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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MOLLY BROWN'S POST-GRADUATE DAYS



"Oh, Miss Molly, let's stay in the 'beechwood period' forever."—Page 113.

MOLLY BROWN'S
POST-GRADUATE
DAYS

BY
NELL SPEED

AUTHOR OF "MOLLY BROWN'S FRESHMAN DAYS," "MOLLY BROWN'S
SOPHOMORE DAYS," "MOLLY BROWN'S JUNIOR DAYS,"
"MOLLY BROWN'S SENIOR DAYS," ETC., ETC.

WITH FOUR HALF-TONE ILLUSTRATIONS
BY CHARLES L. WRENN

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MOLLY BROWN'S POST-GRADUATE DAYS. BOOK I.

"Oh, Judy, almost home! I wonder who will meet us," cried Molly Brown. "I feel in my bones that you and my family will be as good friends as you and I have always been. You are sure to get on well with the boys."

Judy responded with a hug, thinking, with a happy twinkle in her large, gray eyes, that, if by any chance the rest of the Brown boys could be as attractive as Molly's brother, Kent, and should find her as fascinating as Kent had seemed to, when she met him in the spring before the college pageant, she bade fair to have an exciting visit in Kentucky. 6

Molly Brown and Julia Kean (Judy for short), after four busy years of college life, had just graduated at Wellington, and were on their way to Molly's home in Kentucky, where Judy was to pay a long visit. As Molly had been looking forward to the time when she could have some of her college chums know her numerous and beloved family, she was very happy at the prospect. Judy, who was ever ready for an adventure, was bubbling over with anticipation.

The girls sat gazing out on the beautiful rolling fields of blue grass and tasseling corn, which Molly knowingly remarked promised an excellent crop. Molly's blue eyes were misty when she thought of dear old Wellington College, the four years of hard work and play, and the many friends she had made and left, some of them, perhaps, never to see again. Her mind dwelt a long time on Professor Green, the delightful old, young man, who had opened up a new world to her in literature; who had been so very kind to her through the whole college course, often coming to her rescue when in difficulties, and always sympathizing with her when she most needed sympathy; and who had, finally, proved to be her real benefactor, when she discovered that he was the purchaser of those acres of perfectly good orchard that had to be sold to keep Molly at college. On bidding him good-by, she had extended to him an invitation from her mother to make them a visit in Kentucky, and she had already speculated much as to whether the young, old man would accept. Molly never could decide whether to think of him as an old, young man, or a young, old man. Professor Green was in reality about thirty, but, when one is under twenty, over thirty seems very old. 7

Molly smiled when she thought of her parting scene with him, and made a mental note that that was one of the things she must be sure to confess to mother. The smile was enough to dispel the mist that was in her eyes, and her mind turned to Chatsworth, her dear home. She thought of her mother, her brothers and sisters; the decrepit old cook, Aunt Mary Morton; Shep and Gyp, the dogs; her horse, President, no longer young, having lived through four administrations, but still having more go in him than many a colt, showing his fine racing blood and the "mettle of his pasture." 8

"Only two miles more," breathed Molly jubilantly. "We must get our numerous packages together."

The girls had planned to have no bundles to carry on the train, nothing but two highly respectable suitcases; but the fates were against anything so unheard of as two females going on a journey with no extras. They had seven boxes of candy presented at parting by various friends. A large basket of fruit was added to their cares, put on the Pullman in New York by the resourceful Jimmy Lufton, with instructions to the porter to give it to the two prettiest girls who got on at Wellington, with through sleeper to Kentucky. There were the inevitable shirtwaists found in Molly's bottom drawer; books and what not, lent to various girls and returned too late to pack; and some belated laundry that Molly had not had the heart to worry her old friend, Mrs. Murphy, about—collars, jabots, and the muslin sash curtains from her room at college that Molly could not make up her mind to put in her trunk in their dusty state. These things were put in a bulging box and labeled by Judy, quoting the immortal Mr. Venus, "Bones Warious." 9

"I wish we could forget it and leave it on the train," said Molly. "The things in it are all mine, and, now I come to think of it, I believe there is nothing there of any real value except the jabots Nance made me—those that Mrs. Murphy called my 'jawbones.' I could not bear to lose them, and we have not time to dig them out. If Kent meets us he is sure to tease me, and you know how badly I take a teasing. He says he is lopsided now from carrying his sisters' clothes that they have forgotten to pack in their trunks." 10

"Let me call the 'foul, hunch-backed toad' of a bundle mine," offered Judy. "Your brother does not know me well enough to tease me."

"Don't you believe it! Besides, you can't fool Kent. He knows me and my bundles too well. Here we are," added Molly hastily, "and there is Kent to meet us, driving the colts, if you please. It is a good thing you are not Nance Oldham. She will not consent to ride behind any colt younger than ten years old!"

The train stopped just long enough for the girls to jump off, the porter depositing their numerous belongings in a heap on the platform.



“Hello, girls,” exclaimed Kent, hugging Molly, on one side, and shaking hands with Judy, on the other.—Page 10.

“Hello, girls,” exclaimed Kent, hugging Molly, on one side, and shaking hands with Judy, on the other, while a diminutive darkey swung on to the colts’ bits, occasionally leaping into the air as the restive horses tossed their proud heads. “My, it is good to see you! And your train on time, too! That is such a rare occurrence that I have an idea it may be yesterday’s train. You don’t mean to say that this is all of the emergency baggage you are carrying?” grabbing the two highly respectable suitcases and stowing them in the back of the trim, red-wheeled Jersey wagon. The girls giggled, and Kent discovered the conglomerate collection of packages that the porter had hastily dumped by the side of the track.

Molly beat a hasty retreat into the station, declaring that she must speak to Mrs. Woodsmall, the postmistress, thus hoping to avoid the inevitable teasing from her big brother. Judy, with the spirit and somewhat the expression of a Christian martyr, picked up the aforesaid despised, bumpy, bulging bundle, and, with a sweet smile, said: “This is mine, Mr. Brown. Will you please take it? The rest of the things are boxes of candy and parting gifts from various friends.”

Kent took the disreputable looking package, which was not at all improved by its long trip on the Pullman and the many disdainful kicks the girls had given it. Now, in the last hasty handling, the porter had loosened the much knotted string, the paper had burst, and from the yawning gash there had crept a bit of blue ribbon, Molly’s own blue. Judy, with her ever-ready imagination, had been heard to call it “the blue of chivalry and romance, the blue of distant mountains and deep seas.”

Kent took the package, smiling his quizzical smile; the smile that from the beginning had made Judy decide that he was very likable; a smile all from the eyes, with a grave mouth. In fact, the young lady had been so taken with it that she had practiced the expression before her mirror for half an hour and then held it until she could try it on the first person passing by. That person happened to be Edith Williams, who had remarked: “Gracious me, Judy, what is the matter? I feel as though you were some one in a hogshead looking through the bunghole at me.” Judy was delighted. It was exactly the expression she was aiming for, but she was sorry that she had not thought of the apt description herself.

“Now, Miss Judy, I have known for four years from Molly’s letters what a bully good chum you are, and have observed before now how charming and beautiful, but this rôle of Christian martyr is a new one on me. Don’t you know you can’t fool me about a Brown bundle? I could pick one out of the hold of an ocean liner in the dark, just by the lumpy, bumpy feel of it. Besides”—pointing to the bit of blue ribbon spilling through the widening tear—“there are Molly’s honest old eyes peeping out, telling me that this little subterfuge of yours is just an act of true friendship on your part, to keep me from teasing her about her slipshod method of packing. I tell you what I will do, Miss Judy, if you will do something for me. I’ll make a compact with you, and promise to go the whole of this day without teasing Molly.”

“Well, what am I to do?”

"Oh, it's easy enough. Don't call me Mr. Brown any more. Kent, from your lips, would sound good to me. You see, there are four male Browns, and every time you say 'Mr. Brown' we are liable to fall over one another answering you or doing your bidding."

"All right; 'Kent' it shall be for this day and every day that you don't tease Molly."

"I meant just for the one day. The strain of never teasing Molly again would shatter my constitution."

"Very well, Mr. Brown; just as you choose about that."

"Oh, well, I give up."

"All right, Kent."

Molly emerged from the postoffice, with Mrs. Woodsmall following her. Such a stream of conversation poured from the latter's lips that Judy felt her head swim.

"Glad to meet you, Miss Kean. I have long wanted to see some of Molly's correspondents. What beautiful postals you sent her last year from Maine; the summer before from Yellowstone Park; and those Eyetalian ones were grand; one year, even from Californy. You are the most traveled of all her friends, I believe, but Miss Oldham can say more on a postal than any of you, and such a eligible hand, too. Now-a-days all of you young folks write so much alike, since the round style come in, I can hardly tell your writin' apart. It makes it very hard on a lonesome postmistress whose only way of gitting news is from the mail she handles. And now, since Uncle Sam has started this fool Rural Free Delivery, I don't git time to more than half sort the mail before here comes Bud Woodsmall and snatches it from under my nose with irrealvent remarks about cur'osity and cats. Gimme the good old days when the neighbors come a-drivin' up for their mail, and you could pass the time o' day with them and git what news out of them you ain't been able to git off of the postals, or make out through the thin ornvelopes, or guess from the postmarks. Anyhow, I gits ahead of Woodsmall lots of times. Jest yistiddy I 'phoned over to Mrs. Brown that Molly would be in on this two train. To be sure, Woodsmall had the letter in his auto, but he has to go a long way round, and he's sech a man for stopping and gassin', and Molly's ornvelope was some thinner than usual, and I could see mighty plain the time she expected to come. Said I to myself, said I, 'Now, ain't Mrs. Brown nothing but a mother, and don't she want the earliest news of her child she can git? And ain't I the owner of that news, and should I not desiccate it if I can? It so happened that Woodsmall had a blow-out, and didn't git yistiddy's mail delivered until to-day. Now, tell me, wasn't I right to git ahead of him?' She did not pause for a reply, but plunged into the stream of conversation again.

"I don't care if he is my own husband. He asked my sister first, and I never would have had him if there had been a chance of anything better offering. I wouldn't have had him at all if I had foresaw that he was going to fly in my face by gitting app'inted to R. F. D., and then fly in the face of Providence by trying to run one of them artemobes."

Kent stopped the flow of words by saying: "Now, Mrs. Woodsmall, you are giving Miss Kean an entirely wrong idea of you and Bud. She will think you do not love him, and I am sure there is not a man in the county who fares better than your husband, or who shows his keep as well."

The thin, hard face of the postmistress broke into a pleasant smile, and Judy thought: "After all, Kent and Molly are very much alike in understanding the human heart and in trying to make all around them feel as happy as possible."

"Well, you see, Kent Brown, it's this way: I jest natchally love to cook, and Bud he jest natchally loves to eat, and I've got the triflingest, no-count stomic that ever was seed. What's the use of cooking up a lot of victuals for myself, when I can't eat more'n a mouthful? And so," she somewhat lamely concluded, "I jest cook 'em up for Bud."

The colts could not be persuaded to stand still another minute, so they had to call a hasty good-by to the voluble Mrs. Woodsmall. Then the girls gave their attention to holding on their hats and keeping their seats, while the lively pair of young horses pranced and cavorted until Kent gave them their heads and allowed them to race their fill for a mile or more of macadamized road.

Judy was hardly prepared for such a trim turnout as the Jersey wagon, and such wonderful horses, to say nothing of the road. She had yet to learn that Mrs. Brown would have good, well-kept vehicles on her place; that all the Browns would have good horses; and that all Kentuckians insist on good roads. The number of limestone quarries throughout the state make good macadamized roads a comparatively easy matter.

What a beautiful country it was: the fields of blue grass, with herds of grazing cattle, knee deep in June; an occasional clump of trees, reminding one rather of English landscapes; and then the fields of corn, proudly waving their tassels and shaking their pennant-like leaves, as much as to say, "roasting ears for all."

"News for you, Molly," said Kent, as soon as he could get the colts down to a conversation permitting trot. "Mildred is to be married in two weeks."

"Oh, Kent, why didn't they write me?"

"Mother thought it would be fun to surprise you."

Judy's glowing face saddened. "Why, I should not be here at such a time. I know I shall be in the way. I must write to papa to come for me sooner."

"Now, Miss Judy, 'the cat is out of the bag.' You have hit on the real reason why mother would

not let any of us write Molly of the approaching nuptials in the family. She was so afraid that you might fear you would be *de trop* and want to postpone your visit to us, and she has been determined that nothing should happen to keep her from making your acquaintance, and that at the earliest. You see, poor mother has had not only to listen to Molly's ravings on the subject of Miss Julia Kean for the last four years, but now she has to give ear to Mildred and me, since we met you at Wellington, and she thinks the only way to silence us is to have something to say about you herself."

20

Judy laughed, reassured. "You and Molly are exactly alike, and both of you must 'favor your ma.' Well, I'll try not to be in the way, and maybe I can help."

"Of course you can," said Molly, squeezing her. "You always help where there is any planning or arranging or beautifying to be done. But, Kent, tell me, why is Milly in such a rush?"

"Why, Molly, I am surprised at you, laying it on Mildred. It happens to be old 'Silence and Fun' who is so precipitate."

21

"Who is 'Silence and Fun'?" asked Judy.

"Oh, he is Milly's *fiancé*, but the Brown boys call him that ridiculous name. He has a fine name of his own, Crittenden Rutledge. But, Kent, please tell me, why this haste?"

"Well, you see Crit has been ordered out to Iowa by his steel construction company, on a bridge-building debauch, and he thought Milly might just as well go on with him and hold the nails while he wields the hammer. Here we are, so put your hat on straight, and look your prettiest, Miss Judy. I should hate for mother to think that we had been misleading her."

CHAPTER II.—MY OLD KENTUCKY HOME.

22

They turned into an avenue through a gate opened from the wagon by means of a rope pulled by the driver.

"How is that for a gate, Molly? I began my holiday by getting the thing in order. It works beautifully now, but the least bit of rough handling gets it off its trolley."

"It is fine, Kent. But tell me, are you to have your holiday now?"

"Yes; you see I can help with the harvesting this week, and next week the wedding bells have to be rung. And I thought any spare time I have I could take Miss Judy off your hands."

"I am afraid that your holiday will be a very busy one," laughed Judy; "but maybe I can help ring the wedding bells, and, if I can't do much toward harvesting, I can at least carry water to the thirsty laborers."

23

Kent Brown was in an architect's office in Louisville, working very hard to master his profession, for which he had a fondness amounting to a passion. Mrs. Brown had secretly hoped that one of her boys would want to become a farmer, but they one and all looked upon Chatsworth as a beloved home, but not a place to make a living. Their earnest endeavor, however, was to keep up the place, and often their hard-earned and harder-saved earnings went toward much needed repairs or farm machinery. Mrs. Brown had to confess that a little ready money earned irrespective of the farm was very acceptable; and, since her four boys were on their feet and beginning to walk alone, and stretch out willing, helpful hands to her, she found life much easier.

Not that money or the lack of money had much to do with Mrs. Brown's happiness. She was a woman of strong character and deep feelings, with a love for her children that her sister, Mrs. Clay, said was like that of a lioness for her cubs. But that remark was called forth when Mrs. Clay, Sister Sarah, one morning found Mrs. Brown making two pairs of new stockings out of four pairs of old ones, after a pattern clipped from the woman's page of a newspaper. With her accustomed bluntness, she had said: "Well, Mildred Carmichael, if you had only three and a half children, instead of seven, you would not have to be guilty of such absurd makeshifts."

24

Mrs. Brown had risen up in her wrath and given her such a talk that, although ten years had elapsed since that memorable morning, Sister Sarah still avoided the subject of stockings with Sister Mildred.

Mrs. Brown was a great reader, and loved old books and old poetry. One of Molly's earliest remembrances was lying on the otter-skin rug in front of the great open fire, with brothers and sisters curled up by her or seated close to the big brass fender, while mother read Dickens aloud, or the *Idyls of the King*, or something else equally delightful. One by one the younger children would drop to sleep; and then Mammy would come and do what she called "walk 'em to baid," muttering to herself, "I hope to Gawd that these chilluns won't be a dreamin' all night about that stuff Miss Mildred done packed in they haid."

25

Just now, however, Molly's memories were merged in anticipations, and she watched eagerly for the first signs of welcome.

As they approached the house, the colts neighed, and were greeted by answering whinnies from two mares grazing in a paddock. The mares ran to the white-washed picket fence and stretched their necks as far over as they could, gazing fondly on their handsome offspring, trotting gaily by,

tossing their manes and tails.

"The mothers are all coming out to meet their babies, and there is mine!" cried Molly.

It was mother. Oh, that beloved face; that familiar, spirited walk and bearing of the head; those wide, clear, far-seeing gray eyes, and that fine patrician nose, with the mouth ever ready to laugh in spite of a certain sadness that lurked there! She folded Molly in her arms, but did not forget to keep a hand free to clasp Judy's, and, before Molly was half through her hug, the older woman drew the young visitor to her, and kissed her fondly. Then, with an arm around each girl, she said: "I am truly glad to know my Molly's friend, and gratified, indeed, to have her with us."

"It means a great deal to me, too, Mrs. Brown, to see Molly's mother and home." Judy feared that it would be forward to say what she had in her mind, and that was "such a beautiful mother and home."

The house was of white-washed brick, with a sloping gray shingled roof and green shutters, and a general air of roominess and comfort. A long, deep gallery or porch ran across the front, which Architect Kent explained to Judy was not quite in keeping with the style of architecture, but had been added by a comfort-loving Brown to the delectation of all who came after him. The lines of the old house were so good that the addition of a mere porch could not ruin it, and certainly added to its charm and comfort. To the left, in the rear, well off from the house, were the barnyard and stables, chicken houses, smokehouse, and servants' quarters; to the right, a tan-bark walk led to the garden. Down that path came Mildred, by her side a young man who seemed to be so amused by her lively chatter that he could hardly contain himself.

"Molly, Molly, I'm so glad to see you, and so is Crit, although he has no words to tell you how glad he is. And, Miss Kean, Judy! It is splendid for you to come just now. I am certain that Kent could not keep the news, and you know by this time that Crit and I are to be married the last of next week. Mr. Rutledge, let me introduce you to Miss Kean."

Although Crittenden had never uttered a word, he seemed to be able to let Molly understand that he, too, was glad to see her, as he was vigorously hugging her and two-stepping with her over the short, well-kept grass. But, at Mildred's call, he suddenly stopped, made a low and courtly bow to his partner, and turned to Judy, clasping her hand in a warm and friendly grasp, and giving her such a smile as she had never before beheld. In it he made her feel that she was welcome to Kentucky; that he intended to like her and have her like him; and had his heart not been already engaged, he would lay it at her feet. Never a word did he utter. He was tall, rather soldierly in bearing, with the most beaming countenance Judy had ever seen, and such perfect teeth she almost had her doubts about them.

"Where is Sue, mother?" said Molly. "And Aunt Mary and Ca'line? Of course the other boys are not home so early."

"Sue has gone over to Aunt Sarah Clay's. She sent for her in a great hurry. Sue was loath to go, fearing she could not get back before you arrived, but you know your Aunt Clay and how autocratic she is. Sue seems to be in great favor just now. Here is Aunt Mary, however."

Molly ran to meet the decrepit old darkey, embracing her with almost as much fervor as she had her mother. Aunt Mary Morton was surely of the old school: very short and fat, dressed in a starched purple calico, with a white "neckercher" and a voluminous gingham apron, her head tied up in a gorgeous bandanna handkerchief.

"Oh, my chile, I'm glad to see you. I hope you done learned 'nuf to stay at home a while. Yo' ma's so lonesome 'thout you, with Mr. Ernest 'way out West surveyin' the landscape." (Ernest, the oldest of the Brown boys, was employed by the government on the geological survey.) "Mr. Paul so took up wif sassiety in Lou'ville he can't hardly walk straight, and jes' come home long 'nuf to snatch a moufful—but I done tuck 'ticular notice he do manage to eat at home in spite er all his gran' frien's. And now, Miss Milly gwine to step off; an' 'mos' fo' we git time to cook up any mo' victuals, Miss Sue'll be walkin' off. Praise be, she ain't a-goin' fur. How she eber made up her min' to gib her promise to a man what lib up sech a muddy lane, beats me; an' Miss Sue, the mos' 'ticular of all yo' ma's chilluns 'bout her shoes an' skirts an' comp'ny! Now Mr. John ain't been a full-fleshed doctor mo'n two weeks befo' he so took up wif a young lady's tongue what stayin' over to Miss Sarah Clay's, and so anxious 'bout feelin' her pulse, dat yo' ma an' I don' neber see nothin' of him. He jes' come home from dat doctor's office in town long 'nuf to shave and mess up a lot er crivats an' peck a little eatin's, an' off he goes. My 'pinion is, dat's what Miss Sarah done sent for Miss Sue in sech a hurry 'bout, but you' ma say fer me to hesh up, no sich a thing, she jes' wan' to talk 'bout a suit'ble weddin' presen' for little Miss Milly."

"Oh, Aunt Mary, isn't it exciting to have a wedding in the family? You always said Milly would be the first to get married, if Sue was the first to get born," said Molly, giving the old woman another hug for luck. "Now I want you to shake hands with my dear friend, Miss Judy Kean."

Aunt Mary made a bobbing curtsey to Judy, then gave her a friendly handshake, looking keenly in her face the while. Then she nodded her head, until the ends of the bright bandanna, tied in a bow on top of her head, quivered, and said: "I don' know but what that there Kent was right."

"Aunt Mary, I am truly glad to meet you. If you could hear the blessings that are showered on your head when Molly gets a box from home, and could see how hard it is for all of those hungry girls to be polite when the time comes for snakey noodles, you would know how honored I feel that I am the first to make your acquaintance."

"Well, honey, what makes all of you go 'way from yo' homes to sech outlandish places as collidges

where the eatin's is so scurse? Can't you learn what little you don' know right by yo' own fi'side?"

"Maybe we could, Aunt Mary, but you see I haven't any real fireside of my own."

"What! did yo' folks git burned out?"

"Oh, no; but you see my father is an engineer, and mamma travels with him, and stays wherever he stays; and, when I am not at school or college, I knock around with them. Of course, I'd like to have a home like Chatsworth, but it is lots of fun to go to new places all the time and meet all kinds of people."

"Well, they ain't but two kin's, quality an' po' white trash, an' I'll be boun' you don't neber take up wid any ob dat kin', so you an' yo' ma 'n' pa mought jes' as well stay in one place."

While the girls were up in Molly's room, which Judy was to share, getting ready for a belated dinner, they heard the sound of a piano, cracked but sweet, like the notes of an old spinnet, then a male voice, wonderful in its power and intensity, and at the same time so sweet and full of feeling that Judy, ever emotional where art was concerned, felt her eyes filling.

"Shed no tear, oh, shed no tear!
The flower will bloom another year.
Weep no more! Oh, weep no more!
Young buds sleep in the root's white core.
Dry your eyes, oh, dry your eyes!
For I was taught in Paradise
To ease my breast of melodies,
Shed no tear.

"Overhead—look overhead
'Mong the blossoms white and red.
Look up, look up! I flutter now
On this flush pomegranate bough.
See me! 'tis this silvery bill
Ever cures the good man's ill.
Shed no tear, oh, shed no tear!
The flower will bloom another year.
Adieu, adieu—I fly. Adieu,
I vanish in the heaven's blue,
Adieu, adieu!"

"Oh, Molly, Molly, who is that?" cried Judy, weeping copiously, in spite of the repeated request of the singer to "shed no tear."

"Why, that is Crit. Isn't his voice wonderful?"

"Do you really mean it is Mr. Rutledge? I thought he was dumb, and have been feeling so sorry for Mildred."

"Dumb, indeed! He has the most beautiful voice in Kentucky, and can make such an eloquent speech when roused that we have been afraid he would go into politics. But, so far as passing the time of day is concerned, and the little chit-chat that fills up life, he is indeed as dumb as a fish. When he was a little boy he stammered and got into the habit of expressing his feelings in silence, and he can still do it. He had a teacher who cured him of stammering, but nothing will ever cure him of silence, unless he has something important to say, and then nothing can stop him. Mother tells of a man who stammered in talking but not in singing. One day he was passing a friend's house, and saw that the roof was in a blaze, the inmates perfectly unconscious of the conflagration. He rushed in, tried to speak, could only stutter, and then in desperation burst into song. To the tune of 'The Campbells Are Coming,' he sang, 'Your house is on fire, tra-la, tra-la!' Kent declares that Crit proposed to Milly in song, but Milly herself is dumb about how that came about."

"Well, anyhow, I have never heard such scintillating silence as his, and I think that Milly ought to be a very proud and happy girl."

CHAPTER III.—WEDDING PREPARATIONS AND CONFIDENCES.

The next two weeks were busy ones for all the Brown household: first and foremost, the ever-crying need of clothes to be answered; second, the old house to be put in apple-pie order; all the furniture rubbed and rubbed some more; the beautiful old floors waxed and polished until they shone and reflected the newly scrubbed white paint in a way Judy thought most romantic. (But Judy thought everything was romantic those days.) She was "itching to help," and help she did in many ways. Molly would not let her rub furniture or wax floors, but she had the pleasure of hanging the freshly laundered curtains all over the house, and she was received with joy in the sewing room by Miss Lizzie Monday, the neighborhood seamstress. Miss Lizzie was of the opinion that the Browns thought entirely too much about food and not nearly enough about clothes. Indeed it was a failing of the mother, if failing she had, to have good food, no matter at what cost,

and then, since strict economy had to be practiced somewhere, to practice it on the clothes.

Miss Lizzie had once been present when they were packing a box to send to Molly at Wellington, and had sadly remarked: "In these hard times, with the price of food what it is, poor little raggedy Molly could have had an entire new outfit from the contents of that box." Mrs. Brown had indignantly denied that she was spending any money at all on the box, but the fact remained in Miss Lizzie's mind that the food in the delightful box, so eagerly looked for by the hungry college girls, represented so much money that had much better be put on Molly's outside than her inside.

"Not that much of it goes on her own inside. I know Molly too well, bless her heart. Can't I just see her handing out that good old ham and hickory-nut cake and Rosemary pickle to those Yankees? And they, raised on pale, pink, ready-cooked ham and doughnuts and corner grocery dill pickles, don't know what they are getting. Molly, in her same old blue that I have made over twice for her!—and that ham would have bought the stuff for a new one (not that I would have had it anything but blue). The half gallon of Rosemary pickle would have trimmed it nicely, and the hickory-nut cake would have made her at least two new shirtwaists, and the express on the box would more than pay me for making the things."

Judy loved to hear Miss Lizzie talk, and used to encourage her to praise her friend, while she sat helping to whip lace or planning the bridesmaids' dresses for Molly and Sue. These dresses were flowered French organdies. Molly's was covered with a feathery blue flower, that never was on land or sea, but it was the right color, which was the important thing; and Sue's bore the same design in pink. The bride's dress, a lovely simple gown of the finest Paris muslin, was all done and pressed and neatly folded in a box by the careful Miss Lizzie, with one of her own sandy hairs secretly sewed in the hem, which is supposed to bring good luck, and a "soon husband" to the owner of the hair.

There was some doubt and much talk about how the bridal party was to enter the parlor and where the minister was to stand. The parlor at Chatsworth was not very suitable for an effective wedding, as it was in the wing of the house and opened only into the hall, giving, when all was considered, not much room for the growing list of guests. Although it was a very large room, having only one entrance made it rather awkward. It was only a few days before the wedding and this important subject was still under discussion.

"I can count at least ninety-eight persons who are sure to come," said Mrs. Brown, "all of them kin or close friends, and how they are to get in this room and leave an aisle for the wedding party, goodness only knows; and if the hall and porch are full, it will be very uncomfortable."

Judy and Kent were pretending to be the bride and groom, grave Sue was the minister, John and Paul, flower girls, and Molly, boss. Mildred and Crittenden were not allowed to practice for their own wedding, as Miss Lizzie said it was bad luck, and Miss Lizzie was authority on all such subjects. So the two most interested were seated at the piano, pretending to be the musicians doing "Chopsticks" to wedding march time.

"Crit, I believe you will have to give Milly up. There is no way to have a decently stylish wedding in this joint," said Paul. "Let's stop the festive preparations and all of us go to Jeffersonville. It would make a grand story for my paper."

Judy had been very quiet for some minutes and her face wore what Molly called her "flashed upon that inward eye" expression. Suddenly she cried, "I have it. Come on and let's get married out of doors." She seized Kent by the hand and dragged him out on the lawn, the rest following in a daze.

"Look at that natural place to be married in: the guests under the trees; room for everybody; a living altar of shrubs and flowers at the end of the tan-bark walk; minister entering from the grass walk on one side and Mr. Rutledge with his best man from the other; down the steps Mildred on Ernest's arm, followed by Molly and Sue. Can't you see them coming up the tan-bark walk? Just at sunset, the people in their light festive clothes, your mother beautiful in her black crêpe de Chine, with Paul and John and Kent standing by her making a dark note near the bride? Oh, why, oh, why did they not have holly-hocks up this garden walk instead of by the chicken yard fence? It would have made the color scheme simply perfect."

Judy paused for breath. She had carried the crowd by her eloquence, and so perfectly had she visualized the whole thing that each one was able to see what she meant, and absolute and unanimous approval was given the scheme. Kent, with his artistic eye, was in for it heart and soul, and began to plan Japanese lanterns to be lit after the ceremony in the rustic summer-house beyond, where supper was to be served, observing that their color might somewhat take the place of the holly-hocks that were in the wrong place.

"Just where did you want the holly-hocks, Miss Judy? We might do better another year if we knew just what your orders were."

"On both sides of the tan-bark walk, just beyond the intersection of the grass walk. Can't you see how fine and stately they would look, and what a wonderful mass of color?"

"Right, as usual. What an architect you would make! That power of 'seein' things' is what an architect needs above everything. Any one can learn to make it, but it is the one who *sees* it who is the great man or woman, as in the present case."

Things had been humming so since Molly's return that she had had no time for the confidential talk with her mother that both were hungering for. The Browns always had much company, but at

this season there seemed to be no end to the comings and goings of guests, principally comings: many parting calls being paid to Mildred by old and young; Molly's friends hastening to greet her after the eight months' absence at college; a steady following of young men calling on Sue, in spite of her suspected preference for Cyrus Clay, the nephew of Aunt Sarah Clay's deceased husband, and the one Aunt Mary objected to because of his living up such a muddy lane. Presents were pouring in for the bride; notes had to be answered; trains to be met; express packages to be fetched from the station; and poor little Mrs. Woodsmall kept in a state of constant misery over the Parcel Post business Bud was doing, and she with "never a chanst to take so much as a peep."

Molly, ever mindful of others, hitched up President one off day and drove over to the postoffice and got the poor thing. Then she let her see every single present; and feel the weight of every bit of silver; and hunt for the price mark on the bottom of the cut-glass; read all the cards; and even go into the sewing-room where Miss Lizzie Monday proudly showed her the clothes, and let her take a good look at the wedding dress all folded up in its box. But when Mrs. Woodsmall began to pick at the hem where her sharp eyes discovered an end of the stiff sandy hair, sewed in to bring a "soon husband," Miss Lizzie snapped on the top and told her sharply to stop rumpling up Miss Milly's dress.

The night after Judy had solved the problem of where the wedding was to be, Molly felt that she must have her talk with her mother. Judy was tired and a little distraught, visualizing again no doubt; seeing the wedding in her mind's eye; regretting the holly-hocks; wondering if she really did have the power that Kent attributed to her, that of a creative artist. If she did have it, what should she do about it? Was it not up to her to make something of herself if she had such a gift? Was she willing to work, as work she would have to, if she really expected to do something? At the back of it all was the thought, "Would Kent like her so much if she should turn out to be a woman with a purpose?" Judy was obliged to confess to herself as she dozed off that what Kent Brown thought of her made a good deal of difference to her, more than she had thought that any man's opinion could make.

Molly waited until she thought Judy was asleep and then crept softly downstairs to her mother's room. Mrs. Brown was awake and glad indeed to see her "old red head," as she sometimes lovingly called Molly, coming to have a good talk. It is funny what a difference it makes who calls one a red head. Now that horrid girl at college, Adele Windsor, had enraged Molly into forgetting what Aunt Mary called her "raisin" by calling her a red head, and yet when mother called her the same thing it sounded like sweet music in her ears.

Mother had some things to tell Molly, too. She did not altogether approve of John's inamorata, the girl visiting Aunt Clay. It was a case of Dr. Fell with her.

"I do not love thee, Dr. Fell.
The reason why I cannot tell;
But this I know, and know full well,
I do not love thee, Dr. Fell."

Then she did think if Sue intended to marry Cyrus Clay she should not lead on the other two young men, who seemed quite serious in their attentions. She hated to say anything, because Sue was so dignified.

"Now if it were you or Mildred, I would speak out, but you know Sue always did scare me a little, Molly."

And Molly and her mother giggled like school girls over this confession. Sue was very handsome and lovely and good, but she was certainly a little superior, and Mrs. Brown found that, if she had any talking over of things to do, she wanted either Molly or Mildred, who were "not too pure or good for human nature's daily food."

Molly was eager to know what her mother thought of Judy, and was delighted at her frank liking for her friend. Then Molly had to tell her mother of her hopes and ambitions; of her triumphs and disappointments at college; and of her growing friendship for Jimmy Lufton, the clever young journalist from New York who was trying to persuade Molly to go into newspaper work; of his liking for her that she did not want to ripen into anything more serious, but his last letters were certainly growing more and more fervent.

"Don't flirt, little girl, don't flirt. It would not be my Molly if she deceived any one. Have all the fun you can and as many friends as possible and enjoy life while you are young. You are sure to be popular with every one, men and women, boys and girls, but don't be a coquette."

"Mother, I don't mean to be ever, and really and truly I have done nothing to mislead Mr. Lufton, and maybe I am mistaken and conceited about his feeling for me, and I truly hope I am. I have never done anything but be my natural self with him."

Mrs. Brown smiled, well knowing that just being her natural self was where Molly did the damage, if damage had been done.

"Mother, there is something else." Mrs. Brown knew there was, and was patiently waiting. "You know Professor Green? Well, I gave him your invitation to come to Kentucky."

"And what did he say?"

"He said, 'Thank you.'"

"Is he coming?"

"I don't know." Molly found talking to her mother about Professor Green more difficult than she had imagined it would be. "When you wrote me two years ago that some eccentric person had bought the orchard and I could finish my college course, I told Professor Green about it, and also told him I should like to meet the old man who had saved me from premature school-teaching. And when he asked me what I'd do if I should happen to meet him, I told him I would give him a good hug." Molly faltered. "Well, mother, when I told him good-by and gave him your invitation, I went back and—I just gave him a good hug."

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Mrs. Brown sat up so vigorously that Molly, sitting by her side, was almost jolted off the bed.

"Why, Molly Brown! And what did Professor Green do?"

"He? Oh, he took it very philosophically and bowed his head 'til the storm was over."

Mrs. Brown gave a gasp of relief.

"He must be a good old gentleman, indeed. About how old is he, Molly?"

"The girls say every day of thirty-two."

"Why, the poor old thing! Do you think he could take the trip out here to Kentucky all by himself?"

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"Mother, please don't tease. There is something else. Jimmy Lufton wrote a little note which I found in the bottom of the basket of fruit he had put on the train for us. It was wrapped around a lemon and said, 'Here is a lemon you can hand me if, when I come to Kentucky this summer, you don't want me to stay.'"

"Oh! The plot thickens! So he is coming, too."

"Yes, but he lives in Lexington, and is coming out to see his family, anyhow."

"Well, Molly, darling, you must go to bed now, but before you go tell me one thing: do you want Professor Green to come to Chatsworth?"

"Yes, mother, I think I do," and giving her mother a hug that made that lady gasp again and say, "Molly, what a hugger you are," she flew from the room and raced upstairs two steps at a time.

CHAPTER IV.—BURGLARS.

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Judy was sitting up in bed, the moon lighting her enough for Molly to see a wild, startled look on her face.

"Molly, Molly, I hear something!"

"You hear me making more noise than I have any business to at this time o' night. I have been having a good old talk with muddy."

"Oh, no, it wasn't that. I knew you were downstairs. I haven't been truly asleep. I was 'possuming.' It is out by the chicken yard, and I am so afraid it is burglars after the pullets Aunt Mary told me she was saving for chicken salad for the wedding supper. Lewis was to kill them tomorrow."

Judy had entered so intensely into the Browns' household affairs that Molly herself was no more interested in the festive preparations than was her guest. Molly drew cautiously to the window and peeped out; she beckoned Judy, and the excited girls saw a sight to freeze the marrow in their chicken-salad-loving bones: the thief had a wheelbarrow, and some great gunny sacks over his arm, and was in the act of boldly opening the chicken-yard gate.

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"If we call he will get away, and how else can we let the boys know? The wretch may have those sacks full of chickens even now," moaned Molly.

There was a three-room cottage or "office," as they called it, on the side of the house next the garden where all of the young men slept in summer. The girls feared that, in trying to let them know of the burglar, if they went out of the front door they would startle Mrs. Brown. And if they should try to go out the back door, in getting to the cottage they would have to run across a broad streak of moonlight in plain view of the thief, and thus give him ample time to get away with his booty before they could arouse the boys.

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"Why shouldn't we take the matter in our own hands and make him drop his sacks and run?" said Molly. "I am not afraid, are you?"

"Me afraid? Bless your soul, no. I am only afraid he will get off with the chickens," replied the intrepid Judy. "I have my little revolver in the tray of my trunk, the one papa gave me when we were camping in Arizona. I can load it in a jiffy. But what weapon will you take?"

"I don't see anything but my tennis racket. I'll take that and some balls, too, in case I have to hit at long range. There is really no danger for us, as a chicken thief has never been known to go armed with anything more dangerous than a bag."

They slipped on their raincoats, as they were darker than their kimonos, and crept softly down the back stairs, out on the back porch, and down the steps into the yard, keeping close in the

shadow of the house until they came to an althea hedge. Skirting this, still in the shadow, they got near enough to the chicken-yard gate to have a good look at the burglar. That burly ruffian, instead of bagging the pullets that were peacefully roosting in a dog-wood tree, totally unconscious that they were sleeping the last sleep of the condemned, had taken a spade from his wheelbarrow, carefully spread out his gunny sacks and was digging with great care around the holly-hocks, digging so deep and so far from the roots that he soon got up a great sod without injuring the plants. This he placed with great care in the barrow, and as he stepped into the broad moonlight the girls recognized Kent. They clutched each other and were silent, except for a little choking noise from Judy which might easily have come from one of the condemned, having premonitory dreams of the morrow.

Kent worked on until his wheelbarrow was full of the lovely flowers. Then he stuck in the spade and trundled it away toward the garden, the girls silently following, still keeping as well in the shadow as was possible, and holding tight to their weapons, although they no longer had any use for them. On reaching the garden, they realized that Kent must have been working many hours. He had already moved dozens of the stately plants, and they now stood in the garden where they belonged, no doubt glad of the transplanting from their former homely surroundings. So deeply and well had Kent dug that they were uninjured by the move, and he completed the job by dousing them plentifully with water from a great tub that he had filled at the cistern.

The effect was wonderful, as Judy had known that it would be, but her surprise and pleasure that Kent should be so anxious to gratify her every wish was great. She felt her cheeks glowing with excitement and her heart pit-a-patting as it would not have done, even had Kent proved to be the chicken thief they had imagined him to be.

That young man finished his job, cleaned his spade, shook out the gunny sacks, raked the débris from the walk, and then, giving a tired yawn and stretching himself until he looked even taller than the six feet one he measured in his stocking feet, he said out loud in a perfectly conversational tone:

"Now, Miss Judy, you may have the master mind that can imagine things and see beforehand how they are going to look, but I'll have you know it takes work to create and drudgery to accomplish; and only by the sweat of the brow can we 'give to airy nothing a local habitation and a name.' You and Molly can step out of the bushes and view the landscape."

"Oh, Kent, did you know we were there all the time?"

"Certainly, little Sister, from the time Miss Judy went like a chicken with the gapes, I have known you were with me; but you seemed to be having such a good time I hated to break it up. You might have stepped in and helped a fellow, though."

"Oh, we were doing the head work," retaliated Judy.

Kent laughed, and then he had to tease them about their adventure and their weapons, especially Molly's racket and balls.

"We had better crawl into the hay now, however. It is getting mighty late at night, or, rather, mighty early in the morning, and where will our beauty be if we don't get to sleep? I'll see you to the back door."

"You needn't," said Molly. "You must be dead tired, and here is the office door open for you. There is no use in your coming any farther. We can slip around the front way and be in the house in no time."

"Well, good morning. I am dead tired, and such brave ladies as you are need no escort. Better luck to you next time you go burglar hunting."

It was a wonderful night, or rather morning, as Kent had indicated. The moon hung low on the horizon ready for bed, as an example to all up-late young ladies. The stars, with their rival retiring, were doing their best to get in a little shine before daylight. Everything was very still. The tree frogs and crickets and Katy-dids had suddenly ceased their incessant noise. There was a feel in the air that meant dawn.

What was it that greeted the ears of the tired Kent? Old tennis player that he was, it sounded to him like the twang of a racket in the hands of a determined server who means to drive a ball that the champion himself could not return. Then came the dull thud of the ball, a groan, a scream; then the sharp crack of a pistol, more screams from inside the house; lights, doors opening, all the household awake, and Paul and John and Crit, who had spent the night at Chatsworth, tumbling out of the office almost before Kent could get around the house. There he found Judy fallen in a little heap on the grass, and Molly carefully and coolly aiming a second tennis ball, this time at a real burglar.

The man climbing from the upper gallery of the house had been surprised by the girls as they came from the garden. At Molly's first ball he had dropped to the ground, and Judy had caught him on the fly, as it were. The second tennis ball got him square on the jaw, but he was already down and out. Kent declared afterward, when the smoke of battle had cleared away, that it was not like Molly to hit a fellow when he was down. She had always been a good sport until now.

Mrs. Woodsmall, it seems, had talked too much about the weight of Mildred's silver, and had dwelt too long on the recklessness of the Browns in having all of those fine things in the little hall room with the window opening on the upper gallery, where anybody with any limberness could climb up that twisted wisteria vine and get away with anything he had a mind to. A tramp,

hanging around the postoffice window, had overheard her and, having more limberness than any other commodity, had endeavored to help himself.

Dr. John came with first aid to the injured, and found the man more scared than hurt. It was hard to tell which ball had done most damage; certainly Molly's was the more effective in appearance. Her first she had served straight at his nose, so disfiguring that member that the rogues' gallery officials would have had difficulty in identifying him. The second found his jaw and gave him so much pain that John feared a fracture. Judy's little pistol had done good work. A flesh wound on the arm was the verdict for her.

The ground was strewn with silver in every kind of fancy novelty that a bride is supposed by her dear friends to need—or why else do they give them to her?

Then Crittenden Rutledge opened his mouth and spoke. As usual when he did such a thing it was worth getting up before dawn to hear him.

"Don't you think, Mildred, darling, we might give the poor fellow three or four cheese scoops and several butter knives and a card tray or two? A young couple could easily make out for a while with one of each, and if he will promise to go back to Indiana and stay— You did come from Indiana, didn't you?" The man gave a grin and nodded. "Well, if you promise to go back and never put your foot in Kentucky again, I'll go wrap up Aunt Clay's vases for you."

Mrs. Brown, thankful that her brood was safe and no more damage done the poor, wicked tramp than a sore shoulder, a swollen nose and a fractured jaw, sent them all to bed with instructions to sleep late, and told Molly and Judy to stay in bed for breakfast. The burglar was put in the smokehouse for safekeeping until sun-up, when John and Paul expected to take him to Louisville, swear out a warrant against him and land him in jail. When the time came, however, to transfer their prisoner from smokehouse to jail, they found the door open, the man gone and a fine old ham missing.

"An' they ain't a single pusson in the whole er Indianny what knows how ter cook a ham, either," bewailed Aunt Mary.

"To think the ungrateful wretch went off without Aunt Clay's vases," muttered Crittenden Rutledge.

CHAPTER V.—THE WEDDING.

The wedding came off so exactly as Judy had planned it that it seemed to her to be a proof of the theory of transmigration of the soul, and that in a previous incarnation she had been to just such a wedding. The eldest brother, Ernest, arrived from the far West just in time to change his clothes and give the bride away. There were three understudies for his part, so there was not much concern over his non-arrival until he got there with a blood-curdling tale of wrecks and wash-outs that had delayed him twenty-four hours. Then all of them got very much concerned and Mrs. Brown reproached herself for being so taken up with Mildred's wedding that she had forgotten to worry about the absent one for the time being. Ernest resembled Sue more than any of the rest of them, and had a good deal of her poise and dignity. "But I'll wager that he is not as serious as he seems," thought Judy, detecting a twinkle in the corner of his sober eyes.

Mildred looked lovely, and she had such a sweet, trusting look in her eyes as she came down the steps and up the tan-bark walk on Ernest's arm, that Crittenden Rutledge, waiting for her at the end of the walk, broke away from his best man and went forward several yards to meet his bride. Sue and Molly brought up the rear; Sue, composed and calm with her sweet dignity; but Molly, so deeply moved by this beloved sister's marriage and the break in their ranks, the very first, that she felt her knees trembling and wondered if it could be possible that she was going to ruin everything and burst into tears or fall in a faint or do something terrible. But she didn't. The familiar voice of their old minister in the opening lines of the Episcopal marriage service brought her to her senses, and she was able to follow the ritual in her mind, but she dared not trust herself to look up. She kept her eyes glued to her bouquet of "love-in-the-mist," that Miss Lizzie Monday had brought her that morning, picked from her own old-fashioned garden.

"I know the groom will send the bridesmaids flowers, but somehow, Molly, I don't want you to carry hothouse flowers. These 'love-in-the-mists' will look just right with your dress and your eyes and your ways."

So Molly carried Miss Lizzie's "bokay" and put the flowers that the groom sent her in a vase in the parlor. But Molly was not thinking of her dress or her eyes, except to try to keep the tears in them, since come they would, and not let them run out on her cheeks. Mildred's responses were inaudible except to dear old Dr. Peters, the minister, but Crittenden's were so loud and clear and resonant that it was almost like chanting, and Judy had to smile when she could not help thinking of the stammering man's "Your house is on fire, tra la, tra la."

"I pronounce you man and wife."

All is over. Molly can let the tears fall now if she wants to, but, strange to say, she does not seem to want to any more. Such a rejoicing is going on. Everybody seems to be kissing everybody else. Aren't they all more or less kin? Mildred and Kent, the center of a gay crowd, are fondly kissing

the ones they should merely shake hands with, and formally shaking hands with their nearest and dearest, just as in a fire people have been known to carry carefully the pillows downstairs and throw the bowls and pitchers out of the window. Kent has his wits about him, however, and kisses Judy, declaring it is all in the day's work.

A stranger standing on the outskirts of the crowd during the whole ceremony seemed much more interested in the bridesmaid dressed in blue than in the bride herself, and when this same bridesmaid felt herself swaying a little as though her emotion might get the better of her, if one had not been so taken up with the central figures on the stage he might have noticed the stranger start forward as though to go to her assistance. But he, too, was brought to his senses by the calm voice of Dr. Peters in the opening words of the service, and saw with evident relief that the bridesmaid had gained control of herself. He was a tall young man with kind brown eyes and light hair, a little thin at the temples, giving him more years perhaps than he was entitled to.

When the service was over and the general confusion ensued, he made his way swiftly to where Molly stood, and without saying one word of greeting he put his arm around her and tenderly kissed her. Molly was so overcome with astonishment that she could only gasp, "Professor Green! What are you doing here?"

"I am having a very pleasant time, thank you, Miss Molly. I got your mother's kind invitation to attend your sister's wedding, and—here I am. Didn't your brother Paul tell you that I had come?"

"No, we have been so occupied, I believe I have not seen Paul to-day."

"I went to his newspaper office in Louisville to find out something about how to get here, and he asked me to drive out with him. Are you sorry I came, Miss Molly?"

"Sorry? Oh, Professor Green, you must know how glad I am to see you! But, you see, I was a little startled, not expecting you and thinking of you as still at Wellington."

"If you were thinking of me as being anywhere at all, I feel better. Were you really thinking of me?"

"Yes," said the candid Molly, "and wasn't it strange that I was thinking of you just as you came up—and—and——" but, remembering his manner of greeting her, she blushed painfully.

"You are not angry with me, are you, my dear child? I felt so lonesome. You see everybody seemed to know everybody else, and there was such a handshaking and so forth going on that before I knew it I was in the swim."

"Almost every one here is kin or near-kin, and weddings in Kentucky seem to give a great deal of license," said Molly, recovering her equanimity. "Of course I am not angry with you. I could not get angry with any one on Mildred's wedding day."

But Molly felt that in a way Edwin Green had paid her back for the hug she had given him. She had hugged him because he was so old that she could do so with impunity, and he in turn had kissed her because he felt lonesome, forsooth, and she was so young that it made no great difference. His "My dear child" had been a kind of humiliation to Molly. What is the use of being a senior and graduating at college if a man very little over thirty thinks you are nothing but a kid?

"Professor Green is not so very much older than Ernest," thought Molly, "and I wager he will not treat Judy with that old-enough-to-be-your-father air! Here am I getting mad on Mildred's wedding day when I just said I could not! And, after all, Professor Green has been very kind to me and means to be now, I know." Turning to him with one of "Molly's own," as Edith Williams termed her smile, she said, "Now you must meet my mother and all the rest of them."

Mrs. Brown looked keenly and rather sadly at the young professor. This coming of men for her daughters was growing wearisome, so the poor lady thought; but she liked Edwin Green's expression and found herself trusting him before he got through explaining his sudden appearance in Kentucky.

"After all, maybe he is only thinking of Molly as one of his pupils. His buying the orchard meant an interest in her college course and nothing else."

Mrs. Brown introduced him to the relatives and friends near her, and Molly had to leave him and make herself useful, as usual, in seeing that the refreshments were forthcoming.

When they had decided to have the wedding out of doors, it had seemed best to have the supper *al fresco*, and now brisk and very polite colored waiters were busy bringing tables and chairs from a side porch and placing them on the lawn. An odor of coffee and broiled sweetbreads, mingling with that of chicken salad and hot beaten biscuit, began to rival the fragrance of the orange flowers and roses.

The crowd around the bride thinning out a little to find seats at the tables, Professor Green was able to make his way to Mildred and Crittenden. After greeting them, he espied Judy talking sweetly to a stern-looking woman with a hard face and a soft figure, who was dressed severely in a stiff black silk, with most uncompromising linen collar and cuffs. Her iron-gray hair was tightly coiled in a fashion that emphasized her hawk-like expression, but with all she looked enough like Mrs. Brown to establish an undeniable claim to relationship with that charming lady. Mrs. Brown herself, in a soft black crêpe de Chine and old lace collar and cuffs, with her wavy chestnut hair, was more beautiful than any of her daughters, the bride herself having to take a second place.

Judy was delighted to see the professor, and not nearly so astonished as Molly had been, the truth being that Paul had told that young lady of Edwin Green's arrival, with the expectation that

she would inform Molly. But Judy, realizing the state of excitement that Molly was in, determined to keep the news to herself and not give Molly anything more to feel just then, even if in doing so she, Judy, would appear to be careless and forgetful. Judy understood the regard that Molly had for Professor Green—better than Molly herself did. She remembered Molly's expression and misery when little Otoyō, their Japanese friend at Wellington, had told them of his being so dangerously ill with typhoid, and how Molly had lost weight and could neither sleep nor eat until the crisis had passed.

"Did you ever see such a beautiful wedding in your life?" said Judy. 72

"Never, and I am told it was all your plan, even to the holly-hock background."

"Well, you see the idea was floating around in the air, and I was just the one who had her idea-net ready and caught it. Ideas are like butterflies, anyhow—all flying around waiting to be pounced on—but the thing is to have your net ready."

"Yes, and another thing, not to handle the butterfly idea too roughly. Many an idea, beautiful in itself, is ruined in the working out," said her companion.

"That is where taste comes in."

Judy would have liked to chase the metaphor much farther with the agreeable young man, but she remembered that she had set out to fascinate Aunt Clay, and it was Aunt Sarah Clay to whom she had been talking when Professor Green had come up. She introduced him, and Mrs. Clay immediately pounced on him with a tirade against innovations of all kinds.

Looking very much as we are led by the cartoonists to expect a suffragist to look, Mrs. Clay was the most ardent "anti." Opposed to all progress and innovations, and constantly at war on the subject of higher education of women, she carried her conservatism even to the point of having her grain cut with a scythe instead of using the up-to-date machinery. Professor Green was her natural enemy, for was he not instructor in a girls' school where, she was led to understand, belief in equal suffrage was as necessary for entrance as the knowledge of Latin or mathematics? 73

Professor Green, ignorant of the antagonism she felt for him and his calling, endeavored to make himself as agreeable as possible to Molly's aunt. He listened with seeming respect to her attack on modernism and then turned the subject to the wedding, her pretty nieces and fine-looking nephews.

"I never heard of any one getting married out of doors before in my life, and had I known they were contemplating such a thing I certainly should not have set my foot on the place, nor would I have sent them the handsome wedding present I did. I shall not be at all astonished if the bishop reprimands that sentimental old Dr. Peters for allowing anything so undignified in connection with the church ritual. They had much better jump over a broomstick like Gypsies and not desecrate our prayer book in such a manner. Mildred Carmichael has brought all her children up to have their own way. The idea of none of those boys being willing to stay on the farm where their forefathers managed to make a living, and a very good one! They, forsooth, must go as clerks or reporters or what not into cities and let their farm go to rack and ruin, already mortgaged until it is top-heavy. Then when they do make a little, they must squander it in this absurd new-fangled machinery, labor-saving devices that I have no use for in the world. And now Molly, not content with four years wasted at college, to say nothing of the money, says she wants to go back to fit herself more thoroughly for making her living. Living, indeed! Where are her brothers that she need feel the necessity of making her living?" 74

"But, Mrs. Clay," Judy here broke in, "my father says that there are only three male relatives that a woman should expect to support her: her father, her husband and her son. Since Molly has none of these, she, of course, wants to do something for herself. Even with a father, unless the father is very well off, it seems to me a girl ought to help after a lot has been spent on her education. I certainly mean to do something, but the trouble is, the only thing I can do will mean more money spent before I can accomplish anything." 75

"And what does such a charming person as Miss Kean expect to do?" asked the irascible old lady.

"I want to go to Paris and study to become a decorator." This was too much for Mrs. Clay. Without saying a word, she turned and stalked across the lawn where the waiters were carrying trays of food. 76

"Hateful old thing! I hope food will improve her temper. It would certainly be acceptable to me. See, here comes Kent with a table! I'll find Molly and we can have a fine foursome, and you shall taste Aunt Mary's beaten biscuit, hot from the oven. No wonder Molly is such an angel. If, as the cereal ads. say, we are what our food makes us, any one raised on Aunt Mary's cooking would have to be good. Goodness knows what Aunt Clay eats! It must be thistles and green persimmons!"

CHAPTER VI.—BUTTERMILK TACT. 77

Mildred, dressed in her pretty brown traveling suit, off to Iowa; the last slipper and handful of rice thrown; the last lingering guest departed; daylight passed and the moon well up; and at last

Mrs. Brown and Judy and Molly were free to sink on a settle on the porch, realizing for the first time how tired and footsore they were.

"Oh, my dears, I feel as though I could never get up again! It is a good thing I am so tired, for now I shall have to sleep and can't grieve for Mildred all night. I begged Professor Green to stay, but he had to go back to Louisville. However, he is coming out to Chatsworth to-morrow to pay us the promised visit. We shall have to pack the presents in the morning to send to Iowa, and glad I'll be to get them out of the house. Did I tell you, Molly, that Aunt Mary, Ca'line and Lewis are all going off to-morrow to Jim Jourdan's basket funeral? We shall be alone, you and Judy and I. Sue goes to your Aunt Clay's for a few days, and Kent starts back to work, the dear boy. Such a comfort as he has been! Ernest has to look up some friends in town, but will be out in time for supper. I fancy he will drive Professor Green out from Louisville. Good night, my dear girls, I know you are dead tired."

So they were, so tired that Judy overslept in the morning, but Molly was up betimes to help the servants get off on their gruesome spree.

"Now ain't that jes' like my Molly baby? She don' never fergit to be he'pful. Th' ain't no cookin' fer you to do to-day, honey; they's plenty of bis'it lef' from the jamboree las' night; they's a ham bone wif 'nuf on it fer you and yo' ma an' Miss Judy to pick on; they's a big bowl er chick'n salid in the 'frigerater that I jes' bodaciously tuck away from that black Lewis. I done tol' him that awlive ile my'naise ain't no eatin's fer niggers. If his insides needs a greasin' he kin take a good swaller er castor ile. Tell yo' ma I made that lazy Ca'line churn fo' sun-up 'cause they wa'nt a drap er butter in the house, an' the buttermilk is in the big jar in the da'ry. They's a pot er cabbage simperin' on the back er the stove, but that ain't meant fer the white folks, but jes' in case we needs some comfort when we gits back from the funeral. I tried to save some ice cream fer my honey baby from las' night an' had it all packed good fer keepin', but looked like in the night I took sech a cravin' fer some mo' I couldn' sleep 'thout I had some, an' by the time I opened up the freezer an' et some, it looked like the res' of it jes' melted away somehow."

"Well, Aunt Mary, I am so glad you got some more. Have a good time and don't worry about us. We shall get along all right. You see there are no men on the place to-day, and women can eat anything the day after a party. You know my teacher, Professor Green, is going to be here for a visit. He is coming this evening in time for supper, and I do hope you won't be too tired after the basket funeral to make him some waffles."

"What, me tired? I ain't a-goin' to be doin' nothin' all day but enjyin' of myself; and if I won't have the stren'th myself to stir up a few waffles fer my baby's frien's, I's still survigerous 'nuf to make that Ca'line do it. I allus has a good time at funerals an' a basket funeral is the mos' enjoyble of all entertainments."

Judy came on the scene just then and begged to be enlightened as to the nature of a basket funeral.

"Well, you see, honey, when a member dies at a onseasonable time, or at the beginning of the week an' you can't keep him 'til Sunday, or in harvestin' time when ev'ybody is busy an' the hosses is all workin', why then we jes' bury the corpse quiet like. And then when work gits slack an' there is some chanst to borrow the white folks' teams, we gits together an' ev'ybody takes a big lunch an' we impair to the seminary an' have a preachment over the grave and then a big jamboree." The old woman stopped to chuckle, and such a contagious chuckle she had that you found yourself laughing with her before you knew what the joke was.

"I 'member moughty well when this here same Jim Jourdan, what is to be preached over an' prayed over an' et over to-day, was doin' the same by his second wife Suky Jourdan, an' that was after I had buried my Cyrus an' befo' I took up wif my Albert. It was a hot day in July when fryin'-size chick'ns was jes' about comin' on good an' fat, an' I had a scrumptious lot of victuals good 'nuf fer white folks. Jim looked so ferlorn that I as't him to sit down an' try to worry down some eatin's with us. He was vas'ly pleased to do so, an' look like he couldn' praise my cookin' 'nuf; an' befo' we got to the pie, he up an' ast me to come occupy Suky's place in his cabin. I never said one word, but I got up an' fetched a big pa'm leaf fan out'n the waggin an han' it to him. 'What's this fer, Sis Mary?' sez he, an' sez I, 'You jes' take this here fan an' fan you' secon' 'til she's col', and then come a seekin' yo' third.'"

The girls laughed until the tears rolled down their cheeks over Aunt Mary's unique courtship. The red-wheeled wagon came up driven by Lewis with Ca'line sitting beside him, dressed within an inch of her life. Molly got a box for Aunt Mary to step on to climb into the vehicle, but the old woman refused to budge until Lewis took out the back seat and got a rocking chair for her to sit in.

"You know moughty well, you fergitful nigger, that I allus goes to baskit funerals a-settin' in a rockin' cheer! Go git the one offen the back po'ch, the red one with the arms to it. Sho as I go a-settin' on a back seat some lazy pusson what can't borrow a team will come a-astin' fer to ride longside er me, an' I don' want nobody a-rumplin' me up, an' 'sides ole Miss never lent this waggin fer all the niggers in Jeff'son County to come a-crowdin' in an ben'in' the springs. Then when we gits to the buryin' groun', I'll have a cheer to sit in an' not have to go squattin' 'roun' on grabe stones."

"Good-by, Aunt Mary, good-by, Ca'line and Lewis."

The girls waved until they were out of sight and then went laughing into the quiet house. It seemed quiet, indeed, after the hub-bub of the day before.

"Everything certainly stayed clean with all of the guests out of doors. I have never had an entertainment with so little to do when it was over," said Mrs. Brown. "It was a good day for the servants to go away, with the house in such good order and enough left-overs from the wedding supper for three lone women to feed on for several meals. I wonder how your Aunt Clay is getting on with her harvesting? She is so headstrong not to borrow my cutting machine! Why does she insist that flour made from wheat cut with a scythe makes better bread than that cut with modern machinery?"

84

"She declared yesterday, mother, that she was not going to feed her hands until they got through mowing, if it took them until nightfall. She says you spoil all darkeys that come near you, and she is going to show them who is boss on her place. Kent infuriated her by telling her she would get herself into trouble if she did not look out; that her wheat was already overripe, and if she attempted to make her hands work over dinner hour they would leave it half cut; but advice to Aunt Clay always sends her in the opposite direction."

"I wish I had not let Sue go over there. Most of those harvesters are strangers from another county, and they might do something desperate if Sarah antagonized them."

"Don't worry, mother, Cyrus Clay is over there, and he is sure to take good care of Sue."

The morning was spent with much gay talk as they packed the presents. Mrs. Brown was the kind of woman who could enter into the feelings of young people. She seemed to be of their generation and was never shocked or astonished when in their talk she realized that things had changed since her day. She usually made the best of it and put it down to "progress" of some sort. They worked faithfully, and by twelve o'clock had tied up and labeled the last parcel to go in the last barrel.

85

"Come on, girls, let's have an early lunch and then we can have our much needed and hard-earned rest. A good nap all around will make us feel like ourselves again."

How good that lunch did taste! Molly had been so excited that she could not swallow food the evening before, and Mrs. Brown had been so busy looking after guests that she had forgotten to eat. Judy was the only one who had done justice to the supper, but, having tested it, she was more than willing to try the chicken salad again.

"Never mind washing the dishes; put them in a dish-pan for Ca'line. Get into your kimonos and take a good nap. I am sick for sleep," yawned Mrs. Brown.

86

In five minutes they were dead to the world, lost in that midsummer afternoon sleep, the heaviest of all slumber. Everything was perfectly still except the bees, buzzing around the honey-suckle. A venturesome vine had made its way through Molly's window, ever open in summer, and as Judy lay, half asleep, she amused herself by watching a great bumble bee sip honey from the fragrant flowers, and his humming was the last sound that she was conscious of hearing. It seemed like a minute, so heavily had she slept—it was really several hours—when she was awakened with a nightmare that the bee was as big as a horse and his humming was that of a thousand bees.

"Molly, Molly, listen, what is that noise?"

Molly, ever a light sleeper, was out of bed in a trice and at the front window. What a sight met her eyes! Coming up the avenue was a crowd of at least forty negroes, all of them carrying scythes and whetstones, the sweat pouring from their black faces and bared necks and hairy chests, their white teeth flashing and eyeballs rolling, the sun glinting on the sharp steel of their scythes, menace and fury darkening the face of every man and coming from them a mutter and hum truly like the buzzing of a thousand bees.

87

Judy, although she was weak with fear, could not help thinking, "That is the noise on the stage that a mob tries to make."

"Aunt Clay's hands have struck work, and to think there is not a man on this place! I believe the blackguards know it! Load your pistol, Judy, and let us go to mother."

Mother was already up, hastily gowned in her wrapper, and opening the front door when the girls came down the stairs. The intrepid lady walked out on the porch with seemingly no more fear than she had had the day before when she came forward to meet the wedding guests. Head erect, eyes steady and piercing, with a voice clear and composed, she said, "Why, boys, you look very tired and hot, and I know you are hungry. Sit down in the shade, on the porch steps and under the trees, and I will see what we can find for you to eat. Molly, go get that buttermilk out of the dairy. The jar is too heavy for you to lift, so take Buck and let him carry it for you."

88

Mrs. Brown, with all of her courage, was never more scared in her life. All the time she was talking she had been looking in the crowd of black faces for a familiar one, and was glad to recognize Buck Jourdan, a good-natured, good-for-nothing nephew of Aunt Mary's. At her command Buck stepped forward, and then a dozen more of the men came to the front, unconsciously separating themselves from the rest. Mrs. Brown saw that they were all negroes belonging in her neighborhood. At her calming words and proffer of food such a change came over the faces of the mob that they hardly seemed to be the same men. Their teeth showed now in grins instead of sinister snarls; they stacked their murderous looking weapons against the paulownia tree and sat down in the shade with expressions as peaceful as the wedding guests themselves had worn.

89

Molly and the stalwart Buck were back in an incredibly short time with the five-gallon jar of buttermilk and a tray of glasses not yet put away from yesterday's feast. Mrs. Brown herself

dipped out the smooth, luscious beverage, seeing that each man was plentifully served, while Molly went into the house to bring out all the cooked provisions she could find. Mrs. Brown beckoned the trembling and wondering Judy to her and whispered, "Go ring the farm bell as loud as you can. All danger is over now, I feel sure, but it is well to let the neighbors know that we are in some difficulty; and I fancy I heard a horse trotting on the turnpike, and whoever it is might hasten to us at the sound of a farm bell at this unusual hour."

Judy flew to the great bell, hung on a high post in the back yard. She seized the rope, and then such a ding-dong as pealed forth! The bell was a very heavy brass one, and at every pull Judy, who was something of a lightweight, leaped into the air, reciting as she jumped, "Curfew shall not ring to-night."

"That is enough, my dear. There is no use in getting help from an adjacent county, and I fancy every one in Jefferson County has heard the bell by this time," said Mrs. Brown, stopping her before she had quite finished the last stanza, which Judy said was like interrupting a good sneeze.

Molly had found all kinds of food for the hungry laborers, who were more sinned against than sinning. They had gone in all good faith to the Clay farm to harvest the wheat according to the antiquated methods of the mistress, with scythes and cradles. When twelve o'clock, the dinner hour everywhere, came, they were told that they could not eat until they had finished. They had worked on until two, and then, infuriated with hunger and goaded on by the thought of the injustice done them, they had struck in a body and gone to the mansion to try to force Mrs. Clay to feed them; but they had been held back at the point of a pistol, by that lady herself. Then they had determined to get food where they could find it.

Mrs. Brown gathered this much from the men as, their hunger assuaged, they talked more connectedly.

"Th' ain't nothin' like buttermilk to ease yo' heart," said Buck Jasper. "Mis' Mildred Carmichael kin git mo' outen her niggers fillin' 'em full er buttermilk than her sister Mis' Sary kin fillin' 'em full er buckshot."

Mrs. Brown was right; she had heard a horse trotting on the turnpike. The men were wiping their mouths on the backs of their hands and coming up one at a time to thank the gracious lady for her kindness in feeding them, when Ernest and Edwin Green came driving into the avenue.

"Mother! What does this mean? I thought I heard the farm bell when I was about two miles from home, and now I find the yard full of negro men. Have you had a fire?"

Mrs. Brown explained that Aunt Clay had made things pretty hot for her hands, but so far there had been no other fire. She welcomed Professor Green to Chatsworth and called the grinning Buck to take his suitcase to the cottage porch. Judy wondered at her calm manner and at her saying nothing to Ernest about their being so frightened, not realizing that one hint of the trouble would have sent Ernest off into a rage, when he might have reprimanded the negroes and all the good work of the buttermilk have been undone. Molly was pale and Professor Green, ever watchful of her, asked Judy to give him an account of the matter, which she did in such a graphic manner that he, too, turned pale to think of the danger those dear ladies had been in. He made himself at home by making himself useful, and helped Molly to carry back into the kitchen the empty glasses and plates from the feast of the hungry darkeys. She laughingly handed him a great, iron pot in which cabbage had been cooked.

"I am wondering what Aunt Mary will say about her cabbage. Mother sent me into the house to get all available food, when she realized that the hands were simply hungry and that food would be the best thing to quell their rage. Aunt Mary had this huge pot of cabbage on the back of the range; she said in case Lewis jolted down the lunch she was going to eat at the basket funeral she would have it cooked in readiness. The poor dogs will have to go hungry, too, or have some more corn bread cooked for them. I found this big pan full of what we call dog-bread, made from scalded meal and salt and bacon drippings, baked until it is crisp. The men were crazy about it with pot liquor poured over it. You can see for yourself how they licked their platters clean."

"The Saxon word 'lady' means bread-giver, but I think that you and your mother have given it a new significance, and the dictionaries will have to add, 'Dispenser of cabbage and buttermilk and dog-bread.'"

More wheels, and Aunt Mary and Lewis, with Ca'line much rumped and asleep on the front seat, her shoes and stockings in her lap and her bare feet propped gracefully on the dashboard, had returned. Aunt Mary was much excited.

"What's all dis doin'? Who was all dem niggers I seen a-streakin' crost the fiel's? Buck Jourdan, ain't that you I see hidin' behine that tree? I thought I hearn the farm bell as we roun'ed the Pint, but Lewis lowed 'twas over to Miss Sary Clay's. Come here, Buck, an' he'p me out'n dis here waggin. You needn't think you kin hide from me, when I kin see the patch on yo' pants made outen the selfsame goods I gib yo' ma to make some waistes out'n, two years ago come next Febuway." Buck came sheepishly forward to help his old aunt out of the vehicle. "Nex' time you wan' ter hide from me you'd better make out to grow a leettle leaner, or fin' a tree what's made out to grow some wider so's you won't stick out beyant it. What you been doing, and who's been a-mashin' down ole Miss's grass, and what's my little Miss Molly baby a-doin' workin' herself to death ag'in to-day?"

Buck endeavored to explain his appearance, and told the story of the strike at Mrs. Clay's and

how they were just passing through Mrs. Brown's yard when she had come out and invited them all to dinner. His story was so plausible and his voice so soft and manner so wheedling, that Professor Green, who overheard the conversation, was much amused, and had he not already got the incident from Judy might have believed Buck, so convincing were his words and manner. Not so Aunt Mary, who had partly raised the worthless Buck and knew better than anyone how he could use his silver tongue to lie as well as tell the truth, but preferred the former method.

"Now, look here, you Buck Jourdan, you ain't no count on Gawd's green yearth 'cep to play the banjo. What you been doin' hirin' yo'self out to Miss Sary Clay, jes' like you ain't never know'd that none of our fambly don' never work fer none er hern? Yo' ma befo' you an' yo' gran'ma befo' her done tried it. Meanin' no disrespect to the rest er the Carmichaels, der's the ole sayin', 'What kin you expec' from a hog but a grunt?' I knows 'thout goin' in my kitchen that Miss Molly done gib all you triflin' niggers my pot er cabbage an' the dog-bread I baked fer those houn's an' bird dogs what ain't no mo' count than you is, 'cept'n they can't play the banjo."

"Buck Jourdan, is that you?" said Ernest, coming forward and interrupting Aunt Mary's tirade. "I am going to get Miss Molly's banjo and you can sit down and give us some music. I haven't heard a good tune since I went West."

Buck, glad to escape any farther tongue lashing from his relative, and always pleased to play and sing, tuned the banjo and began:

"'Hi,' said the 'possum as he shook the 'simmon tree,
'Golly,' said the rabbit; 'you shake 'em all on me.'
An' they went in wif they claws, an' they licked they li'l paws,
An' they took whole heaps home to they maws."

After several stanzas sung in a soft melodious voice, Buck, at Molly's request, gave them, to a chanting recitative the following song, composed by a friend of Buck's, and worthy to be incorporated in American folk-lore, so Professor Green laughingly assured Mrs. Brown.

THE MURDER OF THE RATTAN FAMILY.

"One evening in September, in eighteen ninety-three,
Jim Stone committed a murder, as cruel as it could be.
'Twas on the Rattan family, while they were preparing for their bed.
Jim Stone, he rapped upon the door, complaining of his head.
The first was young Mrs. Rattan. She come to let him in.
He slew her with his corn knife—that's where his crime begin.
The next was old Mrs. Rattan. Old soul was feeble and gray.
Truly she fought Jim Stone a battle till her strength it give way.
The next was the little baby. When he, Jim Stone did see,
He raised up in his cradle. 'Oh! Jim Stone, don't murder me!
Next morning when he was arrested—wasn't sure that he was the one.
Till only a few weeks later he confessed to the crime he done.
They took him to Southern Prison, which they thought was the
safetes' place.
When they marched him out for trial, he had a smile upon his face.
And after he was sentenced, oh! how he did mourn and cry.
One day he received a letter, saying his daughter was bound to die.
Next morning he answered the letter and in it he did say,
'Tell her I'll meet her there in Heaven, on the sixteenth of Februway.'
They led him upon the scaffold with the black cap over his head.
And he hung there sixteen minutes 'fore the doctors pronounced
him dead.
Now wouldn't it have been much better if he'd stayed at home
with his wife,
Instead of keeping late hours, and taking that family's life?"

CHAPTER VII.—PICTURES ON MEMORY'S WALL.

The next week was a very quiet and peaceful one at Chatsworth. There had been so many excitements, with burglars and negro uprisings and what not, that Molly was afraid her visitors would think Kentucky deserved the meaning the Indians attached to it—"the dark and bloody battle-ground."

Ernest, home for a vacation from his labors in the West, endeavored to keep Judy from missing the attentions of Kent, who was back at his grind in Louisville in the architect's office, and did not get home each day until time for a late supper. Judy liked Ernest very well, as she did all of the Browns, but Kent and Molly were her favorites still, and the evenings were the best of all when Kent came home and, as he put it, "relieved Ernest."

Molly found herself on easier terms with Professor Green than she had ever imagined possible. If he did not consider her quite an old lady, she at least was beginning to look upon him as not such

a very old gentleman. He played what Kent designated as a "cracker-jack" game of tennis, and turned out to be as good a horseman as the Brown boys themselves.

"If he only had a little more hair on his forehead," thought Molly, "he would look right young."

Aunt Mary was the unconscious means of consoling her for his lack of hair. "Honey, I likes yo' teacher mo'n any Yankee I ever seed. He'd oughter rub onions on his haid to stimilate the roots. Not but what he ain't han'some, baldish haid an' all, with them hones' eyes an' that upstandin' look. I done took notice that brains don' make the best sile to grow ha'r on an' lots er smart folks is baldish. Mindjer, I wouldn' go so fer as to say bald haided folks is all smart. It looks like some er them is so hard-haided the ha'r can't break th'ough the scalp."

102

Of course, the first day at Chatsworth he had to be taken out to view his possessions, the two acres of orchard land. It was a possession for any man to be proud of. It lay on the side of a gently sloping hill covered with blue grass and noble, venerable, twisted apple trees, that Molly said reminded her of fine old hands that showed hard, useful work.

"And these trees always have done good work. You know my father called these his lucky acres. He was always certain of an income from these apples. The trees have been taken care of and trimmed and not allowed to rot away as some of the old orchards around here have, Aunt Clay's, for instance. She is so afraid of doing something modern that she refused to spray her trees when the country was full of San José scale, and in consequence lost her whole peach orchard and most of her apples. This is where our 'castle' used to be."

103

They were in a grassy space near the middle of the orchard, where a stump of an old tree was still standing. The land, showing a beautiful soft contour, sloped to the worm fence at the foot of the hill, where the grass changed its green to a brighter hue and a beautiful little stream sparkled in the sun.

"All of us, even Sue, who is not given to such things, cried when in a big wind storm our beloved castle was twisted off of its roots. It was a tree made for children to play in, with low spreading branches and great crotches, the limbs all twisted and bent and one of them curving down so low you could sit in it and touch your feet to the ground. We had our regular apartments in that tree and kept our treasures in a hole too high up for thieves to have any suspicion of it. It was so shady and cool and breezy that on the hottest day we were comfortable and often had lunch here. We played every kind of game known to children and made up a lot more. 'Swiss Family Robinson' when they went to live up the tree was our best game. I remember once Kent gathered a lot of peach-tree gum and ruined my slippers trying to make rubber boots out of them as the father in Swiss Family Robinson did. Our castle had wonderful apples on it, too. They grew to an enormous size, and if any of them were ever allowed to get really ripe they turned pure gold and tasted—oh, how good they did taste."

104

Edwin Green listened, enchanted at Molly's description of her childhood and the beloved play-house. He half shut his eyes and tried to picture her as a little girl in a blue sun-bonnet—of course she must have had a blue bonnet—climbing nimbly up the old apple tree, entering as eagerly into the game of Swiss Family Robinson as she was now playing the game of life, even letting her best little slippers be gummed over to play the game true. He had a feeling of almost bitter regret that he hadn't known Molly as a little girl. "She must have been such a bully little girl," thought that highly educated teacher of English.

105

"Miss Molly, do you think that this would be the best place to build my bungalow? Place it right here where your castle stood? Maybe I could catch some of the breezes that you used to enjoy; and perhaps some of the happiness that you found here was spilled over and I might pick it up. It could not be so beautiful as your tree castle, but it is my 'Castle in the Air.' If I put it here I should not have to sacrifice any of the other trees; there is room enough where your old friend stood for my modest wants. Would it hurt your feelings to have me build a little house where your childish mansion stood?"

"Why, Professor Green, the idea of such a thing! It would give me the greatest happiness to have your bungalow right on this site. I would not be a dog in the manger about it, anyhow. Are you really and truly going to build?"

"I hope to. Of course, I shall have to ask your mother if she would mind having such a close neighbor."

106

"Well, I hardly think mother would expect to sell a lot and then not let the purchaser build. She may have to sell some more of the place. I wish it could be that old stony strip over by Aunt Clay's. You know our home, Chatsworth, is a Brown inheritance, and the Carmichael place adjoining belonged to mother's people. They call it the Clay place now, but until grandfather died it was known as the Carmichael place. Aunt Clay married and lived there and somehow got hold of grandfather and made him appoint her administratrix and executrix to his estate. She managed things so well for herself that she got the house with everything in it and the improved, cleared land, giving mother acres and acres of poor land where even blackberries don't flourish and the cows won't graze. The sheep won't drink the water, but they do condescend to keep down the weeds. I really believe that Aunt Clay is the only person in the world that I can't like even a little bit. I fancy it is because she has been so mean to mother. I believe I could get over her being cross and critical with me, but somehow I can't forgive the way she has always treated mother."

107

"I found her a very trying companion at your sister's wedding, and she looks as though she had brains, too. But how anyone with sense could be anything but kind to your mother I cannot see."

Molly beamed with pleasure. "Ah, you see how wonderful mother is. I thought you would appreciate her. She likes you, too, Professor Green. Mother says she believes she understands boys better than girls and can enter into their feelings more."

"Oh, what am I saying?" thought Molly. "I wonder what the Wellington girls would say if they could know I forgot and as good as called their Professor of English a boy! Well, he does look quite boyish out of doors, with his hat on."

They strolled on down toward the brook, Molly patting each tree as they passed and telling some little incident of her childhood.

"I truly believe you love every one of these trees. You touch them as lovingly as you do President or the dogs, and look at them as fondly as you do at old Aunt Mary."

"Indeed, I do; and, as for this little stream, it makes to me the sweetest music in the world."

"Miss Molly, when I build my little bungalow, will you come and have lunch with me as you used to with your brothers in the old castle? I'll promise you not to let you eat at the second table as you did when you took breakfast with me last Christmas."

They both laughed at the thought of that morning; and Molly remembered that it was then that she had overheard Professor Green tell his housekeeper of his apple orchard out in Kentucky, and had realized for the first time that it was he who had bought the orchard at Chatsworth.

"Indeed, I will take lunch with you, and would like to cook it, too, as I did your breakfast that cold morning. Do you know, when you came downstairs and I peeped at you through the crack in the pantry door, you looked and sounded almost as fierce as the mob of colored men who came hungry from Aunt Clay's last week? The nice breakfast I fixed for you seemed to soften your temper just as mother's buttermilk did the darkies'. Aunt Mary says, 'White men and black men is all the same on the inside, and all of them is Hungarians.'"

Edwin Green laughed, as he always did when Molly got on the subject of Aunt Mary. The old woman was a never failing source of wonder and amusement to him; and Molly mimicked her so well that you could almost see her short, fat figure with her head tied up in a bandanna handkerchief, vigorously nodding to punctuate each epigram.

"Next winter I hope to have my sister with me at Wellington, and she will see that this 'Hungarian' is fed better than my housekeeper has. You will come to us a great deal, I hope. I am overjoyed that you are to take the postgraduate course. That was the one pleasant thing your aunt, Mrs. Clay, had to tell me when I conversed with her at the wedding, and she little dreamed how pleasant it was, or I doubt her giving me that joy."

"I am truly glad. I hated to give up right now. It seemed to me as though I could see the open door of culture but had not reached it, and had a lot of things to learn before I had any right to consider myself fit to pass through it. Mother and Kent together decided it must be managed for me. They are both bricks, anyhow."

The young people had come to the little purling brook during this conversation, and at Molly's instigation had turned down the stream and entered, through a break in the worm fence, a beautiful bit of woods. The beech woods in Kentucky are, when all is told, about the most beautiful woods in the world. No shade is so dense, no trees more noble, not even oaks. With the grace of an aspen and the dignity of an oak, the beech to my mind is first among trees.

"Of all the beautiful pictures
That hang on Memory's wall,
Is one of a dim old forest
That seemeth the best of all.

"Not for the gnarled oaks olden,
Dark with the mistletoe,
Not for the violets golden
That sprinkle the vale below.

"Not for the milk-white lilies
Leaning o'er the hedge,
Coquetting all day with the sunbeams
And stealing their golden edge."

Molly quoted the verses in her soft, clear voice, adding:

"I say 'gnarled oaks olden' for euphony, but I always think 'beech.' I don't know what Miss Alice or Phœbe Gary, whichever one it was who wrote those lovely verses, would think of my taking such a liberty, even in my mind."

"No doubt if Miss Alice or Phœbe Cary could have seen this wood, she would have searched about in her mind for a line to fit beeches and let oaks go hang. This is really a wonderful spot. Can't we sit down a while? I hope your mother will let me have right of way through these woods when I build my nest in the orchard. This makes my lot more valuable than I thought. I have never seen such beech trees; why, in the East a beech is not such a wonderful tree! We have an occasional big one, but here are acres and acres of genuine first growth. You must love it here even more than in the orchard, don't you?"

"Well, you see the orchard period is what might be known as my early manner; while the beech

woods is my romantic era. I used to come here after I got old enough to roam around by myself, and a certain mystery and gloom I felt in the air would so fill my soul with rapture that (I know you think this is silly) I would sit right where we are sitting now and cry and cry just for the pure joy of having tears to shed, I suppose! I know of no other reason."

113

Professor Green smiled, but his eyes had a mist in them as he looked at the young girl, little more than a child now, with her sweet, wistful expression, already looking back on her childhood as a thing of the past and her "romantic era" as though she had finished with it.

"Oh, Miss Molly, let's stay in the 'beech wood period' forever! None of us can afford to give up romance or the dear delight of tears for tears' sake. I love to think of you as a little child playing in the apple orchard, and as a beautiful girl wandering in the woods. But do you know, a still more beautiful picture comes to my inward eye, and that is an old Molly with white hair sitting where you are now, still in the 'romantic era,' still in the beech woods; and, God willing, I'll be beside you, only," he whimsically added, "I am afraid I'll be bald-headed instead of white-haired!"

CHAPTER VIII.—ALL KINDS OF WEATHER.

114

The days went dreamily on. Edwin Green lengthened his stay in Kentucky until he really became touchy on the subject, and one day when some one spoke of the old Virginia gentleman who came in out of the rain and stayed six years, he told Mrs. Brown that he felt very like that old man. She was hospitality itself, and made him understand that he was more than welcome, and, every time he set a date for his departure, some form of entertainment was immediately on foot where his presence seemed both desirable and necessary, and his going away was postponed again. Once it was a coon hunt with Ernest and John and Lewis, the colored gardener; once it was a moonlight picnic at a wonderful spot called Black Rock.

115

On that occasion they drove in a hay wagon over a road that was a disgrace to Kentucky, and then up a dry creek bed until they came to the great black boulder that stood at least twenty feet in the air; there they made their temporary camp. Kent confided to Professor Green that they never dared to come up that creek bed unless they were sure of clear weather, as it had been known to fill so quickly with a big rain that it drowned a man and horse. It was innocent enough then, with only a thin stream of water trickling along the rocks, sometimes forming a pool where the horses would go in almost to their knees; but, as a rule, they went dry shod along the bed. It was rough riding, but no one minded. There was plenty of hay in the wagon for young bones, and Mrs. Brown, who was chaperoning, had a pillow to sit on and one to lean against. When they got to the sylvan spot every one agreed it was worth the bumping they had undergone.

116

"Oh, it looks like the Doone Valley," said Judy.

And so it did, except that the stream of water was not quite so big as the one John Ridd had to climb up.

There were sixteen in the party, which filled the big wagon comfortably so that no one had room to bounce out. Paul and Ernest had invited two girls from Louisville, who turned out to be very pleasant and attractive and in for a good time. The only person who was not very agreeable was John's friend, the girl visiting Aunt Clay, a Miss Hunt from Tennessee. She was fussy and particular and afraid of spoiling her dress, a chiffon thing, entirely inappropriate for a hay ride. She complained of a headache, and, besides, as Molly said, "she didn't sit fair." That is a very important thing to do on a hay ride. One person doubling up or lolling can upset the comfort of a whole wagon load. You must sit with your feet stretched out, making what quilt makers call "the every other one pattern."

117

"I am glad she acts this way," whispered Mrs. Brown to Molly. "I know now why I can't abide her. I couldn't tell before."

Miss Hunt's selfishness did not seem to worry her admirers any. John was all devotion, as were the two other young men who came along in her train. They were sorry about her headache and wanted to make room in the wagon for her to lie down; but Mrs. Brown was firm there and said it was a pity for her to suffer, but she thought it might injure her back unless she sat up going over the rough road. That lady had no patience with the headache, and thought the girl would much better have stayed at home if she were too ill to sit up. She did not much believe in the headache, anyhow, and was irritated to see poor Molly with her long legs doubled up under her trying to make room for the lolling little beauty.

"She is pretty, no doubt of that," said Edwin Green to Mrs. Brown, whom he had elected to sit by and look after for the ride, "as pretty as a brunette can be. I like a blonde as a rule. But it looks to me as though Miss Molly is getting the hot end of it, as far as comfort goes."

118

He would have offered to change places with Molly, but had a big reason for refraining. That was that no other than Jimmy Lufton, Molly's New York newspaper friend, was occupying the seat next to Molly, and Professor Green was determined to do nothing to show his misery at that young man's proximity. Jimmy had arrived quite unexpectedly that afternoon and seemed to be as intimate with the whole Brown family in two hours as he, Edwin Green, was after weeks of close companionship. He tried not to feel bitter, and, next to sitting by Molly, he was sure he would rather sit by her mother than any one in the world, certainly than anyone in the wagon.

Jimmy was easily the life of the party. He had a good tenor voice and knew all the new songs "hot off of the bat" from New York. He told the funniest stories, and at the same time was so good-natured and kindly and modest withal that you had to like him. He was not the typical funny man. Edwin Green felt that he could not have stood Molly's preferring a typical funny man to him. She did prefer Jimmy, he felt almost sure, and now he was trying to steel himself to take his medicine like a man. He was determined not to whine and not to make Molly unhappy. He had seen the meeting between Molly and Jimmy, and it was the flood of color that had suffused Molly's face and her almost painful agitation that had convinced him of her regard for that brilliant young journalist. Had he heard the conversation as well as seen the meeting, he might have been spared some of his unhappiness. Jimmy had said, "Where's my lemon?" and Molly had answered, "Done et up."

They piled out of the wagon. John, the woodsman of the crowd, busied himself making a fire, demanding that the two "extra men" should come and chop wood, determined that they should not get in too many words with the beautiful Miss Hunt while he was working. Miss Hunt then exercised her fascinations on Jimmy Lufton, on whom she had had her eye ever since they left Chatsworth. Jimmy was polite, but had a "nothing-doing" expression which quite baffled the practiced flirt. Poor Molly's foot had gone so fast asleep that she was forced to hop around for at least five minutes before she could get out of the wagon and begin to make herself useful. Kent, who had driven, with Judy on the front seat with him, was busy taking out the four horses to let them rest for the heavy pull home. The other young men were occupied in various ways, lifting the hampers out of the wagon and getting water from the beautiful spring at the foot of the huge black rock. Professor Green came to Molly's assistance.

"I was afraid your foot would go to sleep. You are too good to let that girl crowd you so. She was the most deliberately selfish person I ever saw."

"Oh, there is always somebody like that on a hay ride. I have never been on one yet that there wasn't some girl along with a headache who took up more than her share of room. I am too long to double up; but it is all right now. The tingle has stopped, and I can bear my weight on it, I see."

"Did you ever see anything more beautiful than this valley? How clever Miss Kean is in hitting off a description! I haven't thought of the Doone Valley for years, and now I can't get it out of my head; these overhanging cliffs and this green grass, green even by moonlight; and the sensation of being in an impenetrable fortress! And the great black rock might be Carver Doone petrified and very much magnified, left here forever for his sins. It must be a magnificent sight when the creek is full."

"So it is; but I hope we shall not see that sight to-night. Lorna Doone in the big snow was in a safe place to what we would be in a big freshet up this valley with no way to get back but by the creek bed," said Molly, jumping out of the hay wagon and beginning to make ready the supper.

Such a supper it was, with appetites to match after the long ride and good jolting! Mrs. Brown was an old hand at picnic suppers and knew exactly what to put in and how to pack the baskets in the most appetizing way. There were different kinds of sandwiches, thin bread and butter, all kinds of pickles, apple turnovers and cheese cakes; but the crowning success of one of these camp picnics was always the hot coffee and bacon cooked on John's fire. The Browns kept a skillet and big coffee pot to use only on such occasions. The cloth was soon spread and the cold lunch arranged on it, and then in an incredibly short time the coffee was boiling and the bacon sizzling.

"Oh, what a smell is this?" said Jimmy Lufton, emerging from behind Black Rock, where Miss Hunt had been doing her best to captivate him. (Kent said he bet on Jimmy to give her as good as he got.) "Mark Twain says, 'Bacon would improve the flavor of an angel,' and so it would."

"Well, I'm no angel, but I certainly do smell like bacon," said Molly with flushed face and rumpled hair as she knelt over the fire with a long stick turning the luscious morsels. "Sue and Cyrus are responsible for the coffee and the bacon is my affair."

"As Todger's boy says, 'Wittles is up,'" called Jimmy to the strolling couples, who lost no time in hurrying to the feast. Mrs. Brown was installed at the head of the cloth, but not allowed to wait on any one. "For once, you shall be a guest at your own table," said Kent, taking the coffee pot out of her hands. "Miss Judy, don't you think we can serve this?"

"Mostly cream for me and very little coffee," drawled Miss Hunt.

"If you have such a bad headache you had better take it black," said Judy, who was aware of that young lady's selfish behavior on the trip. "The people who want a great deal of cream will have to wait until the rest are served, as some of the cream got spilled; and, while there is enough for reasonable helps, there is not enough for exorbitant demands."

John and the two "extras" offered their shares to the spoiled beauty, but Judy was adamant.

"Those sandwiches with olives and mayonnaise are very rich for any one with a liver," said Judy later on as Miss Hunt was preparing to help herself plentifully to the delectable food; "these plain bread-and-butter ones would be much more wholesome for you, my dear. What, cheese cakes for any one who is too ill to sit up straight! Goodness gracious, Miss Hunt, do be careful! Your demise would grieve so many it is really selfish of you not to take better care of yourself."

"You seem to be very much concerned about my health, Miss Kean. I wonder that you knew I did not feel well; you seemed to be fully occupied on the journey with Mr. Kent Brown," snapped

Miss Hunt.

"So I was," answered Judy, nothing daunted. "But whenever Kent had to turn his attentions to the four horses when we came to rough spots in the road and he was trying not to jolt the ambulance too much, then I could turn around and get a good bird's-eye view of the passengers, and you always seemed to be on the point of fainting."

"I know you are better now," said Molly, who could not bear for even Miss Hunt, who was certainly not her style of girl, to be teased. "I know these apple turnovers won't hurt you, and Aunt Mary makes such good ones. Do have one, and here is some more cream if you want it in your coffee."

"What a sweet girl your sister is," said Miss Hunt in an audible whisper. "I can't see what she finds in that Miss Kean to want her to make her such an interminable visit."

The ill-natured remark was heard by every one. For did you ever notice that the way to make yourself heard in a crowd of noisy talkers is to whisper? Molly looked ready for tears, and Kent bit his lips in rage, but Judy, as spunky as usual, and feeling that she deserved a rebuke from Miss Hunt, but rather shocked at the ill-bred way of delivering it, spoke out: "Mrs. Brown, when we were laughing the other day over your story of the old Virginia gentleman who came in out of the rain and stayed six years, I had another one to tell, but something happened to interrupt me. Might I tell it now?"

Mrs. Brown gave a smiling consent. She was not so tender-hearted as Molly and, while she felt it a mistake to wrangle, she was rather curious to see who would get ahead in this trial of wits.

"I bet my bottom dollar on Miss Judy, don't you, mother?" said Kent in an undertone.

"I certainly do," whispered his mother.

"A little Southern girl we knew at college, Madeline Pettit, told in all seriousness about a neighbor of hers who was invited to go on a visit. She accepted, but they had to sell the cow for her to go on, and then she had to prolong her visit for the calf to get big enough for her to come home on. I am afraid our calf is almost big enough and papa may come riding in on it any day and carry me off." There was a general roar of laughter, and then the picnickers, having eaten all that they uncomfortably could, made a general movement toward adjournment.

"Where is the moon?" they all exclaimed at once. While they were eating and drinking and making themselves generally merry, the proverbial cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, had grown and spread and now the moon was put out of business. The cliffs were so high that a storm had come up out of the west without any one dreaming of it.

"This creek can fill in such a hurry when a big rain comes we had better start," said Kent.

"Oh, don't be such a croaker, Kent. It can't rain. The sky was as clear as a bell when we left home," said Mrs. Brown, as eager as any of the young people to prolong the good times.

"All right, mother, just as you think best, but I am going to get the horses hitched up in case you change your mind."

Change her mind she did in a very few minutes, as large drops of rain began to fall. The crowd came pell-mell and scrambled into the wagon. Mrs. Brown noticed in the confusion that she had lost her cavalier and that Professor Green had attached himself to Molly. She was pleased to see it, as she had felt sorry for the young man. He was evidently so miserable, and yet at the same time so determined to make himself agreeable to her that he had been really very charming. She loved to talk about books, and, as she said, seldom had the chance, for the people who knew about books and cared for them never seemed to realize that a busy mother and housekeeper could have similar tastes.

"I get so tired of swapping recipes for pickles and talking about how to raise children. Aunt Mary makes the pickle and my children are all raised," she had confided to Edwin Green. "We had a very interesting guest on one occasion, a woman who had done a great many delightful things and knew many delightful literary people, and I hoped to have a real good talk with her about books; but she seemed to feel she must stick to the obvious when she conversed with me. I often laugh when I think of Aunt Mary's retort courteous to this same lady. She was constantly asking me how we made this and what we did to have that so much better than other people, and I would always refer her to Aunt Mary."

"Once it was bread that was under discussion. You know how difficult it is to get a recipe from a darkey, as they never really know how they do the things they do best. Aunt Mary told her to the best of her ability what she did, but the woman was not satisfied. 'Now, tell me exactly how many cups of flour you use.' 'Why, bless you, we done stop dolin' out flour with a cup long ago an' uses a ole broken pitcher.' Another time it was coffee. 'Now, you have told me about the freshly roasted and ground coffee, please tell me how much water.' Aunt Mary gave a scornful sniff. 'You mus' think we are stingy folks ef you think we measure water!' At another time she said, 'Aunt Mary, you must have told me wrong, because I did exactly what you said and my popovers were complete failures.' 'Laws a mussy, I did fergit to tell you one thing, an' that is that you mus' stir in some gumption wif ev'y aig.'"

"De rain kep' a-drappin' in draps so mighty heavy;
De ribber kep' a-risin' an' bus'ed froo de levvy,
Ring, ring de banjo, how I lub dat good ole song,
Come, come, my true love, oh, whar you been so long?"

It was Jimmy who broke into this rollicking song, and when all of the Brown boys, who had had an experience with this old dry creek bed once on a 'possum hunt, heard him, they felt that the song was singularly appropriate. They also thanked their stars that they had with them some one who would "whoop things up" and keep the crowd cheerful, and perhaps the ladies would not realize the danger they were in. This wet-weather creek was fed by innumerable small branches, all of them dry now from something of a drought that had been prevalent, and John, the woodsman, noticed that before they had much rainfall in the valley those small branches had begun to flow, showing that there had already been a great storm to the west of them.

"If the rain were merely local, old Stony Creek could not do much damage in itself, but it is the help of all of these wet-weather springs and branches that makes it play such havoc," whispered John to Jimmy Lufton. "I have known it in two hours' time to rise four feet, which sounds incredible; and then in two hours more subside two feet, and in a day be almost dry again. I spent four hours up on top of Black Rock once in a sudden freshet. I would have scaled the hills, but I had some young dogs hunting, and they were so panic-stricken and I was so afraid they would fall down the cliffs in the creek, that I just took them up on top of the rock; and there we sat huddled up in the driving rain until the water subsided enough for us to wade home. Swimming is out of the question for more than a few strokes, the current is so swift; and as for keeping your feet and walking, you simply can't do it."

"We have a creek up near Lexington that goes on just such unexpectedsprees," said Jimmy. "It will be a perfectly respectable citizen and every one will forget its bad behavior, when suddenly it will break loose and get so full it disgraces itself and brings shame on its family of branches."

By this time the whole crowd was fairly damp, but they made a joke of it, with the exception of Miss Hunt, who was much irritated at the damage done her pretty dress. Although she was covered up with three coats, she clamored for more, but no more were offered her. Professor Green took off his coat and, folding it carefully, put it under the seat in the lunch hamper.

"I fancy you think this is a funny thing to do, but I have seen a wet crowd almost freeze after a storm like this, and it is a great mistake to get all of the wraps wet. It is much better to take the rain and get wet yourself, and keep the coats dry; and then, when the rain is over, have something warm and comfortable to put on."

"That is a fine scheme," said Paul, and all of the men followed Edwin Green's example, and Molly and Judy, who had prudently brought their college sweaters, did the same.

"I think it is rather fun to get wet when you have on clothes that won't get ruined," said Judy.

"I am glad you like it," answered Miss Hunt, still sore over her bout with Judy, "but I must say it is hard on me with this chiffon dress. What will it look like after this?"

"Well, you know, chiffon is French for rag so I fancy it will look like a Paris creation," called back Judy from the front seat, where she was still installed by Kent. "I'll bet anything her hair will come out of curl," she whispered to her companion, "and I should not be astonished to see some of her beauty wash off."

"Eany, meany," laughed Kent. "You are already way ahead of her, Miss Judy. Do leave her her hair and complexion."

"Well, I'll try to be good," said penitent Judy. "You and Molly are so alike, it is right amusing. And the worst of it is your goodness rubs off on everybody you come in contact with. Do you realize I have been in Kentucky for weeks and that Miss Hunt is the first person I have had a scrap with, and so far I have not got myself in a single 'Julia Kean' scrape? I have been in so many, that the girls at college have named the particular kind of scrape I get in after me, just as though I were a famous physician who had discovered a disease."

"Just what kind of scrape do you usually get in?"

"The kind of scrape I get in is always one I can get out of, and usually one that I fall in from not looking ahead enough at the consequences."

"Well, I pray God that this will be a 'Julia Kean' scrape we are in to-night. Certainly, lack of foresight got us in. I'd like to get that weather man and throw him in this creek. 'Generally fair and variable winds,' much!" said Kent with such a serious expression that Judy began to realize that this was not simply a case of a good wetting, but might mean something more.

The horses were knee deep in water now, but splashing bravely on. Molly noticed that in hitching up for the homeward trip Kent had put President in the lead.

"That is because old President has so much sense and will know how to pick his way and keep his feet when the other horses would get scared and begin to struggle and pull down the whole team," said Molly to Professor Green. Molly was fully aware of the danger they were in, but was keeping her knowledge to herself for fear of starting a panic among the girls. "There is no real danger of drowning," she whispered to her companion, "so long as we stay in the wagon. But the banks are so steep that if we should get out we might slip into the creek and then it would be about impossible to keep our feet. Look at the water now, up to the hubs of the wheels! I am sorry for the horses, and what an awful responsibility for Kent! But he is equal to it. Do you know, I really believe Kent is equal to anything!"

It was, of course, pitch dark now, except for frequent flashes of lightning that illuminated the raging torrents, so all were forced to realize the grave situation.

"The horses are behaving wonderfully well, and so far all the passengers are. I hope it will keep

up," muttered Kent. "It is awfully hard to keep your head when you are driving if any one screams."

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"The water is in the wagon bed now. I can tell by my feet. Don't you think your mother ought to come on the front seat, where she can be out of it somewhat?" suggested Judy.

"You are right. Mother, come on up here and help me drive. There is plenty of room for three of us, and I believe you would be more comfortable."

Mrs. Brown got up, glad to change her position. She was more frightened than she cared to own, and was anxious to find out just how Kent felt about the matter.

"I am going on the front seat, too," said the bedraggled Miss Hunt. "It seems to me Miss Julia Kean has had the best of everything long enough. I see no reason why she should sit high and dry during the whole drive, while here I am absolutely and actually sitting in the water."

Kent bit his lips in fury, but held his horses and his tongue while the change was being made. Judy showed her breeding in a way that made Molly proud.

138

"High I may be, but not dry," said Judy, playfully shaking herself on the already drenched Molly as she sank by her side on the soggy hay. "I am going to see how long our fair friend will stay up there. It is really the scariest place I ever got in. Down here you feel the water without seeing it, but up there every flash of lightning reveals terrors that down here are undreamed of."

"Sit in the middle, mother, and Miss Hunt and I can take better care of you."

"Oh, I am afraid to sit on the outside! Mrs. Brown is much larger than I am and could hold me in better than I could her," said the selfish girl.

She squeezed in between mother and son, as Kent said afterward, taking up more room than any little person that he ever saw.

"Noah he did build an ark,
one wide river to cross.
Built it out of hickory bark,
one wide river to cross.
One wide river, and that wide river was Jordan,
One wide river, and that wide river to cross."

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"All join in the chorus," demanded Jimmy.

There were many verses to the time-honored song, and before they got all the animals in the ark the moon suddenly came out from behind a very black cloud, and the rain was over, but not the flood.

"It took many days and nights for the water to subside for old Noah, and we may expect the same delay in our case," said the happy and irrepressible Jimmy.

Kent was glad indeed for the light of the moon. He had really had to leave it to President to take the proper road, or, rather, channel. That brave old horse had gone sturdily on, and, when one of the younger horses had begun to struggle and pull back, he had turned solemnly around and given him a soft little bite.

"Mother, did you see that? And look at that off horse now! I bet he will behave after this."

140

Sure enough, the admonished animal was pulling as steadily as President himself, and they had no more trouble with him.

There were many large holes in the creek bed, and, of course, the wheels often went into them. Once it looked for a moment as though they might have a turnover to add to their disasters. The wagon toppled, but righted itself in a moment. Miss Hunt, as Judy had said, on the front seat was able to see the danger as she could not down in the wagon, and when the wheels went down that particularly deep hole she let out a piercing scream and tried to seize the reins from Kent.

Kent pulled up his horses as soon as the wagon was on a level and called to John, "John, will you please help Miss Hunt back into the seat she has just vacated? She finds she is not comfortable here."

At that Miss Hunt very humbly crawled back, and, like the Heathen Chinee, "subsequent proceedings interested her no more."

141

As dawn was breaking they drove into the avenue at Chatsworth, not really very much the worse for wear. The warm, dry wraps produced from under the seat after the moon came out had been wonderfully comforting. Edwin Green had made Mrs. Brown take his coat, and as he folded it around her he had whispered, "Kentucky women are very remarkable. They meet danger as though it were a partner at a ball."

"Yes," said Kent, who had overheard him, "I could never have come through the deep waters if it had not been for the brave women. You saw how the one scream unnerved me, to say nothing of that little vixen grabbing my reins. Here, Ernest, we are on the pike at last, and I am just about all in. I wouldn't give up until we got through, but take the reins. Maybe Miss Hunt would like to drive," he had slyly added, but a low moan from under the wet coats was all the proud beauty could utter.

142

Aunt Mary greeted them at Chatsworth with much delight.

"The sto'm here been somethin' turrible. I ain't seed sich a wind sence the chilluns' castle blowed down. All of yer had better come back to the kitchen whar it's warm and eat somethin'. I got a big pot er hot coffee and pitchers er hot milk an' a pan er quick yeast biscuit. I done notice ef you

eat somethin' when you is cold an' wet, somehow you fergits ter catch cold."

They all came trooping back to the warm old kitchen, "ev'y spot in it as clean as a bisc'it board," and there they ate the hot buttered biscuit and drank the coffee and milk. It was noticed that John let the "extras" take care of Miss Hunt, and he devoted himself to his mother. Just as they were separating for the morning he hugged his mother and whispered to her, "You need not have any more uneasiness about me, mumsy. I don't believe there is a Brown living who could go on loving a woman who has no more sense than to grab the reins."

CHAPTER IX.—JIMMY.

"Judy, Mrs. Woodsmall has just 'phoned over that her hated R. F. D. Woodsmall is bringing you a letter from your father. She says she could only make out it was from him, but could not decipher anything else. She has an idea he is on his way, as the postmark showed it was mailed on the train somewhere in Kansas. Isn't she too funny? She makes some of the neighbors furious, but we always laugh at her little idiosyncrasy. After all, it is perfectly harmless. She really is as kind a little soul as there is in the county. Her life has been so narrow. If she could have been a real worker in a big city she might have grown into a very remarkable person. What a detective she would have made!"

Judy yawned and stretched and sat up as Molly came in bearing a tray of lunch for her tired friend as well as the news of a letter from Mr. Kean, somewhere on the road, and to be delivered some time that day if Bud Woodsmall's automobile behaved.

"Oh, Molly, I am tired! Are you the only one of the crowd to be up and doing after last night?"

"I have persuaded mother to stay in bed and get a good rest. The boys took a late train into town, and Miss Hunt never did go to bed. Aunt Mary said she came down early this morning and 'phoned over to Aunt Clay's coachman to come for her immediately, and off she went without saying 'boo to a goose.' I wish you could have heard Aunt Mary's description of her!

"'Yo' Aunt Clay's comp'ny sho ain't no wet weather beauty. Her ha'r was so flat her haid looked jes' like a buckeye; and her dress 'min' me of a las' year's crow's nes'. She was so shamefaced like she resem'led that ole peacock when Shep done pull out his tail.'"

Judy laughed. "Oh, I do love Aunt Mary! But, Molly, won't it be fine to see mamma and papa? Do you suppose they are really on their way?"

"It will be fine to see them, but it will be pretty sad to have them take off my Judy. I am mighty afraid that is what they are going to do. Go back to sleep now and I will bring you your letter as soon as Bud puts in his appearance. I am going to have a hard game of tennis with Jimmy Lufton against Ernest and that nice Miss Rogers. Weren't those girls spunky last night? An experience like that will make you know people better than years of plain, everyday life. Professor Green has struck up quite an acquaintance with Miss Ormsby. It seems they have many mutual friends, both of them having summered many times at 'Sconset.'"

Molly spoke quietly, but there was a slight tremor of lip and a deepening of color that the sharp Judy saw and noted, but nothing would have made her let Molly know that she had betrayed herself in the least.

"Molly was perfectly unconscious of what she was doing last night," thought Judy, "but all the same she was making poor Professor Green live up to his name with jealousy. I don't know but it might make Molly open her childlike old eyes if the patient professor should kick up his staid heels and jump the fence and go grazing in another paddock for a while." And then aloud she said, "All right, honey, I'll take forty winks and then get up and come down to the tennis court."

Mr. Kean's letter arrived in due time and, sure enough, Mrs. Woodsmall's surmises were correct. He was on the way to Kentucky with Mrs. Kean, and expected to be in Louisville the next day at a hotel, and would motor out to Chatsworth in the afternoon.

"Your father and mother must not think of stopping at a hotel, Judy," declared Mrs. Brown. "We have an abundance of room. Miss Rogers and Miss Ormsby are going in town after supper to-night with Ernest and Professor Green. Mr. Lufton expects to go back to Lexington to-morrow, and Professor Green is only waiting for some mail and will take his departure, too. We shall be forlorn, indeed, when all of them go. I'll make Kent look up what train Mr. Kean will come in on and he will meet it and send them both right out here."

"Oh, Mrs. Brown, you are so good. I would love for mamma and papa to be here and to know all of you and have you know them. They are as wonderful in their way as you are in yours, and your meeting would be a grand combination."

Molly rather dreaded the coming of evening. She had promised Jimmy to take a walk with him by moonlight, and she had a terrible feeling that he might bring up the subject of "lemons" again. She was not prepared for the question that she felt almost sure he was going to ask her.

"I am nothing but a kid, after all," moaned Molly to herself. "Professor Green was right in calling me 'dear child.' Mother was married when she was my age, but somehow I can't seem to grow up. Jimmy is so nice, and I do like him so much, but as for spending the rest of my life with him—

oh, I just simply can't contemplate it. Why, why doesn't he see how it is without having to talk it over? I wish none of them would ever get sentimental over me." And then she blushed and told herself that she was a big story teller and sentimentality from some one who should be nameless would not be so trying, after all.

Supper was over, Professor Green and Ernest had gone gaily off, driving Miss Rogers and Miss Ormsby to Louisville, Judy and Kent were making a long-talked-of duty call on Aunt Clay, "just to show Miss Hunt there is no hard feeling," laughed Judy. And now it was time to take the promised walk with Jimmy Lufton.

"You look a little tired, Miss Molly. Maybe you would rather not go. You must not let me bore you," said Jimmy, a little wistfully.

"Oh, no, I'm all right. I fancy it will take all of us a few days to get over last night. I have wanted to tell you how fine you were and what it meant to all of us to have you so cheerful and tactful. The boys can't say enough in your praise. We had to have some safety valve, and if we had not been laughing we might have been crying."

"Oh, I'm a cheerful idiot, all right, all right. I have such a short upper lip and such an eternal grin on me that no one ever seems to think I have any feelings. I get no more sympathy than a fat man. I wish I could make people understand that I am as serious as the next, but somehow me Irish grandmither comes popping out in me and I have to joke if I am to die the next minute."

"I think your disposition is most enviable," said Molly kindly, "and, as for the dash of Irish, I always think that is what makes our mother so charming. It was almost a fad with our professor of English at college to find the Irish mother or grandmother for almost all of the great poets or essayists." Molly could not quite trust herself to say Professor Green's name, the picture of the seemingly ecstatic Edwin driving off with Miss Ormsby was too fresh in her mind, and she could not help smiling at herself for her formal "our professor of English."

Their footsteps led them into the garden and then through the apple orchard down by the little stream, and on to the beech woods.

"I wonder why we are coming this way," thought Molly, trying to keep her mind off another walk she had taken over that same ground not so long ago.

"Let's sit down here," said Jimmy, stopping under the great beech tree where Molly and Edwin had sat on that memorable day when he had spoken of his vision of the white-haired Molly, and then had stopped himself so suddenly with a joke about his own possible baldness.

"Oh, not right here," said Molly hurriedly. "I know a nice rock a little farther on."

"Molly, Miss Molly, Miss Brown!—Oh, Molly, darling, there is no use in going any farther because I know you know that I have brought you out here to tell you that I—"

"Jimmy, please don't say anything more. It 'most kills me to hurt you."

"Is there no hope for me? I'll wait a week, oh, I don't mean a week, I'll wait forever if there is a chance for me. I know this is a low question to ask you, but is there any one else?"

Honest Molly hung her head. "Not exactly."

That "not exactly" was enough for Jimmy. He smiled a wan little smile that would have put his Irish grandmother to shame.

"Well, don't you mind, Miss Molly. I wouldn't have you feel blue about me for a million. You never did lead me on one little bit, and I was almost sure when I came to Kentucky that there would be nothing doing for yours truly; but somehow men are made so they have to make sure about such things. You and I have too much sense of the ridiculous to do any spiel about the brother and sister business, but I'll tell you one thing, I am your friend forever, and you must know that, and understand that as long as I live I'll hold myself in readiness to do your bidding."

"Oh, Jimmy, you are so good and generous," holding out her hand to him, "I am your friend forever, and I hope we shall always see a lot of each other."

Jimmy took her hand and for a moment bowed his curly black head over it. Molly put her other hand on his head, feeling somehow that it was like comforting Kent.

"You are sure, Molly?"

"Yes, Jimmy."

"Well, let's go home. I know you are tired.

"If no one ever marries me
I sha'n't mind very much;
I shall buy a squirrel in a cage,
And a little rabbit-hutch,"

sang the irrepressible.

When Judy got back to Chatsworth she found Molly weeping her soul out on the pillow, and she had noticed as they passed the office porch that for once Jimmy Lufton was whistling in the minor.

"Sister Ann, do you see any dust arising?" called Molly to Judy, who had actually climbed up on the gate post, hoping to see a little farther up the road, expecting the automobile from Louisville with her beloveds in it.

"I see a little cloud and I hear a little buzzing. Oh, Molly, I believe it's them."

"Is it, oh, Wellington graduate? Get your cases straight before they come or your father will think that diploma is a fake."

"Grammar go hang," said Judy, performing a dangerous *pas seul* on the gate post and then jumping lightly down and racing up the avenue to meet the incoming automobile. Molly followed more slowly, never having been the sprinter that Judy was. Mr. Kean sprang from the car and lifted Judy off her feet in a regular bear hug.

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"Save a little for me, Bobby," piped the little lady mother. "Judy, Judy, it is too good to be true that we have got you at last, and I mean to keep you forever now, you slippery thing." And then they all of them got into the car and had a three-cornered hug. Molly came up with only enough breath to give them a cordial greeting, welcoming them to Chatsworth.

"That is a very fine young man, your brother, who met us at the station, Miss Molly. Kent is his name? He recognized us by my likeness to you, Judy, so make your best bow and look pleased." In looking pleased, Judy did a great deal of unnecessary blushing which her mother noticed, but, mothers being different from fathers, said nothing about it.

Mrs. Brown came hurrying down the walk to meet her guests. She was amused to see how much Judy resembled both her parents, although Mrs. Kean was so small and Mr. Kean so large. Mother and daughter were alike in their quick, extravagant speech, and a certain bird-like poise of the head, but father and daughter had eyes that might have been cut out of the same piece of gray and by the same pattern.

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"Where is your baggage? Surely Kent gave you my message and you are going to visit us?"

"You have been so kind to my girl that I see no way but to let you be kind to us, too, and if we will not inconvenience you we will accept your invitation," said Mr. Kean. "As for baggage: Mrs. Kean is a dressy soul, but she only carries a doll trunk which holds all of her little frocks and fixings and even leaves a tiny tray for my belongings."

He assisted his smiling wife to alight and then from the bottom of the car produced a wicker trunk that was really no bigger than a large suitcase, but much more dignified looking.

"She says a trunk gives her a little more permanent feeling than a bag and makes a hotel room seem more homelike," went on Mr. Kean. Mrs. Brown thought that she had never heard such a pleasant voice and jolly laugh.

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"Judy, show your mother and father their room. I know they are tired and will want to rest before dinner."

"Tired! Bless your soul, what have we done to be tired? We have been on a Pullman four nights, and that is when we get in rest enough for months to come. I know Julia will want to get at her doll trunk and change her traveling dress, but, if you will permit me, I shall stay down here with you. What a beautiful farm you have! How many acres in it?"

"I have three hundred acres in all; two hundred under cultivation and in grass, fifty in woodland, and fifty that are not worth anything. It is a strange barren strip of land that my father had to take as a bad debt and I inherited from him. We graze some forlorn sheep on it, but they won't drink the water, and it is almost more trouble than they are worth to drive them to water on another part of the place."

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Mr. Kean listened intently. "I should like to see your farm, Mrs. Brown. Did you ever have the water on the barren strip analyzed?"

"No, Mr. Brown thought of looking into it but never did, and I have had so many problems to solve and expenses to meet with my large and growing family that I have never thought of it any more."

Mrs. Kean and Judy came down to join the others in a very short time, considering that Mrs. Kean had unpacked her tiny trunk and shaken out her little frocks and changed into a dainty pink gingham that looked as though it had just come from the laundry, showing no signs of having been packed for weeks.

"What have you done to my Judy, Mrs. Brown? I have never seen her looking so well."

"Fried chicken and candied sweet potatoes are the chief of my diet, and who would have the ingratitude not to show such keep?" laughed the daughter, pulling the little mother down on her lap and holding her as tenderly as though their relationship were reversed. "Robert and Julia, are you aware of the fact that your lady daughter has been a perfect lady since she came to these parts, and has got herself into no bad scrapes, and has not been saucy but once, and that was necessary? Wasn't it, Mrs. Brown?"

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"It certainly was. My old mammy used to tell me, 'Don' sass ole folks 'til they fust sass you'; and Saint Paul says, 'Live peaceably with all men, as much as lieth in you.' When Judy felt called upon

to speak out to Miss Hunt she had the gratitude of almost every one present."

Professor Green joined them and, having made the Keans' acquaintance at Wellington, introductions were not necessary. That young man was in a very happy frame of mind as his hated rival that he had to like in spite of himself had taken an early train to Lexington; and there had been a dejected look to his back as he got into the buggy that Edwin Green decided could not belong to an accepted lover. Molly had a soft, sad look about her blue eyes, but certainly none of the elation of the newly engaged. He had held a cryptic conversation with Mrs. Brown that morning on the porch, in which he had gathered that the dear lady considered Molly singularly undeveloped for a girl her age; that any thought of her becoming engaged for at least a year was very distasteful to her mother; that her mind should be left free for the postgraduate course she was so soon to enter upon. But she very delicately gave him to understand that she liked him and that Molly also liked him more than any friend she had. The conversation left him slightly dazed, but also very calm and happy, liking Mrs. Brown even better than before and admiring her for her delicate tact and frankness that does not often combine with such diplomacy. His mail had come and he had no excuse for further delay, and had determined to go home on the following day.

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"Professor Green, I have been so long on the train that I feel the need of stretching my legs. Could you tear yourself away from these ladies long enough to show me around the farm?"

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"Indeed, I could; but maybe the ladies would like to come."

"No, indeed," answered Mrs. Kean. "I know Bobbie's leg-stretching walks too well to have any desire to try to keep up with him. It is so pleasant and restful here, and Mrs. Brown, Molly, Judy and I can have a nice talk."

The two gentlemen started off at a good pace.

"Professor, I should like to see this barren strip of land Mrs. Brown tells me of. It sounds rather interesting to me. You know where it is, do you not?"

"Yes; and, do you know, I was going to ask you to look at it and give your opinion about it. It has the look to me of possible oil fields. I haven't said anything to any of the family about it, as they are such a sanguine lot I was afraid of raising their hopes when nothing might come of it, but I had determined to have a talk with Kent before I left. He is the most level-headed member of the family, and would not fly off half-cocked. Miss Molly tells me they are contemplating selling this wonderful bit of beech woods. They have a good offer for it, but it is like selling members of the family to part with these trees."

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The two men walked on, discovering many things to talk about and finding each other vastly agreeable. Their walk led them through the beech woods, then through a growth of scrub pines and stunted oaks and blackberry bushes, until they gradually emerged into a hard stony valley sparsely covered with grass and broomsedge.

"About as forlorn a spot as you can find in the whole of Kentucky, I fancy," said the younger man. "Its contrast with the beech woods we have just passed is about as great as that between Mrs. Brown and her sister, Mrs. Clay, who, with all due respect, is as rocky as this strip of barren land and as unattractive. She is the only person of whom I have ever heard Miss Molly and her brother Kent say anything unkind, and they cannot conceal their feeling against her. It seems that Mrs. Clay had the settling of her father's estate, and arranged matters so well for herself that Mrs. Brown's share turned out to be this stony strip. Mrs. Brown accepted it and refused to make a row, declaring that she would never have a disagreement with any member of her family about 'things.' She is a wonderful woman," added the professor, thinking of his talk of the morning.

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Mr. Kean stopped at the banks of a lonesome tarn, filled with black water with a greasy looking slime over it.

"Look at those bubbles over there! Could they be caused by turtles? No, turtles could not live in this Dead Sea. Look, look! More and more of them. Watch that big one break! See the greasy ring he made!"

He was so excited that Edwin Green smiled to see how alike father and daughter were, and was amused at himself for speaking of the Browns as being people who went off half-cocked to this man who was a hair trigger if ever there was one.

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Mr. Kean stooped over and scooped up some of the water in his hand. "'If my old nose don't tell no lies, seems like I smell custard pies.' Why, Green, smell this! It's simply reeking of petroleum! I bet that old Mrs. Clay will come to wish she had made a different division of her father's estate. Come on, let's go break the news to the Browns."

"But are you certain enough? They may be disappointed," said the more cautious Edwin.

"I am sure enough to want to send to Louisville immediately for a drill to test it. I have had a lot of experience with oil in various places and I am a regular oil wizard. You have heard of a water witch? My friends say that my nose has never played me false, and I can smell out oil lands that they would buy on the say-so of my scent as quickly as with the proof of a drill and pump. My, I'm glad for this good luck to come to these people who have been so good to my little girl."

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The two men were very much excited as they made their way back to the house.

"It is funny the way oil crops up in unexpected places," said Mr. Kean. "There is very little of it in this belt, and for that reason Mrs. Brown should get a very good price for her land. I think it best for her to sell to the Trust as soon as possible. There is no use in fighting them. They are obliged

to win out. They will be pretty square with her if she does not try to fight them. What a fine young fellow that Kent is! And as for Miss Molly, she is a corker! She has got my poor little wild Indian of a Judy out of dozens of scrapes at college. Judy always ends by telling us all about the terrible things that almost happened to her. She seems to me to be a little tamer, but maybe it is a strangeness from not seeing us for so long."

Edwin Green had his own opinion about the reason for that seeming tameness, but he held his peace. He could not help seeing Kent's partiality for Miss Julia Kean, and had no reason to believe otherwise than that the young lady reciprocated. Love, or the possibility of loving, might be a great tamer for Judy. He was really not far from the mark. Judy was interested in Kent, very much so, but it was ambition that was steadyng her and a determination to do something with the artistic talent that she was almost sure she possessed. Paris was her Mecca, and she was preparing herself to talk it out with her parents. They, poor grown-up children that they were, had no plans for their daughter's future. College had solved the problem for four years, but, now that that was over, what to do with her next? They loved to have her with them and had looked forward eagerly to the time when she could be with them, but after all was a railway camp the best place for a girl of Judy's stamp?

"Mrs. Brown, what will you take for that barren strip of land over there?" said Mr. Kean, sinking into a chair on the porch where the ladies were still having their quiet talk.

"Well, Mr. Kean, since it is not worth anything, and I have to pay taxes on it, I think I would give it away to any one who would promise to keep up the fences."

"Can you get right-of-way through the adjoining place to the road behind you, where I see that a narrow-gauge railroad runs?"

Mrs. Brown flushed and hesitated. "There is a lane connecting these two turnpikes older than the turnpikes themselves. My place does not go through to this narrow-gauge railroad that you saw this morning, but my father's old place, the Carmichael farm, now owned by my sister, Mrs. Clay, borders on both roads. This lane divides the two places as far as mine goes and then cuts through her place to the road behind. She has lately closed that lane, fenced it off and put it in corn."

"Rather high-handed proceedings," growled Mr. Kean. "Did you protest?"

"The boys went to see her about it, as it blocks their short cut to the Ohio River, where they go swimming, but she was so insulted at what she called their interference that I insisted upon their letting the matter drop. Paul, who always has insisted on his rights, went so far as to see a lawyer about it. His opinion was that Sister Sarah had no more right to fence off that lane than she would have to build a house in the middle of Main Street. But, if you knew my Sister Sarah, you would understand that if she decided to build a house in the middle of Main Street she would do it."

"Perhaps she would if the Law were as ladylike as you are, Mrs. Brown," laughed Mr. Kean, "but the Law happens to be not even much of a gentleman. What I wanted to get at was whether or not you had *right*-of-way, not way. You have the right if not the way. Now I am going to come to business with you. Did you know, my dear lady, that that despised strip of land is worth more than all of your fruitful acres put together, beech woods and apple orchard thrown in?" He jumped up from his chair, able to contain himself no longer, and in clarion tones literally shouted, "Lady, lady, you've struck oil, you've struck oil!"

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.—WELLINGTON AGAIN.

"Wellington! Wellington!"

Molly waked from her reverie with a start. It seemed only yesterday that she was coming to Wellington for the first time, "a greeny from Greenville, Green County," as she had been scornfully designated by a superior sophomore. She could vividly recall her arrival, a poor, tired, timid little girl in a shabby brown dress, with soot on her face and seemingly not a friend on earth. She smiled when she thought of how many friends she had made that first day, friends who had really stuck. First of all there had been dear old Nance Oldham; then Mary Stewart, who had taken her under her wing and looked after her like a veritable anxious hen-mother during the whole of her freshman year; then the vivid, scintillating Julia Kean, her own Judy; then Professor Green, who certainly had proved a friend. On looking back, it seemed that every one with whom she had come in contact on that day had done something nice for her and tried to help her. Mother had always told her that friends were already made for persons who really wanted them, made and ready with hands outstretched, and all you had to do was reach out and find your friend.

Now, as before, the trainload of girls piled out at the pretty, trim little station, and there was dear old Mr. Murphy ready to look after the baggage, no easy job, as he declared, there being as many different kinds of trunks as there were young ladies. Molly shook his hand warmly, for, after all, he was really the very first friend she had made at Wellington. Her trunk being shabby had had no effect on his manner to her as a Freshman, but he noticed now that she had a new

one and remarked on its elegance.

"I simply had to have a new one, Mr. Murphy, 'the good old wagon done broke down.' It was old when I started in at Wellington, and four round trips have done for it."

Next to Molly's big new trunk,—and this time it was a big one, as she had some new clothes and enough of them for about the first time in her life, and had bought a trunk with plenty of trays so as to pack them properly,—and snuggled up close to it as though for protection, was the strangest little trunk Molly had ever seen: calf-skin with the hair on it, spotted red and white, a little moth eaten in spots, with wrought iron hinges and a lock of great strength but of a simple, fine design—oak leaves with the key hole shaped like an acorn. A rope was tied tightly around it, reminding Molly of a halter dragging the poor little calf to slaughter.

"Well, well, I haven't seen such a trunk as this since I left the ould country," said the baggage master, putting his hand fondly on the strange-looking trunk. "I'll bet the owner of this, Miss Molly, will have many a knock from some of the high-falutin' young ladies of Wellington. They haven't seen it yet, because it is hiding behind your grand new big one. I pray the Blessed Virgin that the poor little maid will find a strong friend to get behind and to look after her."

Molly smiled at the old man's imagery, and thought, "What a race the Irish are! I am glad I have some of their blood."

She turned at the sound of laughter and saw coming toward her as strange a figure as Wellington Station had ever sheltered, she was sure. A tall girl of about twenty years was approaching, dressed in a stiff blue homespun dress with a very wide gathered skirt and a tight basque (about the fashion of the early eighties), and a cheap sailor hat. In her hand she carried a bundle done up in a large, flowered, knotted handkerchief. Her hair was black and straight and coming down, but when your eyes once got to her face her clothes paled into insignificance, and Molly, for one, never gave them another thought. Imagine the oval of a Holbein Madonna; a clear olive skin; hazel eyes wide and dreamy; a broad low forehead with strongly marked brows; a nose of unusual beauty (there are so few beautiful noses in real life); and a determined mouth with a "do or die" expression. She came down the platform, head well up and an easy swinging walk, no more regarding the amused titter of the crowd of girls, separating to let her pass, than a St. Bernard dog would have noticed the yap of some toy poodles. On espying her trunk—of course it was hers, the little hair trunk with the wrought iron hinges and lock—she quickened her gait, as though to meet a friend, stooped over, picked it up, and swung it to her broad fine shoulder, more as though it had been a kitten than a calf. Turning to the astonished Molly, she said in a voice so sweet and full that it suggested the low notes of a 'cello, "Kin you'uns tell me'uns whar—no, no, I mean—can you tell me where I can find the president?"

"Indeed, I can," answered Molly. "I am going to see her myself just as soon as I get settled in my quarters in the Quadrangle, and if you will tell me where you are to be I will take you to your room and then come for you to go and see President Walker. Mr. Murphy, the baggage master, will attend to your trunk. You will see to this young lady's trunk soon, won't you, Mr. Murphy?"

"The Saints be praised for answering the prayers of an ould man in such a hurry! Of course I will, Miss Molly; and where shall I be after sinding the little trunk, miss?"

"I don't know until I see the president. I think I'll just keep my box with me. I can carry it myself. 'Tain't much to tote."

"Oh, no, I wouldn't do that," said Molly, hardly able to keep back the laugh that she was afraid would come bubbling out in spite of her. "I tell you what you do: let Mr. Murphy keep your trunk until you find out where your room is to be, and in the meantime you come to my place; then as soon as you are located we can 'phone for it." The girl looked at her new-found friend with eyes for all the world like a trusting collie's, and silently followed her to the 'bus.

"My name is Molly Brown, of Kentucky. Please tell me yours."

"Kaintucky? Oh, I might have known it. I am Melissa Hathaway, and am pleased to make your acquaintance, Molly Brown of Kaintucky. I come from near Catlettsburg, Kaintucky, myself."

"Well, we are from the same state and must be friends, mustn't we?"

There were many curious glances cast at Molly's new friend, but the giggling at her strange clothes had stopped and the spell of her countenance had in a measure taken hold of the girls. Molly spoke to many friends, but she missed her intimates and wondered where Nance was, and if any of the others were coming back for the postgraduate course. At the thought of Nance she smiled, knowing just how she would take her befriending this mountain girl. She would be cold at first and perhaps a bit scornful in her ladylike way, and end by being as good as gold to her, and perhaps even making her some proper clothes.

The door at No. 5 Quadrangle was ajar and Molly could see Nance flitting back and forth getting things to rights. What a busy soul she was and how good it was to know she was already there! The girls were soon locked in each other's arms, so overjoyed to be together again that Molly for a moment forgot her guest; and Nance did not see her as she stood in the doorway, a silent witness to the enthusiastic meeting of the chums.

"Oh, Melissa, what am I thinking of, leaving you standing there so long? You must excuse me. Nance Oldham and I always behave this way when we get back in the fall; and now I want to introduce you two. Miss Oldham, this is my new friend, Miss Hathaway, also of Kentucky."

Nance shook hands with the quaint-looking new friend and awaited an explanation, which she

knew would be forthcoming from Molly as soon as she could get a chance. Melissa was quiet and composed, taking in everything in the room. Her eyes lingered hungrily on the books that Nance had already arranged on the shelves, and then rested in a kind of trance on the pictures that Nance had unpacked and hung.

"Nance, I have some biscuit and fudge in my grip, if you could scare up some tea. I am awfully hungry, and I fancy Miss Hathaway could eat a little something before we go to look up the president. She does not know where her room is to be, and I asked her to come with us until she is located."

"You are very kind to me, and your treating me so well makes me feel as though I were back in the mountains. We-uns—I mean we always try to be good to strangers, back where I come from."

Nance was drawn to the girl as Molly had been.

"She knows how to sit still, and waits until she has something to say before she says anything," thought the analytical Nance. "I believe I am going to like Molly's 'lame duck' this time; and, goodness me, how beautiful she is!"

Melissa was glad to get her tea, having been in a day coach all night with nothing but a cold lunch to keep body and soul together until she got to Wellington. Nance noticed that she knew how to hold her cup properly and ate like a lady; her English, too, was good as a rule, with occasional lapses into the mountain vernacular. The girls were curious about her, but did not like to question her, and she said nothing about herself.

Tea over, they went to call on the president, leaving Nance to go on with her "feminine touches," as Judy used to call her arrangements.

Miss Walker was very glad to see Molly, kissing her fondly and calling her "Molly." "It is good, indeed, to have you back. Every Wellington girl who comes back for the postgraduate course gives me a compliment better than a gift of jewels. And this is Miss Melissa Hathaway? I have been expecting you, and to think that you should have fallen to the care of Molly Brown on your very first day at college! You are to be congratulated, Miss Hathaway. Molly Brown's friendship keeps one from all harm, like the kiss of a good fairy on one's brow. Molly, if you will excuse me, I shall take Miss Hathaway into my office first and have a talk with her and shall see you later."

Molly was blushing with pleasure over the praise from Prexy, and was glad to sit in the quiet room awaiting her turn.

Melissa was closeted for some time with the president, and in the meantime the waiting-room began to fill with students, some of them newcomers tremblingly awaiting the ordeal of an interview with the august head of Wellington; others, like Molly, looking forward with pleasure to a chat with an old friend. Melissa came back alone with a message for Molly to come in to Miss Walker, and told her that she was to wait, as the president wished Molly to show the stranger her room.

"Molly Brown, how did you happen to be the one to look after this girl? It seems providential."

"Well, Mr. Murphy attributes it to himself, and declares it is the direct answer to his prayers," laughed Molly, and told Miss Walker of the little calf trunk and the old baggage master's sentimentality about it.

"I am going to read you part of a letter concerning Melissa Hathaway, and that will explain her and her being at Wellington better than any words of mine. This letter is from an old graduate, a splendid woman who has for years been doing a kind of social settlement work in the mountains of Virginia and Kentucky.

"I am sending you the first ripe fruit from the orchard that I planted at least ten years ago in this mountain soil. You must not think it is a century plant I am tending. I gather flowers every day that fully repay me for my labor here, but, alas, flowers do not always come to fruit. Melissa Hathaway is without doubt one of the most remarkable young women I have ever known, and has repaid me for the infinite pains I have taken with her, and will repay every one by being a success. She comes from surroundings that the people of cities could hardly dream of, in spite of the slums that are, of course, worse because of their crowded condition and lack of air. But in these mountain cabins you find a desolation and ignorance that is appalling, but at the same time a rectitude and intelligence that astonish you; and unbounded hospitality.

"A generation ago the Hathaways were rather well-to-do, for the mountains; that is, they owned a cow and some hogs and chickens and did not sleep in the kitchen, but had a second room and some twenty beautiful home-made quilts. A feud wiped almost the whole family off the face of the earth. Melissa's father, grandfather and three uncles were killed in a raid by their mortal enemies, the Sydneys, and the grandmother and Melissa were the only ones left to tell the tale. (Her young mother died in giving birth to Melissa.) Melissa was eight years old at the time of the wholesale tragedy, which occurred a few days before I came here to take up my life work. I went to old Mrs. Hathaway's cabin as soon as I could make my way across the mountain. The old woman received me with dignity and reserve, but some suspicion. I asked her to let Melissa come to school. She was rather eager for her to learn, since she was nothing but a miserable girl. She was bitter on the subject of Melissa's sex. "Ter think of my bringing forth man-child after man-child, and here in my old age not a thing but this puny little gal ter look to, ter shoot down those dogs of Sydneys!"

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“This child of eight (Melissa is now eighteen, but looks older), came to school every day rain or shine, walking three miles over the worst trail you have ever imagined. Her eagerness for knowledge was something pathetic. I realized from the beginning that she had a very remarkable intellect and gave her every chance for cultivation and preparation for college, determined that my Alma Mater should have the final hand in her education if it could be managed. And now, managed it is by a scholarship presented to my now flourishing school by the Mountain Educational Association. I am sorry her clothes are not quite what my beautiful Melissa should have, but she would not accept a penny for clothes from any of the funds that I sometimes have at my disposal. “Money for my education is different,” she said. “I mean to bring all of that back to the mountains and give it to my people, but I cannot let any one spend money on clothes for me. They would burn my back unless I earned them myself.” She was that way from the time she first came to me. I remember she had a green skirt and an old black basque of her grandmother’s, belted in on her slim little figure. I wanted all of my pupils to have a change of clothing, as from the first I was trying to teach cleanliness and hygiene along with the three R’s. I asked the children one day to let me know if they had two of everything. Melissa stood up and proudly raised her hand. “Please, Miss Teacher, we’uns is got two dresses; one ain’t got no waist and one ain’t got no skirt, but they is two dresses.”

185

“I know that my dear Miss Walker will do her best to place my girl where she can make some friends and not get too homesick for her mountains. I wish she had clothes more like other people, but, since she is what she is, I fancy the clothes in the long run will not make much difference.’

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“That is all of interest to you,” concluded Miss Walker. “Miss Hathaway is, to say the least, a very remarkable young woman. Her entrance examination was unconditioned. And now to get her into a suitable room! I had expected to put her in one over the postoffice, but she would be so isolated there. I wish she could have the singleton near you in the Quadrangle. I, too, have some funds at my disposal that would enable me to give her one of these more expensive rooms, but do you think she would accept it?”

Molly, rather amused at being asked by Prexy herself to decide what to do with this proud girl, smilingly answered, “I am proud myself, but lots of things have been done for me without my knowing about it, and when I do find out I am not hurt but pleased to feel that my friends want to help me. I can’t remember being insulted yet.”

“Well, my child, if I have your sanction about a little mild deceit, I think I’ll put Miss Hathaway in the singleton near you. I believe she is going to be a credit to Wellington. Kentucky has been good to us, indeed.”

187

“I’ll do all I can to help Melissa,” said Molly, her eyes still misty over the letter concerning the childhood of the mountain girl. “She interests me deeply.”

Then Molly and Miss Walker plunged into a talk about what Molly was to study. English Literature and Composition were of course the big things, but she was also anxious to take up some special work in Domestic Science, a new and very complete equipment having been recently installed at Wellington and a highly recommended teacher, a graduate from the Boston school, being in charge.

“Miss Hathaway is to do work on that line, too, and I fancy you will be put into the same division. She is preparing herself to help her mountain people, and I think they need domestic science even more than they do higher mathematics.”

188

Molly escorted Melissa to her small room in the Quadrangle, where she was duly and gratefully installed. Her shyness was passing off with Nance and Molly, and now they noticed that she never made the slips into the mountain vernacular. But on meeting strangers, or when embarrassed in any way, she would unconsciously drop into it, and then become more embarrassed. She never let herself off, but always bit her lip and quickly repeated her remark in the proper English.

“She is really almost as foreign as little Otoyo Sen,” said Nance.

CHAPTER II.—LEVITY IN THE LEAVEN.

189

“Molly, do you know you are a grown-up lady?” asked Nance a few days after they had settled themselves and were back in the grind of work. “I have been seeing it in all kinds of ways; firstly, you have gained in weight.”

“Only three pounds, and that could not show much, spread over such a large area,” laughed Molly.

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“Well, you look more rounded, somehow. Then I notice you keep your pumps on and don’t kick them off every time you sit down; and when you do sit down you don’t always lie down as you used to do. Now, I have always been a grown-up little old lady, but you were a child when you left college last June, and now you are a beautiful, dignified woman.”

"Nonsense, Nance, I am exactly the same. I don't kick off my pumps because I might have a hole in the toe of my stocking, and I don't lie down when I sit down because of my good tailored skirt. You are just fancying things. I am the same old kid. It is thanks to Judy that I have the tailor-made dress and the other things that make me feel grown-up. You see, my family have always had an idea that I did not care for clothes just because I wore the old ones without complaining. One day Kent spoke of my indifference to clothes to Judy, and she fired up and told him I did love clothes and would like to have pretty ones more than any girl she knew of; that I pretended to be indifferent just to carry off the old ones with grace. Kent was very much astonished and the dear boy insisted on my going into Louisville before Judy left and having a good tailor make me two dresses, this blue one for every day and my lovely best gray. I was so afraid of hurting Miss Lizzie Monday's feelings (she is the little old seamstress who has made my clothes ever since I was born); but Kent fixed that up by going to see Miss Lizzie himself, asking her advice and requesting her company into Louisville, where we did the shopping and interviewed the tailor, had lunch at the Watterson and took in a show in the afternoon. Miss Lizzie had the time of her life and was as much pleased over my having some good clothes as I am myself. Dear old Kent had to draw on his savings that he is putting by with a view to taking a finishing course on architecture, but mother says she is going to reimburse him just as soon as there is a settlement made for the oil lands we are selling."

191

"Do you know, Molly, when I got your letter telling me about Mr. Kean's nosing out oil on your place, I was so happy and excited that I began to cry and got my nose so red I had to skip a lecture at Chautauqua, which shocked my mother greatly. To think of your dear mother having an income that will make her comfortable and independent!"

192

"Mother does not seem to be greatly elated over it. She is very glad to pay off the mortgage on Chatsworth; relieved that we shall not have to sell our beautiful beech woods; but money means less to my mother than any one in the world, I do believe. Why, talking about my being a kid, I was born more grown-up than my mother, in some ways. It's the Irish in her. The Irish are all children."

Molly had very cleverly got Nance off of the subject of there being a change in her, but Nance was right. Molly was older, and she felt it herself. The summer had been an eventful one for her and had left her older and wiser. Mildred's marriage; Jimmy Lufton's proposal, or near proposal; the family's change of fortune; Professor Green's evident preference for her society; all these things had combined to sober her in a way.

"I am as limber as ever, and don't feel my age in my 'jints,' but I am getting on," thought Molly. "Nance sees it, and I wonder if Professor Green notices it. He seemed a little stiff with me, but seeing him for the first time in class might account for that."

193

The class in Domestic Science was proving of tremendous interest both to Molly and Melissa. Melissa had much to learn and Molly much to un-learn. It was a special course, and for that reason girls from all classes were mixed in it. There were quite a number of Juniors, and Molly was sorry to see Anne White among them, as she had been on the platform at Wellington when Melissa arrived, and, in the quiet way for which she was famous in making trouble, had been the one to start the titter that had grown, as that seemingly unconscious young goddess made her way down the platform, into a wave of laughter. Melissa had been fully aware of the amusement she had caused, but she had borne no malice against the thoughtless girls.

"I reckon I was a figure of fun to these rich girls," Melissa said to Molly, "but I know they did not mean to be unkind; and if they knew what it means to me to come to college perhaps they would look at me differently. Anyhow, you were so nice to me from the very minute I spoke to you; and even before I spoke, Molly, dear, because I saw your sweet eyes taking me in as I came up the platform between the rows of grinning students. And I said to myself, 'All these are just second-growth timber and don't count for much. That girl with the blue eyes and the pretty red hair looking at me so kindly is the only tree here that is worth much.' And somehow I have been resting in the shade of your branches ever since."

194

This little conversation was held one morning as the girls were getting their materials ready for some experimental bread-making. A tremendously interesting lecture on yeast had preceded it, and now was to be followed by various chemical experiments. The lecturer had not arrived, but had appointed certain students to get the materials in order.

Anne White was one of the monitors, and was moving around in a demure way, daintily setting out the little bowls of flour and portions of yeast. Anne White was a small, mousy-looking, brown-haired young woman who looked as though butter would not melt in her mouth, but who was in reality often the ring-leader in many foolish escapades. She was a great practical joker, and when all is told a practical joker is a very trying person, and very often a person lacking in true humor. As she placed the bowls of yeast, she sang the following song with many sly looks at Molly and her friend:

195

"The first time I saw Melissa,
She was sitting in the cellar,
Sitting in the cellar shelling peas.
And when I stooped to kiss her,
She said she'd tell her mother,
For she was such an awful little tease.
Oh, wasn't she sweet? You bet she was,
She couldn't have been any sweeter.

Oh, wasn't she cute? You bet she was,

She couldn't have been any cuter.

For when I stooped to kiss her,

She said she'd tell her mother,

For she was such an awful little tease."

The singing was so evidently done for Melissa's benefit that Molly felt indignant.

"I can't stand teasing, and certainly not such silly teasing as Anne White delights in. She is a slippery little thing, and I have an idea means mischief for my Melissa. I wish Judy were here to circumvent her, but since she is not I shall have to keep my eye open." So thought Molly, and accordingly opened her eyes just in time to see Anne White raise the cover of Melissa's bowl of flour and drop in something. The instructor came in just then and the class came to order.

"It can't do any real harm," thought Molly, "because we don't have to eat our messes, but if it is something to embarrass Melissa I shall have a talk with Anne White that she will remember all her days. She knows Melissa and I are not the kind to blab on her, the reason she is presuming in this way."

Miss Morse, the Domestic Science teacher, was so exactly like the advertisements in the magazines of various foodstuffs that one was forced to smile. She was always dressed in immaculate linen, and, as she would stand at her desk and hold out a sample of material with which she was going to demonstrate, her smile and expression were always those of the lady who says, "Use this and no other." She was thoroughly in earnest, however, and scientific, and her lectures on Domestic Economy were really thrilling to Molly, who always took an interest in household affairs and was astonished to find out what a waste was going on in all American homes. Melissa listened to every word, and felt that the knowledge she was gaining in this branch of college work was perhaps the most necessary of all to take back to her mountain people.

Miss Morse had the most wonderful and capable hands that were ever seen. She was never known to spill anything or slop over; she used her scales and measures with the precision of an analytical chemist; and, no matter how complicated the experiment, there were no extra, useless utensils. This in itself is worth coming to college to learn, as I have never known a girl make a plate of fudge without getting every pan in the kitchen dirty. Later on in the course of lectures this wonderful woman actually killed a fowl and picked and dressed it right before the eyes of the astonished girls, without making a spot on her dress or on the cloth spread on her desk, and she did not even turn back her linen cuffs.

"I wish Ca'line could see that," thought Molly on that occasion, a picture of the chicken pickin' in the back yard at Chatsworth coming before her mind's eye, with feathers flying hither and yon and Ca'line herself covered with gore.

"Now, young ladies," said the precise Miss Morse, "enough flour is given each one for a small loaf of bread; the right amount of water is measured out; salt and sugar; lard and yeast. You have the correct material for a perfect loaf. This is a demonstration of yesterday's lecture. Remember, salt retards the action of yeast and must not be put in until the yeast plant has begun to grow. Sugar promotes the growth and can be placed in the warm water with the yeast."

The students went eagerly to work like so many children with their mud pies. In due course of time each little loaf was made out and put at exactly the right temperature to rise. Miss Morse explained to them the different methods of bread-making and the fallacy of thinking that good bread-making is due to luck. Molly smiled in remembering what dear old Aunt Mary had said about remembering to put the gumption in.

While the bread was rising and baking the girls were allowed to work on their Domestic Science problem, a pretty difficult one requiring all their faculties: it was how to feed a family consisting of five, mother and father and three children, on ten dollars for one week. The market price of food was given and their menus were to be worked out with regard to the amount of nourishment to be gained as well as the suitability of food. Miss Morse told them they would have to study pretty hard to do it, but it was splendid practice. Poor Melissa was having a hard time. In the first place, she knew so little about food, having been brought up so very simply, and then, she confided to Molly, she was very much worried about her loaf of bread because it didn't do just right.

Finally the time was up, and the bread, too, according to science, should have been up and ready to bake. The monitors were requested to place the loaves in the gas ovens, already tested and proved to be of proper temperature. The problems, meantime, must be completed at once and handed in.

A wail from Melissa on the aside to Molly: "Oh, Molly, Molly, I have got my family all fed for six days, and I forgot Sunday. Not a cent of money left from all of that ten dollars, and I have known whole families live for a month on less in the mountains! What shall I do?"

"I tell you," said Molly, stopping a minute to think, "have them all invited out to Sunday dinner and let them eat no breakfast in anticipation of the good things they are expecting; and let the dinner be so delicious and plentiful that they can't possibly want any supper."

"Good," said Melissa, ever appreciative of Molly's suggestions, "I'll do that very thing." And so she did; and Miss Morse was so amused that she let it pass as a very good paper, as indeed it was.

All of the little loaves were baked and placed in front of the girls, the pans being numbered so that each loaf returned to its trembling maker. It was strange that in spite of science the loaves did not look exactly alike. Molly's was beautiful, but had she not had her hand in Aunt Mary's dough ever since she could climb up to the table and cut out little "bis'it wif a thimble"? Some of them looked bumpy and some stringy, but poor Melissa's was a strange dark color and had not risen.

202

"Miss Hathaway, did you follow the directions in your experiment?"

"Yes, Miss Morse, to the best of my ability," answered Melissa. And, then flushing and becoming excited, she dropped into her familiar mountain speech. "Some low-down sneak has drapped some sody in we'un's pannikin. I mean, oh, I mean, some ill-bred person has put saleratus in my little bowl. I have been raised on too much saleratus in the bread, and I know it." And the proud mountain girl, who had not minded the laughter caused by her appearance, burst into tears over the failure of her bread-making and fled from the room.

Miss Morse was shocked and sorry that such a scene should have occurred in her class, but was determined to investigate the matter. She dismissed the class without a word; but, as Molly was leaving the room, she requested her to stop a moment.

203

"Miss Brown, this is a very unfortunate thing to have occurred in this class. Domestic Science seems to be an easy prey to the practical joke, and when once it is started it is a difficult matter to weed out. I am particularly sorry for it to have been played on Miss Hathaway, who is so earnest and anxious to learn. Miss Walker has told me much about her, and the girl's appearance alone is fine enough to interest one. I could not help seeing by your countenance, which is a very speaking one, my dear, that you knew something about this so-called joke. Now, Miss Brown, I ask you as a friend to tell me what you know, and, if you are not willing, I demand it of you as an instructor and member of the faculty of Wellington."

Molly, who had been as pale as death ever since Melissa's mortification and outbreak, now flushed crimson, held her breath a minute to get control of her voice, and then answered with as much composure as she could muster: "Miss Morse, I have gone through four years at Wellington and have happened to know of a great many scrapes the different students have got themselves in, but never yet have I been known to tell tales, and I could hardly start now. I do know who did the dastardly trick, and am glad that Melissa had recourse to her native dialect to express her feelings about the person who was mean enough to do it; 'low-down sneak' is exactly what she was."

204

"Very well, Miss Brown, if you refuse to divulge the name of the joker, I shall be forced to take the matter up with the president. I hoped we could settle it in the class. This department being a new one at Wellington, and also my first experience at teaching, I naturally have some feeling about making it go as smoothly as possible." This time Miss Morse was flushed and her lip trembling.

Molly felt truly sorry for her, and suddenly realized that Miss Morse, with all of her assurance, was little more than a girl herself. As for taking it up with the president, Molly smiled when she remembered the time Miss Walker had tried to make her tell, and when she had refused how Miss Walker had hugged her.

205

"Oh, Miss Morse, I am so sorry for you, and wish, almost wish, some one had seen the offence besides myself, some one who would not mind telling; but I truly can't tell, somehow I am not made that way. There is something I can do, though, and that is, go call on the person myself and put it up to her to refrain from any more jokes in your class. I meant to see her, anyhow, and warn her to let my Melissa alone."

"Would you do that? I think that would be all that is necessary, and I need not inform the president. I thank you, Miss Brown. You do not know how this has disturbed me."

"Too much 'sody' in the bread is a very disturbing thing," laughed Molly. "I remember a story they tell on my grandfather. He had an old cook who was very fond of making buttermilk biscuit, and equally fond of putting too much soda in them. He stood it for some time, but one morning when they were brought to breakfast as green as poor Melissa's loaf, grandpa sent for the cook and made her eat the whole panful. Needless to add, she was cured of the soda habit. It would be a great way to cure the would-be joker if we made her eat Melissa's sad loaf."

206

Molly did see Anne White that very afternoon, making a formal call on her and giving that mousy young woman a talk that made her cry and promise to play no more jokes in Domestic Science class, and to apologize to Melissa for the mortification she had caused her. Molly told her something about Melissa and the struggle and sacrifices she had made to get her education, and before she had finished Anne White was as much interested in the mountain girl and as anxious for her to succeed as Molly herself. She promised to help her all she could, and a Junior can do a great deal to help a Freshman. Molly was astonished to find that Anne White was really rather likable. She had a mistaken sense of fun, but was not really unkind.

207

Melissa had too much to do to brood long over her outbreak, and laughed and let the matter drop out of her mind when the following apology was poked under her door:

"MY DEAR MISS HATHAWAY: I am truly sorry to have caused you so much mortification in the Domestic Science class. It was a very foolish, thoughtless act, and I hope you will accept my apology. I wish I had found such a friend in my freshman year as you have in Molly Brown.

CHAPTER III.—HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF.

208

Molly and Nance were very busy with their special courses, Nance working at French literature as though she had no other interest in the world, and Molly at English and Domestic Science.

"Thank goodness, I shall not have to tutor! Since we 'struck ile' I am saved that," said Molly one day to her roommate, who was as usual occupied, in spite of its being "blind man's holiday," too early to light the gas and too late to see without it. "Nance, you will put out your eyes with that mending. I never saw such a busy bee as you are. Melissa tells me you are going to help her with a dress, too."

209

"Yes, I am so glad she will let me. I told her how we made the Empire gown for you in your Freshman year, and she seemed to feel that if her dear Molly allowed that much to be done for her, it was not for her to object to a similar favor. I know you will laugh when I tell you that I am going to get a one-piece dress and an extra skirt for shirtwaists out of the blue homespun. It is beautiful material, spun with an old-fashioned spinning wheel and woven on a hand loom by Melissa's grandmother. Did you ever see so much goods in one dress? It seems that the dear woman who has taught her everything she knows has not had any new clothes herself for ten years, and could not give her much idea of the prevailing fashion; and Melissa made this dress herself from a pattern her mother had used for her wedding dress. I hate to cut it up. It seems a kind of desecration, but Melissa has a splendid figure and if her clothes were not quite so voluminous she would be as stylish as any one. She improves every day in many ways and seems to be less shy."

210

"She has an instinct for good literature. Professor Green tells me her taste is unerring. He says it is because her preference is for the simple, and the simple is always the best. Little Otoyō has the same feeling for the best in poetry. Haven't we missed that little Jap, though? I'll be so glad to have her back. I fancy I shall have some tutoring to do in spite of myself to get Otoyō Sen up with her class."

Otoyō Sen, the little Japanese girl who had played such a close part in the college life of our girls, had been back in Japan, and had not been able to reach America in time for the opening weeks of college, due to some business engagements of her father. But she was trusting to Molly and her own industry to catch up with her class, and was hurrying back to Wellington as fast as the San Francisco Limited could bring her.

211

Molly had been writing every moment that she could spare from her hard reading, and now she had two things she really wanted to show Professor Green—a story she had worked on for weeks until it seemed to be part of her, and a poem. She had sent the poem to a magazine and it had been rejected, accompanied by a letter which she could not understand. At all times in earlier days she had gone frankly to the professor's study to ask him for advice, but this year she could hardly make up her mind to do it.

"He is as kind as ever to me, but somehow I can't make up my mind to run in on him as I used to," said Molly to herself. "I know I am a silly goose—or is it perhaps because I am so grown up? It is only five o'clock this minute, it gets dark so early in November, and I have half a mind to go now." The temperament that goes with Molly's coloring usually means quick action following the thought, so in a moment Molly had on her jacket and hat. "Nance, I am going to see Professor Green about some things I have been writing. I won't be late, but don't wait tea for me. Melissa may be in to see us, but you will take care of her, I know."

212

There was a rather tired-sounding, "Come in," at Molly's knock on Professor Green's study door.

"Oh, dear, now I am going to bore him!" thought the girl. "I have half a mind to run back through the passage and get out into the Cloister before he has a chance to open the door and see who was knocking. But that would be too foolish for a postgraduate! I'd better run the risk of boring him rather than have him think I am some one playing a foolish Sophomore joke, or even a timid little Freshman, afraid to call her soul her own."

"Come in, come in. Is any one there?" called the voice rather briskly for the usually gentle professor. And before Molly could open the door it was actually jerked open. "Dearest Molly!—I mean, Miss Molly—I thought you were going to be some one else. The fact is, I have had a regular visitation from would-be poets this afternoon, and, as it never rains but it pours, I had a terrible feeling that it was another one. I am so glad to see you; not just because you are not what I feared you were, but because you are you."

213

Molly blushed crimson and tried to hide the little roll of manuscript behind her, but the young man saw it and kicked himself mentally for a rash, talking idiot.

"I can't come in, thank you. I just stopped by to—to—I just thought I'd ask you when your sister was coming."

"Oh, Molly Brown, what a poor prevaricator you do make! You know perfectly well you have written something you want me to see; and you also know, or ought to know, that I want to see

what you have written above everything; and what I said about would-be poets had nothing to do with you and me. The fact is, I am a would-be myself and have been working on a sonnet this afternoon instead of looking over the thousand themes that I must have finished before tomorrow's lecture. I had just got the eighth line completed when you knocked, and the six others will be easy. Please come in and take off your hat, and I'll get Mrs. Brady to make us some tea; and while the kettle is boiling you can show me what you have been doing, and when I get my other six lines to my sonnet done I'll show it to you."

214

Molly of course had to comply with a request made with so much kindness and sincerity. Mrs. Brady came, in answer to the professor's bell which connected his study with his house, and was delighted to see Molly, remembering with great pleasure the Christmas breakfast the young girl had cooked for Professor Green the year before. Molly had a way with her that appealed to old people as well as young, and she had won Mrs. Brady's heart on that memorable morning by telling her that she, too, boasted of Irish blood.

"And I might have known it, from the sweet tongue in your head," Mrs. Brady had replied.

The old woman hastened off to make the tea, and Molly reluctantly unrolled her manuscript.

"Professor Green, I want you to think of me as some one you do not know or like when you read my stuff."

215

"That is a very difficult task you have set me, and I am afraid one that I am unequal to; but I do promise to be unbiased and to give you my real opinion, and you must not be discouraged if it is not favorable, because, after all, it is worth very little."

"I think it is worth a lot. This first thing is something I have been working on very hard. It is called 'The Basket Funeral.' I remembered what you told me about trying to write about familiar things, and then, on reading the 'Life and Letters of Jane Austen,' I came on her advice to a niece who was contemplating a literary career. It was, 'Send your characters where you have never been yourself, but never take them.' I had never been out of Kentucky, except to row across the Ohio River to Indiana, when I came to Wellington, and so I put my story in Kentucky with Aunt Mary as my heroine. Now be as hard on me as you want to. I can stand it."

216

There was perfect silence in the pleasant study while Edwin Green carefully perused the well-written manuscript. An occasional involuntary chuckle was all that broke the quiet when one of Aunt Mary's witticisms brought back the figure of the old darkey to his mind. When he had finished, which was in a very few minutes, as the sketch was a short one, he carefully rolled the paper and remained silent. Molly felt as though she would scream if he did not say something, but not a word did he utter, only sat and rolled the manuscript and smiled an inscrutable smile. Finally she could stand it no longer.

"I am sorry to have bothered you, Professor Green. I know it is hard for you to have to tell me the truth, so I won't ask you." She reached for the roll of paper, her hand shaking a little with excitement.

"Oh, please excuse me. Do you know, I took you at your word and forgot I knew you, and forgot how much I liked you; forgot everything in fact but Aunt Mary and the 'Basket Funeral.' My dear girl, you have done a wonderful little bit of writing, simple, natural, sincere. I congratulate you and envy you."

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And what should Molly do, great, big, grown-up postgraduate that she was, but behave exactly as the little Freshman had four years before when this same august professor had rescued her from the locked Cloisters: she burst into tears. At that crucial moment the rattle of tea cups was heard as Mrs. Brady came lumbering down the hall, and Molly had to compose herself and make out she had a bad cold.

"Have some hot soup," said the young man, and both of them laughed.

"It was natural for me to blubber, after all," said Molly, after Mrs. Brady had taken her departure. "When you sat there so still, with your lips so tightly closed, I felt exactly as I did four years ago, shut out in the cold with all the doors locked; and when you finally spoke it was like coming into your warm pleasant study again with you being kind to me just as you were to the little scared Freshman. Do you know, I like my picture of Aunt Mary, too, and when I thought you didn't like it I felt forlorn indeed."

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"I notice one thing, Miss Molly Brown of Kentucky doesn't cry until everything is over. The little Freshman didn't blubber while she was locked out, but waited until she got into the pleasant study, and now the ancient postgrad is able to restrain her tears until the awful ogre of a critic praises her work. Now let's have another cup of tea all around and show me what else you have brought."

"I hesitate to show you this more than the other thing, after your cutting remarks about would-bes. But I want you to read this so you can tell me what this letter means that I got from the editor of a magazine, when he politely returned my rejected poem."

"Read me the poem yourself. Would you mind? Poetry should always be read aloud, I think; and afterward I will see what I think the editor meant."



"Read me the poem yourself. Would you mind?"—Page 218.

"All right, but I am afraid it is getting late and Nance will worry about me."

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The study was cosy indeed with its rows and rows of books, its comfortable chairs and the cheerful open grate. This was his one extravagance in a land of furnace heat and drum stoves, so Edwin Green declared. "But somehow the glow of the fire makes me think better," he said in self-defence.

Molly read any poetry well, her voice with its musical quality being peculiarly adapted to it. This was her poem:

"My thoughts like gentle steeds to-day
Rest quiet in the paddock fold,
Munching their food contentedly.
Was it last night? When up—away!
Through spaces limitless, untold,
Like storm clouds lashed before the wind,
Nor strength, nor will could check nor hold,
Manes flying—through the night they dashed
'Til the first glimmering sun's ray flashed
Its blessed light; 'til the first sigh
Of dawn's awak'ning stirred the leaves.
Then back to quiet fold—the night was done—
Bend patient necks—the yoke—and day's begun."

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"Let me see it. Your voice would make 'Eany, meany, miney, mo' sound like music. I should have read it first to myself to be able to pass on it without prejudice."

He took the poem and read it very carefully. "Miss Molly, you are aware of the fact that you may become a real writer? How old are you?"

"Almost twenty."

"Well, I consider that a pretty good poem for almost twenty. I bet I know what that saphead of an editor had to say without reading his letter. Didn't he say something about your having only thirteen lines?"

"Oh, is that what he meant? I have puzzled my brains out over his note. I didn't even know I had only thirteen lines. Of course I knew it wasn't exactly sonnet form, but somehow I started out to make fourteen lines and thought I had done it. Here is his cryptic note."

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"DEAR M. B.: We are sorry to say we are too superstitious to print your poem. Are the poor horses too tired to go a few more feet? If you can urge them on, even if you should lame them a bit, we might reconsider and accept your verses."

"Fools, fools, all of them are fools! Don't you change it for the whole of the silly magazine. It is a good poem, and its having thirteen lines is none of his business. Haven't you as much right to create a form of verse as Villon or Alfred Tennyson? That editor would have rejected 'Tears, idle tears,' because it hasn't a rhyme in it and looks as though it might have."

The professor was so excited that Molly had to laugh.

"You are certainly kind to me and my efforts. I must go now. Please give my love to Mrs. Brady and thank her for her tea. You never did tell me when you expect your sister." 222

"Bless my soul," said Edwin Green, looking at his watch, "she will be here in a few minutes now!"

"Don't forget to let me see your sonnet, and please put all the lines in. I am so glad your sister is to be with you, and hope to see her often."

And Molly flew away, happy as a bird that her writing was coming on, and that she felt at home again with the most interesting man she had ever met.

CHAPTER IV.—A BARREL FROM HOME. 223

Christmas was upon our girls almost before they had unpacked and settled down to work. Mid-year exams. had no terrors for our two post-graduates, but they were working just as hard as they ever had in their collegiate course.

"I don't know what it is that drives us so, Nance, unless it is that we are getting ready for the final examination at Judgment Day," said Molly. "I am so interested, I never seem to get tired these days; and I don't even mind the tutoring that has been thrust upon me. Now that I shall not have to teach for a living, I really believe I should not mind it very much."

Otoyo Sen was safely sailing under Molly's tutelage through her senior year. She spoke the most correct and precise English unless she was embarrassed or upset in some way, and then, like Melissa Hathaway, she spoke from the heart, and little Otoyo's heart seemed to beat in adverbs and participles. She and Melissa had struck up the closest friendship. 224

"We might have known they would," said the analytical Nance. "They are strangely alike to be so different."

"Now, Nance, how Bostonesque we are becoming! I have never asked a Bostonian a question that I have not been answered in this way, 'It is and it isn't,'" teased Molly.

"Well, they are alike in being foreign, for Melissa is as foreign from us as is Otoyo. Then they are both scrupulously courteous until their *amour propre* is stepped on, and then you realize that they are both medieval. They are certainly alike in pride and in fortitude and perseverance and family feeling. You know perfectly well that the real Melissa that is so covered up by this educated Melissa would take a gun and shoot every living Sydney she could get at if her grandmother told her to! I hope to goodness modernism will never get to the old woman and she will learn that women can do anything men can, or she will make Melissa take the place of the sons she mourns. On the other hand, little Otoyo would commit *hara-kiri* without winking an eyelash if honorable-father told her to." 225

"You have so convinced me of their similarity that I see no room for difference. They will look to me exactly like twins after this," laughed Molly; and both the girls could hardly restrain their merriment, for at that moment the so-called twins came in to call: Melissa, tall and stately as "the lonesome pine," with all doubts as to her fine figure removed now, thanks to Nance's skillful reformation of the blue homespun; and little Otoyo looking more like a mechanical toy than ever, since she had taken on a little more of the desirable flesh, according to the taste of her countrymen.

"Melissa and I have determined to move into a suite together," said Otoyo, as they entered. "Miss Walker said it is not usually for a Freshman and Senior to be so intimately, but since there is a suite vacant in the Quadrangle and more visits for singletons than suites, she is willing." 226

"You are excited over it, I know, you dear little Otoyo," said her tutor, "or you would not be so adverbial, and you must mean 'calls for singletons' instead of 'visits.'"

"Oh, you English and your language, made for what you call puns!"

"I am glad you call them puns instead of visiting them on us," said Nance, dodging a soft cushion hurled by Molly. "Did you girls hear the news? I am to stay at Wellington for Christmas and my father is coming down here to spend it with me. I can't think when father has taken a holiday before, and I am as excited about it as can be. He needs a rest, and he needs some fun. I wish he could have come last year before the old guard disbanded."

"But listen to me," put in Molly. "I have some news, too, that I was trying to keep for a surprise, but I am a sieve where news is concerned: Judy Kean is to be here for Christmas, too. She writes that as her mother and father are in Turkey she will have to have some turkey in her, and she can think of no place that she would rather have that turkey than at Wellington with us. Dear old 227

Judy, won't it be fun? And she will help to whoop things up for your father, Nance. She expected to be studying art in Paris by now, but Mr. Kean insisted on a year of drawing in New York before Paris, and that makes her in easy reach of us. We shall have to stop work and go to playing. I declare I have grown so used to work—I don't believe I know how to play."

"Mees Grace Green is going to have an astonishment party for her brother, the young student medical," said Otoyoy, the ever-ready news monger.

"A surprise party for Dodo," shrieked the girls with delight. "Otoyoy, Otoyoy, you are too delicious." 228

"Also, Mr. Andy McLean will be home with his honorable parents for making holiday, having done much proud work in the law school at Harvard University."

Nance smiled. Her private opinion was that Mr. Andrew McLean and his proud work were the cause of Otoyoy's very mixed English.

"Also," continued Otoyoy, "Mr. Andrew McLean will bring with him honorable young Japanese gentleman, who has hugged the Christian faith and is muchly studying to live in this country, whereas his honorable father has a wonderful shop of beautiful Japanese prints in Boston. My honorable father is familiar with his honorable father, namely, Mr. Seshu."

"Oh ho, and that is the reason of the many mistakes," said Molly, in an aside to Nance. "I thought at first it was Andy's return, but I bet the little thing is contemplating something in connection with the honorable Mr. Seshu. I wonder if her father has written her about this young Jap." 229

During all this chit-chat Melissa had sat perfectly quiet, but her quiet was never heavy nor depressing. She looked calmly and interestedly on and listened and smiled and sometimes gave a low laugh, showing that her humor was keen and ready. Otoyoy was a never-failing source of delight to her, and when the little thing spoke of hugging the Christian faith a real hearty laugh came bubbling up. But she put her arm affectionately around her little friend and smothered her laugh in Otoyoy's smooth black hair, that always had a look of having just been brushed, no matter how modern and American was the arrangement.

And very modern and American were all of Otoyoy's arrangements now. Her clothes bore the stamp of the best New York shops, with the most up-to-date shoes and hats, and she endeavored in every way to be as American as possible. She even tried to use the slang she heard around her, but her attempts in that direction were very laughable. 230

In due time the holidays arrived, and with them came our own Judy full of enthusiasm for her work at the art school; came young Andy with his Japanese friend from the law school. Andy looking older and broader and more robust, not half so raw-boned as he used to be, and the young Japanese gentleman, on first sight, so like Otoyoy that it was funny—but, on further acquaintance, it proved to be a racial likeness only; came Nance's father, a staid, quiet gentleman with his daughter's merry brown eyes and a general look of one to be depended on; came George Theodore Green, familiarly known as Dodo, no longer so shy, but with much more assurance of manner, as befitted a medical student from Johns Hopkins.

Miss Grace Green had secretly sent out invitations for the surprise party for Christmas Eve, and all the girls were very busy getting their best bibs and tuckers in order to do honor to the occasion. Molly had seen a good deal of Miss Green since she came to Wellington to keep house for her brother, and they had become fast friends. Miss Green often asked her to come in to afternoon tea, and then they would have the most delightful talks in the professor's study, and he would read to them. Sometimes Molly would be prevailed upon to read some of her sketches, always of Kentucky and the familiar things of her childhood. She lost her shyness in doing this, and felt that it rather helped her and gave her new ideas for more things to write about. 231

"Judy, please help me unpack this barrel from home," called Molly the day before Christmas. "I know you will want to help carry some of the things to the Greens for me. I almost wish I had sent the barrel there, as so many of the things are to go to them. We shall be laden down, I am sure."

Judy, all excitement, began to knock off the top hoop and then with much hacking and prying they finally got off the head of the formidable-looking barrel and began to unpack the goodies: a ham for the professor of English cooked by Aunt Mary; a fruit cake for Molly, black and rich, with an odor to it that Judy said reminded her of the feast in St. Agnes Eve; a jar of Rosemary pickles; one of brandy peaches; a box of beaten biscuit; a roasted turkey, stuffed with chestnuts, and a wonderful bunch of mistletoe full of berries, growing to a knobby stunted branch of a walnut tree, which Kent had sawed off with great care and then packed so well with tissue paper that not one berry or leaf was misplaced. 232

"This is for Miss Green's party. I asked Kent to get it for me. You know her party is to be an old English one, and it would not be complete without mistletoe. What is this little note hitched to it?"

"DEAREST MOLLY:

"I almost broke my neck getting this, and hope it is what you want. Tell Miss Judy Kean, who, I hear, is to spend Christmas with you, not to get under this until I get there. 233

"KENT."

"What can he mean? Judy Kean, is Kent coming here for Christmas? Answer me."

But Judy only buried her crimson face in the big turkey's bosom and giggled.

"Answer me, Judy Kean."

"How do I know? Am I your brother's keeper?"

"He couldn't be coming or mother would have written me! I see he means for you to wait for him until he 'arrives' in his profession. Oh, Judy, Judy, I do hope you will! But come on now, we must take these things to the Greens. Miss Grace is very busy with her preparations, while Dodo is off for the day with young Andy and his Jap friend, revisiting their old college, Exmoor. We must get the mistletoe hung; and the ham is to be part of the party, I fancy. I am going to take them some of these pickles, too, and half of my fruit cake. It is so big that it will take us months to devour it, besides ruining our complexions."

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The girls, weighed down with their heavy contributions—ham, pickle, fruit cake and mistletoe—rang the bell at Professor Green's house, fronting on the campus. The door was quickly opened by Miss Alice Fern. She eyed them haughtily and coldly, hardly responding to Molly's greeting and barely acknowledging the introduction to Judy, whom she already knew, but refused to remember.

"My cousin, Miss Green, is very busy and regrets she cannot speak to you just now."

"Oh, I am sorry not to see her! I have some mistletoe that my brother sent her from Kentucky, and Miss Kean and I were going to ask her to let us hang it for her."

"You are very kind, but I am decorating the house for my cousins, and can do it very well without any assistance from outside."

"Molly, we had better leave our packages and make a chastened departure," said Judy, the irrepressible. "We have some interior decorations besides the mistletoe, Miss Fern, in the way of an old ham and a fruit cake, and some Rosemary pickles. Are you also chairman of the committee on that kind of interior decorations? If you are not, I should think it were best for us to interview the secretary of the interior, if we are not allowed to see the head of the department."

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At that moment who should come bounding up the steps but Edwin Green himself.

"Good morning to both of you! I am so glad to see you back in Wellington, Miss Kean. I have just come from the Quadrangle, where I went to call on you, but saw Miss Oldham, who told me you and Miss Molly were on your way to see my sister. Why don't you come in? Grace is in the pantry, preparing for the 'astonishment party,' as I am told Miss Sen calls it. I will call her directly."

"Grace has asked to be excused to callers, Edwin," said the stately Miss Fern.

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"Nonsense, Alice, she was expecting Miss Brown to decorate the parlors, and Miss Kean is not a stranger to any of us. Come in, come in," and the indignant professor ushered them into the parlor and went to call his sister, confiding to her, as she hastened to greet the girls, that if Alice Fern did not stop trying to run their affairs he was going to do something desperate.

"I am afraid you brought it on us by being too nice to her two years ago when she first came home from abroad," teased his sister; and he remembered that he had been rather attentive to his fair cousin at a time when Miss Molly Brown of Kentucky had had a little misunderstanding with him.

"How good of you, you dear, sweet girl, to have this mistletoe sent all the way from Kentucky for our party, and what a wonderful piece of walnut it is growing to, this great, knotted, knobby branch! But, Alice, don't break any of it off! You will ruin it." Miss Green stopped Alice just in time, as she had begun with rapid tugs to pull the mistletoe from the branch that Kent had sawed off with such care, and to stick it in vases among the holly, where it did not show to any advantage. "Of course, it must be hung from the chandelier just as it is."

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"Oh, very well, Cousin Grace; but it seems to me to be a very heavy looking decoration." And the young woman flounced off, leaving Molly and Judy feeling very much mystified, to say the least.

"Aunt Mary sent you a ham, Professor Green. I brought it to-day, thinking maybe your sister would like it for part of the night's festivities."

"Not a bit of it. That ham is to be brought out when there are not so many to devour it. I am not usually a greedy glutton, but beech-nut fed, home-cured ham is too good for the rabble, and I am going to hide it before Grace casts her eagle eye on it." He accordingly picked it up and pretended to conceal it from his smiling sister.

"Well, anyhow, Miss Green, you will use my fruit cake for the party, will you not?" begged Molly.

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"Oh, please don't ask me to. I know there is nothing in the world so good as fruit cake, and Edwin has told me of the wonders that come from Aunt Mary's kitchen. So if you don't mind, Molly, I am going to keep my cake for our private consumption. It would disappear like magic before the young people to-night, and Edwin and I could have it for many nights to come. Do you think I am as greedy as Edwin is with his ham?"

Molly was very much amused, but her amusement was turned to embarrassment when she heard Miss Fern say to her Cousin Edwin: "Miss Brown seems to be trying very hard to give the party."

She did not hear Edwin's answer, but noticed that he hugged his ham even more fervently, it being, fortunately for him and his coat, well wrapped in waxed paper. She also noticed that he went around and took out of the vases the few pieces of mistletoe that his cousin had pulled from the big bunch, and carefully wired them where they belonged on the walnut branch, and then got a step ladder and tied the beautiful decoration to the chandelier, while Judy, ignoring the stately

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Alice, bossed the job.

"Miss Molly, did you know that Dicky Blount will be here to-night?" asked the professor. "We can have some good music, which will be a welcome addition to the program, I think."

"That is fine; but please give him a slice of ham. I feel as though some were coming to him. Five pounds of Huyler's was too much for the old ham bone he got that memorable evening at Judith's dinner. By the way, Professor Green, I want to ask a favor of you and your sister."

"Granted before asked, as far as I am concerned, and Grace is usually very amiable where you are in question," said the eager Edwin.

"Oh, it isn't so much of a favor, and I have an idea I am doing you one to ask it of you. My dear friend Melissa Hathaway has a most wonderful voice, but no one ever knows it, as she is so reserved. I thought, maybe to-night, you might persuade her to sing. She has some ballads that are splendid for an Old English celebration."

"I should say we will ask her, and be too glad to! I am so pleased that she is coming. She seemed rather doubtful whether she could or not."

"Oh, that was just clothes, and clever Nance solved the problem for her just as she often has for me by making something out of nothing. When you see our Melissa and realize that her dress is made of eight yards of Seco silk at twenty cents a yard, you will think Nance is pretty clever."

CHAPTER V.—DODO'S SURPRISE PARTY.

The old red brick house, where Professor Green had his bachelor quarters, had been put in good order for his sister's régime, and with the furniture that had been in storage for many years since the death of their parents was made most attractive. It was designed for parties, seemingly, as the whole lower floor could be turned practically into one room. It had begun to snow, which made the glowing fire in the big hall even more cheerful by contrast.

"Whew! aren't we festive?" exclaimed Dodo, bursting in at the front door with Lawrence Upton, whom he had picked up at Exmoor. "Looks to me like a ball, with all of this holly and the bare floors ready for dancing. Andy and his little Jap are coming around this evening to see you, Gracey, and I wish we could get some girls to have a bit of a dance. I have been learning to dance along with my other arduous tasks at the University, and I'd like to trip the light fantastic toe with some real flesh and blood. I have had nothing but a rocking chair to practice with for ever so long. I've got a little broken sofa that is great to 'turkey trot' with."

"How about the old tune, 'Waltzing 'Round with Sophy, Sophy Just Seventeen,' for that dance of yours?" laughed his older brother. "I declare, Dodo, we ought to do better than that for you at a girls' college, even in holiday time. Let's wait and see if young Andy comes, and then with his help maybe we can scare up a girl or so."

Miss Grace thanked Edwin with an appreciative pat for keeping up the game of surprise party. Just then Richard Blount came blowing in from New York, and they all went in to supper, where the greedy Edwin permitted them to have a try at his ham.

"What a girl that Miss Brown is!" declared Dicky. "She seems to me to be the most attractive blonde I have ever seen." Richard, being very fair, of course, had a leaning toward brunettes. "We were talking about her the other evening at the Stewarts', and we agreed that when all was told she was about the best bred person we knew."

Miss Fern, to whom praise of Molly seemed to be bitterness and gall, gave a sniff of her aristocratic nose and remarked: "There must have been some question of Miss Brown's breeding for you to have been discussing it. I have always thought breeding was something taken for granted."

"So it should be," said Professor Green, laconically.

"Do you know, it is a strange thing to me, but the only two persons in the world that I know of who don't like Miss Molly Brown of Kentucky are our two cousins on different sides of the house—Judith Blount and you, Cousin Alice."

This from Dodo, enfant terrible. Edwin turned the color of his old ham and looked sternly at Dodo, who was entirely unconscious of having said anything amiss. Miss Grace and Lawrence Upton giggled shamefully, while Richard Blount hastened to say, "I think you are mistaken about Judith. On the contrary, she now speaks very highly of Miss Brown, and looks upon her as a very good friend."

"As for me," said Alice, "I have never given Miss Brown a thought one way or the other. I do not know her well enough to dislike her. She impresses me as being rather pushing."

At this Miss Grace made a sign for them to rise, as she was anxious to get the dining-room in readiness for the entertainment.

"All of you boys had better put on your dress suits if there is a chance of scaring up some dancers," she tactfully suggested, so there was a general rush for their rooms, and she was left in

peace to get everything ready for the surprise party.

The guests, as had been agreed upon, arrived together. The old house was suddenly filled with dancers enough to satisfy the eager Dodo, and dear Mrs. McLean, ready to play dance music until they dropped. Dodo was astonished enough to delight his sister, and the fun began.

Dr. McLean and Mr. Oldham found much to talk about, so Nance felt that her father was going to have a pleasant evening, and with a glad sigh gave herself up to having a good time with the rest. Young Andy was not long in attaching himself to her side, and they picked up conversation where they had dropped it the year before and seemed to find each other as agreeable as ever.

All the girls looked lovely, as girls should when they have an evening of fun ahead of them and plenty of partners to make things lively. Several more young men came over from Exmoor, in response to a secret invitation sent by Miss Grace through young Andy, so, as Judy put it, "There were beaux to burn."

Judy was going in very much for the picturesque in dress, as is the usual thing with art students, so she was very æsthetically attired in a clinging green Liberty silk. Molly wore her bridesmaid blue organdy, which was very becoming. Nance,—who always had the proper thing to wear on every occasion without having to scrape around and take stitches and let down hems, and find a petticoat to match, and for that reason had time to do those necessary things for the other girls,—wore a pretty little evening gown of white chiffon, and she looked so pretty herself that Dr. McLean whispered to his wife that he took it all back about young Andy's having picked out a plain lassie. Little Otoyó had on the handsomest dress of the evening, a rose pink silk embroidered in cherry blossoms. The clever child had bought the dress in New York at a swell shop and taken it to Japan with her, and there had the wonderful embroidery put on it. Melissa was a revelation to herself and her friends. The black Seco silk fitted her so well that Nance was really elated over her success as a mantuamaker. Melissa had never gone décolleté in her life, and at first the girls could hardly persuade her to wear the low-necked dress; but when she saw Molly she was content.

"Whatever Molly does is always right, and if she wears low neck then I will, too," said the artless girl.

Her hair was rolled at the sides and done in a low knot on her neck. As she came into the parlor Richard Blount, who was going over some music at the piano, did not see her at first. Looking up to speak to Edwin about a song he was to sing, he was struck dumb by her beauty. Clutching Edwin he managed to gasp out, "Great Cæsar! who is she?"

"She is not Medusa, my dear Dick. Don't stand as though you had turned to stone. It is Miss Hathaway, a friend of Miss Brown's, and a very interesting and original young woman, also from Kentucky, but from the mountains. I will introduce you with pleasure."

Edwin Green did introduce him, and if Richard Blount took his eyes from Melissa once during the evening he did it when no one was looking.

Mr. Seshu, young Andy's friend, proved to be a charming, educated young man, who understood English perfectly and spoke with only an occasional blunder. He made himself very agreeable to Molly, who was eager to talk with him, hoping to find out if he were worthy of their little Otoyó. The girls were almost certain that he had come to Wellington with the idea of viewing Otoyó and passing on her as a possible wife. Otoyó had let drop two or three remarks that made them feel that this was the case. She was very much excited, and her little hands were like ice when Molly took them in hers to tell her how sweet she looked and how beautiful and becoming her dress was. It was a trying ordeal for any girl, and Molly wondered that the little thing could go through with it, but honorable father had thus decreed it and it must be borne.

"I fancy it is better than having the marriage broker putting his finger in, which is what would have happened if the Sens and Seshus had not 'hugged the Christian faith' and come to America," whispered Molly to Nance as they took off their wraps.

"I'd see myself being pranced out like a colt, honorable father or not," said Nance. "I fancy he is very nice, however, or Andy would not be so chummy with him."

Molly was amused at the farce of telling Mr. Seshu that one of his country women was a student at Wellington, and she hoped to have the pleasure of introducing them. He received the information with a polite bow, and no more expression than a stone image, but with volubly expressed thanks and eagerness for the introduction.

"Our little Otoyó is very precious to us," said Molly, "and we are very proud of her progress in her studies. She takes a fine place with her class, and will graduate this year with flying colors. She writes perfect English, but there are times in conversation when adverbs are too many for her. She is excited to-night over coming to a dance, having but recently added dancing to her many accomplishments, and her adverbs may get the better of her." Molly was determined that the seeker for a wife should not take the poor little thing's excitement to himself.

Mr. Seshu seemed more anxious to talk about Otoyó than to meet her.

"And so you are trying to pump me about my little friend, are you, you wily young Jap? Well, you have come to the right corner. I'll tell you all I can, and you shall hear such good things of Otoyó that you will think I am a veritable marriage broker," said Molly to herself.

"Is Mees Sen of kindly heart and temper good, you say?"

"She has the kindest heart in the world and a good temper, but she is well able to stand up for

herself when it is necessary."

"He shall not think he is getting nothing but a good family horse, but I am going to try to let him understand that our little Otoyō has a high spirit and is fit for something besides the plow," added Molly to herself.

After much talk, in which Molly felt that she had been most diplomatic, Mr. Seshu was finally presented to Miss Sen. Poor little Otoyō was not as embarrassed as she would have been had she not learned to converse with honorable gentlemen quite like American maidens. The practice she had had with young Andy and Professor Green came in very well now, and her anxious friends were delighted to see that she was holding her own with her polished countryman, and that he seemed much interested in her chatter. At the instigation of Molly and Nance, Andy McLean soon came up and claimed Otoyō for a dance. She looked very coquettishly at her Japanese suitor and immediately accepted, and Mr. Seshu was as disconsolate as any other young man would have been to have a pleasant companion snatched from him.

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"We'll teach him a thing or two," said our girls. "And just look how well Otoyō is 'step twoing,' as she calls it, with Andy!"

"While the dancers are resting we will have some music," said the gracious hostess. "I am going to ask you, Miss Hathaway, to sing for us."

Melissa looked astonished that she should be chosen, but, with that poise and dignity that years in society cannot give some persons, she agreed to sing what she could if Molly would accompany her on the guitar.

"Sing 'Lord Ronald and Fair Eleanor,'" whispered Molly. "I want Professor Green to hear it."



The two Kentucky girls made a wonderfully charming picture.—Page 252.

The two Kentucky girls made a wonderfully charming picture as they took their places to do their part toward entertaining the guests—Molly so fair and slender in her pretty blue dress, with her hair "making sunshine in a shady place," seated with the guitar, while Melissa, tall and stately, with figure more developed, in her clinging black dress stood near her. Judy was so overcome at the picturesque effect that she began to make rapid sketching movements in the air as was her wont.

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"Oh, what don't we see when we haven't got a gun! I'd give anything for a piece of charcoal and some paper."

"I don't know all of this song, but I shall sing all I do. I learned it from my grandmother, and she learned it from hers. This is all Granny knows, but she says her grandmother had many more verses," said Melissa as Molly struck the opening chords of the accompaniment.

"So she dressed herself in scarlet red,
And she dressed her maid in green,
And every town that they went through
They took her to be some queen, queen, queen,

They took her to be some queen.

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“Lord Ronald, Lord Ronald, is this your bride
That seems so plaguey brown?
And you might have married as fair skinned a girl
As ever the sun shone on, on, on,
As ever the sun shone on.’

“The little brown girl, she had a penknife,
It was both long and sharp;
She stuck it in fair Eleanor’s side
And it entered at the heart, heart, heart,
It entered at the heart.

“Lord Ronald, he took her by her little brown hand
And led her across the hall;
And with his sword cut off her head,
And kicked it against the wall, wall, wall,
And kicked it against the wall.

“Mother, dear mother, come dig my grave;
Dig it both wide and deep.
By my side fair Eleanor put,
And the little brown girl at my feet, feet, feet,
And the little brown girl at my feet.”

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As the beautiful girl finished the plaintive air there was absolute stillness for a few seconds. The audience was too deeply moved to speak. Melissa’s voice was sweet and full and came with no more effort than the song of the mocking bird heard in her own valleys at dawn. She took high note or low with the same ease that she had stooped and lifted her little hair trunk at Wellington station.

The song in itself was very remarkable, being one of the few original ballads evidently brought to America by an early settler, and handed down from mother to daughter through the centuries. Edwin Green recognized it, and noted the changes from the original from time to time. Richard Blount was the first to find his tongue, although he was the one most deeply moved by the performance.

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“My, that was fine!” was all he could say, but he broke the spell of silence, and there was a storm of applause. Melissa bowed and smiled, pleased that she met with their approval, but with no airs or affectation.

“She has the stage manner of a great artist who is above caring for what the gallery thinks, but has sung for Art’s sake, and, as an artist, knows her work is good,” said Richard to Professor Green. “Miss Hathaway, you will sing again for us, please. I can’t remember having such a treat as you have just given us, and I have been to every opera in New York for six years.”

The demand was general, so Melissa graciously complied. This time she gave “The Mistletoe Bough.”

“The mistletoe hung in the castle hall,
And the holly branch shone on the old oak wall;
And all within were blithe and gay,
Keeping their Christmas holiday.
Oh, the mistletoe bough,
Oh, the mistletoe bough.”

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And so on, through the many stanzas of the fine old ballad, telling of the bride who cried, “I’ll hide, I’ll hide,” and then of the search and how they never found the beautiful bride until years had passed away, and then, on opening the old chest in the attic, her bones were discovered and the wedding veil.

When the applause subsided, Miss Grace asked Richard Blount to sing.

“I’ll do it, Cousin Grace, but I have never felt more modest about my little accomplishments. Miss Hathaway has taken all the wind out of my sails. I am going to sing a little thing that I clipped out of a newspaper and put to music. ‘It is a poor thing, but mine own.’ I think it is appropriate for this party, and hope you will agree with me.”

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“Now, Dicky, you know we love your singing, and because Miss Hathaway has charmed us is no reason why you cannot charm us all over. Caruso can sing, as well as Sembrich,” said Miss Grace.

Richard Blount had a good baritone voice, and sang with a great deal of taste; and he played on the piano with real genius. With a few brilliant runs he settled down to the simple, sweet air he had composed for the little bit of fugitive verse, and then began to sing:

"The holly is a soldier bold,
Arrayed in tunic green,
His slender sword is never sheathed,
But always bared and keen.
He stands amid the winter snows
A sentry in the wood,—
The scarlet berries on his boughs
Are drops of frozen blood.

"The mistletoe's a maiden fair,
Enchanted by the oak,
Who holds her in his hoary arms,
And hides her in his cloak.
She knows her soldier lover waits
Among the leafless trees,
And, weeping in the bitter cold,
Her tears to jewels freeze.

"But at the holy Christmas-tide,
Blessed time of all the year,
The evil spirits lose their power,
And angels reappear.
They meet beside some friendly hearth,
While softly falls the snow—
The soldier Holly and his bride,
The mystic Mistletoe."

Richard had been delighted by Melissa's performance, and now she returned the compliment by being so carried away by his singing and the song that she forgot all shyness and reserve and openly congratulated him, praising his music with so much real appreciation and fervor that the young man was persuaded to sing again. He sang the beautiful Indian song of Cadman's, "The Moon Hangs Low," and was beginning the opening chords to "The Land of Sky-blue Water," when there came a sharp ringing of the bell, followed by some confusion in the hall as the door was opened and a gust of wind blew in the fast falling snow. Then a man's voice was heard inquiring for Professor Green.

CHAPTER VI.—MORE SURPRISES.

"Whose voice is that?" exclaimed Molly and Judy in unison; and without waiting to be answered they rushed into the hall to find Kent Brown being warmly greeted by Professor Green. Before he had time to shake the snow from his broad shoulders, Molly seized him and he seized Judy, and they had a good old three-cornered Christmas hug.

"Did you get my note tied to the mistletoe?"

"Yes, you goose; but we did not know you were really coming. I thought you were speaking in parables," said Molly, but Judy only blushed.

"Well, it is powerful fine to get here. My train is four hours late."

"I know you are tired and hungry," said Miss Green, who was as cordial as her brother in her reception of the young Kentuckian. "But where is your grip, Mr. Brown?"

"Oh, I left it at the inn in the village. I could not think of piling in on you in this way without any warning."

"Well, Edwin will 'phone for it immediately. You Southern people think you are the only ones who can put yourselves out for guests. It would be a pretty thing for one of Mrs. Brown's sons to be in Wellington and not at our house."

So Kent was taken into the Greens' house with as much cordiality and hospitality as Chatsworth itself could have shown. The odor of coffee soon began to invade the hall and parlors, and in a little while the dining-room doors were thrown open and the feasting began. Miss Green was an excellent housekeeper, and knew how to cater to young people's tastes as well as Mrs. Brown herself, so the food was plentiful and delicious. Molly noticed with a smile that some of the precious ham was smuggled to the plates of Dr. and Mrs. McLean and Mr. Oldham, where it was duly appreciated, and that later on the favored three were regaled with slices of the fruit cake.

Kent found a cozy seat for Judy by the hall fire, and soon joined her with trays of supper.

"Oh, Miss Judy, it has been years since last July. I have worked as hard as a man could, hoping to make the time fly, but it hasn't done much good,—except that it made my firm suggest that I let up for a few days at Christmas, and here I am! I am working awfully hard trying to learn to do water coloring of the architectural drawings. I wish I had you to help me, you are so clever. I am hoping to get to New York or Paris some day to learn the tricks of the trade, but in the meantime there are lots of things to learn in Louisville; and I am getting more money for my work than I

did. Did Molly give you my message tied to the mistletoe?"

"Yes, Kent."

"Will you wait? I was speaking in parables. I think somehow that I must arrive a little more, before I can catch you under the mistletoe; and you must do your work, too. Oh, Judy, it is hard to be so wise and circumspect! But will you wait?"

"Yes, Kent. I am working hard, too, harder than I have ever worked in my life. I was terribly disappointed when papa would not let me go to Paris this winter, but insisted on the year of hard drawing in New York, to test myself and find myself, as it were, and I have been determined to make good. I am drawing all the time, and you know that is virtuous when I am simply demented on the subject of color. I let myself work in color on Saturday in Central Park, but the rest of the time it is charcoal from the antique or from life, with classes in composition and design. There is no use in talking about being a decorator if you can't draw. I hope to be in Paris next year, and then I shall reap my reward and simply wallow in color."

When supper was over, they were all called on to stand up for the Virginia Reel, which Mrs. McLean played with such spirit that Mr. Oldham and Dr. McLean could not keep their feet still; and before the astonished eyes of Edwin Green and Andy McLean, who had other plans, Mr. Oldham seized Molly and Dr. McLean Nance, and they danced down the middle and back again with as much spirit as they had ever shown in their youth.

"It takes the old timers to dance the old dances, hey, Mr. Oldham?" said the panting doctor as he came up the middle smiling and cutting pigeon wings, while Nance arose to the occasion and "chasseed" to his steps like any belle of the sixties. Even Miss Alice Fern forgot her dignity and romped, but she was very gay, as Edwin had sought her out when Molly danced off with Mr. Oldham. He had remembered that he had been rather remiss in his attentions to his fair cousin.

How they did dance!—and all of the extra men danced with each other, so there were no wall flowers. Richard Blount claimed Melissa as a partner, and they delighted the crowd by singing as they danced a song that Melissa had taught Richard, as she told him of some of the mountain dance games, the words fitting themselves to Mrs. McLean's lively tunes.

"'Old man, old man, let me have your daughter?"

'Yes, young man, for a dollar and a quarter.

Pick up her duds and pitch 'em up behind her.'

'Here's your money, old man, I've got your daughter.'"

After the dance they drew around the open fire in the hall and roasted chestnuts and popped corn and told stories, and had a very merry old-fashioned time capping quotations. And finally the one thing wanting, as Molly thought, came to pass, and Professor Green read Dickens' Christmas Carol just as he had three years before, when he and his sister gave Molly the surprise party at Queen's in her Sophomore year.

"At the risk of making myself verra unpopular, I am afraid I shall have to say it is time for all of us to be in bed," said Mrs. McLean, when the professor closed the worn old copy of Dickens.

"Oh, not 'til we have had a little more dancing, please, dear Mrs. McLean," came in a chorus from the young people; and Professor Green told her that it would be a pity to throw Dodo back on a rocking chair for a partner before he had had a little more practice with flesh and blood. So up they all sprang, and with Miss Grace at the piano, to relieve the good-natured Mrs. McLean, who had thrummed her fingers sore, off they went into more waltzes and two-steps, even the shy Melissa dancing with Richard Blount as though she had been at balls every night of her life. Otoyo and Mr. Seshu hopped around together as though "step-twoing" and "dance-rounding" were the national dances of Japan.

And so ended the delightful surprise party. Before they departed, Dr. McLean drew his wife under the mistletoe and kissed her.

"Just to show you bashful young fellows how it is done," said the jovial doctor.

"And I will give the lassies a lesson in how to accept such public demonstration," said his blushing wife, and she suited the action to the word by giving him a playful slap, whereupon he kissed her again, but instead of another slap she hugged him in return, and there was a general laugh.

"I did that just to show the indignant lassies that they must not hold with their anger too long. A kiss under the mistletoe has never yet been offered as an insult, and the forward miss is not the one to get the kiss."

CHAPTER VII.—DREAMS AND REALITIES.

The holidays were all too soon over. Much feasting went on, what with Molly's big turkey and her fruit cake and Rosemary pickles; and the invitations to Mrs. McLean's and Miss Walker's; and Otoyo's Japanese spread, where she and Melissa charmed the company with the beautifully arranged rooms and the dainty, delicious refreshments. Mr. Seshu, throughout, was very attentive to his little countrywoman, and the girls decided that he was in love with her just like

any ordinary American might be.

"I am so glad it is coming about this way," said Molly. "Just think how hard it might have been for our little Otoyó, now that she has been in this country long enough to see how we do such things, had she been compelled, by filial feeling, to marry some one whom she did not love and who did not love her. I think she is all over the sentimental attachment she used to have for the unconscious Andy, don't you, Nance?"

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"I fancy she is," said the far from unconscious Nance, who always had a heightened color when young Andy's name got into the conversation. "I don't think she ever really cared for Andy. He was just the first and only young man who was ever nice to her, and it went to her head. Andy is so kind and good natured."

"You forget Professor Green. He was always careful and attentive, and Otoyó would chatter like a magpie with him."

"Oh, but he is so much older!" And then Nance wished she had bitten out her tongue, as Molly looked hurt and sad.

"Professor Green is not so terribly old! I think he is much more agreeable than callow youths who have no conversation beyond their own affairs."

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"Now, Molly Brown, I didn't mean to say a thing to hurt your feelings or to imply that Professor Green was anything but perfection. He is not too old for y—us, I mean; but Otoyó is like a child."

"I am ashamed of myself, Nance, but I do get kind of tired of everybody's taking the stand that Professor Green is so old. He is the best man friend I ever had, and—and——" But Nance kissed her fondly, and she did not have to go on with her sentence, which was lucky, as she did not know how she was going to finish it without committing herself.

Kent had to fly back to Louisville to work at his chosen profession and try to learn how to do water color renderings of the architectural elevations; Judy back to New York to dig at her charcoal drawings and dream of swimming in color, with Kent striking out beside her; Dodo again at Johns Hopkins, learning much about medicine and how to "turkey trot" with a broken sofa; young Andy and Mr. Seshu at Harvard, studying the laws of their country, for was not Mr. Seshu fast becoming an American? They had their dreams, too, these two young men. Andy was looking forward to the day when he would not have to stop talking to Nance just at the most interesting turn of the argument, but could stay right along with her forever and ever,—and sure he was that they would never talk out! Mr. Seshu's dreams—but, after all, what do we know of his dreams? Certain we are that he looked favorably on the little Miss Sen, and that honorable Father Sen and honorable Father Seshu had a long and satisfactory talk in the shop in Boston with the beautiful Japanese prints hanging all around them, representing in themselves money enough to make the prospective young couple very wealthy.

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Mr. Oldham went back to Vermont, also dreaming that the day might come when his little Nance would keep house for him, and he could leave the hated boarding house, and have a real home. Richard Blount returned to New York, dreaming, too, and his dream was of the beautiful mountain girl with the dignity and poise of a queen, eyes like the clear brown pools of autumn and a purposeful look on her young face that showed even a casual observer that she had a mission in life.

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Mid-year examinations came and went. Melissa and Otoyó came through without a scratch, which made Molly rejoice as though it had been her own ordeal.

Domestic Science grew more thrilling; so interesting, indeed, that Molly could not decide for a whole day whether she would rather be a scientific cook or a great literary success. But a note from a magazine editor accepting her "Basket Funeral" and asking for more similar stories decided her in favor of literature. And on the same day, too, Professor Edwin Green said to her, "Please, Miss Molly, don't learn how to cook so well that you forget how to make popovers. I am afraid all of these scientific rules you are learning will upset the natural-born knowledge that you already possess, and your spontaneous genius will be choked by an academic style of cooking that would be truly deplorable."

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Molly laughingly confided in the professor that she would not give one of Aunt Mary's hot turnovers for all of Miss Morse's scientifically made bread.

"I know her bread is perfect, but it lacks a certain taste and life, and is to the real thing what a marble statue is to flesh and blood. Judy described it, in speaking of the food at a lunchroom for self-supporting women that she occasionally goes to in New York, as being 'too chaste.'"

"That is exactly it, too chaste," agreed Professor Green.

"Of course, cooking is a small part of what we learn in Domestic Science,—food values, economic housekeeping, etc. It really is a very broad and far-reaching science."

They were in the professor's study, where Molly had come to tell him the good news about her story, and to ask his advice concerning what other of her character sketches she should send to the magazine. She was wearing her cap and gown, as she was just returning from a formal college function. When the young man greeted her, he had quickly rolled up something, looking a little shamefaced. But as they talked, he rolled and unrolled and finally determined to show the papers to her.

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"Miss Molly, Kent has sent me the plans for my bungalow that I commissioned him at Christmas to get busy on. I wonder if you would care to see them."

"Of course I'd be charmed to, Professor Green. There is nothing in the world that is more interesting to me than plans of a house. Kent and I have been drawing them ever since we could hold pencils. Kent was the master hand at outside effects, and I was the housekeeper, who must have the proper pantry arrangements and conveniences."

"Well, please pass on these. The outside effects seem lovely to me, but I cannot tell about the interior."

Molly seated herself and pored over the prints, soon mastering the details with a practiced eye, noting dimensions and windows and doors.

"I think it is splendid, but do you really want my criticism?"

"I certainly do, more than any one's."

"Well, there is waste space here that should be put in the store room. This little passage from dining-room to kitchen is entirely unnecessary and should be incorporated in the butler's pantry. These twin doors in the hall, one leading to the attic and one to the cellar, are no doubt very pretty, but they are not wide enough. An attic is for trunks, and how could one larger than a steamer trunk get through such a narrow door? A cellar is certainly for barrels and the like, and I am sure it would be a tug to pull a barrel through this little crack of a door. I'd allow at least nine inches more on each door, and that means a foot and a half off something. Let me see. It seems a pity to take it off of the living-room, and rather inhospitable to rob the guest chamber.

"Aunt Clay always puts the new towels in the guest chamber for the company to break in. She says company can't kick about the slick stiffness of them, and somehow it would seem rather Aunt Clayish to take that eighteen inches off of the poor unsuspecting guests, whoever they may be."

Molly sat a long time studying the plans, and she looked so sweet and so earnest that Edwin Green thought with regret of the tacit promise he had made Mrs. Brown: to let Molly stay a child for another year. How he longed to know his fate! How simple it would be while she was showing her interest in his little bungalow to ask her to tell him if she thought she could ever make it her little home, too! Was she the child her mother thought her? Did she think he was a "laggard in love," and despise him for a "faint heart"? Or could it be that she thought of him only as an old and trusted friend, too ancient to contemplate as anything but a professor of literature, and, at that, one who was building a home in which to spend his rapidly declining years?

"Time will tell," sighed the poor, conscientious young man, "but if I am letting my happiness slip through my fingers from a mistaken sense of duty, then I don't deserve anything but 'single blessedness'."

"I have it!" exclaimed Molly. "Have the cellar entrance outside by the kitchen door with a gourd pergola over both, and take this inside space where the cellar door and steps were to be for a large closet in the poor guests' room, to make up to them for coming so near to losing a foot and a half off of their room."

"That suits me, if it suits you. Is there anything else?"

"If you won't tell Kent it is my suggestion, I do think the bathroom door ought to open in and not out. He and I have disagreed about doors ever since we were children.

"Do you know what plan Kent is making for mother and me? He wants us to go abroad next winter. Sue is to be married to her Cyrus in June, muddy lane and all; Paul and John are in Louisville most of the time, now that Paul is on a morning paper and has to work at night, and John is building up his practice and has to be on the spot; Kent hopes to be able to take a course at the Beaux Arts next winter if he can save enough money, and that would leave no one at Chatsworth but mother and me. There is no reason why we should not go, and you know I am excited about it; and, as for mother, she says she is like our country cousin who came to the exposition in Louisville and said in a grandiloquent tone, 'I am desirous to go elsewhere and view likewise.' Mother and I have never traveled anywhere, and it would be splendid for us. Don't you think so?"

"I certainly do, especially as next year is my sabbatical year of teaching, and I expect to have a holiday myself and do some traveling. I have something to dream of now, and that is to meet you and your mother in Europe and 'go elsewhere and view likewise' in your company!"

"Oh, Mother and I will be so glad to see you," exclaimed Molly. "I have brought a letter from Mildred to read to you, Professor Green. It is so like Mildred and tells so much of her life in Iowa that I thought it might interest you."

"Indeed it will. I have thought so often of that delightful young couple and the wonderful wedding in the garden."

So Molly began:

"Dearest Sister:—You complain of having only second-hand letters from me and you are quite right. There is nothing more irritating than letters written to other people and handed down. Your letters should belong to you, and you only, just as much as your tooth-brush. You remember how mad it used to make Ernest to have his letters sent to Aunt Clay, and how he would put in bad words just to keep Mother from handing them on.

'Crit and I are more and more pleased with our little home out here in this Western

town (not that they call themselves Western, and on the map they are really more Eastern than Western). The people are lovely, and so neighborly and hospitable. It is a good thing for Southern people to get away from home occasionally and come to the realization that they have not got a corner on hospitality. Entertaining out here really means trouble to the hostess, as there are no servants and the ladies of the house have all the work to do; and still they entertain a great deal and do it very well, too.

'I have never seen anything like the system the women have evolved for their work. For instance: they wash on Monday morning and have a "biled dinner." When washing is over, they are too tired to do any more work, so they usually go calling or have club meetings or some form of amusement to rest up for Tuesday, ironing day. Wednesday, they bake. Thursday is the great day for teas and parties. Friday is thorough cleaning day, and I came very near making myself very unpopular because in my ignorance, when I first came here, I returned some calls on that fateful day. I was greeted by irate dames at every door, their heads tied up in towels and their faces very dirty. I could hardly believe they were the same elegant ladies I had met at the Thursday reception, beautifully gowned and showing no marks of toil. On Saturday they bake again and get ready for Sunday, and on Sunday no one ever thinks of staying away from church because of cooking or house work.

'I am so glad our mother taught us how to work some, at least not to be afraid of work, but I do wish I had been as fond of the kitchen as you always were and had learned how to cook from Aunt Mary. My sole culinary accomplishment was cloudbursts, and if Crit is an angel he has to have something to go on besides cloudbursts. The restaurants and hotels here are impossible and there are no boarding houses. There are only twenty servants in the whole town and they already have a waiting list of persons who want them when the present employers are through with them, which only death or removal from the town would make possible, so you see we have to keep house. I am learning to cook, and simply adore Friday when I can tie up my head and pull the house to pieces and make the dust fly. Crit calls me a Sunbonnet Baby because I am so afraid of not keeping to the schedule set down for me by my neighbors. Crit has bought me every patent convenience on the market to make the work easy: washing machine, electric iron and toaster, fancy mop wringer, and a dust pan that can stand up by itself and let you sweep the dirt in without stooping, vacuum carpet cleaner (but no carpets as yet), window washer and dustless dusters, fireless cooker and a steamer that can cook five things at once and blows a little whistle when the water gets low in the bottom vessel. I have no excuse for not being a good cook except that I lack the genius that you have. I thought I never should learn how to make bread but I have mastered it at last and can turn out a right good loaf and really lovely turnovers.

'Thank you so much for your hints from your Domestic Science class. I really got a lot from them. I had an awfully funny time with some bread last week. You see, having once learned how to make it, it was terribly mortifying to mix up a big batch and have it simply refuse to rise. I didn't want Crit to see it, so I took it out in the backyard and buried it in some sand the plasterers had left there. Crit came home to dinner and went out in the yard to see if his radishes were up and came in much excited: said he had found a new mushroom growth (you remember he was always interested in mushrooms and knew all kinds of edible varieties that we had never heard of). Sure enough there was a brand new variety. That hateful old dough had come up at last! The hot sand had been too much for it and it was rising to beat the band. I was strangely unsympathetic with Crit and his mushroom cult, so he came in to dinner. As soon as Crit went back to work, I went out and covered up the disgraceful failure with a lot more sand, hammered it down well and put a chicken coop on it, determined to get rid of it; but surely murder must be like yeast and it will out. When Crit came back to supper that old leaven had found its way through the cracks under the chicken coop and a little spot was appearing to the side of the sand pile. Crit was awfully excited and began to pull off pieces to send to Washington for the Government to look into the specimens, and I had to give in and tell him the truth. He almost died laughing and decided to send some anyhow, just to see what Uncle Sam would make out of it. The report has not come yet. I have lots more things to tell you about my housekeeping but I must stop now. I am so sorry I can not come home to Sue's wedding, but it is such an expensive trip out here that I do not see how Crit and I can manage it just now. Of course Crit could not come anyhow as the bridge would surely fall down if he were not here to hold it up, and even if we could afford it I should hate to leave him more than I can tell you. Oh, Molly, he is so precious! We have been married almost a year now and when I was cross about his mushrooms was the nearest we have ever come to a misunderstanding. That is doing pretty well for me who am a born pepper pot. It is all Crit, who is an angel, as I believe I remarked before. Please write to me all about your class reunion, and give my love to that adorable Julia Kean, and also remember me to that nice Professor Green.

'Your 'special sister,
MILDRED BROWN RUTLEDGE.'

"What a delightful letter and how happy they are," said the professor, fingering his roll of blue prints with a sad smile. "It was good of her to remember me. Please give her my love when you write."

"I did not tell you quite all she said," confessed Molly, opening the letter again and reading. "She says, 'remember me to that nice Professor Green, who is almost as lovely as Crit,'" and Molly beat a hasty retreat.

CHAPTER VIII.—THE OLD QUEEN'S CROWD.

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"Nance, do you fancy this has really been such a quiet, uneventful college year, or are we just so old and settled that we don't know excitement when we see it? It has been a very happy time, and I feel that I have got hold of myself somehow, and am able to make use of the hard studying I have done at college. I know you will laugh when I tell you that one reason I have been so happy is that I have not had to bother myself over Math. No one can ever know how I did hate and despise that subject."

"You poor old Molly, I know it was hard on you. You were in good company, anyhow, in your hatred of it. You remember Lord Macauley hated it, too, but for that very reason was determined 'to take no second place' in it. You always managed to get good marks after that first condition in our Freshman year. I often laugh when I think of you with your feet in hot water and your head tied up in a cold wet towel, trying to cure a cold and at the same time grasp higher mathematics," answered the sympathetic Nance, looking lovingly at her roommate. The girls found themselves looking at each other very often with sad, loving glances. Their partnership was rapidly approaching its close. They could not be room-mates forever and college must end some time.

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"The funny thing about me and Math. is that I never did really and truly understand it," laughed Molly. "I learned how to work one example as another was worked, but it was never with any real comprehension. Nothing but memory got me through. I remember so well when I was a little girl, going to the district school. I came home in tears because division of decimals had stumped me. My father found me weeping my soul out with a sticky slate and pencil grasped to my panting breast. 'What's the matter, little daughter?' he said. 'Oh, father, I can't see how a great big number can go into a little bits of number and make a bigger number still.' 'Well, you poor lamb, don't bother your little red head about it any more, but run and get yourself dressed and come drive to town with me. I am going to take you to see Jo Jefferson play "Cricket on the Hearth."' I shall never forget that play, but I never have really understood decimals; and you may know what higher mathematics meant to me."

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"Speaking of a quiet year, Molly, I have an idea one reason it has been so uneventful is that our dear old Judy has not been here to get herself into hot water, sometimes pulling in her devoted friends after her when they tried to fish her out. Won't it be splendid to see all the old Queen's crowd again: Judy and Katherine and Edith, Margaret and Jessie? I wonder if they have changed much! I am so glad they are coming to the meeting of the alumnæ this year, and that we are here without having to come!"

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"I do hope my box from home will get here in time for the first night of the gathering of the clan. I know it will seem more natural to them if we can get up a little feast. I want all of the girls to know Melissa. Isn't she happy at the prospect of her dear teacher's coming? Do you know the lady's name? I never can remember to ask Melissa, who always speaks of her with clasped hands and a rapt expression as 'teacher'."

"Yes," answered Nance. "She has a wonderful name for one who is giving up her life working for mankind: Dorothea Allfriend, all-friendly gift of God. I believe her name must have influenced her from the beginning."

"We must ask her to our spread on Melissa's account," cried the impetuously hospitable Molly. "That makes ten, counting the eight Queen's girls, and while we are about it, let's have——"

"Molly Brown, stop right there. If you ask a lot of outsiders, how can we have the intimate old talk that we are all of us hungering for? Of course we can't leave Melissa out, as she has been too close to us all winter to do anything without her, and her friend must come, too; but in the name of old Queen's, let that suffice."

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"Right, as usual, Nance, but inviting is such a habit with all of my family that it almost amounts to a vice. Of course we don't want outsiders, and I shall hold a tight rein on my inclination to entertain until after the fourth of June. If there are any scraps left, I might give another party."

"There won't be any, unless all of us have fallen in love and lost our appetites."

The fourth came at last, and with it our five old friends: the Williams sisters, Katherine and Edith, as amusing as ever, still squabbling over small matters but agreeing on fundamentals, which they had long ago decided was the only thing that mattered; Margaret Wakefield, with the added poise and gracious manner that a winter in Washington society would be apt to give one; Jessie Lynch, as pretty as ever but still Jessie Lynch, not having married the owner of the ring, as we had rather expected her to do when she left college; and our dear Judy, in the seventh heaven of bliss because The American Artists' exhibition had accepted and actually hung, not very far above the line, a small picture done in Central Park at dusk.

293

The meeting at No. 5, Quadrangle, was a joyous one. Everybody talked at once, except of course

little Otoyoy, whose manners were still so good that she never talked when any one else had the floor; but her smile was so beaming that Edith declared it was positively deafening.

"Silence, silence!" and Margaret, the one-time class president, rapped for order. "I am so afraid I will miss something and I can't hear a thing. Let's get the budget of news and find out where we stand, and then we can go on with the uproar."

"Well, what is the matter with refreshments?" inquired the ever-ready Molly. "That will quiet some of us at least. But before we begin, I must ask you, Otoyoy, where Melissa is. She and her friend Miss Allfriend understood the time, did they not?"

"Yes, they understood and send you most respectful greetings, but my dearly friend, Melissa, says she well understands that the meeting of these eight old friends is equally to her meeting of her one friend, and she will not intrusively be until we our confidences have bartered, and then she will bring Miss Allfriend to meet the companions of Miss Brown and Miss Oldham."

"I haven't heard who Melissa is, but she must be fine to show so much tact," exclaimed Katherine. "I am truly glad we are alone. I am bursting with news and drying up for news, and any outsider would spoil it all."

Nance gave a triumphant glance in Molly's direction, and Molly stopped carving the ham long enough to give an humble bow to Nance before remarking, "You girls are sure to adore my Melissa, but if Katherine is already bursting with news, suppose she begins before I get the ham carved. What is it, Kate? A big novel already accepted?"

"No, but a good job as reader for a publisher, and two magazine stories in current numbers, and an order for some college notes for a big Sunday sheet. Isn't that going some for the homeliest one of the Williams sisters? But that is nothing. My news is as naught to what is to come. Have none of you noticed the blushing Edith? Look at her fluffy pompadour, her stylish sleeves, her manicured nails. Compare them with those of the old Edith. Remember her lank hair and out-of-date blouses and finger nails gnawed down to the quick. Note the change and guess and guess again."

"Edith, Edith! Oh, you fraud!" in chorus from the astonished girls.

"Is it a man?"

"Who is he?"

"When is it to be?"

They certainly guessed right the very first time. Edith Williams was to be the first of the old guard to marry, and she was certainly the last to expect such a thing. She took the astonishment of her friends very coolly and accepted their congratulations without the least embarrassment.

"I can't see what you are making such a fuss about. You must have known all the time that my hatred of the male sex was a pose, just adopted because I had a notion that no man in his senses could ever see anything in me to care for; or if one did, he would be such a poor thing that I could not care for him. But," with a complacent smile, "I find I was mistaken."

"Tell us all about him, do please, Edith. I know he is splendid or you would not want him," said Molly, handing Edith the first plate piled with all dainties.

"I can't eat and talk, too, so I'll cut my love affair short. His name is plain James Wilson, but he is not plain, at all. He is very tall, very good looking and very clever. He is dramatic critic on a big New York paper and has written a play that is to be produced in the fall. Oh, girls, I can't keep it up any longer! I mean, this seeming coldness. He is *splendid* and I am very happy!" With which outburst, she attempted to hide her blushes in her plate, but Katherine rescued it, saying sternly, "Don't ruin the food, but effuse on your napkin," which made them laugh and restored Edith's equanimity. Then the girls learned that she was to be married in two weeks and go to Nova Scotia on her honeymoon.

"Next!" rapped Margaret. "How about you, my Jessica, and what have you done with your winter?"

Pretty Jessie blushed and held up her fingers, bare of rings. "Not even any borrowed ones?" laughed Judy. "Why, Jessie, I believe you have sought the safety that lies in numbers, and have so many beaux you can't decide among them."

"I have had a glorious debutante winter and do not feel much like settling down as yet," confessed the little beauty. "There is lots of time for serious thoughts like matrimony later on."

"So there is, my child, but don't do like the poor princess who was so choosy that she ended by having to take the crooked stick. My Jessica must have the best stick in the forest, if she must have any at all," said Margaret, putting her arm around her friend. "For my part, I have had a busy winter and haven't felt the need of a stick, straight or crooked. What with entertaining for my father and keeping up the social end necessary for a public man, and a general welfare movement I am interested in, and the Suffrage League, I have often wished I had an astral body to help me out. Mind you, I am not opposed to matrimony, but I am just not interested in it for myself."

"That is a dangerous sentiment to express," teased Judy. "I find that a statement like that from a handsome young woman usually means she is taking notice. Come now, Margaret, if, instead of having an astral body to do part of the work you are planning for yourself, you had been born triplets, you would have let one of you get married, wouldn't you? Now 'fess up. Margaret could

attend the suffrage meetings, and Maggie could look after the child's welfare, while dear, handsome, wholesome Peggy could be the beloved wife of some promising public man. I don't believe Margaret or Maggie would mind at all if Peggy had to hurry home from the meetings to have the house attractive for a brilliant young Senator from the western states whom we shall call 'the Baby of the Senate' just for euphony, and who would come dashing up to the door in his limousine whistling 'Peg o' my Heart' in joyful anticipation of his welcome."

Margaret, the stately and composed, was blushing furiously at Judy's nonsense.

"Judy Kean, who has been telling you things?"

"No one, I declare, Margaret. I was just visualizing. I wouldn't have presumed to hit the nail on the head had I realized I was doing it. You must forgive me, dear, but I am rather proud of being able to predict, and if I ever meet the 'Baby of the Senate' I shall tell him to 'try, try again'."

300

Molly interfered at this point and stopped Judy's naughty mouth with a beaten biscuit. "Aren't you ashamed, Judy? How should you like to be teased as you have teased Margaret?"

"Shouldn't mind in the least. If in a moment of ambitious dreaming I have said 'nay, nay' to any handsome young western senators, Margaret has my permission to tell them to 'try, try again,' that I was just a-fooling. I am perfectly frank about my intentions in regard to the husband question. I am wedded to my art, but it is merely a temporary arrangement, and I may get a divorce any day if more attractive inducements are offered than my art can furnish. It is fine, though, to get my picture accepted and almost well hung by The American Artists. I have an idea its size had something to do with the judges taking it. It would have been cruel to refuse such a little thing; and then it is so easy to hang a tiny picture, and there are so many gaps in galleries that have to be filled in somehow."

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"What a rattler you are, Judy," broke in Edith. "Your picture is lovely, and it made me proud to tell James, who took me to the exhibition, that you were my classmate and one of the immortal eight."

"Three more to report," rapped Margaret, "Molly and Nance and Otoyoy. Otoyoy first, to punish her for being so noisy," and Margaret drew the little Japanese to her side with an affectionate smile.

"It is not for humble Japanese maidens to bare lay their heart throbbings, so my beloved friends will have to excuse the little Otoyoy."

And it spoke well for the breeding of the other seven that they respected the reticence of their little foreign friend and did not try to force her confidence, although they were none of them ignorant of the intentions of the wily Mr. Seshu.

"Otoyoy is right," declared Nance. "I have nothing to confess, but if I had, I should be Japanese and keep it to myself."

302

"Oh, you 'copy cat'," sang Judy. "I'll wager anything that Nance has more up her sleeve than any of us. Look, look! It has gone all the way up her sleeve and is crawling out at her neck."

Nance made a wild grab at her neck, where, sure enough, the sharp eyes of Judy had discovered a tiny gold chain that Nance had not meant to show above her neat collar. She clutched it so forcibly that the delicate fastening broke, and a small gold locket was hurled across the room right into Molly's lap. Molly caught it up and handed it back to the crimson and confused Nance amid the shrieks of the girls.

"I reckon a girl has a right to carry her father's picture around her neck if she has a mind to," said Molly.

Just then there was a knock at the door and Melissa and Miss Allfriend were ushered in, much to the relief of Molly, who by their coming had escaped the ordeal of the teasing from her friends that she knew was drawing near; and it also gave Nance the chance to compose herself.

303

Miss Allfriend proved to be delightful. She was overjoyed to be back at her Alma Mater and eager to know Melissa's friends and to thank them for their kindness to her protégée. Personalities were dropped and the program for the entertainment of the alumnæ was soon under discussion. Miss Allfriend had been president of her class and she and Margaret found many subjects of mutual interest. Melissa was anxious to know the old Queen's girls, having heard so much of them from Otoyoy, and the girls were equally anxious to know the interesting mountain girl. The party was a great success, and Nance was delighted to see that there were no "scraps" left for Molly to give another, as there were many things on foot for the alumnæ meeting for the next week and Nance felt sure Molly would have enough to do without any more entertaining.

And now we will leave our girls. Their postgraduate year is over. A very happy one it has been, with little excitement but much good, hard work. Nance is to go to Vermont and rescue her long-suffering father from the boarding house, and give the poor man the taste of home life that he has never known. Mrs. Oldham cannot keep house in Vermont and make speeches, now at the International Peace Conference at The Hague, and then at a Biennial of Woman's Clubs in San Francisco, with a stop over in New York to address the Equal Suffrage League between boat and train!

304

Molly is going back to Kentucky to assist at her sister's wedding, this wedding a formal affair in a church, to suit the notions of the formidable Aunt Clay. Molly has many plots in her head to work out. Her little success with "The Basket Funeral" has fired her ambition, and she is longing for

time to write more. French must be studied hard all summer if they are to go abroad, and Kent must be coached, as he is very rusty in his French and must rub up on it for lectures at the Beaux Arts. She has promised Edwin Green to write to him, and he has offered to criticize her stories, which will be a great help to her. The place of meeting in Europe has not been decided on, but Professor Green is determined that meeting there shall be.

Melissa will go back to her beloved mountains and try to give out during her well-earned vacation some of the precious knowledge she has gained in her freshman year to the less fortunate children of her county. She will in a measure repay the noble woman who has spent her life in the mountain mission work for all the care and labor she has expended on her, and will go back to Wellington for the sophomore course with her purpose stronger and deeper: to help her people and uplift them as she herself has become uplifted.

One more incident only we must record before this volume ends. After Molly got home she received by express a box wrapped in Japanese paper, so carefully and wonderfully done up that it seemed a pity to break the fastenings. In the box was the most beautiful little stunted tree in a pot that looked as though it had come out of a museum. The tree had all the characteristics of a "gnarled oak olden," with thick twisted branches and one limb that looked as though little children might have had a swing on it, so low did it sag. And this tiny tree, with all the dignity of a great "father of the forest," was, pot and all, only eight inches high! With it, came the following letter:

"Will the honorably and kindly graciously Miss Brown be so stoopingly as to accept this humble gift from the father of Otoyō Sen, who has by the most graciously help of Miss Brown passed her difficulty examinations at Wellington College and now is to become the humble wife of honorable Japanese gentleman, Mr. Seshu? The honorable gentleman gave greatly praise to graciously Miss Brown for her so kindly words about humble Japanese maiden and is gratefully that his humble wife is the friend of so kindly lady."

With this little note, it seemed to Molly that the last ties that bound her to the precious life at Wellington and the old, complete Queen's group had suddenly snapped. Little Otoyō had outstripped them all! She was quietly entering the school of Life, while the rest were only standing at the threshold.

Molly, knowing the serene satisfaction with which the Japanese maiden awaited the new bonds, and remembering the transforming happiness of Edith Williams in anticipation of a similar experience, thoughtfully pondered upon her own future.

She had the eye of faith but she was not a seer; and she could not travel in advance those devious paths by which Destiny was to lead her.

How she finally came to her own and fulfilled the promise of college days, it remains for "Molly Brown's Orchard Home" to disclose.

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MOLLY BROWN'S POST-GRADUATE DAYS ***

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