hurry me away; I'm only going to dine at the Waldorf by and by with these friends,—they're Washington friends of my mother and Bessie,—but I needn't hurry, not the least, and of course I shall take you home by the other line if you like that best."

"But I don't like it best—*now*. I—I—"

Hope here caught sight of Dorothea's face,—the quivering lips, the eyes that were striving against tears,—and obeying a swift, warm impulse of pity and sympathy, forgot her fears in it, and called out softly,—

"Dorothea! Dorothea!"

Dorothea turned a startled glance behind her at this call. Then, "What! *you* here, Hope?" she exclaimed.

"Yes, with Mrs. Sibley."

"Oh, and you're going straight home—to Miss Marr's? Mrs. Sibley is to take you?" stepping back to Hope's side.

"Yes."

"And may I—will you let me come with you?" in a whisper, and clutching Hope's wrist nervously.

"Yes, oh, yes; I was going to ask you if you wouldn't like to come with us."

"Were you?" A quick glance at Hope from the black eyes still struggling against tears, a closer clutch upon Hope's wrist, then a sudden conquering of the quivering lips, and, "I needn't keep you waiting any longer, I have found friends who will take me home," Mr. Raymond Armitage was told with a dignity that surprised and rather abashed him. Hope, too, was surprised at the real dignity displayed, and slid her hand into the hand that was clutching her wrist, with a sudden movement of approbation and sympathy. Dorothea gave a quick start, and turned an inquiring look upon Hope's face at this movement,—a look that seemed to ask, "Do you really feel like this toward me?"

With wise forethought, Mrs. Sibley, on leaving the Park, had directed her coachman, who was awaiting her with the carriage at that point to drive round to the theatre and await her there. If he did not find her ready for him at once, he was to return at four o'clock. She had thus provided for either result of her expedition. If the elevated, swift though it was, did not enable them to reach the theatre in time to interview Dorothea as she arrived, the carriage would be on hand at four to take her back with them after the play, for Mrs. Sibley had no manner of doubt from the

first that the girl would go with them, though she little thought it would be under the present conditions.

Indeed, she had looked forward to a very different state of things; and sure though she felt of ultimate success, she fully expected to bring it about by adroit management. Instead of this, however, here was this difficult-to-be-dealt-with Dorothea not only willing, but gratefully glad, to avail herself of the opportunity offered her.

CHAPTER XXI.

"And you mean that you *won't* tell her about Ray Armitage's rudeness?"

"No, I won't tell her if you feel like this,—if you don't want me to tell her."

"Of course I don't want you to, but of course I expected that you *would* tell her; she's such a chum of yours. I know it would have been the first thing *I* should have done with a chum of mine."

"Well, *I* should have spoken of it to Kate, naturally, but for your feeling; and she would have been very nice about it, just as indignant and disgusted with him as I am."

"Perhaps so; but she's tried to do me good and failed too much to be very sorry for anything that would mortify me; and I *know* if she heard of this rudeness to me, she'd think it served me right,—would teach me a lesson."

Hope couldn't help laughing a little at this. Then she said suddenly, "How do you know that I don't feel just the same?"

"Oh, I know you don't exactly approve of me; but you haven't cut me up as she has, and then tried to set me right in that superior way; and you haven't meddled with me or my affairs."

"You don't know what I have done. You took it for granted that I happened to go to the theatre with Mrs. Sibley to please myself, that I happened to be behind you, and so happened to hear your talk with Raymond Armitage. But I *didn't* go there to please myself. I went there on purpose to—to meddle with you and your affairs!"

"What in the world *do* you mean?"

"I'll tell you." And then and there Hope told the whole story of her meddling, and why she did it,—the whole story, from the moment she had observed Dorothea leaving the Park with Raymond Armitage to her own departure with Mrs. Sibley; and this, of course, included the consultation with Kate, and the information regarding Raymond Armitage's movements that was wrung from Schuyler Van der Berg. As she neared the end of this story, Hope rose from her chair. Dorothea would not now desire her presence, as she had desired it a few minutes ago when they entered the house together after Mrs. Sibley had left them, and when, full of relief and gratitude, she had said: "Oh, do come up to my room for a few minutes! I want to ask you something." No, she would no longer desire her presence, even with the added relief,—the added debt of gratitude for Hope's voluntary offer to say nothing of Raymond Armitage's rudeness. She would not only no longer desire her presence, but she would doubtless turn upon her with hot resentment, as she had turned upon Kate on a previous occasion; and it was to avoid the outburst of this resentment that Hope rose to make herself ready to leave the room when she had come to the end of her story. But as she said her last word, as she turned to go,—

"Don't, don't go!" was called after her, in a queer stifled voice, not at all like Dorothea's usual high loud tones when she was protesting against anything,—a queer stifled voice that had—could it be possible?—a sound of tears in it? and—and there was a look in Dorothea's eyes,—yes, a look, as if the tears were there too, were almost ready to fall.

"Don't, don't go"

A lump began to rise in Hope's throat. Had she been too harsh in what she had told, or in the way she had told it? Had they all been too harsh, too cold in their treatment of this girl's offences? It was true that they were all against her,—the "all" who comprised the little set of the older girls, and perhaps—perhaps—But what was that that Dorothea was saying?

"I think you've been awfully kind to take all this trouble for me; and I've always thought you were so indifferent,—that you didn't in the least care what became of me."

"Kind? indifferent? I don't understand," faltered Hope, staring blankly in her amazement at Dorothea.

"Yes, I should never have thought of your taking the least trouble, putting yourself out for me. I knew you didn't approve of me very much, but I supposed that you were so indifferent that it didn't matter to you. I don't half believe, and I never have, that such dreadful consequences would come of going against Miss Marr's rules; but *you* do, I see, and it was awfully kind of you to take all this trouble to pull me out of the danger you thought I was in,—awfully kind, and I sha'n't forget it; and if you call this meddling, it's a very different sort of meddling from some other people's. It's easy enough for some folks to *talk* and criticise everything you do, telling you what you ought and what you ought not to do, as if you were a mere ignoramus. I never would stand that kind of thing. Yes, it's a very different sort of thing that you've done, to put yourself out, and maybe run a risk yourself in doing it; and then to promise, as you have, not to say anything about that horrid part of the whole affair,—Raymond Armitage's hateful impoliteness! Well, I don't think there are many girls that would hold their tongues like that; and I—I—I just—just—love you for it!" wound up Dorothea, her voice breaking in a sudden little tempest of tears.

"Oh, but I—I—I'm not what you—what you think—I'm not—I don't deserve—you don't know me," stammered Hope, astonished and embarrassed beyond words.

"I knew you from the first, the very first," went on Dorothea.

Hope started.

"From the very first, when I saw you coming down the corridor that afternoon I arrived, as the kind of girl I'd like,—a girl who wouldn't be mean and meddlesome; and I knew you were a lady of the real stuff, and you *are*—a long shot ahead of most of 'em here; and oh, I say—" Dorothea had now conquered her tears,—"aren't you the girl I saw last year at Papanti's with the Edlicotts?"

"No."

"Well, you look so like her I thought you might be, or some relation of hers maybe. You're just of her stamp, any way. Anna Fleming is always talking about those Knickerbocker Van der Bergs as if they were ahead of everybody else, and she is always quoting Kate Van der Berg as being so swell in her looks and her manners. Looks and manners! I told Anna the last time she said this to me, that *you* were a great sight *more* swell. And you are. Oh, I know who's who; there can't anybody tell *me*! Manners! I don't call it very good manners to talk *at* people as Kate Van der

Berg has talked at me, with all that stuff of what her brother Schuyler says about girls. She never liked me from the start, and she did what she could to set you, and, for that matter, the rest of the girls against me. I soon caught on to that. If it hadn't been for her—"

"Oh, Dorothea! Dorothea!" burst in Hope at this point, "I can't let you go on any more like this,—it would be mean and cowardly and dishonorable in me. You're all wrong, all wrong! Kate hasn't set me or any one else against you. You don't know, you don't remember—you think I—I would have been more—more sociable—more friendly, if it hadn't been for Kate, but—but it is—it is Kate who would have been more sociable, more friendly perhaps, if it hadn't been for me! *You* have forgotten *me*—you have forgotten that we have ever met before, but we have, and *I* have never forgotten, for you—you hurt me horribly—horribly at that time. I remember everything about it—every word; and when I met you in the corridor, the day you arrived here in the autumn, I knew you at once, but I saw that you had forgotten me, and I—"

"But when—where—how long ago was it—that time we met first—and what in the world did I say to hurt you so?" interrupted Dorothea with wide-open eyes of amazement.

"It was at Brookside, years ago."

"At Brookside? I never knew a girl like you at Brookside."

"Not like me now. I was only ten years old then, and I—was selling mayflowers in the Brookside station."

"Oh, I remember! I remember!" cried Dorothea, leaping down from the bed where she was sitting. "And you—you are that girl?"

"Yes, my father was an engineer on that road, and couldn't afford to buy me what I wanted more than anything in the world—a violin, and I thought I would have to give it up—to go without it, until one day on the street I heard a boy with a basket of mayflowers crying 'Ten cents a bunch,' and then I saw how I might earn the money that I wanted so much, and buy my violin myself."

"And you—*you* are that little girl—that little 'Ten-cents-a-bunch,' as I called you afterward to my father! Oh, oh, it all comes to me now; how mad I got because you stood up to me, and talked back to me. I suppose I was a great inquisitive brat, and fired off a lot of inquisitive questions at you,—I was always asking questions,—and you got mad at 'em and went for me, and then *I* got mad with you, and we had a regular squabble. I told my father about it, and he laughed and said, 'I don't think you had the best of it, Dolly;' and then I remember, too, something he said to Mary, my sister,—Mary had taken a great fancy to you,—something about your father knowing a lot about engines,—being a genius at that kind of thing; and then papa laughed again and asked me, if your father should turn out a millionaire some day, how'd I like my impudent little girl—that's *you*, you know—turning into a millionaire's daughter, and I said I'd say,'Ten cents a bunch to her,' and I have, I have! For your father *has* turned into a millionaire, hasn't he? and that's what it means, your being here, and your having a Stradivari violin! Oh, oh, oh, it's just like a story, just like a play—a Cinderella play; but," catching a queer expression on Hope's face, "I'm awfully sorry I hurt your feelings as I did, but you mustn't lay it up against me,—nobody ever lays anything up against me. I didn't *mean* to hurt your feelings, but I didn't know any better then, and anyhow, everything's come out all right for you now,—you've come up out of the soot and ashes just as Cinderella did, only *your* soot was engine soot, and you've come up at the top of everything, and I *do* say, *now*, that you are a great sight more swell in your looks and your manners and in *yourself* than Kate Van der Berg, I don't care *what* soot and ashes you came up from."

The queer expression on Hope's face had by this time deepened into something that looked like a wondering smile, a smile that seemed to say, "How perfectly astonishing this girl is!"

Dorothea saw the smile, and with a sudden acuteness that now and then came to her, hit upon its meaning, and cried out,—

"Oh, I see what you think,—I surprise you all round, I know, I'm so outspoken and blunt. Jimmy says I'm beastly blunt sometimes. I suppose in the first place that you expected me to have laid things up against you as you did against me; but, goody gracious, I never remember a quarter of what I say nor a quarter of what anybody else says after a while, and I'm always ready to make up, to jump over anything that's disagreeable if I'm met half-way; and you,—well, you've met me more than half-way in this business about Raymond Armitage, and if I *had* laid up anything you'd ever said,—and I do remember," laughing, "you said I was the most ignorant girl you'd ever seen,—I couldn't be mad with you for it now. No, I couldn't be anything but friendly to you,—and it's such jolly fun, too, the whole story,—my not remembering you, and the way it's turned out, and all; but look here, what's that you said about Kate Van der Berg,—that she might have been more sociable if it hadn't been for you? Did you tell her—I suppose you did—of our first meeting in the Brookside station, and the scrimmage we had, and that I hurt your feelings so dreadfully?"

"No; but after you had been here for a little time, Kate noticed that I—was rather stiff toward you."

"Yes, stiff and offish, but dreadfully polite, and in spite of it—the offishness, I mean—I liked you. *Isn't* it funny? But go on—Kate noticed that you were stiff toward me—"

"And she asked me what it was that I disliked in you, and I told her just this,—that you and I had met long ago when we were little girls, and that you had said something then that had hurt me

that I had never forgotten, but that you had forgotten it and forgotten *me*. That was all. I thought it was better to tell her what I did than to try to turn the subject, because if I tried to do that she would have thought the matter worse than it was."

"Well, I suppose she told the girls what you said, and made much of it, and—"

"She told no one. I asked her at once not to speak of it, and she promised that she wouldn't, and I know that she didn't."

"But you—I don't see, when you have talked with her, as you must have done, you are so intimate with her—about your mayflower business and everything—how you could help mentioning our scrimmage."

"I never have talked to her about the mayflower business, as you call it."

"Do you mean to say that she doesn't know that you sold those flowers to buy a violin?"

Hope colored painfully as she answered,—

"I—I have never said anything about those things to her."

"You haven't? Well, now look here; you've been so nice keeping *my* secret, I'll keep yours. The girls, not one of them, shall hear a word from me of that poor time and the flower-selling,—not one word; you can trust me."

"Oh, no, no, Dorothea! You think I am ashamed of that 'poor time,' as you describe it,—that dear time, it ought to be described. No, no, it isn't because I was ashamed of that time that I haven't spoken to Kate or to the others, it is because I'm always shy of talking about myself, always, and I was more than ever shy of talking to girls about a way of living and doing that they knew nothing of, and that they would wonder at as I told of it,—wonder at and stare at me in their wonder, because they knew nothing only of one kind of living and doing,—*their* kind. It would have been like what it is sometimes for a musician to play to an audience a new composition that is full of strange chords and harmonies. The audience listens and wonders but doesn't understand, and so is not in sympathy with the player, and the player is made to feel awkward and uncomfortable, and as if he had made a mistake in producing the composition at that time. That was what I knew that I should feel if I talked to these girls. Don't you see what I mean?"

"Yes, I see, now that you've put it before me in this way, but I shouldn't, if you hadn't laid it out as you have; and—well, I suppose I might have felt just as you did in your place, only I shouldn't have known how to explain it to myself as you have."

"And then after *you* came," went on Hope, more as if she were relieving her own mind than addressing any particular person, "after that, it would have been more difficult to talk of that old time—"

"Because you thought I'd stowed away in my mind that old squabble just as you had, and would jump on you, and say a lot of disagreeable things. Well, I might have burst out with a lot of remarks and exclamations and questions, and stared at you as you say you expected to be stared at, but I shouldn't have had any feeling of spite against you, any more than I have now this minute, for, as I tell you, I'd never laid up anything, but you're so sensitive, you wouldn't have liked my remarks and questions before all the girls, I dare say."

"And I dare say this sensitiveness has made me cowardly. I thought one day last term when Kate Van der Berg was talking with Anna Fleming about people who had risen in the world by their own ability, and yet didn't like to refer to their early days of poverty and struggle, that I must be a great coward, and I was very unhappy over it for a while; but I know now that my cowardice isn't shame at all, but just that shrinking from talking to those who couldn't fully understand what I was talking of, and who would stare at me with wonder and curiosity *because* they didn't understand. But now, now, I'm not going to shrink any longer, I'm not going to have anybody ever think for a single moment that I'm ashamed of that dear time when we lived in that tiny cottage at Riverview, where I first began to learn to play on the little violin I earned myself, and where my dear, dear father made the little model of the engine that made his fortune."

"Oh, do you mean, then, that you are going to tell Kate now, right away,—Kate and the other girls,—what you've told me?" asked Dorothea eagerly, and with her usual blunt inquisitiveness.

"Well, I don't know that I shall rush 'right away' now, this minute, and tell them; it isn't exactly a matter of such importance as that," answered Hope, with a laugh that was half amused and half annoyed. "I think I shall dress for dinner first, and I *may* sleep on it."

"Oh, now you're snubbing my inquisitiveness, I know! But, Hope, see here a minute. I—I want to say that I'm not going to talk to the girls about you. Of course, you expected that I would—would go on over that Brookside station squabble, and I might, if things hadn't turned out as they have—if I—I didn't feel as I do—as if I knew you better now, and knew how you felt about being made a show of."

Hope winced a little at this presumption on Dorothea's part that there was still a secret between them,—a secret dependent on Dorothea's own good will,—and she made haste to say,—

"It is very nice of you, I'm sure, Dorothea, to want to consult my feelings, but it isn't necessary for you to think that you must keep silent on my account."

Dorothea looked a little disappointed, and Hope felt a twinge of self-reproach as she glanced at her; but it was impossible for her to accept the attitude of indebtedness that seemed about to be thrust upon her. As she turned to leave the room, however, she said more warmly than she had yet spoken,—

"I think you have been very good-natured, Dorothea, to have taken everything that I have said so nicely—and—and"—smiling a little—"you are better-natured than I am, because you don't lay things up as I do."

"No, I don't lay up grudges, but I can lay up a little gratitude, I hope, and that helps me to be good-natured sometimes."

As she said this, Dorothea showed all her milk-white teeth in a frank laugh; and Hope, regarding her, thought to herself: "She *is* better natured than I am about some things, and she *can* be generous."

CHAPTER XXII.

"And she didn't make any objection to going with you?"

"No, not the slightest. Indeed she seemed glad to go with us."

Hope flushed a little, as she said this in answer to Kate's question that night, as the two sat talking over the day and its exciting events. The flush was the result of that pang of tender conscience that springs up in revolt at even a momentary want of candor.

"And Ray Armitage,—how did he take it?"

"Oh, quite easily!"

"And you didn't have—either you or Mrs. Sibley—to argue with her; you didn't have to tell her that the only thing to save her from the consequences of her silliness was to go home in a proper way under proper chaperonage?"

"No, we didn't have to knock her down with that bludgeon," laughed Hope.

"Well, I suppose she had begun to *think*! I'm glad she had so much sense. Schuyler made all manner of fun of me after you and Mrs. Sibley left. He said, in the first place, that he didn't believe you'd be in time to see them before they entered the theatre, and if you did, you wouldn't stop them."

"Mrs. Sibley was of the same opinion exactly."

"How clever it was of her to do the next thing,—take you into the theatre, and then manage the whole thing so perfectly!"

"Yes, wasn't it clever, and so kind."

"When you drove up did you see any of the teachers?"

"We met Miss Stephens as we entered the hall."

"You don't mean it? What did she say at seeing Dorothea with you?"

"Mrs. Sibley came in with us for a moment, and Miss Stephens looked at the three of us with some surprise, and then said,—

"'I thought Dorothea was coming home long ago under the escort of Bessie Armitage and her brother.'

"At that, Mrs. Sibley answered at once, 'We met Dorothea, and took her with *us*.'

"Oh! and when Miss Stephens saw Mrs. Sibley and heard her say that, she felt that everything was all right, I suppose. She ought to have been sure of that before, and then you wouldn't have lost your afternoon's skating, and had such a lot of bother."

"Oh, well, it's all turned out satisfactorily."

Hope couldn't tell Kate *how* satisfactorily,—couldn't tell her that if Miss Stephens *had* been sure that everything was right at an earlier hour and Dorothea had thus been hindered from doing what she did, she would also have missed that mortifying experience, that might do more to shake her unlimited confidence in her own estimates and opinions than anything else could possibly do.

No, Hope couldn't tell Kate of this, for her lips were sealed. But if she could not express herself freely in this direction, she could, and she would, say something to show Dorothea as she had just seen her,—at her best; and so she held forth, with what amplitude was possible within the limit of her promise, on the girl's surprising gentleness and reasonableness. Dorothea had really behaved exceedingly well, she told Kate, and was not only appreciative of what had been done for her, but of the good intention that prompted the doing. And here Hope could not help repeating this

characteristic speech of Dorothea's,—

"I don't half believe, and I never have, that such dreadful consequences would come of going against Miss Marr's rules; but *you* do, I see, and so it was awfully kind of you to take all this trouble to pull me out of the danger you thought I was in."

"She said that? Well, I must say, she's got more sense and feeling than I gave her credit for; and to think of her flying at *me* as she did. *My* intentions were as good as yours."

"Yes, but you gave her advice, and she hates advice. What seemed to impress her was our—Mrs. Sibley and my—taking the trouble to leave the Park, and actually going in to the matinée and waiting to do her the service we did."

"Well, I hope her gratitude and appreciation will last long enough to keep her out of any more silly scrapes for a while."

"I don't believe she will want to get into any more such scrapes. I—I think she feels sort of ashamed of what she has done. And, Kate, couldn't we—wouldn't it be a good plan if we tried to help her to keep out of such things?"

"Help her—how?"

"Well, I—I feel as if I may have been too hard on her. I have cherished my feeling of dislike constantly, and have done her an injury all round—with you, and the other girls by the way I have held off from her. She feels that the girls don't like her, and thinks that *you* were the first to dislike her, and that it was you who had influenced me. I told her what a mistake that was,—that it was *I* who had influenced you—by my manner at the start; and then, then I recalled myself to her mind. I told her what she had forgotten,—that I was the little girl she had met five years ago, —the little girl she had had a quarrel with at the Brookside station, and that I had always remembered what she had said to me there,—always remembered and resented it, and that it was that that had affected my manner towards her, had made me stiff and offish to her."

"Oh, Hope, do, do tell me about that time! I've never liked before to urge you to tell me the whole story, but I wish now that you *would* tell me."

There was a moment of hesitation,—just a moment; then with a little rising of color, a little tremulousness of voice, Hope said,—

"Kate, do you remember that piece of music that I brought back from Boston,—that 'Idyl of the Spring' that Mr. Kolb had composed for me to play at our coming May festival?"

"That piece dedicated to you, and so oddly named 'Mayflowers: Ten Cents a Bunch'?"

"Yes, and do you remember, when you asked me how he came to give it such an odd title, that I told you he had known a little girl once that he was very fond of, who had sold mayflowers at ten cents a bunch?"

"Yes."

"Well, *I* was that little girl."

"You! you! When—where—how did you come to sell them?"

"I'll tell you;" and then, for the second time that night, Hope told her story of that 'poor time,' as Dorothea had blunderingly called it,—that dear time, as she herself rightly and happily called it, —when she lived with her father and mother in the little cottage at Riverview, and carried out her joyous plan of earning that wonderful twenty-five dollars to buy the good little fiddle. As she told the story now, as she went back to the details of her plan, with Kate for audience, and described the little fiddle in the shop-window as she had first seen it, and the sinking of her heart as she was told the price, and then the happy relief of her inspiration when she heard the boy on the street call out "Ten cents a bunch," she began to lose her shyness in the warmth of her recollection,—to lose her shyness and to forget her shrinking from a possible auditor who *wouldn't understand*. Wouldn't understand! As she neared the end, as she came to her meeting with Dorothea in the Brookside station, and said, "It was there that I first met Dorothea," Kate burst in,—

"And she insulted you, she insulted you in her ignorance and stupidity! I can see it all,—all. She couldn't comprehend such a dear darling brave little thing as you. She took you for an ordinary little street huckster,—the horrid thick-headed, thick-skinned creature,—and sneered and jeered at you, and very likely called you names, or did other dreadful things."

"Oh, no, no, Kate! she wasn't malicious. She didn't *mean* to hurt me; but she was ignorant of any way of living but her own way, and she thought that anybody who sold things on the street must be one of those very poor people who lived anyhow, like the people at the North End, and so she asked me questions,—questions that hurt me, because they showed that she thought I was so different from herself. No, it wasn't malice that made her ask these questions, it was simply ignorance; and I—I told her so at last."

"You did? Hurrah! Tell me—tell me exactly what you said," cried Kate, laughing delightedly.

"Well, I said exactly that,—that she must be very ignorant or she would know more about the difference in people, that she would *see* the difference; and then I told her that my father was an

engineer on the road, and that we had a nice home and plenty to eat and to drink and to wear, and books and magazines and papers, and then she asked me what I sold flowers on the street for, if we were as nice as that, and I told her that I wanted to buy something for myself that my father couldn't afford to buy for me; and then I remember"—and a little dimpling smile came over Hope's face here—"I asked her, 'Don't you ever want anything that your father doesn't feel as if he could buy for you just when you want him to?' and she was so irritated at my accusing her of being ignorant that she answered, 'Well, if I did, I shouldn't be let to go out on the street and peddle flowers to earn the money.'"

"The hateful, impudent—"

"But wait, wait! I was as bad as she was here, because I answered back, 'And *I* shouldn't be *allowed* to say "let to go," like ignorant North Enders.'"

"Oh, Hope, Hope, this is beautiful, beautiful!" and Kate began to dance wildly around the room, thrumming an imaginary pair of castanets as she danced.

"I don't think it was very beautiful," protested Hope; "but you can see by this speech that I was as bad as she after I got my temper up."

"Bad! it was beautiful, beautiful,—just the best thing I ever heard. Bad! well, I should say not."

"But *she* didn't *mean* to hurt me, to begin with, and I—I *meant* to hurt her in everything I said. Remember that."

"You meant to enlighten her, and I fancy you did, and you certainly got the better of her."

"Yes, and her father told her so, she said, when I recalled the 'scrimmage,' as she termed it, to her mind; and yet in spite of that she didn't lay up anything against me. She had forgotten my face, and was fast forgetting the whole affair when I brought things back to her. She had never had a bit of grudge against me, and she only laughed when she recalled some of the things I had said. I'm glad now to tell you the whole story, for you must see by what I have told you, that she isn't in the least malicious, and you must see, too, that she is really much better natured than we have thought her, not to have laid up anything; yes, much better natured than I am."

"Well, she was the attacking party. You were only on the defensive, and you knocked her down with the truth. Of course you would remember the kind of things she said to you more than she would remember your replies; and then you are much finer and more sensitive than she, anyway. But I will allow that she has turned out better in the end than I would have expected. That telling you what her father said wasn't bad. But, Hope dear, sensitive as you are, how could you recall yourself and that old time to her?"

"I told you how I came to do it; it was because she had got it into her head that it was you who had made me stiff and offish, and I had to tell her then just how it was."

"Oh, yes; and you sacrificed yourself in that way for me. You hated to tell her, Hope, I know you did,—you are such a sensitive, shrinking creature."

"Yes, that is just my fault,—a cowardly shrinking, that makes me keep silent sometimes when I ought to speak. Oh, Kate, Kate, I dare say now, this minute, you are thinking how strange it is,—my not having spoken to you before, of all this old life of mine, when I lived so differently from the way I live now. I dare say you think I—I was ashamed to talk about it, because my father was a working-man, a poor locomotive engineer. Oh, I shall never forget how I felt that day last term when you talked about the people who kept still and never spoke of their humble beginnings; and when you brought up the Stephensons and said, 'Do you think *they'd* keep still, because they were ashamed of their humble beginnings, after they had worked out of them and become prosperous?' and then when you went on and declared how you hated the cowardice of those people who didn't dare to speak of these things, and what *you* would do under such circumstances, I felt that *I* was the most miserable coward, and that you would despise me forever if you knew what I was keeping to myself. But I knew—I knew all the time, that I wasn't ashamed of *anything*,—of the little home without a servant or of the engine-cab and my dear, dear father. I knew I was proud of him and what he had done, and yet I knew that I couldn't bear to think of telling all these things to girls who had never known what it was to live as we had. I felt that you wouldn't, that you couldn't understand; that you would take it all something as Dorothea had, years ago, though you wouldn't *say* a word of how you felt, but you would look it. You would stare at me with wonder and curiosity,—that you—you—"

"Oh, Hope, Hope, my dear, I do understand it all—all—everything. I *know* that you couldn't be ashamed of that old time, and I understand just how you felt about us, how and why you shrank from telling us. One such experience as that with Dorothea was enough to make you shrink from all girls like us. You were a dear delicate little child, and you had never known that there was such ignorance as Dorothea's, and that you *could* be so misunderstood, and it has made a great bruise on you that you have never got over. Oh, Hope, this is all Dorothea's doing. She *meant* no harm, but she has done the harm nevertheless, for she has taken away your belief and trust and confidence. To think that you couldn't trust *me*, after all you've known of me, to understand just a difference in the way of living! Why, the life you've just told me of—that little home where you were so close to each other, where you lived so near to all your father's hopes and plans—seems to me beautiful, something to be envied. And to think *you* should think I shouldn't understand, shouldn't appreciate it—should look at it with—with such eyes as—as Dorothea's! Oh, Hope!

Hope! doesn't this prove what harm Dorothea has done you?"

"And if it does, Kate, and I don't deny that it does, I say again that she didn't *mean* to do any harm,—I see that now as clear as can be,—and that ought to make all the difference; and then when I think what *I* have done—"

"You! what have you done but to forgive her ninety-and-nine times?"

"Oh, no, no, Kate, I've—I've dis—no, I've *hated* her all these years, and this hate has affected my manner towards her so much that it influenced you and all the other girls against her; and as she has been harmed through that, I don't see but that I ought to cry quits."

"Yes, five months against five years. Do you call that quits?"

"Yes, and maybe more than quits, because I've made enemies for her, or at least influenced people against her, while she had no feeling to prejudice people against me. She has liked me all this time that we've been here at school together, spite of my being so stiff; and when she came to find out who I was,—the little girl who got the best of her in that childish quarrel, she hadn't the least ill will towards me. Quits? Yes, I say it's more than quits for me. Oh, Kate, I can't tell you everything she said to me just now, but she did show herself generous and grateful; and even when I confessed that it was I who had prejudiced you, even then she had no ill will. Yes, yes, I agree that I was harmed and hurt by what happened five years ago; but, Kate, I've been thinking very fast and very hard for the last hour or two, and I've come to believe that if I had known nothing of Dorothea before she came here—if I and you had started without any prejudice, things might have been different, we might have been easier and pleasanter with her, and that might have brought her out in pleasanter ways. But instead of that, we picked up every little thing, and, well, she *was* cold-shouldered awfully by all of us at times; and we can't tell—we don't know what we might have done, if we had tried to make her *one of us* more. We might have kept her from doing such foolish reckless things as she has; and so, as I think that I am to blame for the beginning of this prejudice that has hurt her, I think that I may have been the means of doing her greater harm than she has ever done me; for think, *think*, Kate, *what* harm it must be to a girl to have Raymond Armitage able to boast about her accepting his attentions, and for your brother and Peter Van Loon, and nobody knows who else, getting such a cheap opinion of her through these things."

"Yes, I see. But what do you propose to do about it?"

"Well, I think—I ought to do or try to do what I can now, to help her *not* to hurt herself any more by these pranks."

"How are you going to work to make her over like this?"

"I—I don't expect to make her over, Kate, but I think she may get a different idea of having a good time if we are very friendly to her, and bring her into *our* good times, and she sees that the girls, and the boys too, that she really wants to associate with, really and truly look down on these pranks that she has thought were only 'good fun,'—look down upon them and think them vulgar."

"And you want me to help in this missionary work?" asked Kate, half laughing.

"Yes, I—I want you to be nice to her, Kate. When you meet her to-morrow morning, now, I want you to give her something more than a stiff nod; I want you to smile a little,—not too much, or she'll think I've been talking to you about her."

"A little, but not too much," laughed Kate, "Oh, Hope, Hope, you dear delightful darling you, this is too funny, too funny!"

"But won't you try—won't you try, Kate, to—"

"To smile upon her a little but not too much? Yes, yes, I'll try, I'll try," still laughing.

"And, Kate dear," suddenly enfolding the laughing girl in a close embrace, "will you try to do something else for me,—will you try to forgive me for—for being so stupid as not to trust you to—to understand? Will you try to forgive me, and to—to love me as well—as you did before?"

"Try to forgive you—to love you as well as I did before," cried Kate, pressing Hope's cheek against her own. "I've nothing to forgive; and as for loving you as well as I did before, I love you better, if that were possible, for before, though I thought I knew you pretty well, I didn't know how more than generous you could be. Love you? I love and admire you beyond anybody; I—"

"Girls, girls, it's after talking hours," whispered Anna Fleming, as she pushed open the door. "I've just come from your room, Hope, where I've been with Myra, and the lights are all being turned down in the halls, and so we *must* say good-night and scatter to bed."

"Oh, yes, I ought not to have stayed so long," whispered back Hope, apologetically. "Good-night!" and "Good-night!" "Good-night" responded Anna and Kate in chorus; but Kate managed to add slyly in a lower whisper to Hope,—

"I'll smile upon her a little, but not too much, Hope dear."

CHAPTER XXIII.

The next morning was rather dreaded by Dorothea. She had really suffered from a headache the night before, and with that excuse had been allowed to keep her room, and have a light supper sent up to her.

"But I wish I hadn't—I wish to goodness I'd gone down last night!" she said petulantly to herself, as she faced the morning's sunshine. She had full faith in Hope and her promise, and was therefore quite secure that not one of the girls would know of that mortifying little episode at the end of yesterday's escapade; and this was the most that she cared for. But yet, in spite of this, she had a certain very uncomfortable feeling about meeting Kate Van der Berg and "that set," as she called the little group of girls of which Kate seemed the natural head and leader. A very uncomfortable feeling; for though that mortifying episode was a safe secret, the rest of the escapade was the common property of Kate and Hope; "and of course," argued Dorothea, "Kate Van der Berg has told all *she* knows to the others, and they'll just take her little pattern of things, and set up and look at me, and think how the naughty girl was taken care of by Mrs. Sibley and Hope. Oh, oh, if it hadn't been for that horrid Raymond Armitage's being so mean and selfish at the end,—well, I've found *him* out!—I shouldn't have *had* to accept Hope's offer,—though it was awfully good of her, and I was awfully glad to accept, as things turned out. But if things *hadn't* turned out as they did,—if Ray Armitage had behaved himself, I *needn't* have accepted, and then if I had come back in the cars, as I went, I should have taken the risks and they'd have known that I was independent. But now, though thank Heaven they won't know *why* I accepted Hope's offer, they'll know that I *did* accept it, and so they'll stare at me as the naughty little girl who *had to* give in!"

It will be seen by this argument that Dorothea's state of mind was not yet what it should be. It will also be seen that, harboring such a state of mind, it was quite natural that she should find herself decidedly uncomfortable at the prospect of facing "that set." But it had to be done, however. There was no use in putting it off; and with a final glance at the mirror, a final pat to her smooth shining hair, Dorothea started off toward the dining-room. As she gained the lower hall, she heard a mingled sound of various voices issuing from the room, and ruefully thought: "Late as it is, they're all there! *Why* didn't I get up earlier? I might have known they'd be late Sunday morning. Now all eyes will be glaring at me when I open the door!"

But as she opened the door, beyond one or two of the girls looking up with a preoccupied air and a hasty good-morning, no notice was taken of her. "That set" and indeed the whole assembled company were in the very thick of an animated talk concerning the origin and observance of Saint Valentine's Day.

"Of course we have kept up the Valentine fun year after year, because there's such a lot of children in our family. I don't suppose that grown up people nowadays would make anything of it, if it wasn't for children,—except maybe vulgar people who use those horrid comic valentines to play a vulgar joke on some one," Kate Van der Berg was saying just as Dorothea stepped over the threshold. A little nod and smile was given to Dorothea the next moment,—a little easy nod and that happy half-smile that was "not too much," recommended by Hope.

"It says in Chambers' Book of Days," here spoke up Anna Fleming, "that Valentine's Day is now almost everywhere a much degenerated festival, but that it was once a very general custom with everybody—grown-up-people as well as children—to send valentines to each other; and it says, too, that the origin of this custom is a subject of some obscurity. Those are the very words; I read them last night to Myra, didn't I, Myra?"

"Yes; and you read too that the Saint Valentine who was a priest of Rome and martyred in the third century seems to have nothing to do with the matter beyond the accident of his day being used for the festival purpose."

"Then, if that is true, the whole thing is a sentimental muddle of nonsense, starting off with the mating of birds for origin, as some of the old writers seem to believe," cried Kate, in a disgusted tone. "But *I'm* not going to believe any such thing. I'm going to believe what Bishop Wheatley says about it. He says that Saint Valentine was a man so famous for his love and charity that the custom of choosing valentines upon his festival took its rise from a desire to commemorate that very love and charity by choosing a special friend on his day,—I suppose his birthday,—which was, as nearly as can be reckoned, the fourteenth of February. Now, I shall stick to this explanation of the day. Bishop Wheatley's authority is good enough for me, and I shall choose *my* valentine on his lines this year as I did last."

"Oh, *who* was your Valentine last year?" cried little Lily Chester, with eager curiosity.

"My aunt Katrine,—a great-aunt whom I had never seen until last year, when she came over from Germany to visit us."

"An old aunt,—how funny!" exclaimed Lily.

"Why funny?"

"Why? Because—because whoever heard of anybody choosing an old aunt for a valentine?"

"Whom do *you* choose, Lily?"

"I? Oh, *I* choose children I know,—boys, always."

An outburst of laughter greeted this declaration; and in the midst of it Kate said gayly, with a little confidential nod to Dorothea, "It's currants and raisins again, Dorothea."

The gay tone of good-fellowship, the confidential nod and smile took Dorothea so by surprise that for the moment her ready speech failed her. What she had *thought*, what she might have *said* if she had not thus been surprised into silence, was something in her usual truculent vein, with a very decided declaration of sympathy with Lily's choice. But surprised and silent for the moment, she was all ready to agree with Myra Donaldson, who followed Kate's remark with a laughing confession that she too had chosen "boys always,"—that she thought that was the customary, the proper valentine way. And agreeing with Myra in an emphatic "It *is*—it always *has* been the proper valentine way," Dorothea was again surprised at the gentleness of Kate's tone as she disagreed,—as she said:

"Oh, no, no, Dorothea; the good old Bishop Wheatley didn't mean that it was *nothing* but a sweethearting custom, for there is another record that says distinctly that the early Church looked upon that custom as one of the pagan practices, and observed the day as a real Saint's Day, when one chose a particular patron saint for the year and called him, or her, my 'valentine.' And it was in that way that I chose dear old Aunt Katrine for *my* valentine last year."

"And *I* chose my dear Mr. Kolb, my first music-teacher," said Hope, looking up brightly. "He taught me to play on that little violin I was telling you about," glancing at Kate with a significant smile. Dorothea saw the smile, and instantly said to herself: "She's told her,—she's told her all that Mayflower and fiddle story, every word of it, I can see by their looks. I wonder if she's told the other girls?"

But what was that that Myra Donaldson was referring to?—something that had evidently brought up all this talk. Dorothea had lost a sentence or two in her momentary preoccupation over Hope and Kate; but now catching the words "It's to be a valentine party as usual," she asked eagerly,—

"Whose party is it,—who gives it?"

"Bessie Armitage. The fourteenth of February is her birthday, and she always has a party on that day, or on the evening of the day. She hasn't sent her invitations out yet, but she will next week. I went to her last year's party, and it was such a pretty party, wasn't it?" looking at Kate and Hope, who at once gave cordial agreement that it was a *very* pretty party. "But you'll see for yourself this year, Dorothea," Myra went on, "for I suppose Miss Marr will let us go, as she did last winter, though it *is* stretching a point to go to any party outside; but Bessie has been here so long—she was only ten when she first came to Miss Marr's—that she has exceptions made in her favor; and then these birthday-parties of hers are always early parties, and that makes a great difference."

A party,—a Valentine party at Bessie Armitage's! Dorothea couldn't, for the life of her, keep the hot angry color from rushing to her face as she heard the name of Armitage; and her first thought was: "Catch me going to a party at *his* home, where I've got to be polite to *him*!" At the next thought,—the thought that her refusal to go would be thoroughly understood by Raymond himself, would be taken by him as a direct cut and snub, her spirits rose, and a little triumphant smile began to curl her lips.

"Look at Dorothea! She's planning *some* mischief," laughed Myra, who had noted the sudden change in her opposite neighbor's face. All eyes were now indeed turned upon Dorothea.

"Yes, you look like yourself again," spoke up Anna Fleming, "you were quite pale when you first came in. Has your headache all gone?"

"My headache?"

"Yes; they said you didn't come down to dinner last night on account of a headache."

"Oh yes, I forgot to ask you how you were, we were so full of Bessie's Valentine party when you came in," said Myra, apologetically. Then, politely: "You had to leave the Park yesterday almost directly after you arrived there, some one said. 'Twas too bad. I didn't see you at all after we entered, for I went at once over on the other side of the pond with Anna and some of her friends. What a scattered party we were,—Anna and I on one side and Kate and Hope on the other, and the rest I don't know where: and how we straggled home,—Anna's friends in charge of us, while Miss Thompson had another party and Miss Stephens still another."

Dorothea forgot her embarrassment, forgot everything, as she listened to these words, but the amazing fact that Kate had told neither Anna nor Myra the story of yesterday's escapade,—and Anna was Kate's room-mate! Could it be that Kate Van der Berg,—who had always been so ready to find fault, to say disagreeable things, to put her—Dorothea—in the wrong,—could it be possible that of her own will, her own thought, she had refrained from repeating what she knew? And if she had, what was her motive? Dorothea asked herself suspiciously, for she could not understand how one so outspoken and lavish in her fault-finding could suddenly put such restraint upon her tongue; for she could not comprehend, this quick-tempered yet obtuse Dorothea, that a nature which might be lavish of fault-finding and criticism upon certain occasions, upon certain other occasions, from a nice sense of honor and generosity, might also be able to keep a golden silence. Yet this was just what Kate Van der Berg had done. She had had the impulse at the first to rush at once to Myra, to whom she had already told so much, with this amazing story of Dorothea's latest exploit. But a second impulse came to her,—a kindly impulse of restraint, wherein she said

to herself: "No, I won't prejudice Myra any further, perhaps I've prejudiced her too much already by what I've told her; at any rate, I'll keep silent about this affair." How more than glad she was that she had thus kept silent when Myra's innocently betrayed ignorance brought that look of surprise and relief into Dorothea's face. And Dorothea, presently turning her gaze from Myra to Kate herself, caught on the latter's face something of the expression of this gladness, and experienced a fresh surprise thereat; but in this surprise was mixed a little feeling of self-gratulation that matters were turning out so easily and happily; and then her volatile spirits began to rebound again, and her thoughts to run in this way,—

"How silly I've been to get so nervous and fidgety; but it's all owing to Ray Armitage's behavior. I haven't done anything to be ashamed of anyhow, and I dare say in her secret heart Kate Van der Berg *thinks* I haven't. Any way everything is blowing over beautifully now, and I'm not going to bother about things another bit, not even about that horrid Ray Armitage,—though I'll manage to get even with him yet!" And so solacing herself, in this fashion, Dorothea's spirits continued to rise higher and higher, and by Monday she was in her usual mental as well as bodily condition, her headache and her heartache—if the latter term could be employed to describe her pangs of sore mortification—no longer conquering her. Indeed, so jubilant was the reactionary state of mind following upon her depression, that she at once set about readjusting various little plans to suit her present mood. One of these plans was the determination she had made to refuse Bessie Armitage's invitation to the birthday valentine party. It would only make the girls talk for her to stay away, she concluded. It would be a great deal better plan to go to the party, and show Ray Armitage that he wasn't of enough consequence to keep her away. And when there she could manage to snub him beautifully in a dozen different ways, though it *was* in his own house,—oh yes, in a dozen different ways, and be outwardly very polite too; yes, indeed, *she* knew how to do it!

In thoughts and plans like these, the days flew swiftly by. "Next week," Myra had informed them, the invitations were to be sent out, and she had had *her* information from Bessie herself, who was at that time confined at home with a severe cold. Next week, and then another week would bring the anticipated fourteenth.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"But there must be some mistake, some accident, that has delayed yours, for all the other girls received theirs yesterday," exclaimed Myra Donaldson in surprise, when Dorothea mentioned the fact to her on Tuesday of that following week, that she had not received her invitation. "Yes, there must be some accident," reiterated Myra; "it no doubt slipped out in some way, and you'll get it to-morrow." But "to-morrow" came and went and Dorothea failed to receive the invitation.

"Of course there must be some mistake," Anna Fleming also declared, when *she* was told of the fact; and then one and another echoed the same declaration as they heard of the circumstance. Of course there was some mistake! By Thursday, certainly, everybody thought the "mistake" would be discovered and rectified; but Thursday too came and went, and Friday passed by without the desired result. On Saturday morning Dorothea said to Hope,—

"I—I wish you would do something for me, Hope."

"Yes, certainly I will if I can," returned Hope.

"Well, it's just this: I heard that you were going out to drive with Kate Van der Berg this afternoon, and I wondered if you could—if you *would* call and see Bessie Armitage,—see how she is, you know—and then—and then you might ask her—you might tell her about the invitation,—that I hadn't received it. Of course *I* don't want to speak to her about it, but somebody else might, and she would want to be told—she'd feel horribly—*I* should, I'm sure, in her place if I *wasn't* told—if the mistake *wasn't* rectified; and so I thought if *you* would just speak of it—"

"Yes, indeed I will. I'm glad you asked me. I wonder I hadn't thought of it myself, but I'll go round directly the first thing this afternoon," responded Hope, cordially.

"Some mistake?" repeated Bessie Armitage, in a queer, hesitating, questioning way, as Hope sat before her, waiting for the explanation that she had expected would at once make everything right for Dorothea.

"Yes, for she hasn't received her invitation at all, you understand," answered Hope, thinking that Bessie had *not* understood.

"Yes?" began Bessie, and then stopped, her eyes cast down and the color coming into her cheeks, while Hope and Kate glanced at each other in embarrassed silence. What *did* it mean? What *could* be the matter? They were wildly conjecturing all sorts of strange impossible things, and Hope was just determining to break the dreadful silence with these very questions, when Bessie looked up and said:

"I'll tell you—I *must* tell you; there wasn't any mistake—I knew that Dorothea had no invitation."

"Oh!" breathed Hope, faintly; and "Oh!" echoed Kate, in the same tone.

"No, it was meant that she shouldn't have one; but I had written one, and I was going to send it if —if my mother hadn't stopped it."

"Your mother?"

"Yes, my mother. I had already sent out quite a number of invitations, and had just got another lot ready, when my mother came in and saw Dorothea's name on one of the notes. The moment she saw it, she forbade me to send it. Mother was at the New Year's party,—perhaps you remember,—just at the last of it, when Dorothea was going on so, and she took a great dislike to Dorothea then. Dorothea *was* noisy, you know. Mother thought she was very loud and underbred. But that—that wasn't all. A little while ago some acquaintances of ours from Philadelphia—the Cargills—were staying at the Waldorf. The next day after they arrived, they went to a matinée at the Madison Square Theatre, and saw there my brother Raymond, and with him a young girl. Of course they thought the girl was some member of our family; and when he went to speak to them, they asked him if that was another sister he had with him, and he told them no; that it was only an acquaintance,—a girl who was in a boarding-school in the city. Mrs. Cargill thought this was very odd; and as Raymond was so young, she spoke about it to mamma. Mamma was astonished, and she went straight to Raymond and asked him what it all meant, and who the girl was; and Raymond had to tell the whole story then,—that it was Dorothea Dering, from Miss Marr's school; that he had invited her to go to the matinée with him, and that she had accepted the invitation; and then that he had met her at the skating-pond in Central Park, and had gone from there with her to the theatre, unsuspected by any of the teachers. The minute mamma heard the name, 'Dorothea Dering,' she recalled the New Year's party and Dorothea's behavior there; and so, and so, don't you see, when she saw Dorothea's name on the envelope, the other day, she thought of all these things, and—and forbade my sending the note. I tried my best to get her to let me send it; I told her what Anna Fleming had said to me,—that Dorothea came from one of the first families of Massachusetts; that her father was the Hon. James Dering, and all her people were in the very best society. But the more I tried to talk Dorothea up in this way, the more decided mamma grew; until, at last, she said that there had been too much of this falling back upon one's family nowadays; that bad, loud manners and rude behavior were not to be overlooked and excused on that account, and that she didn't propose to overlook Dorothea's by having her invited to her house. And when I said I thought that Raymond was as much to blame, in *asking* her to go to the matinée, as Dorothea was in going, mamma said that that didn't help her case at all; that Raymond's invitation was only the result of her own loud, free ways; that he would never have thought of inviting her like that, if she had been a different kind of girl. Oh,"—with a quick look at Hope and Kate,—"mamma didn't altogether exonerate Raymond; she didn't think he was altogether right, by any means; but then she does think—and so do I, girls—that boys and young men are apt to treat a girl a good deal as the girl treats them; and—and—Dorothea *was* too forward with Raymond. I saw it myself from the first; and she led him on,—she encouraged him to treat her as he wouldn't have treated either of you two. She thought he admired just those free, foolish ways of hers; but he didn't,—he was only amused by them. Oh, I know Raymond; and I know if he had seen *me* going on with any one as Dorothea did, he would have scolded me well. It wouldn't have amused him to have seen his sister going on so, to have seen *me* amusing any one like that. But, Hope, Kate, all the same, I felt dreadfully at leaving Dorothea out,—dreadfully, for there I'd sent off almost all the school invitations; there was no getting them back. If I could have got them back, I would; and—yes, truly, I wouldn't have sent any invitations to any one at Miss Marr's, if I had known I had got to cut Dorothea. No; I wouldn't have sent one, and then I could have explained it to the rest of you privately, or I could have said I couldn't make so large a party this year. Yes, I would certainly have done this if it hadn't been too late,—if mamma had only seen and stopped Dorothea's invitation before the other school notes had been sent. Yes, I would have done just that; and not because I'm at all fond of Dorothea, but because I hate to hurt anybody's feelings, and to—to make such a time. I should have gone back to school this week if it hadn't been for this happening; but I'm not going now until after the party, and I may not go until next term if my father will take me away with him to Florida, where he is going next month; and I hope, oh, I hope he will!" And here suddenly, to Hope and Kate's astonishment, this quiet, self-contained Bessie Armitage covered her face with her hands and burst into tears.

"Oh, Bessie! Bessie!" broke forth Hope and Kate, with a warm outrushing of sympathy, and a desire to say something comforting,—"oh, Bessie, Bessie!" and then suddenly they both stopped, for what could they say further without saying something that would seem like a protest against Mrs. Armitage's decision,—that, in fact, *would* be a protest, for both girls were protesting in their hearts at that moment, were saying something like this to themselves,—

"What harm could it have done to let *this* invitation go,—just this one? They needn't ever have invited her again." And at that very moment, as they were thus thinking, they heard the rings of a portière slip aside, and there was Mrs. Armitage herself, entering from the next room with a kind look of concern on her face, and in another moment, after her friendly greeting, she was saying, —

"Bessie has told you my decision about the invitation to Miss Dering, and I dare say you think I am very stiff and hard, not to let the invitation go,—that it can't make much difference for this once; but, my dears, it is *this once*, this one party, where my little ten-year-old Amy and her little cousins will be in amongst the older ones, that *will* make all the difference, for I don't want these little girls to see such an exhibition of loud manners, and those—I hate to say it—vulgar *flirting* ways such as I saw New Year's evening. If it were any other party, a party where there were

older girls only, I might have let the invitation go; but I have seen the ill effects of very young girls like my Amy and her cousins being brought into contact even for a short time with a handsome showy girl who does and says the kind of things that Miss Dering does, especially when that girl is accepted as a guest by their own friends; and so, if only for this one reason apart from any other, don't you see, my dears, that I *couldn't* let this invitation go?"

"Yes, I do see, I do see!" cried Kate, impulsively; "but—Mrs. Armitage, do you think she—Dorothea will understand—will know that it is her own fault?"

"I—I think she will, I think she must," answered Mrs. Armitage. There were tears in her eyes as she said this; and as she bent down and kissed them good-by, both Hope and Kate felt the depth and sincerity of her purpose, and respected her for it.

"She's right, she's right of course!" burst forth Kate, as the two girls were driving away together; "but, oh, I do wish she hadn't been quite so right, quite so high-minded just now; for *what* an uncomfortable time is ahead of us! Oh, Hope, I pity you; what shall you—what *can* you tell Dorothea?"

"I don't see that I can tell her anything but the truth."

"Not the whole truth?"

"What else could I tell her?"

"My! I wouldn't be in your shoes for something! She'll be so furious, she'll fall upon you,—you or anybody who is nearest,—and chew you into mince-meat! Oh, Hope, don't tell her! Tell her—tell her—oh, I have it—tell her that you spoke to Bessie about the invitation, and that there was none sent because Bessie is offended with her for some reason,—that you can't tell her what it is, but that she must go to Bessie herself for the reason. There! there you are all fixed up, and with the great high-minded muss shoved off on to the Armitage shoulders, where it ought to be. Houp la! I'd dance a jig if I were out of the carriage!"

"But I—I sha'n't shove it off like that, Katy dear. I shall tell Dorothea everything,—it is the only way. I shall tell her as gently as I can, but I shall tell her. If I turn it off in the way you suggest, it will make more trouble. She'll go to Bessie the minute she gets back and say something disagreeable to her, or she'll treat her in an angry disagreeable manner, and just as like as not say something,—something purposely impertinent to irritate Bessie,—for she won't stop at anything then."

"But do you think it will be any better—do you think she'll be any less angry if you tell her that it is Mrs. Armitage who is at the bottom of the business?"

"Yes, I do; I think it will be a great deal better. She'll be angry,—she may be furious, as you say; but I shall tell her just how Bessie felt about *not* sending the note,—how she cried over it, and how Mrs. Armitage felt; and Dorothea has too much sense not to see herself, after the first burst of temper, that the whole thing has been made too serious a matter for her to quarrel about it in a little petty way. And then—then I think, after she gets over the anger, that she is going to be helped by the whole experience, going to see what she has never seen before,—that she is all in the wrong in her way of doing and saying the things that she does, and that she will be left out of everything if she doesn't do differently; and nothing—no, nothing but something like this—would ever show her how she has been hurting herself."

"Well, you *may* be right, Hope; but *I* believe this spoilt baby will scream and kick and bang her head in some sort of tantrum way, and then she'll pack up her clothes and rush off to Boston, shaking the wicked dirty dust of New York from her feet, and calling us all a lot of primmy old maids, or something worse."

Hope laughed a little, but she was more than a little anxious and troubled; for, spite of her brave stand, she did have a very decided dread of applying that heroic treatment of the whole truth to Dorothea; and her dread by no means diminished as she went down the long corridor and saw at the end of it Dorothea's room-door standing open, and within the room Dorothea herself, humming a gay waltz as she shook out the folds of the yellow gown; and "Oh," groaned Hope, "she's getting it ready for the party; she thinks everything is all right, and she's so sure she's going. Oh, dear!"

And then it was, when Hope's heart was quaking with fear and pity, that Dorothea glanced up from the yellow gown and cried out joyfully,—

"Oh, there you are! Come in, come in, and tell me all about it,—how the mistake was made; and where is it,—the invitation?—you brought it with you, didn't you?"

"No—I—she—"

"Thought it wasn't necessary,—that you could tell me? Was the note lost?" went on Dorothea, in her headlong way of anticipating everything as usual, and only brought up at last by Hope's faint, distressed cry of—

"Oh, Dorothea, there wasn't any invitation!"

"Wasn't any? What—what do you mean?" exclaimed Dorothea, dropping her yellow gown to the floor, and staring with great dilating eyes at Hope.

"I mean that Bessie—that Bessie didn't—that—that it was stopped—that her—"

"Her brother stopped it? Raymond Armitage? He was so mean as that—because I resented the way he treated me there at the theatre? He—he has told her some lie, then, and I will tell *her*—"

"Oh, Dorothea, Dorothea, wait, wait—listen to me! It is not—it was not her brother, not Raymond Armitage, who stopped it; it was—it was—their mother—it was Mrs. Armitage."

"Mrs. Armitage! and Raymond went to her—he got her to stop it? Oh, how—"

"No, no, he did not go to her. Oh, Dorothea," going forward and taking Dorothea's hand, "won't you wait, won't you listen to me?"

The soft touch of Hope's hand, the soft tone, so full of pity it sounded like love, seemed to surprise Dorothea out of her gathering wrath for a moment, and her own fingers closing over Hope's with a sudden clinging movement, she answered hastily,—

"Yes, yes, I'll listen, I'll listen; go on, go on!"

And Hope, holding the girl's hand with that soft, firm touch, went on to tell her the story that was so difficult for her to tell,—that "whole truth" that she had decided that Dorothea must now know once for all. As gently as possible, the talk with Bessie, the interview with Mrs. Armitage was given; nothing, not even the reference to the New Year's party episode and its prejudicial effect, being withheld; and yet through it all Dorothea made no interruption, made no sign to show her feeling, beyond now and then a convulsive clutch at the hand that was holding hers, and a gradual fading away of the hot red color that had suffused her face at the start. As Hope felt this clutch of her fingers now and then, as she saw toward the end of her story the increasing pallor of her companion's face, she could not help a thrill of apprehension, for these signs seemed to her the signs of a storm that would presently break forth; and as she came to the end, the very end of what she had to say, she had a feeling of trying to steady herself, to hold herself in readiness to argue or assert or soothe, whichever method might seem best suited to stem or stay the outbreak she expected. But what—what did this mean—this dead silence that followed, when she had ceased speaking? Was this the calm before the dreaded storm? And Hope, who had lowered her eyes toward the end of her story, instinctively looked up,—looked up to see great tears rolling down the colorless cheeks before her, and over all the face a pale passion of emotion that did not seem to be the passion of anger. Could it be the passion of pain only? Could it be that there was to be no storm of angry protest and defiance even at the very first? No, there was to be no storm of that kind. Dorothea had again surprised her!

CHAPTER XXV.

But as the fears and apprehensions that beset her began to lessen, Hope's pity and sympathy rose afresh, and with added vigor. She was thinking how best to express this pity and sympathy without striking a note of criticism that might injure the effect of what she had placed before Dorothea, when Dorothea herself showed the way, as she suddenly said,—

"There's no use for me to stay here any longer. I'd better go home, where people know me, and—and don't think my ways are so dreadful."

There was no angry temper in this speech. Though the tone was rather morose and bitter, it seemed to spring from a sudden appalled sense of defeat and danger such as she had never heretofore experienced. And this was just the situation. Hope's tact and kindness had presented the whole truth so carefully that petty irritation was swallowed up in the something serious that Dorothea herself but half comprehended, but from which her first instinct was to flee,—to go home where people knew her and didn't think her ways so dreadful.

But, "No, no," Hope urged against this desire. "You must stay, Dorothea,—stay and take a better place than you've ever taken before with us; for you can, oh, you can, Dorothea. You can make us all love and admire you if you have a mind to, if you won't—won't be *quite* so headlong, so—so sure you are right in some things, so—childish in some ways."

"*I* childish! 'Tisn't childishness your Mrs. Armitage is finding fault with!" blurted out Dorothea, in a bitter yet broken tone.

"But it is just that. If you were small for our age instead of so big, it would be called childishness; and as it is, I've heard you spoken of as 'a spoilt child.' But you are so tall, so big, so womanly, most people think you are a grown up young lady; and—and grown up young *ladies* don't go on just in the way that you do, Dorothea."

"'Just the way that I do!' Oh, I laugh, and I make too much noise in my fun, I suppose you think; but what's the reason the Brookside people and the lots of people we know all about Brookside,—what's the reason they don't find fault with my ways and leave me out of their parties?"

"You are a stranger here, Dorothea. You must remember that we never have the same freedom, or are looked upon quite the same, in a place where we are strangers, as where we have always lived," answered Hope, gently.

"Then it's all the more reason why I'd better go home, where people know me and don't think my ways so dreadful."

"Dorothea, you have told me once or twice that your cousin found fault with your ways, and perhaps—if he had not been your cousin, have known you so well—if you had been a stranger to him, he might not have made a friendly allowance for you; and, Dorothea, tell me one thing: did you ever—ever go on there at home as you have here,—receiving gifts and attentions, and going to the theatre on the—on the sly?"

"N—o."

"If you had, and it had been found out, do you think it would have been passed over unnoticed?"

"N—o, I don't suppose it would, but I shouldn't have been treated like this,—left out like this."

"No; because—because, Dorothea, you and your family are not strangers,—because you are well known, and people forgive friends for a long time."

"Then I'd better go back to them, I'd better go back to them, and I will, I will! Oh, I can't stay here, Hope, I can't, I can't! I see how you'll all feel, how you'll think that I've been a disgrace to the school, when this gets out that Mrs. Armitage wouldn't have me at the party, and I can't, I can't stay."

"Dorothea, Dorothea!" and Hope knelt down by the couch where Dorothea had flung herself in an agony of tears,—knelt down, and putting her arms about the suffering girl begged her never for a moment to think that either she or Kate or Bessie would speak to the other girls about Mrs. Armitage's action in regard to the invitation. "No, they will never know from us, Dorothea,—never, never."

"Hope knelt down by the couch where Dorothea had flung herself"

"But—but what wi—will they think whe—when I—I don't—go to the party?" sobbed Dorothea.

"Of course they'll think there's been a falling out of some kind, and there has; but it isn't necessary that they should be told what it is, is it?"

"N—o, n—o, but it wi—will ge—get out somehow. You—you'll see, Hope, and I—I can't—I can't stay, and have them talking about my—my being left out on—on purpose li—like this."

"But even if the truth did get out, it would be a great deal worse for you to run away than to stay, for it would look—it would *be*—cowardly. No, no, Dorothea! you must stay, and I—I will help you all I can; I will be your friend, whatever happens, and so will Kate."

"Whatever happens." When Hope said this, she had little thought that anything further in connection with the matter was to happen. She had spoken out of her deep pity and sympathy, to soothe and sustain Dorothea through a hard crisis,—to soothe and sustain and strengthen her to

do the courageous thing. She was quite sure, as she had said, that neither Bessie nor Kate would tell the story of the arrested invitation; but she made it still surer by exacting a solemn promise from them not to do so,—a promise as solemnly kept as it was made. And yet, and yet, somehow and from somewhere—was it through Mrs. Armitage or Raymond, both of whom had given their word to Bessie to make no mention of the subject?—a whisper of the truth, found its way, before the week was over, into the schoolroom circle. And before the week was over, Dorothea knew it! She knew it by the suddenly withdrawn glances as she looked up; she knew it by the suddenly changed conversation as she approached; she knew it by numberless little signs and indications in all directions. And Hope, when she was presently beset by eager questions from one and another,—Had she heard? and what did she think? and could it be true?—poor Hope had hard work to fence and parry and hold her ground without violating the truth. She succeeded at last, however, in silencing her questioners; but she was perfectly well aware that she had *only* silenced them as far as she herself was concerned.

Kate Van der Berg also had a good deal of the same trying experience, and bore it less amiably.

"I'm sick to death of the whole subject," she said at length to Hope. "I wish to mercy Dorothea Dering had never entered this house! But don't be alarmed!" as she caught a startled look from Hope; "I'm not going to back down. I'll be good to her, and I *do* pity her."

"Pity her! I should think anybody *might* pity her," cried Hope, with almost a sob. "It simply breaks my heart to see her."

And to Dorothea, who came to her with this further trouble,—who said to her, "You see, you see, it has all come out just as I thought it would,"—to Dorothea she was an angel indeed, this sweet-souled Hope,—an angel of real help in the stanch devotion of her companionship, and the constant influence it exerted in soothing and encouraging her to accept the condition of things as they were, and make the best of them by making no aggressive protest. It was not easy for Dorothea to pursue this course, and Hope could not help admiring the new spirit of dignity which she seemed to develop in sticking to it.

But there was a new element of knowledge coming to Dorothea through her bitter experience. She had always heretofore been ready to fight against any and every opposition, as I have shown. Now, for the first time, she was beginning to feel the pressure of that great power of the great world which we call the sentiment of society, and dimly but surely to perceive that she must submit to it, or at least that, if she tried to fight against it, it would be to her own destruction. But this new sense of things, valuable though it was in its present restraining influence and its promise of right development, did not tend to make Dorothea feel easier or happier at the moment. Rather, the restraint chafed and depressed her. In spite of this depression, however, she said no more about going back to Brookside. She was discovering for herself that Hope was right,—that it would be not only cowardly for her to run away, but prejudicial to her interests in every direction. But how difficult it was for her to live through these days with apparent calmness, only Hope guessed. What Hope did not guess was the extent and power of her own helpfulness at this crisis. Dorothea, however, was fully aware of it; and one day,—it was the morning after the Valentine party,—when the girls had naturally been very voluble in their reminiscences of the evening, she said to Hope,—

"Hope, you've helped me to *live* through this thing, and I shall always remember it, and always, always love you for it. But for you I could never have stayed here and stood things,—never, never, never!"

Yet not then had she received the full measure of Hope's help. It was when the days went by, and she found that the curiosity about herself had subsided, she also found that in the indifference that had succeeded this curiosity there was a shadow of something that she could give no name to,—that she could not at once understand,—but that by and by she came to know was that shadow of the world's disapproval that she had been made acquainted with through Mrs. Armitage. It was then, when the girl felt herself in the settled atmosphere of this shadow, that Hope showed the full measure of her power to help.

Not immediately realizing the condition of things, she could not comprehend what seemed to her Dorothea's persistent shrinking from the companionship of the others, and at last remonstrated with her in this wise:—

"Dorothea, you mustn't keep by yourself, and neglect the girls, as you do. It isn't right or sensible."

And to this Dorothea had replied, with a mirthless laugh,—

"Neglect them! If there is any neglect going on, *I'm* not guilty of it."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. *I'm* not neglecting anybody."

"You mean—that—that they are neglecting *you*?"

Dorothea nodded. She could not command her voice to speak further.

Hope was about to protest,—to say that there must be a mistake,—that *she* had seen nothing, when suddenly the meaning of certain little things, that she had but vaguely noticed at the time,

flashed over her, bringing the instantaneous conviction that Dorothea was right. And with this conviction there sprung up in Hope's heart a hot flame of indignation, and she set herself to think what further she could do—what strong measure could be taken—to show these girls that they were not to sit in judgment in this wholesale fashion, and to show them, too, that Dorothea had stanch friends who believed in her virtues, even while they admitted her faults, and would stand by her through thick and thin.

But what *could* she do further? She had indicated to the girls how friendly she felt toward Dorothea, by bestowing upon her whatever kindly attentions she could,—had walked with her and talked with her, and made little visits to her room, which latter she had never been in the habit of doing before. She had also influenced Kate to join her in these attentions, and Kate had tried to do so,—not always successfully, however; and yet all this had seemed to go for nothing against the tide that had risen against the girl. What more *could* be done? There was nothing, nothing more.

Yes, yes, yes, there *was*—there *was* something more, there *was* something! And as this "something" flashed into Hope's mind, she seized Dorothea's hands in hers, and—

"Dorothea, Dorothea!" she cried, "I have a plan,—something I want you to do *for* me and *with* me. I am to play, you know, at the May festival,—first, something Mr. Kolb has written specially for me; then, later, a waltz also by Mr. Kolb. It is a duet, and Fraulein Schiller was to play it with me; but she has got news of the illness of her mother, and has gone home to Germany, and I have to choose some one to fill her place; and I choose you, if you will take it."

"Choose me,—*me*? Oh, Hope, Hope, Hope, I don't care for anything else now,—not anything else! But, oh, *can* I, *can* I,—I'm afraid it's too hard, that it's beyond me."

"No, it isn't too hard, but I'll give you lessons; I'll practise with you every day, if you'll study hard."

"Study! I'll study every minute that I can get;" and then, quivering with excitement, Dorothea flung herself upon the floor, and, putting her head down on Hope's lap, cried brokenly,—

"Oh, Hope, Hope, how angelic of you to do this for me *now, now*!"

It was the last of March when this proposition was made, and the festival was to come off the last of May, that being the end of the school year at Miss Marr's; the festival itself being a sort of celebration of the year's work,—a grand general class day.

To have a special part assigned to one in the program of this day was to be specially honored, and great was the surprise when it was found that Dorothea had been thus honored.

There were two or three others—outside pupils, to be sure, but Fraulein Schiller was an outside pupil—from whom it was expected that Hope would make her choice, as they were known to be, if not particularly brilliant, yet very faithful students of the violin; and to pass these by for Dorothea was surprising indeed, and not to be explained by any mere good-nature. Hope Benham *was* a very good-natured girl, and had been very kind and polite to Dorothea, the little school circle decided; but they all knew how refined and fastidious and very, *very* sensitive she was, and what she thought about things; and if she thought seriously that Dorothea had really—*really* been so dreadfully loud and horrid as they had heard, she would never have chosen her to stand up there before all that festival audience with her. And arguing thus, this little world, so like the big world under like circumstances, began to re-consider things,—to think that perhaps—perhaps it might have made mistakes in ranging itself so decidedly, and that it might be well in that case to be a little less censorious in one's attitude. From this there arose a slight change of tactics,—slight, but significant enough if one were on the alert to take note of them; but Dorothea—Dorothea was no longer so sensitively alert in these directions,—for morning, noon, and night, at every regular practice hour, and sometimes at irregular ones, her fiddle bow could be heard diligently at work, under Hope's tutelage; and as she worked, as she surmounted difficulty after difficulty in the musical score, she became so absorbed in her occupation that she had little time to bestow upon other difficulties. And so, day after day, the weeks went by, and brought at last the great day they were all anticipating so anxiously,—the day of the May Festival.

It looked like the very heart of summer in the great hall at the top of the house that festival morning, for it was literally made into a perfect bower of wood and garden glories; windows, dome, aisles, and stage wreathed and hung with forest growths, and set about with flowering plants. At the back of the stage the arched doorway that led into the anteroom was so skilfully decorated that it appeared like a natural opening into some woodland way; and as the audience began to fill the seats, and there came to them through this sylvan opening a soft overture from unseen violins and piano, there was at first a hush of delight and then a general burst of applause. The group of girls who were not to take special parts and who sat together well down in front, looked at each other inquiringly. The overture was a surprise to them, as it was to all but the two or three behind the scenes.

"It is Hope's doing, of course," one girl whispered. "And of course the second violin is Dorothea!" whispered another, and then presently still another whisper arose. It was Hope's doing, of course—because—Dorothea probably had failed to perfect herself in the duet she had undertaken—or—or Hope herself perhaps had failed in her courage to—to stand up there before that festival-audience with Dorothea! This last suggestion was caught at and turned over and over, until at length it seemed to become a certainty. Yes, that was the only explanation of this little overture

being sprung upon them without warning. Hope's courage had failed, and to console Dorothea in a measure, she had brought her into this new arrangement!

The little group of girls would not have owned to the disappointment that they felt as they settled down upon this explanation; but with all the Armitages, except Raymond, present in full force, every girl of the group had somehow counted upon rather a sensation when Dorothea appeared. How Bessie would stare, they had thought—Bessie, who had not been back to school since her birthday party,—how she would stare and wonder, and how surprised Mrs. Armitage would look to see the girl that she had so disapproved of brought forward so conspicuously! But now—well, things began to fall a trifle flat in the failure of such a delectable sensation, and they gave a somewhat wavering attention to what immediately followed. They brightened up, however, as Hope played her "Mayflowers," and, applauding vigorously, found time to wonder what that queer sub-title, "Ten Cents a Bunch," meant, and resolved that they would ask her sometime; and then they yawned and fidgeted, and looked at their little chatelaine watches, and craned their necks to look at the people behind them, and nodded at this one and that one, and finally fell to studying their programs, and glanced significantly, and with a little air of "I told you so," at each other, as they saw that the duet number had just been passed over. After this they settled themselves comfortably back to wait for the close of the exercises, when the best of the festival to their thinking was to come,—the meeting with their friends, the introductions to the other girls' friends, the gay talking and walking about, and the merry end of it all, when, as if by magic, the pretty bowery stage was to be converted into a sylvan tea-room, presided over by a chosen number of the school-girls.

Only two brief exercises,—a short essay by Anna Fleming and a little aria of Schumann's by Myra Donaldson, and then ho, for the anticipated festival fun, these waiting girls jubilantly thought; and so absorbed were they in this thought that their attention was only half given to Anna's clever little essay upon School Friendships, which had some sharp hits in it; but they nevertheless joined in the vigorous applause, though by that time their attention had entirely wandered from the stage to the movements of a new late arrival just outside the doorway,—a tall fine-looking man that Mrs. Sibley, Hope's friend, was smiling radiantly upon, and beckoning to her seat. Who *could* he be? But hark! what—what sound was that? A violin? But Schumann's aria was a solo,—Hope was not to play with Myra! No, no, Hope was not to play with Myra, for there—there upon the stage, Hope in her white dress was standing beside—Dorothea! The duet had not been omitted then, only carried forward!

No more yawning and fidgeting now from the group of girls; with eager interest they leaned forward to see the two white-robed figures as they stood there side by side,—one with her waving golden-brown hair, her golden-brown eyes, and fair soft coloring; the other with her shining black locks, her great sombre orbs,—for there was no light of laughter in them at this moment,—and the strange pallor of coloring that at that instant lent almost a tragic look to her face. No, no more yawning and fidgeting now, and no more doubt or question of Dorothea's ability to play her part, as the sweet full strains rose harmoniously together. Dorothea had studied, indeed,—had studied so ardently that she had greatly surprised Hope at the last by her accuracy and finish. But as she stood there before the festival audience, she surprised her still further by the something more than the accuracy and finish,—that something that every musical artist recognizes, that Hope at once recognized,—the touch of living, breathing, individual emotion, of passionate personal appeal. With a thrill of sympathy, Hope instinctively responded to this, and there arose a strain of such moving, melting power that the audience, listening in breathless delight, broke forth at the end in a little whirlwind of applause.

The aria that followed was beautifully rendered, but the audience could not seem to fix its attention upon it as it should have done; and Myra had scarcely struck her last note when there was a general uprising, and hastening forward toward the little flock of girl-students who had taken part in the exercises. In the centre of this flock, standing together, were Hope and Dorothea, and there was a buzz of girl talk going on about them,—a buzz of congratulation, of enthusiasm, not one of the girls hanging back,—when over it all, Hope suddenly caught the sound of another voice,—a deep manly voice,—the voice of—of—oh, could it be? Yes, yes, it was; and starting forward, she cried joyfully, "Oh it *is*—it *is* my father!" and the next instant her father's arms were round her, and his kisses on her cheek.

Her father! Dorothea glanced up eagerly. *That*, that distinguished-looking man the man who was once a locomotive engineer! Had she heard aright? Yes, she had heard aright, for presently there was Mrs. Sibley saying in answer to some questioner,—

"It's her father, yes; he's the great inventor, you know. He came on unexpectedly, and is to take Hope back with him to spend the summer in the north of France."

And presently, again, Dorothea saw Miss Marr and the Van Der Bergs and the Sibleys and—yes, the Armitages, looking up and listening with the most admiring interest to this man who was once a locomotive engineer!

What would Dorothea have thought, how would she have felt, if she had heard Mrs. Armitage say to one of her acquaintances a little later,—

"There must be something fine and good, after all, in this Dorothea Dering, to attract to herself and make a friend of such a girl as Mr. Benham's daughter; and certainly she has shown a very refined taste in her manner of playing. I wonder if she hasn't been improved all round by Miss Benham's influence?"

And what would she have thought if she had heard Miss Marr talking in somewhat the same strain to Mr. Benham,—telling him what a restraining, refining influence his dear little daughter had had over one of the most difficult of all her charges; and what would she have felt if she could have known all Mr. Benham's thoughts on this subject as he listened there with that rather grave smile of his?

But Dorothea heard and knew nothing of all this. She only heard and felt the warmth of appreciation that had followed her violin performance. She only saw that the little world that had turned away from her was now turning toward her, and her spirits began to rise once more. But they did not overflow all reasonable bounds as before. There was a new reserve in her demeanor that certainly did not rob her of her attractiveness, if one could judge from the kindly looks cast upon her by some of the older people, as she helped in the tea-table hospitalities.

Some of the younger people too seemed not to be blind to this new attractiveness. But it remained for Peter Van Loon to express the real effect produced, and he did it fully, as he suddenly turned to Hope from a long observation of Dorothea at her tea-table duties,—turned and said in that odd way of his,—

"I say, now, she'll get to be an awfully nice girl by and by, won't she, if she keeps on—on this track?"

Hope felt a little startled, though she couldn't help being amused at this queer remark of Peter's; but she quite agreed with it, and told him so; and then Peter said in the same emphatic way,—

"I've heard all about it—how you've stuck to her—from Kate—Kate Van der Berg; and I'd—I'd like to say, if you don't mind, that you're a trump, Miss Benham; and the other fellows think so too."

THE END.

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