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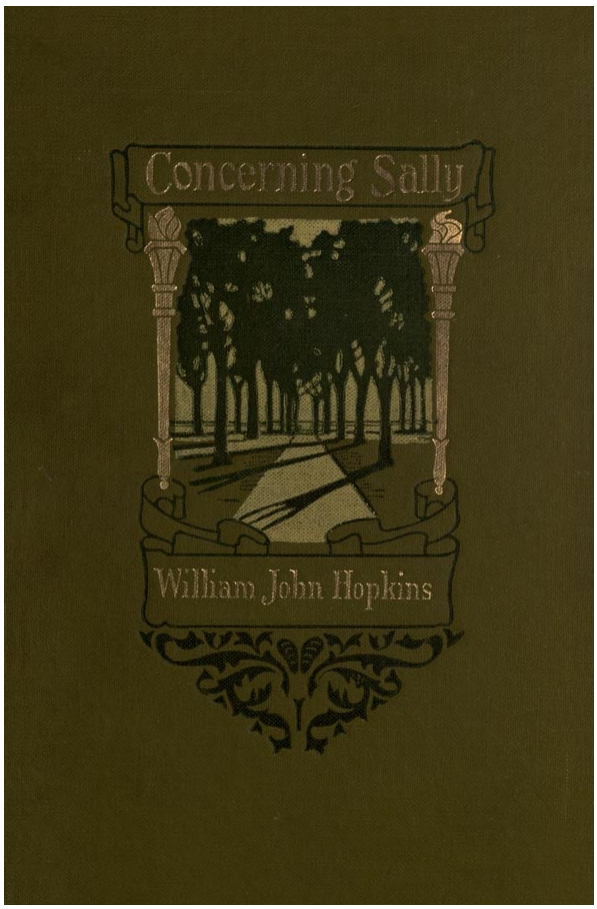

By William John Hopkins

CONCERNING SALLY.
THE INDIAN BOOK. Illustrated.
THE MEDDLINGS OF EVE.
OLD HARBOR.
THE CLAMMER.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

CONCERNING SALLY

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BY

WILLIAM JOHN HOPKINS

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BOOK I

CONCERNING SALLY

CHAPTER I

ToC

Professor Ladue sat at his desk, in his own room, looking out of the window. What he might have seen out of that window was enough, one would think, to make any man contented with his lot, especially a man of the ability of Professor Ladue. He had almost attained to eminence in his own line, which, it is to be presumed, is all that any of us can hope to attain to—each in his own line.

Out of Professor Ladue's window there might have been seen, first, a huge tree, the leaves upon which were fast turning from the deep green of late summer to a deep copper brown with spots of brilliant yellow. If his eyes were weary of resting in the shadow of that great tree, his gaze might go farther and fare no worse: to other trees, not too thickly massed, each in the process of turning its own particular color and each of them attaining to eminence in its own line without perceptible effort; to the little river which serenely pursued its winding and untroubled course; or to the distant hills.

But Professor Ladue, it is to be feared, saw none of these things. He was unconscious of the vista before his eyes. A slight smile was on his handsome face, but the smile was not altogether a pleasant one. He withdrew his gaze and glanced distastefully about the room: at the small bundle of papers on his desk, representing his work; at the skull which adorned the desk top; at the half-mounted skeleton of some small reptile of a prehistoric age lying between the windows; at his bed. It was an inoffensive bed; merely a narrow cot, tucked out of the way as completely as might be. Professor Ladue did not care for luxury, at any rate not in beds, so long as they were comfortable, and the bed took up very little room, which was important.

As his glance took in these things, a slight expression of disgust took the place of the smile, for a moment; then the smile returned. All expressions in which Professor Ladue indulged were slight. There was nothing the matter with him. He was only tired of work—temporarily sick of the sight of it; which is not an unusual state of mind, for any of us. It may be deplored or it may be regarded as merely the normal state of rebellion of a healthy mind at too much work. That depends largely upon where we draw the line. We might not all draw it where Professor Ladue drew it. And he did not deplore the state of mind in which he found himself. It was a state of mind in which he was finding himself with growing frequency, and when he was in it his sole wish was to be diverted.

He opened a drawer in his desk, dumped therein the papers, and, removing from it a box of cigarettes, took one and slipped the box into his pocket. After various tappings and gentle thumpings in the manner of your cigarette-smoker, designed, I suppose, to remove some of the tobacco which the maker had carefully put into it, the cigarette seemed to be considered worthy of his lips. I have no doubt that it was. So he lighted it, cast the match thoughtfully into the empty grate, and rose slowly.

He dawdled a minute at the window, looked at his watch, muttered briefly, and went briskly out and down the stairs.

He took his overcoat from the rack in the hall and removed the cigarette from his lips for a moment.

"Sarah!" he called curtly.

His voice was clear and penetrating and full of authority. If I had been Sarah, the quality of that one word, as he uttered it, would have filled me with resentment. A door almost at his elbow opened quickly and a girl appeared. She was well grown and seemed to be about twelve. She was really ten.

"What is it, father?" she asked; I had almost said that she demanded it, but there was no lack of respect in her voice. "Please don't disturb mother. She has a headache. I'm taking care of Charlie. What is it?"

"Oh, Sally," he said. It appeared as if he might even be afraid of her, just a little, with her seriousness and her direct ways and her great eyes that seemed to see right through a man. He gave a little laugh which he intended to be light. It wasn't. "Oh, all right, Sally. You're a very good girl, my dear."

Sally did not smile, but looked at him steadily, waiting for him to say what he had to say.

"Tell your mother, Sally," the professor went on, "that I find I have to go into town to attend to an important matter at the college. I may be late in getting out. In fact, she mustn't be worried if I don't come to-night. It is possible that I may be kept too late for the last train. I am sorry that she has a headache. They seem to be getting more frequent."

Sally bowed her head gravely. "Yes," she said, "they do."

"Well, tell her that I am very sorry. If I could do anything for her, I should, of course, be only too happy. But I can't and there doesn't appear to be any good purpose served by my giving up my trip to town." In this the professor may, conceivably, have been wrong. "Give her my message, my dear, and take good care of Charlie. Good-bye, Sally."

The professor stooped and imprinted a cold kiss upon her forehead. Sally received it impassively without expressing any emotion whatever.

"Good-bye, father," she said. "I will tell mother."

Professor Ladue went out and walked jauntily down the road toward the station. No good purpose will be served, to use his own words, by following him farther at this time. Sally went soberly back to the library, where she had left Charlie; she went very soberly, indeed. No Charlie was to be seen; but, with a skill born of experience, she dived under the sofa and haled him forth, [6] covered with dust and squealing at the top of his lungs.

"I hided," he shouted.

"Sh—h, Charlie. You'll disturb mother. Poor mother's got a pain in her head." The sombre gray eyes suddenly filled with tears, and she hugged the boy tight. "Oh, Charlie, Charlie! I'm afraid that father's going to do it again."

Charlie whimpered in sympathy. Perhaps, too, Sally had hugged him too tight for comfort. His whimper was becoming a wail when she succeeded in hushing him. Then she heard a soft step coming slowly down the stairs.

"Now, Charlie," she said reproachfully, "it's too bad. Here's mother coming down. I wish," she began, impatiently; then she checked herself suddenly, for the boy's lips were puckering. "Never mind. Laugh, now."

It is not strange that the boy could not accommodate himself to such sudden changes. He was only six. But he tried faithfully, and would have succeeded if he had been given more time. The door opened gently.

"Sally, dear," said a soft voice, "I thought that I heard the front door shut. Has your father gone out?"

Mrs. Ladue was gentle and pretty and sweet-looking; and with a tired look about the eyes that seldom left her now. She had not had that look about the eyes when she married young Mr. Ladue, thirteen years before. There were few women who would not have had it if they had been married to him for thirteen years. That had been a mistake, as it had turned out. For his own good, as well as hers, he should have had a different kind of a wife: none of your soft, gentle women, but a woman who could habitually bully him into subjection and enjoy the process. The only difficulty about that is that he would never have married a woman who habitually bullied. He wanted to do any bullying that there was to be done. Not that he actually did any, as it is usually understood, but there was that in his manner that led one to think that it was just beneath the surface; and by "one" I mean his wife and daughter,—no doubt, I should have said "two." As for [7] Sally, the traditional respect that is due a father from a daughter was all that prevented her from finding out whether it was there. To be sure, his manner toward her was different. It seemed almost as if he were afraid of Sally; afraid of his own daughter, aged ten. Stranger things have happened.

If Mrs. Ladue knew that she had made a mistake, thirteen years before, she never acknowledged it to herself when she thought of her children. She beckoned Charlie to her now.

"Come here, darling boy," she said, stooping.

Charlie came, with a rush, and threw his arms about his mother's neck.

"Oh, Charlie," cried Sally quickly, "remember mother's head. Be careful!"

Mrs. Ladue smiled gently. "Never mind, Sally. Let him be as he is. It makes my head no worse to have my little boy hugging me. Has your father gone out?" she asked again.

Sally's eyes grew resentful. "Yes," she answered. "He left a message for you. He said I was to tell you that he was very sorry you had a headache and that if he could do anything for you he would be only too happy." Sally's voice insensibly took on a mocking quality. "And—and there was something about his being called into town by pressing matters and you were not to be worried if he missed the last train and—and—" She burst into a passion of tears. "Oh, mother, dear, I don't believe a word of it. I'm afraid he'll come back like—like—" Her whole form quivered with the energy of her utterance. There was no doubt that she meant what she said so violently. "I *hate*—"

"Hush, darling, hush! Never say that." Mrs. Ladue drew her little daughter close and patted her shoulder.

Sally's crying ceased abruptly, but the muscles were all tense under her mother's hand. She smiled bravely.

"Now, mother, dear," she said, "I have made it worse, haven't I? I didn't mean to do that—to cry. Truly, I didn't. I won't ever do it again." She put one arm about her mother's neck and [8] stroked her forehead gently. "Mother, darling, doesn't it make your head just a little better to have your little daughter hu—hug—ging you, too?" And she hid her face in her mother's neck.

Mrs. Ladue's eyes filled with tears. "My dearest little daughter!" she murmured, kissing her. "If only you could be happy! If only you didn't take things so to heart! Mother's own dear little girl!" She rose and spoke brightly. "Now, let's all go out into this lovely day and be happy together."

Sally smiled. "Yes," she said, "we'll all be happy together. Don't you think, mother, that it will make your head better?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Ladue, "I think it will."

So they went out to the trees and the river and the hills. But Sally did not skip. Charlie, it is to be noted, did; Charlie, who had said nothing about being happy. It is to be presumed that they were all ecstatically happy; for had they not assured one another that they would be?

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[9]

CHAPTER II

ToC

It is to be feared that Professor Ladue had gone and done it again, as Sally said. Not that Sally knew what "it" was, nor did her mother know, either. Indeed, Mrs. Ladue made no inquiries concerning that point, being glad to put the most favorable construction possible upon the matter and, perhaps, afraid that she would not be able to do so if she knew any more. Perhaps, too, she realized that, unless she pursued her inquiries among comparative strangers, she would learn nothing. The professor would lie freely and skillfully, assuming that he considered it necessary or desirable to lie, and might be led to bully a little. Whatever course he might take, she would be no better off. So, as I said, she made no inquiries, which may have been wise or it may not; and she kept on hoping, although each occasion left her with less ground for any reasonable hope.

At all events, Professor Ladue came back early the next afternoon in the most fiendish temper, which may have been due to excess in any of its customary forms. Whatever the exact cause, the effect was, apparently, to make him hate himself and everybody with whom he came in contact. Mrs. Ladue was aware of the state of mind that he would be in, from experience, I suppose; an experience which she did not seem at all anxious to repeat. Sally was aware of it, too, and even Charlie seemed to realize that any meeting with his father was to be avoided. So it happened that Professor Ladue found the way into the house and to his room unobstructed. His wife and his children were nowhere to be seen; which circumstance, in itself, annoyed him exceedingly, although it is probable that he would have found their presence equally annoying.

[10]

Once in his room, he paced to and fro for a few minutes, nervously; then he took off his coat and bathed his head and face with cold water, pouring it over his head repeatedly. When he had rubbed his head partially dry he appeared to feel somewhat better, and he seated himself, frowning, at his desk, and tried to apply himself to his work. In this, as he undoubtedly expected, he was not very successful. He would not have expected one of his own students to be able to apply himself to work with any success under similar circumstances, whatever those circumstances were. So he pushed his work aside with some impatience, got up, took the skull from the desk and handled it absently. The feel of the skull seemed to suggest some ideas to him, for he put it down, went to the half-mounted skeleton of that ancient reptile that I have mentioned as lying between his windows, and began to work in earnest.

He soon became interested; so much interested that he was forgetting about his head, which felt as if it had been pounded with hammers,—tiny hammers which had not yet finished their work, whatever it was,—and he was forgetting about his eyes, which ached as if the pressure of blood behind the eyeballs was forcing them out of his head. He didn't know but it was; but it didn't matter. And he was forgetting about his body, every bone and muscle of which was crying out for rest and sleep. He sat there, on the floor under one of his windows, puzzling over a bone which he held in his hand, and completely absorbed.

Suddenly he glanced involuntarily out of the window. There sat Sally, astride a limb of the great tree, looking in at him intently. She was a most annoying child; yes, a most devilishly annoying child. He sprang to his feet and threw up the window, almost in one motion. Sally did not move a muscle; not even her eyes. He did not say the sharp things that were on the tip of his tongue, he could not have told why; he did not say anything for very nearly a minute. Under such circumstances, a minute is a long time. Nor did Sally say anything. She only gazed solemnly at him.

[11]

"Sally," he demanded at last, "what are you doing there?" The look in his eyes had softened. You might have mistaken it for a look of affection.

"Nothing, father," Sally answered, briefly and respectfully.

"Well, what the—" Professor Ladue was at a loss for words in which to express his exasperation. This was an unusual condition for him to be in. "Well, why don't you get down?"

"I don't want to get down," Sally returned. "I like being up here."

"You'll break your neck."

Sally made no reply.

"Can you get down safely?"

"Yes, father."

"Get down, then," said Professor Ladue, less sharply than he had meant to speak. "Don't you know that it must annoy me very much to have you spying in upon me in that way?"

"No, father, I didn't know it annoyed you," replied Sally in a colorless voice. "I beg your pardon. But I wasn't spying on you. I was only enjoying myself. I won't do it again."

Sally began slipping and sliding and scrambling down the tree. She seemed to have no fear and to be very familiar with the road she was taking. She knew every foothold. Her father watched her as she went from one insecure hold to another. It must have appeared to him a perilous descent, one would suppose; but I do not know what he thought. At all events, he called to her when she had swung off the lowest branch and dropped safely. He still had in his hand that prehistoric bone.

"Sally!" he called; "don't you want to come up here?"

Sally looked up, evidently greatly surprised. She was not easily surprised.

"To your room?" she asked.

"Yes," replied her father impatiently, "of course. To my room."

"Do you want me to?" Sally is to be excused for pressing the point. She did not wish to make any mistake. Mistakes had been made before. [12]

"I should be greatly pleased," said the professor, smiling and bowing airily. "I should consider it a great honor if Miss Sally Ladue would favor me with her company at the present juncture." He leaned a little out of the window. "You know I am working on the skeleton."

"Yes," said Sally. "I'll come up right away."

It is to be noted that Sally had not answered the exact question which the professor had asked her. She may have been reluctant to answer it just as it was asked. It is to be supposed that she was aware of the question and that she knew the answer. Sally was a truthful young person, but she preferred to take the course that made for peace if it was consistent with truth. The professor did not press the matter.

He was again sitting on the floor when Sally knocked on the door and came in. His head was a little better. Perhaps the tiny hammers had nearly finished their work. At all events, he soon forgot it completely.

"Sally," he said, after he had been working for some minutes and Sally had been watching him in silence, "what do you think this is?"

"I don't know, father," she answered. "Is it a—an alligator?"

"No," he said, stopping and looking thoughtfully at the skeleton. "No, it is not an alligator, although you came nearer than I should have thought you would. You were just barely warm, Sally. It is a distant relative of the alligator; perhaps I should call it a connection. The thirteenth cousin of his hundred thousandth great-grandfather, or something like that. It is a sort of a lizard, Sally. It is a very small one."

"Oh!" cried Sally. "A *small* one! A small *lizard*! Why, father!"

Professor Ladue smiled. "It lived a great many thousands of years ago. Nobody knows how many thousands of years, although they will tell you very glibly. They don't know anything about it except that it was a long time. I know that. This little lizard is a kind that nobody has ever discovered; nobody except me. It is *my* lizard. It must be known by my name. What do you think of that, Sally?" [13]

"It must be very fine," Sally murmured, "to discover things."

"At that far-off time," the professor continued, "there were lots of great horrid creeping and flying things. Even my little lizard may have been able to fly. See! These seem to be the beginning of his wing bones. There are some bones missing, so that I can't tell, yet, whether he had wings that would bear him up. But probably he had. Probably he had." And the professor relapsed into a thoughtful silence.

"Father," said Sally presently. She had been thinking and her interest in the skeleton was more active than it had been.

The professor looked up. "Any question that Miss Ladue has to ask," he observed, "will be cheerfully answered, provided that I know the answer. If I do not know the answer, and have the courage to say so, I trust she will not regard me as wholly ignorant of the subject."

Sally gave vent to a chuckle which was entirely unexpected; entirely unexpected by herself, at least.

"Father," she asked, as soon as she had managed to suppress her chuckles, "then could your little lizard fly up high?"

"Yep," he answered; "like a pigeon. Or, more probably, he flew more like a bat than like a pigeon."

"Right up into the tops of the trees?"

"Right up into the topmost branches of the coal trees."

"The *coal trees*!"

"The coal trees. Fed on the fruit. Large lizards customarily ate furnace coal, middle-sized lizards ate stove coal. Little lizards ate chestnut coal."

Sally burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. In all her experience of her father, she had never known him to be so amusing.

"And the littlest lizards?" [14]

"Ate pea coal," replied the professor promptly, "and the tiniest babies ate buckwheat coal. Very nourishing, chestnuts and peas and buckwheat. Cracked it with their teeth."

Sally was still giggling.

"Seriously, Sally," said the professor, with a change of manner, "by the coal trees I meant the trees which have become the coal we are burning in the stove and the furnace and to make steam. I see no reason to doubt that this little lizard could fly up into the tops of the trees. Perhaps he actually alighted on some tree which we now have down cellar in the coal bin."

"Oh!" cried Sally. "Let's suppose he did. And what did he see from his topmost branch?"

"Very little," replied the professor, "except treetops and a swamp or two."

"Well," said Sally, "it's rather disappointing. But I wish I could have seen it."

"Then," said her father solemnly, "there would now be nothing left of you but a skeleton which I would be puzzling my brains over. It would be somewhat disconcerting, Sally, to find a skeleton of a little girl among these bones of a past age; very disconcerting, indeed, to find that of Miss Sally Ladue."

"But how would you know it was Miss Sally Ladue's skeleton?" asked Sally, her eyes twinkling.

"That is a poser," her father answered. "I should know it, though. If there were no other means of identifying it, I should know it for Miss Ladue's by the large bump of inquisitiveness on the skull."

"What's my bump of inquisitiveness?"

The professor turned towards her. "Hand me that skull on my desk, and I'll show you." Sally obediently handed him the skull. "There it is," he continued. "You can see it, although it is not as large as your own. Come here and let us see if it is."

Sally came.

"The phrenologists," he began, feeling of her head, "would—hello!" [15]

"Ouch!" cried Sally, squirming but giggling irrepressibly, nevertheless.

"It is a very large bump," said the professor gravely; "unexpectedly large, even for you. What makes it so large, Sally?"

"I—I fell out of a tree yesterday," Sally said. "I suppose it was that."

"Ah, yes," the professor returned; "and because the bump was so large by nature it stuck out in a most inappropriate and uncomfortable way and was made more inappropriate and uncomfortable. It might be safer for you if you could fly, like my little lizard."

"I wish I could," said Sally; "I wish I could fly into the top of any tree I wanted to."

"You find the trees very attractive?"

"Yes, I do," Sally replied, simply. "You can see a lot from the top of a tall tree. The trouble is that you can't find big enough branches when you get nearly to the top."

"No," observed the professor, "I can't. If I could, I suppose I might climb trees oftener. It is very disconcerting to get almost up, just where the leaves are thickest, and find that I can't get any higher and can't see anything to speak of, either. And twigs that you wouldn't hesitate to trust yourself upon, Sally, are not nearly big enough for me. That," he finished, reflectively, "is, I think, the only reason why I have given up tree-climbing at such an early age."

Sally chuckled delightedly. "Did you climb trees when you were a boy, father?"

"Huh! Climb trees! Gracious, yes. Used to run right up one side and down the other. Tallest trees I could find, too. Hundreds of feet high. Did I use to climb trees!" The professor turned away in excess of scorn.

"Oh!" cried Sally, clapping her hands.

"Climb trees!" murmured the professor. "Why, there was one tree that I remember—"

He was interrupted, at this point, by a gentle knock at the door. [16]

"That sounds like your mother's knock, Sally. Will you be kind enough to see?"

It was Mrs. Ladue. She had heard the unaccustomed sounds of merriment issuing from her husband's room and had come up—rather timidly, it must be confessed—to see what it was all about. If her heart was fluttering a little with symptoms of hope, as she came, it is not to be wondered at. There was another reason for her coming, although she was not conscious that it had weight with her.

She was half smiling as she entered; half smiling in a doubtful, hesitating sort of way, ready to let the smile develop in its own lovely manner or to check it and let it fade away, according to

circumstances. Sally held tightly to her hand. Professor Ladue got upon his feet with more agility than would have been expected of him.

"Sally and I were having a session with my lizard," he said, "and were variously entertaining ourselves. I hope your head is better, Sarah."

Mrs. Ladue appeared to see some reason for letting her smile take its natural course. It was a very lovely smile, almost tender. Professor Ladue should have been a very proud and happy man that it was for him. There is no reason to think that he was.

"Thank you, Charlie," she replied. "It is all right, to-day. Won't you and Sally go on with your session and let me be a visitor? It must have been a very amusing session. I don't know when I have heard Sally laugh so much."

Sally clapped her hands again. "Oh, do," she said. "You were going to tell me about a tree, father. What about it?"

Professor Ladue talked much nonsense in the next half-hour and was surprisingly gay; and Sally sat, holding her mother's hand, and smiling and chuckling and enjoying it intensely. Of course Mrs. Ladue enjoyed it. The professor seemed so genial and care-free that she reproached herself for her doubts. She even thought, unfortunately, that it was a favorable time for asking for something that she was very much in need of. But she hesitated, even then. [17]

"Charlie," she said timidly, as they were going, "can you—can you let me have this week's money for the house? Katie, you know,—we owe her for two weeks, and there's the—"

Professor Ladue interrupted her. "Money?" he said airily. "Money? What's money? Certainly, my dear. Help yourself. You're welcome to anything you find there."

He tossed her his pocketbook and turned back to his skeleton. Perhaps it was to hide some embarrassment; perhaps it was only to indicate that, so far as he was concerned, the incident was closed. For the pocketbook was empty.

Mrs. Ladue spoke low and tried hard to keep any hint of reproach out of her voice. "Did you—did you lose it?" she asked.

"I suppose I must have lost it, if there was anything to lose," Professor Ladue replied nonchalantly. He did not turn away from his work.

"And—and did you notify the police?"

"No, my dear, I have not notified the police, yet." He smiled dryly as he spoke. "I will take that matter under advisement."

Mrs. Ladue did not push the question further. There were tears in her eyes as she joined Sally.

"Oh, mother," cried Sally joyously, "wasn't it fun? Did you ever know that father could be so funny?"

"Yes, darling child. He was full of fun and nonsense before we were married, and for some years after."

She bent and kissed her daughter, but would say no more.

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[18]

CHAPTER III

ToC

Sally was not completely deprived of the society of other children, although her temperament made this question a rather difficult one. Her father did not bother himself about Sally's goings and comings, which was quite what would have been expected. Indeed, he bothered himself very little about the doings of his family; as a general thing, he did not know what they did, nor did he care, so long as they refrained from interference with his own actions. They had learned to do that.

Mrs. Ladue did bother herself about Sally's doings a good deal, in spite of the difficulty of the question; and one would have thought that she had her fill of difficult questions. She went to the door and looked out. She saw Charlie playing alone near the foot of a tree. He was tied to the tree by a long string, one end of which was about his body, under his arms.

"Charlie," she called, "where's Sally?"

Charlie looked up, impatiently, and shook his head. Mrs. Ladue repeated her question.

"Up there," he answered, pointing into the tree above his head. "And I'm a giraffe in a menagerie and giraffes can't talk, mother."

"Oh, excuse me, little giraffe," she said, smiling.

"Great, *big* giraffe. *Not* little giraffe."

Meanwhile there had been a sound of scrambling in the tree and Sally dropped to the ground.

"Did you want me, mother?" she asked.

"I only thought that you have had the care of Charlie for a long time. Don't you want to go up to Margaret Savage's and play with her?" This was, perhaps, the hundredth time that Mrs. Ladue had asked that question.

"No, mother," Sally replied, also for the hundredth time, "I don't. But if you want me to go, I will." [19]

Mrs. Ladue laughed outright at her daughter's directness. "Why?" she asked. "I am really curious to know why you don't like to play with other little girls."

"They are so stupid, mother," Sally answered quietly. "I have a lot better time alone."

"Well, my dear little daughter," began Mrs. Ladue, laughing again; and there she stopped. "I should like, Sally,—I should like it very much, if I could manage to send you to dancing-school this winter."

"Very well, mother," said Sally again.

"But I don't know what your father would think of the idea."

"No," Sally returned. "You can't ever tell, can you?"

"Wouldn't you like to go and be with the other children and do what they do?"

Sally was quite serious. "I don't think it would be very interesting," she said. "But if you want me to go, I will."

Mrs. Ladue sighed; then she laughed. "Well, Sally, dear," she said, "run along and play in your own way. At any rate, I can trust you."

"Yes, mother, dear, you can."

And Sally ran out, quite happy, to untie the giraffe.

"What you goin' to do, Sally?" he asked.

"Giraffes can't talk," remarked Sally.

"Aren't a giraffe. I'm the keeper. But I'll turn into a giraffe again as soon as you answer me."

"I'm going down in that little clump by the wall, where there are plenty of things for giraffes to eat."

Reminded that he was hungry, Charlie began to cry.

"What's the matter?" asked Sally, stopping short.

"Don't *want* to be a giraffe and eat old leaves and things," Charlie wailed. "Can't I have some gingerbread, Sally?"

"Well, here," said Sally. She took from her pocket some little crackers, which she gave him. "I guess those won't hurt you."

Charlie made no reply, being busy with the crackers; and Sally led him into the clump by the wall and tied him. [20]

"Sally," asked Charlie, somewhat anxiously, "what you goin' to do?"

"I'm going up in the tree, of course."

"Yes, but Sally, what will you be?"

"I haven't decided," replied Sally thoughtfully. "I'll be deciding while I go up." She turned and began to climb the tree, skillfully. She had got no farther than the lower branches when she stopped. "Oh, I'll tell you, Charlie," she cried. "It's just the thing. I'll be father's little lizard."

"What lizard?" Charlie demanded.

"Father's little lizard, that he's got the skeleton of, up in his room."

"Isn't any little lizard," Charlie returned, very positively. "That's a croc."

"It is, too, a lizard, Charlie. Father said so."

"Lizards are little weenty things," Charlie objected. "'Sides, they don't live in trees."

Sally did not feel sure on this point, so she evaded it.

"That little lizard lived millions of years ago." What were a few million years, more or less, to her? "And father said that it could fly like a bat. It used to fly right up into the coal trees and—and eat the coal that grew on them." Sally was giggling at the recollection. "Now, this is a coal tree and I'm that little lizard, and this is millions of years ago."

Charlie had been paralyzed into momentary silence by the information poured into him so rapidly. The silence was but momentary, but Sally took advantage of it and climbed swiftly.

"Sally!"

Sally paused. "What?" she asked.

"You that same lizard that father has the skeleton of?"

Sally acknowledged that she was.

"Then," Charlie retorted, "you haven't got any bones in you. They're up in father's room."

Sally chuckled, but she did not reply to this remark directly. [21]

"Charlie," she called, "you be a saurus something."

"Don't *want* to be a—Sally, what's a—that thing that you said for me to be? What is it?"

"Well," replied Sally slowly, "it's an animal kind of like an alligator—and such things, you know. I guess I'm one. And Charlie, you can't talk. Animals—especially sauruses—*never* talked."

"Parrots can," returned Charlie sullenly.

Sally did not think it worth while to try to answer this objection.

"There wasn't any kind of a thing, millions of years ago, that could talk," she said calmly, "so, of course, they couldn't learn."

"Then you can't talk, either," said Charlie, in triumph. And he subsided and returned to the eating of crackers, of which, as everybody knows, the saurians were extremely fond.

Sally, meanwhile, was enjoying the prospect of treetops; an unbroken prospect of treetops, except for a swamp which, in historic times, became their own little valley.

Sally had ceased, for the moment, her flitting lightly from bough to bough, and there was no sign of her presence; and Charlie had come to the end of his crackers and was browsing around in the grass, picking up a crumb here and there.

"Hello!" said a strange voice; a strange voice, but a very pleasant one. "As I'm a living sinner, if here isn't a little pony!"

Charlie looked up into the eyes of a very serious young man. The eyes were twinkling over the wall and through the gap in the trees. Charlie decided not to be frightened. But he shook his head. He wasn't a pony.

"Well, well, of course not," the voice went on. "I was rather hasty, but it looked like a pony, at the first glance. I guess it's a fierce bull."

Charlie shook his head again, less positively. Now that it had been suggested, he yearned to be a fierce bull. He wished that he had thought of it before he shook his head. [22]

"A camel?" asked the young man. "Can it be a camel?"

Once more Charlie shook his head, and he laughed.

"It sounds like a hyena," remarked the stranger solemnly, "but it can't be, for hyenas eat—" He put his hand to his forehead and seemed to be puzzling it out. "Aha!" he cried at last. "I have it. A giraffe!"

"No!" Charlie shouted. "I'm *aren't* a giraffe. I'm a saw-horse."

And he straddled his legs far apart and his arms far apart, and he looked as much like a saw-horse as he could. That isn't saying much.

At this last announcement of Charlie's, Sally exploded in a series of chuckles so sudden and so violent that she almost fell out of the tree.

An answering titter came from the other side of the wall and a pair of hands appeared, trying for a hold on the top stones; then the head of a very pretty little girl followed, until her chin was on a level with the top of the wall and she could look over it into Charlie's eyes.

The strange young man had looked up into the tree. "Hello!" he exclaimed. "If there isn't another! Is that a saw-horse, too?"

Charlie had considered himself the person addressed. "Yes," he replied, "it is. It's a flying one."

"Mercy on us!" cried the young man. "A flying saw-horse! What a lot of saw-horses you have about here; very interesting ones, too."

"Yes," said Charlie importantly, "we like to be 'em."

"It must be most exciting to be so extraordinary a thing. Do you suppose you could get that flying one to come down where we can see it? Do you know, I never have seen a flying saw-horse in all the nineteen years that I have lived."

"She won't come down unless she wants to," Charlie grumbled.

Sally was recovering, in a measure, from her fit of chuckling. She leaned far forward, below the screen of leaves. [23]

"Oh, yes, I will," she called, in a low, clear voice. "Besides, I want to. Charlie was mistaken about the saw-horse. He meant saurus. And I was a flying lizard and this was a coal tree. From the top of the tree you can't see anything but treetops and swamps. It's millions of years ago, you know. And father's got the skeleton of this very lizard up in his room, and he said that it used to fly right up in the topmost branches of the coal trees and he told me about the sauruses that used to be." She had dropped to the ground. "Oh, it's very interesting."

"It must be," the young man smilingly replied; "and I should suppose that it must be rather interesting for your father to have such a pupil."

"It isn't," Sally returned. "That is—father only told me those things the other day."

The young man laughed. "I guess you must be Professor Ladue's little girl."

"Yes," said Sally, "we are. That is, I am, and this is my brother Charlie."

"The only and original saw-horse. You, I suppose, were a—we'll call it a gynesaurus—"

Sally clapped her hands and gave a little laugh of delight.

"And this," he continued, laying his hand affectionately upon the small head beside him, "is my small sister, Henrietta Sanderson, who would be happy to be any kind of a beast that you tell her about. She is ten years old and she dotes on being strange beasts."

"Oh," cried Sally, "and I'm ten years old, too. Would Henrietta like to come over the wall now? There's a gate farther along."

"Henrietta despises gates. But does your invitation include her brother? I'm Fox Sanderson and I was on my way to see your father."

"Father isn't at home to-day," said Sally; "and, if you could come over, too—"

At that, Fox Sanderson put his hands on the top of the wall and vaulted lightly over. He turned [24] to help Henrietta.

"Now," he said, when she was safely on the right side, "here we all are. What'll we do?"

Henrietta had her brother's hand. "Fox tells lovely stories," she remarked.

"Does he?" asked Sally. "What about?"

"About any kind of a thing that you ask him," answered Henrietta.

"About sauruses?" Sally asked eagerly, turning to him.

"All right," he agreed, smiling; "about sauruses. But I'm afraid it's just a little too cold for you youngsters to sit still and listen to stories. I'll have to keep you moving a bit."

Sally told her mother about it that night. She thought that she never had had such a good time in all her life. Fox Sanderson! Well, he told the most wonderful stories that ever were.

"And, mother," said Sally, all interest, "he had me be a gynesaurus and Henrietta was a—— But what are you laughing at?"

For Mrs. Ladue had burst out laughing. "My dear little girl!" she cried softly. "My dear little girl! A gynesaurus! This Fox Sanderson must be interesting, indeed."

"Then I can play with Henrietta? And father wouldn't mind, do you think? And your head can't be hurting, mother, because you just laughed right out."

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[25]

CHAPTER IV

ToC

Professor Ladue again sat on the floor of his room before the skeleton of his lizard, absent-mindedly fingering a bone. Now and then he looked out of the window at the great tree; at that particular spot in the great tree upon which his daughter had been seated, one morning, not so very long before. He may have had a half-formed wish that he might again discover her there.

But I do not know what half-formed wishes he had, concerning the tree, his daughter, or anything else. At all events, Sally did not appear in the tree. Had not he expressed disapproval of that very performance? He could trust her. Perhaps, with a dim consciousness of that fact, and, perhaps, with a certain disappointment that she was to be trusted so implicitly,—she bore, in that respect, not the most remote resemblance to her father,—the professor sighed. Then, still holding the bone which bothered him, he went to his desk. There was a bone missing—possibly more than one—and he would try to draw the missing bone.

He had scarcely got to work when there was a knock at his door. It was a firm knock, but not loud, expressing a quiet determination. Professor Ladue seemed to know that knock. He seemed, almost, as if he had been waiting for it.

"Come!" he cried, with an alacrity which would not have been expected of him.

He pushed back his drawing-board and Sally came in.

"Ah, Miss Ladue!" he cried, with a certain spurious gayety which concealed—something. I don't know what it concealed, and neither did Sally, although she knew well enough that there was something behind it. She feared that it was anxiety behind it, and she feared the cause of that anxiety. "And what," continued the Professor, "can we do for Miss Ladue to-day? Will she have [26] more about this lizard of mine?"

Sally's eyes lighted up and she smiled. "I should like that very much, father, thank you. But I

can't, this morning, for I'm taking care of Charlie."

"And is Charlie concealed somewhere about you? Possibly you have him in your pocket?"

Sally giggled. "Charlie's tied to a tree."

"Tied to a tree! Does he submit gracefully?"

"He's an alligator; down by the wall, you know."

"Ah!" exclaimed the professor. "I am illumined. Do you think it is quite for the safety of the passers-by to keep an alligator so close to the road?"

Sally giggled again. "Yes," she returned, "if I'm not gone too long. I came on an errand."

Professor Ladue lost somewhat of his gayety. "State your errand, Sally. I hope—"

But the professor neglected to state what he had hoped. Sally stated her errand with her customary directness.

"Mother wants me to go to dancing-school. Can I?"

"I suppose," returned Professor Ladue airily, "that you can go wherever your legs will carry you. I see no indications of your inability in that direction or in any other. Whether you *may* go is another question."

Sally did not smile. "Well, then, may I? Have you any objection? Will you let me go?"

"That is a matter which deserves more consideration. Why do you wish to go?"

"Only because mother wants me to," Sally answered. "I like to please mother."

"Oh," said the professor. "Ah! And what, if I may ask, are your own inclinations in the matter?"

"Well," replied Sally slowly. "I—it doesn't seem to me that it would be very interesting to go there just because a lot of other children go. I could have a lot better time playing by myself. That is, I—of course, there's Henrietta, but Margaret Savage is stupid. But," she added hastily, "I do want to go because mother wants me to." [27]

"Oh," the professor remarked, with a slight smile of amusement; "so Margaret Savage is stupid. But why didn't your mother ask me herself?"

"Perhaps she was afraid to," Sally said quietly. "I don't know what the reason was."

"But you think it was that she was afraid to." The smile on his face changed imperceptibly. The change made it a sneer. It is astonishing to see how much a slight change can accomplish. "Perhaps you know why she was afraid?"

"Yes," Sally acknowledged, "perhaps I do."

"Well, would you be good enough to give me the benefit of your ideas on that subject?"

Sally flushed a little, but she did not falter in the directness of her gaze any more than in her speech. "You generally make her cry when she asks you for anything."

The professor flushed in his turn. "Indeed!" said he. "A most observing child! A very observing child, indeed. And so your mother sent you in her place."

"She didn't," said Sally impassively, although with a rising color; "she doesn't know anything about my coming."

"Oh!" remarked the professor reflectively. "So you came on your own hook—off your own bat."

She nodded.

There was a long silence while Professor Ladue drummed on the table with his fingers. Sally waited.

At last he turned. "Sally," he said, with a slight return of that gayety he had shown on her entrance, "the high courage of Miss Sally Ladue shall receive the reward which it deserves. It is not fitting that it should not. Bearding the lion in his den is nothing to it. I am curious to know, Sally, whether you—" But there the professor stopped. He had been about to ask his daughter, aged ten, whether she was not afraid. He knew that she was not afraid. He knew that, if there was some fear, some hesitation, some doubt as to the exact outcome of the interview, it was not on Sally's part.

Sally was waiting for him to finish. [28]

"Well, Sally," he continued, waving his hand airily, "make your arrangements. Miss Ladue is to go to dancing-school and dance her feet off if she wants to. Never mind the price." He waved his hand again. "Never mind the price. What are a few paltry dollars that they should interfere with pleasure? What is money to dancing?"

Sally was very solemn. "I think the price is ten dollars," she said.

Professor Ladue snapped his fingers in the air. "It doesn't matter. Poof! Ten dollars or ten hundred! Let us dance!"

Sally's eyes filled, but she choked the tears back.

"Thank you, father," she said gently. "Mother will be glad."

He rose and bowed, his hand on his heart. "That is important, of course."

"I think it is the only important thing about it," Sally returned promptly.

The professor bowed again, without reply, and Sally turned to go.

It may have been that the professor's heart smote him. It may have been that he had been aware of Sally's unshed tears. It may have been that he regretted that he should have been the cause—but I may be doing him an injustice. Very likely he was above such things as the tears of his wife and his daughter. It is quite possible that he was as proud of his ability to draw tears as of his ability to draw, correctly, a bone that he never saw. Whatever the reason, he spoke again as Sally was opening the door.

"Will Miss Ladue," he asked, with an elaborate politeness, "honor my poor study with her presence when she has more leisure? When she has not Charlie on her mind? We can, if she pleases, go farther into the matter of lizards or of coal trees."

"Thank you, father," Sally replied.

Professor Ladue was conscious of a regret that she spoke without enthusiasm. But it was too much to expect—so soon. [29]

"I shall be pleased," he said.

An idea, which seemed just to have occurred to Sally, made her face brighten. The professor noted it.

"And can—may I bring Henrietta?"

"Bring Henrietta!" cried the professor. "That is food for thought. Who is this Henrietta? It seems to me that you mentioned her once before."

"Yes," said Sally eagerly. "I did. She is Henrietta Sanderson and Fox Sanderson is her brother. He came to see you the other day. You weren't at home."

"Fox Sanderson!"

"Yes," said Sally, again; "and when I told him that you weren't at home, he came over the wall. He brought Henrietta. He knows a lot about sauruses."

"He knows a lot about sauruses, does he?" the professor repeated thoughtfully. "It seems to me that I have some recollection of Fox Sanderson."

He turned and rummaged in a drawer of his desk. He seemed unable to find what he was looking for, and he extracted from the depths of the drawer many empty cigarette boxes, which he cast into the grate, and a handful of papers, which he dumped on the top of the desk, impatiently. He sorted these over, in the same impatient manner, and finally he found it. It was a letter and was near the bottom of the pile. He opened it and read it.

"H-mph!" he said, reading, "Thanks me for my kind permission, does he? Now, Miss Ladue, can you give me any light upon that? What permission does he refer to? Permission to do what?"

Sally shook her head. But her father was not looking.

"Oh," he said; "h-m. I must have said that I'd see him." He read on. "I must even have said that he could study with me; that I'd help him. Very thoughtless of me, very thoughtless, indeed! It must have been after—well. And he will be here in the course of three weeks." The professor turned the leaf. "This was written a month ago. So he's here, is he, Sally?" [30]

"Yes," Sally answered, "he's here."

The professor stood, for a few moments, looking at Sally, the slight smile on his lips expressive of mingled disgust and amusement.

"Well," he observed, at last, "it appears to be one on me. I must have said it. I have a vague recollection of something of the kind, but the recollection is very vague. Do you like him, Sally?"

"Oh, yes." Sally seemed to feel that that was too sweeping. "That is," she added, "I—I like him."

Professor Ladue laughed lightly. Sally laughed, too, but in an embarrassed fashion.

"That is satisfactory. You couldn't qualify it, Sally, could you? Tried hard, didn't you?"

Sally flushed.

"Well," continued the professor, "if you chance to see this Fox Sanderson, or any relative of his, will you convey to him my deep sense of pleasure at his presence? I shall be obliged to Miss Ladue if she will do that."

"I will," said Sally gravely.

Professor Ladue bowed. So far as he was concerned, the interview was closed. So far as Sally was concerned, it was not.

"Well?" asked Sally. "May I bring Henrietta? You haven't answered that question, father."

"Dear me! What an incomprehensible omission! I must be getting old and forgetful. Old and forgetful, Sally. It is a state that we all attain if we do not die first."

"Yes," said Sally, "I suppose so. May I bring Henrietta, father?"

Professor Ladue laughed shortly. "What a persistent child you are, Sally!"

"I have to be," she replied, trying not to show her disappointment. "I suppose you mean that you don't want me to bring Henrietta. Well, I won't. Perhaps I may come in some day and hear about the lizard."

He did what he had not expected to do. "Oh, bring her, by all means," he cried, with an assumed cheerfulness which would not have deceived you or me. It did not deceive Sally. "Bring her." He waved his hand inclusively. "Bring Henrietta and Margaret Savage and any others you can think of. Bring them all. I shall be pleased—honored." And again he bowed. [31]

Sally was just opening the door. "Margaret Savage would not be interested," she said in a low voice, without turning her head, "and there aren't—"

"Sally," the professor interrupted in cold exasperation, "will you be good enough to project in my direction, what voice you think it best to use, when you speak to me? Will you be so kind? I do not believe that I am growing deaf, but I don't hear you."

Sally turned toward him. "Yes, father, I beg your pardon. I said that Margaret Savage wouldn't be interested," she repeated quietly and clearly, "and that there aren't any others."

He made an inarticulate noise in his throat. Sally was on the point of shutting the door.

"Sally!" he called.

The door opened again just far enough to show proper respect. "Yes, father?"

"Would your friend Henrietta really be interested in—in what she would probably hear?"

The door opened wider. "Oh, yes, she would. I'm sure she would." There was a note of eagerness in Sally's voice.

"Well, then, you may bring her. I shall be glad to have you both when you find leisure. But no Margaret Savages, Sally."

"Oh, no, father. Thank you very much."

After which Sally shut the door and the professor heard her running downstairs. He seemed pleased to hear the noise, which really was not great, and seated himself at his desk again and took up his drawing.

And Sally, when she had got downstairs and out of doors, found her exhilaration oozing away rapidly and a depression of spirit taking its place. The interview, on the whole, had been well calculated—it may have been carefully calculated—to take the starch out of a woman grown. Professor Ladue had had much experience at taking the starch out of others. And Sally was not a woman grown, but a child of ten. Her powers of resistance had been equal to the task imposed, fortunately, but she found that the exercise of those powers had left her weak and shaky, and she was sobbing as she ran. If the professor had seen her then,—if he had known just what her feelings were as she sobbed,—would he have been proud of his ability to draw tears? I wonder. [32]

"Anyway," Sally sobbed, "I know how he makes mother feel. I know. Oh, mother, mother! But I'll never give in. I won't!"

She stopped her convulsive sobbing by the simple process of shutting her teeth over her lower lip, and she dashed away the tears from her eyes as she ran toward the captive alligator, whose continuous roar was growing in her ears. The roar was one of rage.

"Oh, dear! I left him too long."

And Sally ran up to find Charlie fumbling at the knot of the rope by which he was tied. He cried out at her instantly.

"Sally! Don't *want* to be tied any more. *Aren't* an alligator. I'm a little boy. Don't want to be tied like an old cow."

Sally hastily untied him, comforting him, meanwhile, as well as she could. But Charlie, noticing something unusual in her voice, looked up into her face and saw traces of tears. He immediately burst into tears himself.

"Charlie!" cried Sally, fiercely; "Charlie! Laugh, now! Laugh, I tell you." She glanced over the wall. "Here come Fox Sanderson and Henrietta. Laugh!"

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[33]

CHAPTER V

ToC

Sally always remembered that winter, a winter of hard work and growing anxiety for her, enlivened by brief and occasional joys. She got to know Fox and Henrietta very well, which was a continual joy and enlivenment. Sally did not count dancing-school among the enlivenments. And the infrequent lessons with Fox and Henrietta and her father were enlivenments, too, usually; not always. After the times when they were not, Sally wanted to cry, but she didn't, which made it all the harder.

Her mother seemed steadily progressing toward permanent invalidism, while her father was

doing much worse than that. And she took more and more of the burden of both upon her own small shoulders. Poor child! She should have known no real anxiety; none more real than the common anxieties of childhood. But perhaps they are real enough. Sally was not eleven yet.

It is hard to say whether her mother or her father caused Sally the more anxiety. Her mother's progress was so gradual that the change from day to day—or from week to week, for that matter—was not noticeable; while her father's was spasmodic. Sally did not see him during a spasm, so that she did not know how noticeable the change was from day to day or from hour to hour. We do not speak of weeks in such cases. But it was just after a spasm that he was apt to make his appearance again at home in a condition of greater or less dilapidation, with nerves on edge and his temper in such a state that Mrs. Ladue had grown accustomed, in those circumstances, to the use of great care when she was forced to address him. Lately, she had avoided him entirely at such times. Sally, on the contrary, made no effort to avoid him and did not use great care when she addressed him, although she was always respectful. This course was good for the shreds of [34] the professor's soul and perhaps no harder for Sally. But that was not the reason why she did it. She could not have done differently.

There was the time in the fall, but that was over. And there was the time at Christmas which Sally nipped in the bud. Following the Christmas fiasco—a fiasco only from the point of view of the professor—was the Era of Good Behavior. That is begun with capitals because Sally was very happy about her father during that era, although her mother's health worried her more and more. Then there was the time late in the winter, after her father had broken down under the strain of Good Behavior for two months; and, again, twice in March. Professor Ladue must have been breaking rapidly during that spring, for there came that awful time when it seemed, even to Sally, as if the bottom were dropping out of everything and as if she had rather die than not. Dying seems easier to all of us when we are rather young, although the idea does not generally come to us when we are ten years old. But it must be remembered that Sally was getting rather more than her fair share of hard knocks. Later in life dying does not seem so desirable. It is a clear shirking of responsibility. Not that Sally ought to have had responsibility.

The time at Christmas happened on the last day of term time; and, because that day was only half a day for the professor and because Christmas was but two days off, Sally had persuaded her mother to take her into town. "Town" was half an hour's ride in the train; and, once there, Sally intended to persuade her mother further and to beard her father in his laboratory and to take him for an afternoon's Christmas shopping; very modest shopping. Whether Mrs. Ladue suspected the designs of Sally and was sure of their failure, I do not know. Sally had not told her mother of her complete plans. She was by no means certain of their success herself. In fact, she felt very shaky about it, but it was to be tried. Whatever her reason, Mrs. Ladue consented with [35] great and very evident reluctance, and it may have been her dread of the occasion that gave her the headache which followed. So Sally had to choose between two evils. And, the evil to her father seeming the greater if she stayed at home with her mother, she elected to go.

She disposed of Charlie and knocked softly on her mother's door. There was a faint reply and Sally went in. The shades were pulled down and the room was rather dark. Sally went to her mother and bent over her and put her arms half around her. She did it very gently,—oh, so gently,—for fear of making the headache worse.

"Is your head better, mother, dear?" she asked softly.

Mrs. Ladue smiled wanly. "Having my dear little girl here makes it better," she answered.

"Does it, mother? Does it really?" The thought made Sally very happy. But then it suddenly came over her that, if she carried out her plans, she could not stay. She was torn with conflicting emotions, but not with doubts. She had considered enough and she knew what she intended to do. She did not hesitate.

"I'm very sorry, mother, dear, that I can't stay now. I'll come in when I get back, though, and I'll stay then, if it isn't too late and if you want me then. I truly will. I love to."

"Is it Charlie, Sally? You have too much of the care of Charlie. If I weren't so good for nothing!"

"I've left Charlie with Katie, and he's happy. It's father. I think I'd better go in and meet him. Don't you think I'd better?"

The tears came to Mrs. Ladue's eyes. "Bless you, dear child! But how can you, dear, all alone? No, Sally. If you must go, I'll get up and go with you."

"Oh, mother, you mustn't, you mustn't. I can get Fox to go with me. I know he will. I promise not to go unless I can get Fox—or some one—to go."

"Some grown person, Sally?" Mrs. Ladue asked anxiously.

"Yes," answered Sally, almost smiling, "some grown person. That is," she added, "if you call Fox [36] Sanderson a grown person."

"Fox Sanderson is a dear good boy," replied Mrs. Ladue. "I wish you had a brother like him, Sally,—just like him."

"I wish I did," said Sally, "but I haven't. The next best thing is to have him just Fox Sanderson. Will you be satisfied with him, mother, dear,—if I can get him to go?"

Again Mrs. Ladue smiled. "Quite satisfied, dear. I can trust you, Sally, and you don't know what a relief that is."

"No," said Sally, "I s'pose I don't." Nevertheless she may have had some idea.

That thought probably occurred to her mother, for she laughed a little tremulously. "Kiss me, darling, and go along."

So Sally kissed her mother, tenderly and again and again, and turned away. But her mother called her back.

"Sally, there is a ticket in my bureau, somewhere. And, if you can find my purse, you had better take that, too. I think there is nearly two dollars in it. It is a pretty small sum for Christmas shopping, but I shall be glad if you spend it all."

Sally turned to kiss her mother again. "I shan't spend it all," she said.

She rummaged until she found the ticket and the purse; and, with a last good-bye to her mother, she was gone. Mrs. Ladue sighed. "The darling!" she said, under her breath.

Sally met Fox and Henrietta just outside her own gate. "Oh," she cried, "it's lucky, for you're exactly the persons I wanted to see."

Henrietta looked expectant.

"Well, Sally," Fox said, smiling, "what's up now?"

"I'm going to town," Sally answered, less calmly than usual. She laid her hand on his arm as she spoke. "That is, I'm going if I can find somebody to go with me."

Fox laughed. "Is that what you call a hint, Sally? Will we do?"

"It isn't a hint," said Sally, flushing indignantly. "That is,—it wasn't meant for one. I was going [37]
to ask you if you had just as lief go as not. I've got a ticket and there are—let's see"—she took out her ticket and counted—"there are seven trips on it. That's enough. Would you just as lief?"

"I'd rather," replied Fox promptly. "Come on, Henrietta. We're going to town." He looked at his watch. "Train goes in fourteen minutes, and that's the train we take. Step lively, now."

Henrietta giggled and Sally smiled; and they stepped lively and got to the station with two minutes to spare. Fox occupied that two minutes with a rattle of airy nothings which kept Sally busy and her mind off her errand; which may have been Fox's object or it may not. For Sally had not told her errand yet, and how could Fox Sanderson have known it? When they got into the car, Sally was a little disappointed because she had not been able to tell him. She had meant to—distinctly meant to during that two minutes.

She had no chance to tell him in the train. The cars made such a noise that she would have had to shout it in his ear and, besides, he talked steadily.

"I'll tell you what," he said, at the end of a stream of talk of which Sally had not heard half. "Let's get your father, Sally, and take him with us while you do your errands, whatever they are. He'll be through in the laboratory, and we'll just about catch him."

"All right," Sally murmured; and she sank back in her seat contentedly.

She had been sitting bolt upright. She felt that it was all right now, and she would not need to tell Fox or anybody. She felt very grateful to him, somehow. She felt still more grateful to him when he let the conductor take all their fares from her ticket without a protest. Fox was looking out of the window.

"It looks as if we might have some snow," he remarked. "Or it may be rain. I hope it will wait [38]
until we get home."

When they got to the laboratory, they found one of the cleaners just unlocking the door. She didn't know whether the professor had gone or not. He always kept the door locked after hours; but would they go in? They would and did, but could not find Professor Ladue. Fox found, on his desk, a beaker with a few drops of a liquid in it. He took this up and smelt of it. The beaker still held a trace of warmth.

"He has just this minute gone," he said. "If we hurry I think we can catch him. I know the way he has probably gone."

"How do you know he has just gone?" asked Sally, looking at him soberly and with her customary directness. "How can you tell?"

"Sherlock Holmes," he answered. "You didn't know that I was a detective, did you, Sally?"

"No," said Sally. "Are you?"

"Seem to be," Fox returned. "Come on, or we'll lose him."

So they hurried, twisting and winding through streets that Sally did not know. They seemed to be highly respectable streets. Sally wondered where they were going. She wanted to ask Fox, but, evidently, he didn't want to take the time to talk. Henrietta's eyes were brighter than usual and she looked from Fox to Sally with a curiosity which she could not conceal; but Sally, at least, did not notice, and Henrietta said nothing.

"There he is," said Fox, at last.

They had just turned the corner of a street lined with what appeared to Sally to be rather imposing houses. It was a highly respectable street, like the others they had come through, and it was very quiet and dignified. Indeed, there was no one in sight except Professor Ladue, who was sauntering along with the manner of the care-free. His coat was unbuttoned and blowing slightly, although there was that chill in the air that always precedes snow and the wind was rising. Their [39]
steps echoed in the quiet street, and, instinctively, they walked more softly. Strangely enough,

they all seemed to have the same feeling; a feeling that the professor might suddenly vanish if he heard them and looked around.

"Now, Sally," Fox continued, speaking somewhat hurriedly, "you run and catch him before he turns that next corner. The street around that corner is only a court with a dozen houses on it. If you don't catch him before he goes into the house in the middle of that block, give it up. Don't try to go in after him, but come back. Henrietta and I will be waiting for you. If you get him, we won't wait. But don't say anything about our being here unless he asks you. He might not like to know that I had followed him."

"But," protested Sally, bewildered, "aren't you going with us? I thought you were going shopping with us."

"If we had caught him before he had left the college. Now, it might be embarrassing—to both your father and to me."

"But your tickets!" wailed Sally in a distressed whisper. They had been speaking like conspirators.

Fox laughed softly. "I have a few cents about me. You can make that right some other time. Now, run!"

So Sally ran. She ran well and quietly and came up with her father just after he had turned that last corner. The professor must have been startled at the unexpectedness of the touch upon his arm, for he turned savagely, prepared, apparently, to strike.

"Father!" cried Sally; but she did not shrink back. "Father! It's only me!"

The look in Professor Ladue's eyes changed. Some fear may have come into it; a fear that always seemed to be latent where Sally was concerned. His look was not pleasant to see directed toward his own little daughter. The savage expression was still there, and a frown, denoting deep displeasure.

"Sally!" he exclaimed angrily. Then he was silent for a time; a time, it is to be presumed, long [40]
enough for him to collect his scattered faculties and to be able to speak as calmly as a professor should speak to his daughter, aged ten.

"Sally," he said at last, coldly, "may I ask how you came here?"

"Why," Sally replied, speaking hastily, "I was coming in town, this afternoon,—I planned it, long ago, with mother,—and—"

"Is your mother with you?" the professor interrupted.

To a careful observer he might have seemed more startled than ever; but perhaps Sally was not a careful observer. At all events, she gave no sign.

"Mother had a headache and couldn't come," said Sally quietly. She must have been afraid that her father would ask other questions. It was quite natural that he should want to know who did come with her. So she went on rapidly. "But I thought I'd come just the same, so I did, and I went to your laboratory, but you'd just gone and I followed on after and I caught you just as you turned this corner, and now I would like to have you go down to the shops with me. I want to buy something for mother and Charlie. Will you go with me, father?"

The professor did not ask any of the questions that Sally feared. Possibly he had as much fear of the answers as Sally had of the questions. So he asked none of the questions that one would think a father would ask of his little daughter in such circumstances. As Sally neared the end of her rapid speech, his eyes had narrowed.

"So," he said slowly, "I gather from what you have left unsaid that your mother sent you after me."

There was the faintest suspicion of a sneer in his voice, but he tried to speak lightly. As had happened many times before, he did not succeed.

"She didn't," answered Sally, trying to be calm. Her eyes burned. "She didn't want me to come. I came on my own hook."

"It might have been wiser, Sally," the professor observed judicially, "to do what your mother [41]
wished."

Sally made no reply. She would have liked to ask him if he did—if he ever did what her mother wished.

Sally saying nothing and seeming somewhat abashed, the professor found himself calmer. "So that course did not commend itself to your judgment? Didn't think it best to mind your mother. And you went to the laboratory and—who let you in?" he asked suddenly.

"One of the cleaners."

"Oh, one of the cleaners. A very frowzy lady in a faded black skirt and no waist worth mentioning, I presume." The professor seemed relieved. "And you went in, and didn't find me. Very natural. I was not there. And having made up your mind, from internal evidence, I presume, which way I had gone,—but who told you?—oh, never mind. It's quite immaterial. A very successful trail, Sally; or shall I say shadow? You must have the makings of a clever detective in you. I shouldn't have suspected it. Never in the world."

The professor was quite calm by this time; rather pleased with himself, especially as he had

chanced to remark the tears standing in his little daughter's eyes.

"And I never suspected it!" he repeated. Then he laughed; but it was a mirthless laugh. If he had known how empty it would sound, the professor would never have done it.

At his laugh, two of the aforesaid tears splashed on the sidewalk, in spite of Sally's efforts to prevent. The tears may not have been wholly on her own account. She may have felt some pity for her father's pitiful pretense.

She bit her lip. "Will you go with me now, father?" she asked, as soon as she could trust herself to speak at all.

It was always somewhat difficult to account for the professor's actions and to assign the motive which really guided. The professor, himself, was probably unaware, at the time, of having any motive. So why seek one? It need not concern us.

"Go with you, Sally? Why, yes, indeed. Certainly. Why not?" he agreed with an alacrity which [42] was almost unseemly; as if he challenged anybody to say that that was not just what he had meant to do, all along. "I have some presents to buy—for your mother and Charlie. And for somebody else, too," he murmured, in a tone that was, no doubt, meant for Sally to hear. She heard it.

Sally smiled up at him and took his hand, which she seldom did. It is true that she seldom had the chance. Then she glanced quickly around, to see whether Fox and Henrietta were in sight. The street was deserted.

Professor Ladue buttoned his coat; but the wind was rising still, and the chill increasing, and his coat was rather light for the season. What more natural than that he should wish it buttoned? But Sally would have unbuttoned her coat gladly. She would not have felt the chill; and she almost skipped beside him, as they walked rapidly down toward streets which were not deserted, but crowded with people. As they went, he talked more and more light nonsense, and Sally was happy; which was a state much to be desired, but unusual enough to be worthy of remark.

They were very late in getting home. With the crowds and the snow which had begun to fall, there was no knowing what the trains would be up to. Trains have an unpleasant habit of being late whenever there is any very special reason for wishing to get in promptly. But I suppose there is always somebody on any train who has a very special reason for wishing to get in promptly. There was on this train. Sally had a bad case of the fidgets, thinking of her mother, who must be waiting and waiting and wondering why her little daughter didn't come. It would be bad for her head. The professor, too,—but I don't know about the professor; he may have been in no hurry.

When at last they did get home, after a long wade through snow up to her shoetops, Sally ran up to her mother's room, shedding her wet and snowy things as she ran. She knocked softly and, at the first sound of her mother's voice, she went in and shut the door gently behind her. The [43] room was nearly pitch dark, but she could see the bed, dimly, and she ran to it and ran into her mother's arms.

"Bless you, Sally, darling!" Mrs. Ladue cried softly. "You don't know how glad I am to have you back."

"I got him, mother, dear," Sally whispered. "I got him. But it was only by the skin of my teeth."

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[44]

CHAPTER VI

ToC

If Sally did get the professor only by the skin of her teeth, she had no need to keep that precarious hold upon him. Providence or the elements, or whatever you wish to call it, took that matter in hand and attended to it with the thoroughness usual in cases in which it undertakes to attend to anything. For Sally awoke the next morning to find her world bound fast in ice. Every twig bore its load except such as had refused to bear it. The birches, in scattered clumps, bowed down to the ground, and the hard crust of the snow was littered with broken branches.

Sally stood at her window, looking out. It was beautiful, there was no denying it; but, as she looked at the birches, every one of them bent to the ground, with the freshly fallen snow covering it, and its top held fast under the crust, her lip curled a little. She didn't think much of a tree which couldn't hold itself up. It seemed to her too much like saving yourself at the price of your self-respect. Better be a self-respecting, upstanding tree, even if you did lose an arm or two; better to go down altogether, if need be, but fighting. Yes, in spite of their beauty, she despised the birches. And, with some such thoughts as these, she turned from the window and dressed quickly.

Nothing came that morning. A horse could hardly get through that crust with safety to his legs. In consequence, the professor had no cream. Sally fully expected an outburst of rage, which, with

the professor, took the form of acidly sarcastic remarks. His remarks, while preserving outward forms of politeness, usually resulted in reducing Mrs. Ladue to tears as soon as she had gained the seclusion of her own room. It was not that Professor Ladue held his wife accountable for such things as heavy snowstorms or sleet-storms—upon full consideration. Such things are usually [45] denominated "acts of God," and, in contracts, the contractors are expressly relieved from responsibility for failure of performance in consequence. The professor himself, upon full consideration, would have held such exemption quite proper. But his wife was not a contractor and was entitled to no such exemptions. A professor was entitled to cream for his breakfast.

Sally, coming down with Charlie, found her father eating his breakfast in solitude and in apparent content, and without cream; certainly without cream. Mrs. Ladue had not appeared. Perhaps she was tired of being reduced to tears on such occasions and had more confidence in Sally than she had in herself. Certainly the professor was less apt to indulge his taste for acid sarcasm with Sally. There is little satisfaction to be got out of it when the only effect upon the hearer is a barely perceptible rise in color and a tightening of the lips. At all events, he did not do what was expected of him.

"Good-morning, Sally," he said pleasantly.

Sally was much surprised. She was so much surprised that the blood surged into her cheeks in a flood. That was a greater effect than could have been produced by acid sarcasm in any amount. The professor might have noted that. Perhaps he did.

"Good-morning, father," Sally replied, smiling. She hesitated for a fraction of a second, then, yielding to her impulse, she put her arm around his neck and kissed him on the cheek. "Good-morning." And she went quickly to her seat, her cheeks blazing.

The professor was so astonished at this act of Sally's,—an act as difficult to foresee and to provide against as an act of God,—he was so thoroughly astonished, I say, that he spilled some of the coffee which had no cream in it. But let us hope he would not have wanted to provide against that act of God.

"Well, Sally," he said, laughing lightly, "it's surprising to think what the weather can do when it [46] tries. Only yesterday afternoon, bare ground and scarcely a hint of what was coming. Now, here we are, tied up."

"Tied up?" Sally asked.

"Tied up," he repeated. "There's little doubt about it. No milkman." He waved his hand. "And there'll be no grocer and no anybody else. You'll see. No butcher—meat man—we don't have butchers, now. Just think of that, Sally. No meat until spring. How will you like that? We should have been keeping chickens and pigs and we ought to have cows and a calf or two. Then I would take my axe in my hand and my knife and I would sally out to the barn. You would hear sounds of murder and we should have fresh meat. Fresh meat!" The professor looked ferocious.

"And no trains," he added meditatively. "I haven't heard a train this morning and I don't expect to."

"Well," said Sally, "you don't have to take them. What do you care?"

"Ah, true," he replied in the same meditative tone. "Very just, Sally. I don't have to take them, and what do I care? What do I? Answer, nothing."

The professor waved his hand again and drank his coffee. An irrepressible chuckle came from Sally. She said nothing, but waited for her father to resume. He always did resume when he was in this mood, which was not often.

He put down his empty cup. "And what do we do? We finish our breakfast, which may be a matter of some time, judging from quantity alone." He pointed to Sally's plate and to Charlie's. Charlie had been eating industriously ever since he sat down. "We finish our breakfast and we loaf awhile, and then we bundle up and try to shovel out; you, Sally, and I and Charlie."

Here he pointed a finger at Charlie, who emitted a roar of delight.

"An' can I shovel with my little snow-shovel? Can I?"

The professor poured for himself another cup of coffee. "You are to have the felicity of [47] shoveling with your little snow-shovel, Charlie. See that you do good work with it. And Sally shall take the *middle-sized* snow-shovel, and I will take the GREAT BIG snow-shovel."

Another roar from Charlie, who began to eat faster.

"This coffee, Sally," continued the professor, "would be better if the storm had been less severe. But it does very well. It is most excellent coffee. It is probably better for my health than it would be with cream. For, do you know, Sally, I am well convinced that cream with coffee forms quite another substance, which is deleterious to health and destructive of the ability to sleep, although affecting in no way the desire to do so. And that, Sally, is most unpleasant."

Professor Ladue was speaking in his lecture-room voice and very seriously. Sally was smiling. As he finished, the smile grew into a chuckle and she choked. Charlie, having taken an extraordinarily large mouthful, and being diverted from the ensuing process by the choking of Sally, also choked.

"Sally," said the professor calmly, "your little brother needs your attention. He needs it rather badly, it seems to me." For Charlie had his mouth open and was getting red in the face.

Sally got up hastily and pounded Charlie on the back. That measure being ineffective, she

shook him violently. He gasped twice.

"Want to race," he exploded.

The professor looked surprised. "An eating race, Charlie?" he asked. "Why, my dear boy, I shouldn't stand a ghost of a chance with you. We might make it a handicap, but, even then—"

"Shoveling race," Charlie explained. "You have the great big snow-shovel an' Sally have the middle-sized shovel an' I have the little snow-shovel, an' we race to see who can get the most done."

"Brilliant idea, Charlie, positively glittering," his father returned. "But it would hardly be fair to [48] start us all from scratch, I am afraid. Better make it a handicap, eh?"

"Yes," Charlie replied, not knowing in the least what a handicap was.

Neither did Sally. "What is a handicap, father?" she asked.

Her father explained.

"Oh," she said, approving, "then it makes the race fair, doesn't it? Every one has as much chance of winning as everybody else. I think that is nice."

"It is an attempt in that direction, Sally. But there are many things about it, about—er—racing —of any kind, that it is just as well you shouldn't know. So I will not try to explain. If every one concerned acts fairly, Sally, and with good judgment, it is nice, as you say."

Sally was not going to be put off. "Why doesn't everybody act fairly?"

The professor waved his hand and shrugged his shoulders; but before he could make any other reply, the door opened softly. He welcomed the opening of the door. It put a stop to Sally's questioning, which was apt to become embarrassing, in certain cases.

A glance at Sally's face would have told Professor Ladue who had opened the door, but it is to be supposed that he knew. Sally jumped up and ran; and the professor rose—rose with some alacrity—and turned.

"Good morning, Sarah," he said pleasantly. "We are all glad to see you. I hope you are feeling better."

Mrs. Ladue smiled happily. One would have thought that Professor Ladue would have tried that manner oftener. It produced much effect with little effort; but I spoke hastily. I do not know how much effort it was.

"Thank you, Charlie—Charlie, dear," she answered, hesitating a little; "I do feel very much better. I heard all the happy noise down here and I had to come down."

"Don't apologize, my dear," he protested; "don't apologize, or we shall have to believe that you didn't mean to come because you didn't want to."

Mrs. Ladue took her seat, but made no reply. There was a faint color in her cheeks and she [49] looked almost shyly at her husband. Sally was gazing at her mother, but not in wonder. There was no fathoming Sally. She reached out and pressed her mother's hand.

"You look so very pretty, mother," she whispered.

The color in Mrs. Ladue's cheeks became deeper. "Hush, dear," she whispered in return. "It must be because I am happy."

"I wish we could always be happy," Sally whispered again; "all of us."

There was no way of knowing whether her father had heard these whispers. He might have heard, but he gave no sign, looking into his empty cup and playing with the spoon.

"Sally," he said suddenly, "what do you suppose my little lizard would have done if he had waked up some morning and found his swamp covered with this?" The professor waved his hand toward the window.

Sally was much interested. "Would he have flown away?"

"Wrong," cried the professor, getting up and walking to the window. "Guess again."

Sally gave the question some thought. "I don't know," she said at last.

"Wrong again. Next! Charlie!"

Charlie had his mouth full. He looked up in surprise. "What?" he spluttered.

"What would my little lizard have done this morning?"

Charlie was no Fletcherite. He swallowed his mouthful very nearly whole. Then he gasped a little which is not to be wondered at.

"Little lizard would take his little snow-shovel and shovel a great big place—" he began. Then an idea seemed to strike him and he stopped with his mouth open. "No," he cried; "little lizard would be dead."

"Very possibly, Charlie. That's the nearest answer, so far." The professor turned and regarded his son curiously. "I should really like to know how you arrived at that conclusion." [50]

"Lizard died a long time ago," Charlie answered. "Couldn't wake up this morning because you've got the bones upstairs."

The professor laughed. "A very just observation," he remarked. "You have a logical mind,

Charles."

Charles slid down from his chair. "I'm through my breakfast," he announced. "Want to shovel."

"You forget our programme, Charlie," said his father. "We are to loaf now. It is always best to eat slowly, masticate your food well, refrain from drinking when you are thirsty, and stand for half an hour after eating. There are other things which I forget. But we will loaf now."

The professor lit a cigarette, after due preliminaries. Mrs. Ladue had finished, apparently. She had come down rather to enjoy the rare occasion than to eat. Perhaps it was a knowledge of that fact which had kept the professor going and a desire—an inexplicable desire—on his part to keep her in her state of happiness. It was seldom possible to account for his actions. At all events, he was accomplishing that end. It was a great pity that his desires did not always run in that direction. It would have been so easy; so very easy for him, and it would have made his wife so very happy. But the time when that would have done any great good may have passed already.

The professor followed out his programme religiously, talking when he felt like it, always a pleasant and cheerful flow of irresponsible talk, and loafing conscientiously for half an hour. Mrs. Ladue sat still, saying little, afraid to move lest the movement break the spell. Charlie had slipped out, unnoticed.

Presently there was a great noise on the cellar stairs, sounding like distant thunder. The noise stopped for a moment.

"What's going on?" asked the professor casually. "Socialists in the cellar? Not that I care," he added, with a wave of his cigarette. "Mere curiosity. I should be glad to meet any socialists; but not in the cellar." [51]

Mrs. Ladue laughed gently. It was a long time since the professor had heard her laugh. That thought occurred to him.

"You will, I think. They are opening the cellar door now. There they come."

For the noise had resumed, and was approaching along the hall. The door of the dining-room swung open suddenly and Charlie entered, earnest and intent and covered with dust and cobwebs. Behind him dragged three snow-shovels, also covered with dust and cobwebs.

Sally sprang for him. "Oh, Charlie—"

He brushed her aside. "I brung your shovel, father," he said, "an' Sally's. I couldn't lift 'em all at once, an' so I dragged 'em."

The professor bowed. "So I gathered," he replied. "I thank you, Charles."

"But, Charlie," Sally cried, "you're all over dust and so are the shovels. They ought to have been dusted."

Charlie had dropped the shovels on the floor, thinking his mission ended. Now he leaned over and thoughtfully wiped the shovels, one after another, with his hand.

"They are," he said, gazing at his grimy hand, "aren't they? But it was dark an' I couldn't see. Besides, the snow'll clean 'em. I want to shovel an' race, father," he added, somewhat impatiently. "Isn't it time yet?"

"Charlie," said his father, throwing away his cigarette, "in the words of Friar Bacon's brass head, time is. Come on."

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[52]

CHAPTER VII

ToC

The next month passed very pleasantly for the Ladues. Sleet-storms cannot last forever and, the morning after Christmas, Sally heard the trains running with some regularity. She was anxious accordingly and she watched her father closely. But he did not seem to care whether trains ever ran or not. His pleasant mood lasted, too: the mood of light banter, in which he appeared to care something for his wife and children; something, if not enough. They were grateful for that little, although they knew very well that it was but a mood that might change utterly in five minutes. It did not change for a surprisingly long time, and Sally almost held her breath at first, while she waited for it to pass. It would have been a relief—yes, distinctly it would have been a relief, at first. But that feeling passed, too.

In short, the professor was good, and Sally was happy. After the tension of that first expectation was over she was very nearly as happy as she should have been always. Children have a right to happiness—to freedom from real worries—as far as we can compass that end; and Sally had been deprived of her birthright. I wonder whether the professor had ever realized that; whether he had ever given it a thought.

Mrs. Ladue was happy, too, because Sally was happy and because her husband was kind to her, temporarily. He was not as kind as he might have been, but then, he might have been so very much worse. He might have beaten her. He had been accustomed to beat her, figuratively, for some years. At first, too, her head seemed really better. At the end of a week of the new order of things, she spoke of it to Sally. She knew better than to mention the subject of headaches to the professor.

Sally was overjoyed. She buried her head in a pillow that happened to be handy, and wept. A [53]
strange thing to do! "Oh, mother, dear!" she cried. "Oh, mother, dear, if it only will stay so!"

Mrs. Ladue gathered the child into her arms. "There darling!" she said softly. "There, my dear little daughter! We'll hope it will."

But when, at the end of a month, Sally looked back and compared, she knew that it hadn't. It had been a happy month, though. Fox and Henrietta had been in every day, and, while Sally played—or was supposed to be playing—with Henrietta, Fox sometimes sat with her mother. Mrs. Ladue became very fond of Fox. He didn't talk much, nor did she. Indeed, Sally thought, in that fit of retrospection, that Fox had seemed to be watching her mother; at least, occasionally. And Fox, saying little, saw much. Sally knew. There was no telling how she knew it, but she did; so she went to him, rather troubled, and asked what he thought about her mother's health.

He considered, looking seriously at her for a long time.

"Well, Sally," he answered at last, "it isn't any better, on the whole. I should think she ought to consult some doctor about it—some good doctor."

"Oh," said Sally in a low voice, "you—I hope you don't think—"

"I don't think, Sally," Fox interrupted. "I know there is some cause beyond my limited knowledge, and some one who really knows should see your mother—if any one really knows. Doctors don't know much, after all."

Sally considered, in her turn, for a long time, her eyes searching Fox's face.

"Then," she concluded, sighing, "I shall have to speak to father about it. Well,—I will."

"That's the best thing to do," he replied. "And, Sally, remember, if he doesn't receive the suggestion favorably, you are to let me know."

"He won't," said Sally, with a faint little smile; "that is, he never did. I let you know now. He [54]
may," she added doubtfully. "He has been nice for a long time." Sally flushed at this implied confession, but why should she not make it? Fox knew.

"You try it, Sally, and let me know how you come out."

So Sally tried it. It may have been a mistake, but how should Sally have foreseen? It was as likely that, at the worst, she but hastened her father's action; touched off the charge prematurely. The explosion would have come.

There was no beating about the bush. "Father," Sally began soberly, "don't you think that mother ought to see some good doctor? I do."

If her heart beat a little faster, as she spoke, there was no tremor in her voice.

Professor Ladue looked up. He had been prepared to throw back some light answer and to see Sally smile in response; perhaps to hear her chuckle. But, deuce take it, there was no knowing what that confounded child would say next. It was presuming upon his good nature. It occurred to the professor that he had been good-natured for an unreasonably long time. He was surprised and he was annoyed.

Meanwhile that confounded child was looking at him out of sombre gray eyes, waiting for his reply. As the professor's look met those eyes, they seemed to see right through him, and the sharp answer which trembled on the tip of his tongue was left unsaid. It was astonishing how often that happened. The professor was aware of it!—uncomfortably aware—and the knowledge annoyed him the more. The professor was to be excused. It is most unpleasant to have one's naked soul exposed to the view of one's little daughter. One's soul needs to be a pretty good sort of a soul to stand that, without making its owner squirm. And the professor's soul was—well, it was his; the only one he had. But he did squirm, actually and in the flesh.

He tried to speak lightly, but his look shifted. He could not meet Sally's eyes without speaking the truth. "What is the matter with your mother, Sally?" he asked. "Stomach-ache or toothache?" [55]

Sally did not smile. "Her headaches. They are getting worse."

"Pouf!" said the professor, with a wave of his hand. "Everybody has headaches. What's a headache?"

"I don't know," Sally replied, "and she doesn't and I think she ought to."

"The definition," remarked the professor coldly, "is to be found in the dictionary, I have no doubt. You might look it up and tell her."

"And so I think," Sally continued, as if he had not spoken, "that mother ought to see a doctor; a doctor that knows about headaches."

"Oh," said the professor, more coldly than before. "So you would like to have a specialist called in; a specialist in headaches."

"I don't know whether that's what you call them," Sally returned bravely. "If it is, then I would."

Her father had turned toward her, but he did not look at her. "Most interesting!" He got a cigarette from the drawer and proceeded to beat out some of the tobacco. "Doctor—er—what's-his-name, from the village, wouldn't do, then?"

"No, he wouldn't." There was just a suspicion of a quiver in Sally's voice. "He doesn't know enough."

"Indeed! You have not communicated your opinion of his knowledge, or his lack of it, to him, I take it?"

Sally shook her head. She could not have spoken, even if the question had called for a reply.

"Do you know what a specialist charges, Sally?"

She shook her head again.

"For taking a case like your mother's, Sally," he said slowly, "which would be nuts to him, I have no doubt, his charge would be more, in a week, than I could pay in ten years."

"It is very important," Sally urged. "It is very important for mother."

The professor rose. "Much as I regret the necessity, I feel obliged to decline." He made her a [56]
bow. "No specialists for this family. If your mother feels the need of a physician, let her call Doctor what's-his-name from the village."

Sally turned to go without a word.

"And, Sally," her father added, "be kind enough to tell your mother that important matters at the college require my attention. She is not to be alarmed if I fail to come in my usual train. I may be kept late."

The phrase sounded familiar. It was the old formula which Sally had hoped would not be used again. She went out quietly, feeling responsible. It was absurd, of course, but she could not help it. She meant to find Fox and tell him; but not quite yet. She couldn't bear it yet.

The matters at the college must have been very important, for they—or something—kept Professor Ladue late, as he had seemed to fear; the important matters—or something—must have kept him too late for the last train that night. To be sure, Sally did not know anything about it, at the time. She had not indulged a hope of anything else, and had gone to bed and to sleep as usual. For Sally was a healthy little animal, and she was asleep in a very few minutes after her head had touched the pillow. Her eyes may have been wet. Mrs. Ladue went to bed, too. Her eyes were not wet, but there was an ache in her head and another just above her heart. She may have gone to sleep at once or she may not. It is conceivable that she lay there, with her two aches, until after the last train had got in.

It was the middle of the next forenoon before Sally got a chance to tell Fox about it; and Fox listened, not too sympathetically. That seemed to him to be the best way to treat it. He would have made light of it, even, for Sally was oppressed by the sense of her own responsibility; but Sally would have none of it.

"Don't, Fox, please," she said.

"Well," he replied, "I won't, then. But don't you worry, Sally. We'll have your mother fixed up, all right, yet."

"How?" she asked. [57]

"I haven't decided. But I'm going to bend the whole power of a great mind to the question. When I've found the best way to do it, I'm going to do it. You'll see."

Sally sighed with relief. She had not got beyond the stage of thinking that Fox could do anything that he tried to do. Perhaps he could.

They were down by the gate, Fox leaning upon it and Sally standing on a bar and swinging it gently. Occasionally she looked down the road.

"Here comes father," she said suddenly, in a low voice.

"Stay where you are, Sally." Fox checked her impulse to run.

The professor was walking fast and he came in at the gate almost immediately. Sally had dismounted. He looked annoyed and would have passed without a word.

"Good-morning," said Fox cheerfully.

The professor turned, giving Fox one of his smiles which was not a smile at all. If the professor had chanced to turn one of those smiles upon a too confiding dog, the dog would have put his tail between his legs and run. Vivisection came after.

"Good-morning," said the professor acidly. "I shall be obliged to delay our session for an hour."

"Very well, sir, whenever it is convenient for you." And Fox smiled cheerfully again.

The professor turned once more. His eyes were bloodshot, he was unshaven, and—well, tousled. In short, the professor looked as if he had been sitting up all night. He had.

"You see," said Sally solemnly. Her father was out of hearing, as may be supposed.

[58]

CHAPTER VIII

ToC

Professor Ladue had had a relapse. There was no doubt about it. It was rather serious, too, as relapses are apt to be; but what could be expected? He had been good for a long time, a very long time for him. It was even an unreasonably long time for him, as had occurred to him, you will remember, in the course of his conversation with Sally, and nobody had any right to expect more. What Mrs. Ladue and her daughter Sally thought they expected was really what they hoped. They did not expect it, although they thought that they did; and the proof is that, when the first relapse happened, they were not surprised. They were deeply discouraged. The future looked pretty black to Sally as she swung there on the gate. It looked blacker yet when the professor did it twice again in one month. That was in March. But the worst was to come. It was lucky that Sally did not know it. It is always lucky that we do not know, at one blow, all that is to happen to us. Our courage might not survive that blow. Instead, it has a chance to grow with what it feeds upon.

So Sally went her daily round as cheerfully as she could. That was not any too cheerfully, and her unexpected chuckles became as rare as roses in December. Even her smiles seemed to be reserved for her mother and to be tender rather than merry. She watched the progress of her mother's disease, whatever it was, with solicitude and anxiety, although she tried desperately hard not to show her mother how anxious she was.

Mrs. Ladue's progress was very slow; imperceptible, from day to day, and she had her ups and downs. It was only when she could look back for a month or more that Sally was able to say to herself, with any certainty, that her mother was worse—that the downs had it. But always, when [59] Sally could look back and compare, she had to confess to herself that that was so. The headaches were no more frequent nor did they seem to be harder to bear; but her mother seemed—it was a struggle for Sally to have to acknowledge it, even to herself—her mother seemed to be growing stupid. Her intelligence seemed to be diminishing. What was Fox thinking of, to let that happen?

When this question presented itself, Sally was again swinging moodily upon the gate, regarding the muddy road that stretched out before her. Charlie was playing somewhere behind her, equipped with rubber boots and a heavy coat. It is to be feared that Sally had forgotten Charlie. It was not her habit to forget Charlie. And it is to be feared that she was forgetting that the last day of March had come and that it was warm and springlike, and that there were a number of birds about. It was not her habit to forget any of those things either, especially the birds. There was a flash of blue under a tree near by and, a few seconds later, a clear song rang out. Charlie stopped his play and looked, but Sally did not see the blue wings nor the ruddy breast nor did she seem to hear the song.

That question had brought her up short. She stopped her rhythmic swinging to and fro.

"I'll ask him," she said. Her faith in Fox was absolute.

She opened the gate quickly, and started to run.

There was a roar from Charlie. "Sally! Where you goin'? Wait for me! I want to go, too. I'm awful hot. Can't I take off my coat? An' these boots are hot. I want to take 'em off."

Sally sighed and waited. "I'm afraid I forgot you, Charlie. Take off your coat, if you're too hot, and leave it by the gate."

Charlie had the overcoat off and he dropped it by the side of the footpath.

"Not there, Charlie," Sally said impatiently. "Inside the gate. We don't leave overcoats by the side of the road."

"You didn't say inside," Charlie returned sulkily. "I left it where you said." He opened the gate [60] and cast the offending garment inside. "And these boots—can I take 'em off?"

"No," said Sally sharply, "of course not. If your feet are hot they'll have to stay hot. You can't go in your stocking feet in March."

"I don't see why not," grumbled Charlie. "I could take my stockings off, too."

Sally made no reply to this protest. She took his hand in hers. "Now, run, Charlie. I'm in a hurry."

So Charlie ran as well as a small boy can run in rubber boots and along a path that is just muddy enough to be exceedingly slippery. When they came to the corner that they had to turn to go to Fox's, he was almost crying and Sally was dragging him. They turned the corner quickly and almost ran into Henrietta.

"Oh!" cried Henrietta, startled. "Why, Sally!"

Charlie laughed. "Why didn't you go faster, Sally? Then we might have run into her—plump."

He laughed again, but got no attention from Sally.

"Where's Fox?" she asked.

"He went into town this morning," Henrietta answered. "He told me to tell you to cheer up. I don't know what it's about, but probably you do. I was just on my way to tell you. Come on. Let's go back to your house."

Sally gave a sigh of relief. Fox had not forgotten, after all. There was nothing to do but to wait; but Sally was rather tired of waiting.

"Well, Henrietta," she said, "then we will. But I want to see Fox as soon as ever I can."

Fox at that moment was sitting in the private office of a physician—a specialist in headaches—and was just finishing his story. He had mentioned no names and it was hardly conceivable that he was talking about himself. Fox did not look like a person who was troubled with any kind of aches.

That seemed to be the opinion of the doctor, at any rate. It would have been your opinion or [61] mine.

"I take it that you are not the patient," he said, smiling.

That doctor was not the type of the grasping specialist; he did not seem to be the kind of man who would charge as much as a patient would be likely to be able to pay—all that the traffic would bear. But who is, when you come to know them? Probably the doctors of that type, in any large city, could be counted on the fingers of one hand. I know of one conspicuous example, and one only, and he is dead now. But he squeezed out large fees while he lived, and became very rich; and he was so busy with his squeezing that he had no time to enjoy his gains—I had almost said his ill-gotten gains. But that is by the way.

This doctor of Fox's—we will call him Doctor Galen, for the sake of a name—this Doctor Galen was a kindly man, who had sat leaning one elbow on the table and looking out at Fox under a shading hand and half smiling. That half smile invited confidence, and, backed by the pleasant eyes, it usually got it. Whether that was the sole reason for its being is beside the question; but probably it was not.

In response to the doctor's remark, Fox smiled, too, and shook his head.

"Am I to see this patient of yours?" asked Doctor Galen casually.

Fox was distinctly embarrassed. "Is it absolutely necessary, Doctor?" he asked, in return. "It is difficult to arrange that—without a complete change of base," he added. "It might be done, I suppose, but I don't see how, at this minute."

"The only reason that it might be necessary," said the doctor, speaking slowly, "is that you may have neglected some symptom that is of importance, while seeming to you to be of no consequence whatever. It is always desirable to see a patient. I have to take into account, for example, the whole life history, which may be of importance—and it may not."

Fox made no answer to this, but he looked troubled and he drummed with his fingers upon his [62] knee.

"Can't we assume the patient to be—merely for the sake of fixing our ideas—" Doctor Galen continued, looking away and searching for his example, "well—er—Professor Ladue? Or, no, he won't do, for I saw him a few days ago, in quite his usual health. Quite as usual."

"You know Professor Ladue, then, Doctor?"

"Oh, yes, I know him," the doctor replied dryly. "Well, as I said, he won't do. Let us suppose that this case were that of—er—Mrs. Ladue." The doctor looked at Fox and smiled his pleasant smile. "She will answer our purpose as well as another."

"Do you know Mrs. Ladue, too?"

"No," said Doctor Galen. "No, I have not that pleasure. But I know her husband. That," he added, "may be of more importance, in the case we have assumed—with the symptoms as you have related them."

Fox smiled very slightly. "Well, suppose that it were Mrs. Ladue, then,—as an instance. Assuming that I have given all the symptoms, what should you say was the matter with her?"

Doctor Galen did not answer for some minutes. "Well," he said at last, "assuming that you have given all the symptoms correctly—but you can't have given them all. I have no means of knowing whether there is any tendency to hardening of the walls of the arteries. How old is she?" he asked suddenly.

Fox was startled. "I'm sure I don't know," he answered. "Say that she is thirty-odd—not over thirty-five."

"That is not likely, then," the doctor resumed, "although it is possible. I should have to see her to be sure of my ground. But, assuming that there are no complications,—*no* complications,—there is probably a very slight lesion in the brain. Or, it may be that the walls of the arteries in this neighborhood"—the doctor tapped his head—"are very thin and there is a gradual seepage of blood through them. To tell the truth, Mr. Sanderson, we can't know very exactly what is [63] happening until skulls are made of plate glass. But the remedy is the same, in this case, whatever is happening, exactly."

"What is the treatment?"

"Oh," said Doctor Galen, apparently in surprise, "there is no treatment. In the hypothetical case which we have assumed, I should prescribe rest—absolute rest, physical and mental. We must

give those arteries a chance, you know; a chance to build up and grow strong again. There is the clot to be absorbed, too. It is likely to be very slight. It may be completely absorbed in a short time. Given time enough, I should expect a complete recovery."

"How much time?" Fox asked.

"That depends upon how far she has progressed and upon how complete a mental rest she can get. It might be any time, from a few weeks to a few years."

Fox hesitated a little. "Then, I suppose, any—er—anxiety might interfere?"

"Any mental disturbance," Doctor Galen replied decidedly, "would most certainly retard her recovery. It might even prevent it altogether. Why, she ought not to think. I hope she has not got so far that she is unable to think?"

"No, not yet," Fox sighed and rose. "It's not so simple as you might suppose. But I'm grateful to you, Doctor. I'll see what can be done and I may call upon you again." He put his hand to his pocket. "Shall I pay you now?"

Doctor Galen smiled as he checked Fox's motion. "Hadn't you better wait until you get my bill? Yes, wait if you please."

That smile of Doctor Galen's seemed to envelop Fox in an atmosphere of kindliness. "You'll send one, Doctor?" he asked doubtfully.

"How do you suppose, sir," said the doctor, smiling more than ever,—he seemed really amused, that doctor,—"how do you suppose, sir, that I should pay my grocer, otherwise? You have put yourself into the clutches of a specialist, Mr. Sanderson. We are terrible fellows. You are lucky to escape with your life." [64]

"Well," Fox replied, laughing, "I thank you again, Doctor, at any rate; and for letting me escape with my life."

The doctor let him out by a door that did not open into the outer office.

"Let me know how you come on with your schemes," the doctor said. "I am really interested. And, if you find it possible to give me a half-hour with your patient, I hope you will do so. It will be much better. Good-bye, Mr. Sanderson."

"I will," said Fox. "Good-bye, Doctor."

The doctor shut the door and touched a button on his desk. He was still smiling. A nurse appeared noiselessly.

"A nice boy, that, Miss Mather, and a deserving case," he commented. "I should be glad to be able to believe that all my patients were as deserving. But I shouldn't make much," he added.

Miss Mather smiled, but made no other reply. The doctor was looking over a little pile of cards. He took up the card from the top of the pile.

"Mrs. Van Hoofe, Miss Mather."

The nurse disappeared as noiselessly as she had come; and the doctor proceeded to smooth out his smile and to assume a properly sympathetic expression. Mrs. Van Hoofe would, perhaps, help him with his grocer's bills.

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[65]

CHAPTER IX

ToC

Fox was not immediately able to compass the end that was so much to be desired, but he did it, at last, not without misgivings. If Professor Ladue had known, what would he have thought—and said—about such interference with his domestic affairs? There were misgivings on Mrs. Ladue's part, too, and Fox had to overcome those. She was in no condition to combat Fox's wish, poor lady!—especially as it was her own wish, so far as she had any wish in the matter; and she knew that Sally had her heart set upon it. This is the way it happened.

Sally had been regular in her attendance at the dancing-class, all winter, and she had applied herself conscientiously to learn what she went to learn, with more or less success. There is no doubt that she learned the steps, but there is no less doubt that she failed to get the Spirit of Dancing. Indeed,—I speak with hesitation,—the Spirit of Dancing is born, not made. And how should Sally get it if she did not have it already? How should she get it if she did have it already, for that matter? It is not a thing that can be bought; it resembles happiness in that respect. And, although one may buy a very fair kind of an imitation of either, the real thing comes from within. Henrietta had had the Spirit of Dancing born in her; in regard to Sally there is some doubt.

So, if Sally's success was not glittering, it was better than Henrietta had feared it would be,

and she breathed a sigh of relief at the close of the last day. Sally breathed a sigh of relief, too. She was unaffectedly glad that it was over. Mrs. Ladue, then experiencing one of her ups, planned a party for Sally and invited the whole dancing-class to it. It was to be a birthday party and was to be on the nineteenth of April, when Sally would have completed her eleventh year. [66] Sally had always been glad that her birthday happened to come on the nineteenth of April, for it was a great help in remembering Leading Dates in American History—or one of them, at least.

They neglected to apprise the professor of the plan, no doubt through forgetfulness. For, how could he fail to be pleased that his daughter was to have a birthday party? He did not find it out until the seventeenth, two days before the event, and then only through the inadvertence of the caterer, who asked him some question about it. The caterer was a new man. He had been employed by Mr. Sanderson. Upon hearing this announcement and without giving the man any reply to his questions, Professor Ladue rushed off to town. He did not even leave word, at home, that Mrs. Ladue must not be alarmed if he failed to make his train. Fox happened to see him walking to and fro on the station platform, evidently fuming, and to guess where he was going and why.

We may be very sure that Fox did not tell Mrs. Ladue, but she found it out the next morning and immediately proceeded to have a down. The up having had its turn, the down was due, of course, but it was a very bad down. Fox telephoned for Doctor Galen.

Doctor Galen came out that afternoon. Sally had not been told, but she knew, somehow, and she was waiting for him by the gate.

"Doctor," she said, "will you let me get you anything that you want and—and wait on mother? Will you?"

The doctor smiled down at her. "Why, my dear little girl—" he began, looking into the earnest gray eyes. He did not finish as he had intended. "I thank you," he said. "If I need anything, you shall get it for me. And you shall wait upon your mother to your heart's content. But I can't tell how much waiting upon she will need until I have seen her."

"Thank you!" Sally cried softly. "I'm glad. I'll take you to mother." They started towards the [67] house together. "Oh, I forgot," she added, turning toward him. "I'm Sally Ladue."

The doctor smiled down at her once more. "I gathered as much," he replied, "putting this and that together. I guess that your mother and your father are proud of their little girl."

"I don't think that father is," Sally returned soberly.

The doctor's eyes twinkled. "Why, that would be very strange. By the way, where is your father? In town, at the college?"

Sally flushed to the roots of her hair. "I think he is in town," she answered, looking carefully straight before her.

"Of course, he must have classes." The doctor had noted that fiery flush and had drawn his inference. "One would think," he continued, more to himself than to Sally, "that—er—one would think—" It was none of his business, he reflected, and he could not see, for the life of him, how —"Which is your mother's room, Sally?"

They were just entering the house and the doctor was pulling off his gloves.

"Oh, I'll take you up."

Doctor Galen came out after about half an hour. "Now, Sally," he said cheerfully, "we'll have her all right again, in time. It may take quite a long time, so don't you get impatient if it seems slow, will you, Sally?"

"I'll try not to." Her lip quivered and she began to sob.

"I'm c—crying bec—cause I'm g—glad." Then her sobs stopped suddenly and she looked up at the doctor; but the tears rolled down her cheeks. "Mother can't hear me?"

"No, you blessed child. You come with me, Sally, and cry as much as you like. It'll do you good. And I'll stay until you get through."

So it happened that Fox found them behind a big tree, out of sight from the house, Sally contentedly crying into the doctor's coat. Henrietta had gone on.

"She's all right, Mr. Sanderson. It has done her good to cry. I think she's about through, now." [68]

Sally stopped crying and smiled at them both. "I'm so glad, Fox," she said.

Fox looked inquiringly at the doctor. "Your opinion, then, is that she will get well?"

"Yes, if there are no complications. I shouldn't expect any."

Sally, who had been waiting, apparently, to hear the doctor say this once more, murmured something about her mother and started for the house, running. She overtook Henrietta.

"Sally," continued the doctor, "seems to be a dear child—"

"She is."

"And her father seems to be—well, it isn't necessary for us to say what."

Fox laughed.

"There is only one thing—only one which looms up plainly. You and I have got to think of some way to get Mrs. Ladue away from her present surroundings. It would answer the purpose quite as

well—perhaps better," the doctor added thoughtfully,—"if her husband could be removed from the environment. I am speaking rather plainly."

Fox nodded. "I understand," he said. "It is not impossible that Providence and Professor Ladue, working together, may accomplish that. I don't know how," he admitted, seeing the question in the doctor's eyes, "but I think there is going to be an explosion in that college, some day, soon. Professor Ladue—"

"Pig!" murmured Doctor Galen, under his breath.

"Had better look out," Fox finished. "By the way, Doctor, shall we have the party that we had planned for to-morrow—Sally's birthday—or had we better call it off?"

"If you can keep them out of the house," answered the doctor slowly, "and if they don't make too much noise, I see no objection to it. Mrs. Ladue will probably sleep through it. I have left a mild sleeping-potion—I want to keep her dozing, at any rate, for some days. Arrangements all made, I suppose?" [69]

"They can be unmade easily enough."

"No, no. It isn't worth while. Let Sally have her party. I'll come to it, myself. You tell her so, will you, Mr. Sanderson?"

So Sally had her party. The knowledge that she had it was some comfort to Mrs. Ladue, who, in her comfortable, half-asleep condition, was dimly conscious—and glad—that her illness had made no difference in the plans for Sally. And Doctor Galen had come; ostensibly to the party. To be sure, he spent more than half the time with Mrs. Ladue, mounting the stairs silently, once in a while. Then, if she was sleeping, he would stand and watch her, observing every movement, voluntary and involuntary. They all meant something to him; most of them told him something. If she was not sleeping, she would open her eyes and smile vaguely, being still in that comfortable, dozing state when nothing seems to matter much. Then the doctor would enjoin silence by raising his hand, and she would smile again and close her eyes while he took a turn about the room, quietly, but not so quietly as to make his patient nervous.

It was fortunate that the day was pleasant and warm, for that made it possible to spread the table at some distance from the house, where the noise would not disturb Mrs. Ladue. Doctor Galen leaned against a tree and looked on at the happy crew. When they seemed to be about through their eating and talking, he beckoned to Sally, who came to him at once.

"I must go now, Sally," he said. "Your guests will be going pretty soon, I suppose. You won't let them make too much noise near the house?"

"Why," Sally asked, startled, "is mother—"

"Your mother is doing just what I want her to do," the doctor replied, interrupting her. "She is doing very well, indeed. It's only a precaution, my dear little girl. I don't want you to worry, Sally. I'll look out for your mother. You needn't do anything but follow the directions I gave you. You can do that easily. And don't worry, Sally, whatever happens." [70]

The quick tears had rushed to Sally's eyes as Doctor Galen spoke. "Oh, yes, indeed, I can," she said, "and I won't." This speech was not as clear as it might have been, and Sally realized it. "Oh, I mean—"

"I know what you mean," the doctor returned, patting her shoulder. "You're a good girl, Sally. Now, I must go."

When the doctor went out at the gate, a few minutes later, he was smiling. I don't know what he was smiling at, but it may have been at the recollection of a kiss which Sally had just bestowed upon him. It had taken him somewhat by surprise. It had been almost as much of a surprise to Sally.

"Well," he said to himself, "that was pretty good pay, considering. But it's just as well that the Mrs. Van Hoofes don't—Hello!"

For there, before him, was Professor Ladue, walking rapidly, his eyes red and bloodshot, and looking generally tousled. The doctor glanced at him, took in these details, and decided quickly that it would be wiser not to speak. Accordingly, he passed the professor with no more than a bow. The professor glared at him, bowed shortly, then half turned.

"A lovely spring afternoon, Doctor," he said, clearly and coldly, with the grimace which did duty for a smile. It was even less like one than usual.

"Charming!" the doctor replied.

"I should not suppose," continued the professor, almost snarling, "that a man of your engagements would have time for profitless excursions into the country."

"Ah," the doctor returned, smiling, "but it was not profitless. I have been to a birthday party; the party of Miss Sally Ladue." [71]

What reply should the professor have made to that? The professor, at least, did not know. He turned, again, without a word.

Doctor Galen looked after him, still smiling. Then he, too, turned again. "I am sorry for Sally," he murmured, sighing. "But Sanderson is there. He must get her out of it somehow."

Sanderson could not get her out of it, as it happened. The little bunch of guests was halfway down the walk, laughing and talking; even Sally laughed a little, although she did not talk much,

and her eye was alert for anybody who might come in at the gate. She hoped, fervently, that nobody would come in at that gate until the girls were out of it and safe at home. Then her father emerged from behind the screen of bushes along the wall and swung the gate wide.

Sally gave one look. "Oh, Fox!" she cried.

But Fox had seen and had run forward.

"Why such haste, Mr. Sanderson?" sneered the professor. "Why such haste? I require no assistance."

He went on toward the house, smiling at the girls as he passed. The way opened quickly before that smile of the professor's, and the laughter and the talk died. The effect was astonishing. And while he made his way rapidly onward, closely followed by Fox, the group of Sally's guests fairly melted away. Once outside the gate, and behind the sheltering screen, they ran.

Sally met Fox just coming out.

"It's all right, Sally," he said. "I persuaded him that no noise is to be made. I persuaded him."

Sally looked at Fox in wonder. "It didn't take long."

"No, it didn't take long." There were curious firm lines about Fox's mouth and his voice was not quite steady. What the nature of the persuasion was, which was so effective and in so short a time, Sally was not likely to know.

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[72]

CHAPTER X

ToC

Professor Ladue was rather more out of sorts with the world in general than was usual on such occasions. He was very much out of sorts with the world in general and with three of its inhabitants in particular: with his wife, because he was unable, for reasons which Fox had made clear to him in a very short time, to wreak his ill temper upon her; with Fox, because he had succeeded so well in making those reasons clear; and with Doctor Galen, because he was sure that the doctor was attending Mrs. Ladue. Perhaps I should have said that the professor was out of sorts with four persons in particular. The fourth person was Sally. It is hard to see why he should have been put out with her, who had done nothing to deserve it. But she was good and dutiful and she saw through him clearly enough; and by so doing she kindled in him a feeling of helpless resentment.

Of course, we know very well that the professor's behavior was, itself, the real cause of his feeling. The professor knew that well enough. He was not dull-witted, whatever else he was. And, because he knew it, he raged; and, because there was no outlet for his rage, he raged the more, coldly. Those cold rages of his fairly scared Sally, and she was not easily scared.

His rage was not any the less because of a letter that Sally brought up to him, late in the afternoon. She had shrunk from seeing him, but the letter was from the college, bearing the university arms in the corner, and it was for special delivery. So Sally thought that it might be very important. There was no one else to take it to her father, so she took it, and, in obedience to his brief command, and with great inward relief, she tucked it under his door.

[73]

The letter was important, although not in the way that Sally had surmised. It was from the provost of the university of which the professor's college was a part, written with the venerable provost's own hand and apparently in some haste. It stated that Mr. Ladue had, that very day, been seen, by the provost and by one other member of the governing body, to issue from a well-known gambling-house. That fact, coupled with the rumors which had persisted for a year or two past, made it imperative that Mr. Ladue should appear before the Board of Governors, at their next meeting, to clear himself; or, if he preferred, Mr. Ladue might send in his resignation at once, such resignation to take effect at the close of the college year.

That was all. One would think that it was quite enough. Professor Ladue looked up from his brief reading.

"Ah!" he cried airily. "The honorable provost addresses me as Mr. Ladue. *Mr.* Ladue. And so I am to appear before the Board of Governors for the purpose of clearing myself—of what? I am accused of coming out of a house. After all, it is a very quiet, respectable-looking house, indeed, in a quiet street, rubbing elbows with other quiet, respectable-looking houses. Does it happen that the honorable provost and that other member of the governing body have seen more than the outside of that house? Do I appear before the Board of Governors? I do not. And do I send in my resignation like a good little boy? I think not. The honorable provost is a fool. I will write him a letter and tell him so."

So saying, the professor—we may call him the professor for almost the last time—the professor went to his desk and wrote the letter. He was in just the mood to write such a letter and it is to

be remembered that he dealt naturally in caustics. Consequently, the letter was an excellent letter; it was exactly what it was meant to be. It was a model of its kind. There is little doubt that it was a poor kind and that it was very unwise to send it. Having been written, it should have been burned—utterly destroyed. It would have served its purpose better. But the professor was in [74] no mood to do what was merely wise. He was pleased with the letter, proud of it. He was so pleased with it that he read it over three times. Then he laughed and signed it.

"That will, perhaps, make them sit up. It would give me some pleasure to be present when he reads it." The professor gazed out into the great tree, musing pleasantly. "No, it can't be done. It is a matter of regret that it cannot."

He sealed the letter and went out, at once, to mail it. He was quite cheerful as he took his hat and his stick from the rack in the hall; so cheerful that Charlie, who happened to catch sight of him, was encouraged to hail him. He answered pleasantly, even buoyantly, so that Sally was sure that she had been right and that the letter which she had carried up had been important.

The cheerfulness of the professor was spurious, but, such as it was, it lasted, unimpaired, until the letter was posted. The mail was just going out, and the postmaster, obliging as postmasters invariably are, held it long enough to slip in the letter to the provost. The professor saw it go; then doubts began to assail him, and his cheerfulness ebbed. He stood irresolute until he heard the train. It was useless to stand irresolute longer. It is always useless to stand irresolute for any length of time whatever. The professor knew that very well. With a quick compression of the lips, he turned homeward. He was no longer cheerful.

No doubt I was wrong in speaking of him as the professor that last time. He was, henceforth, to be Mr. Ladue. His professorial career had been cut off by that letter to the provost as cleanly and as suddenly as by a sharp axe. That would be true of any college. Mr. Ladue did not deceive himself about that. There was a need of adjustment to the new conditions, and he set himself the task of thinking out just what the new conditions were. He was so busy with his thinking that he nearly ran into a young man. The young man had just issued from Mr. Ladue's own gate. But was it his gate? Mr. Ladue happened to have got to that very matter. There seemed to be a [75] reasonable doubt of it; indeed, as he progressed farther in his thinking-out process and his recollection emerged from the fog of habit, there seemed to be no doubt that it was not his gate at all and that he had been allowed to think of it as his and to call it his, purely on sufferance.

For he remembered, with a shock, a thoughtless moment, a moment of inadvertence,—a moment of insanity,—in which he had made over the place to his wife, Sarah. He had got into the habit of forgetting all about it. Now it was necessary that he should get out of that habit. He had never regretted that act more keenly than at that moment. It was the act of a madman, he told himself impatiently.

As these thoughts passed rapidly through his mind, the aforesaid young man had gone on his way. If he was to speak, he must speak quickly.

He turned. "Oh, Fox," he said casually, "I am afraid I was rather abrupt a short time ago. Pray accept my apologies."

It was a new rôle for Mr. Ladue. It cost him something to assume it, but it was necessary to his purposes that he should. This was one of the new conditions which must be faced. It was an opportunity which must be seized before it ceased to be. For Fox it was a totally new experience to receive an apology from a man like Mr. Ladue. The experience was so new that he blushed with embarrassment and stammered.

"Oh,—er—that's all right. Certainly. Don't apologize." He managed to pull himself together, knowing that what he had said was not the right thing at all. "And, Professor," he added, "shall we resume our studies when Mrs. Ladue is better?—when she will not be disturbed?"

Fox did not know as much about Mr. Ladue's affairs as we know, or he might not have called him by that title. But yet he might.

"To be sure," answered Mr. Ladue, apparently in surprise; "why not? Is she in a condition to be [76] disturbed by such little matters? I had rather expected to see her, to talk over an important question." If Fox chose to infer that the important question related to certain delinquencies of his own, why, let him think so.

"I am afraid that will be impossible for some time," Fox replied firmly. "Dr. Galen left instructions that she is, on no account, to be disturbed. She is not to be compelled to think. It seems to be important. His instructions were explicit and emphatic on that point."

"Ah," Mr. Ladue remarked calmly. "So Dr. Galen is running my house."

"Yes." There was no lack of firmness in Fox's voice, although he was not flushing now. "Dr. Galen is running your house. That is the situation exactly."

"And may I ask," Mr. Ladue inquired coldly,—"may I venture to ask how it happens that a specialist—one of the most expensive in the city—is in such a position that he can assume to do so?"

"Certainly you may. I will try to make it clear that it was necessary, but it will not alter the situation if I fail. Immediately after your leaving for town, Mrs. Ladue had one of her attacks. It seemed to Sally—and to me—essential that she should have expert advice at once. So—in your absence—I sent for Dr. Galen. I am very glad that I did."

"Do you know what his price will be?"

"I do not. What difference does it make? Mrs. Ladue's life may depend upon her having the best advice there is to be had."

Mr. Ladue did not answer immediately. He could not well say to Fox that that was a matter of less importance to himself than the price that would be charged. Besides, he was not sure that it mattered to him what Dr. Galen charged. He had no intention of paying it. They ought to have known that they could not saddle him with their bills without his consent. Further than that——

"It's all right, of course, Fox," said Mr. Ladue pleasantly, looking up. "I didn't realize that Mrs. [77] Ladue's condition was serious. Thank you. Come in as soon as you think it advisable and we will continue our studies. Good-night."

"Good-night." Fox turned away with a curious mingling of feeling toward Mr. Ladue. He could not help feeling grateful to him, yet he did not trust him. What next?

That was precisely the question Mr. Ladue was asking himself as he walked slowly toward the house. What next? It was most unfortunate that he could not see his wife, most unfortunate. If he could have the chance to talk to his wife, Sarah, now, he thought he could persuade her. Give him but five minutes and he was sure he could persuade her. He would do better to have the papers ready. He wondered whether he dared; and, for an instant, he entertained the idea of having that talk, in spite of Fox and of Dr. Galen. He thought upon it.

"No," he said to himself, "it wouldn't do, under the circumstances. It wouldn't do. We'll have to give that up."

Mr. Ladue deserved no credit for deciding to give that up. It is to be feared that the possibility of evil consequences to his wife, Sarah, played no part in forcing him to that decision. The important thing is that he did so decide. In the short time that remained before dinner, he walked to and fro in his room, thinking hard. He could do that very well when he applied himself to it. At dinner he was unexpectedly pleasant, giving Sally a sense of security that was not at all justified by the event. In that, no doubt, he was doing just what he intended.

That evening, having devoted a certain brief time to thinking to some purpose, he packed his bag and wrote a short note to his wife. It is immaterial what he said in that note, but he ended it with these words: "So you may keep your place, madam, and much good may it do you. In fact, I think that you will have to keep it. You could not give a good deed or a good mortgage without my signature." It seemed an entirely uncalled-for evidence of his ill humor. What had Mrs. Ladue [78] done to deserve it?

In the morning he came to breakfast as usual, and again he was very pleasant. Indeed, he was so pleasant that the fact excited Sally's suspicions. He was not usually so pleasant on the morning after. And when he had gone to his customary train—carrying a bag, Sally noted—she found his note, sealed, and addressed, in her father's well-known scrawling hand, to her mother. She took possession of the note. Of only one thing was she sure and that was that no note written by her father—and sealed—was going to be delivered to her mother; at least, not without advice.

Later she showed the note to Fox; and he, being as uncertain what ought to be done as Sally was, showed it to Dr. Galen. They three decided, much against their will, to see what Mr. Ladue had said.

"For," Dr. Galen observed, "Mrs. Ladue is not in condition to read a note of any kind. She will not be in that condition for a week, at least. It seems to me, Sally, that you should know what your father says, especially in view of the circumstances. I advise you to open it."

"You do it," said Sally.

So the doctor did it. "Of course," he remarked, as he slid the blade of his knife under the flap, "if, on glancing at it, I see that it is improper for me to read, I shall not read it. But if, as I fear—"

He was reading it. "The cur!" he muttered, as he finished. He handed it to Fox. "You read it, Mr. Sanderson."

Fox read it and chuckled. "I ought not to laugh," he explained, "but it is so—so futile. Delivery to Mrs. Ladue seems out of the question. And, Sally," he went on, "you shall see this if you want to, but I wish that you would not want to. Your father has gone, apparently."

"Yes," said Sally, somewhat puzzled, "I know it; to the university?"

"Not to the university, I think. He seems to have lit out. He says something about getting another position suited to him. He says some other things that it would give you only pain to [79] read."

Sally's face expressed a curious mingling of anxiety and relief. "I won't read it if you don't want me to," she said. "But—but what—how shall we get any money?"

"Don't you worry about that. We'll manage to raise a few cents when we need to."

Fox had said "we" and that seemed to comfort Sally. Fox turned to the doctor.

"The environment has taken care of itself," he remarked; and the doctor smiled.

CHAPTER XI

ToC

It was in all the papers. The honorable provost seemed to wish that the fact of Professor Ladue's break with the authorities of the university should be known, and he graciously allowed himself to be interviewed on the subject once a week. As was to be expected, but one side of the question was presented in these interviews, but that may have worked no injury to Mr. Ladue, who received undeserved credit for his silence. It was just as well. In none of those interviews did the honorable provost give out the letter that Mr. Ladue had written. That letter contained certain pointed passages which the press should not get hold of, if he could help it. Mr. Ladue had some reason to be proud.

Then the reporters began to come out to Mr. Ladue's house, in the hope of an interview with him. They did manage to get a few words with Sally, but the words were very few and then Fox came in. So it came about that Fox Sanderson spent most of his time, from breakfast-time until bedtime, at the Ladues'. Naturally, Henrietta was there, too. Sally was well content with any arrangement which brought them both there all the time.

Those would have been hard times with the Ladues if it had not been for Fox Sanderson. Mrs. Ladue owned the place, to be sure, but she owned very little else; hardly more than enough to pay the taxes. And if Mr. Ladue had been a hard man to extract money from, at least he had kept the tradesmen satisfied; or, if not satisfied, they were never sufficiently dissatisfied to refuse to supply the necessities. It was a different case now, and Sally wondered a good deal how they contrived to get along. She knew that Fox was managing their affairs, but things had been going on in this way for a long time before she got to the point of wondering whether he was supplying [81]
the money. She reached that point at last, and she asked Fox about it.

She had waited until she got him alone and was sure that they would not be interrupted.

"Fox," she asked without preamble, "where do we get our money?"

Fox was taken by surprise. He had not been expecting any question of the kind. He found himself embarrassed and hesitating.

"Why," he answered, not looking at her, "why—our money? Er—what do you want to know for?"

Sally was regarding him steadily. "Because," she replied, "I think I ought to. Where do we get it?"

"Oh, don't you care, Sally," said Fox carelessly. "We get it honestly."

Sally's earnest regard did not waver. "Of course we get it honestly. But where? I think you ought to tell me, Fox. Do you give it to us?"

Sally, bent upon the one purpose, had not thought of sitting down. She stood squarely before Fox, her fingers interlocked before her, and gazed up into his face. Fox shifted his weight to the other foot as she asked the question. Then he laughed a little.

"I give it to you! What an idea!"

"But do you?" Sally insisted. "You haven't said you don't."

"Let's sit down, Sally," said Fox, attempting a diversion. "Aren't you tired?"

"No, I'm not. But you sit down if you want to. Excuse me for keeping you standing."

Fox found a chair and seated himself comfortably. Sally again faced him, still standing.

"Aren't you going to sit down?" asked Fox, seemingly surprised. "Please do. I can't be satisfied to sit, with you standing." He placed a chair for her.

"All right," Sally moved the chair around so that she would face him, and sat down.

"What a lovely summer day, Sally!" he said. "Isn't it, now?" [82]

Sally laughed. She would not be diverted. "Yes," she said. "But you haven't answered my question."

"Well," asked Fox, sighing, "what is the question?" There seemed to be no escape.

"Where do we get our money? Do you give it to us?"

"But that," he remonstrated, "makes two questions."

The quick tears rushed into Sally's eyes. "Oh, Fox, won't you tell me?"

Fox glanced at her and gave in at once. He told the strict truth, for nothing less would do, for Sally. He couldn't have told anything else, with those solemn, appealing gray eyes looking at him.

"I'll tell you, Sally," he said quickly. "Just trust me."

Sally smiled. It was like a burst of sunshine. "I do."

"I know it," he returned, "and I'm proud of it. Well, I have been advancing what money has been needed for the past three months. You can't say I've given it to you. I'd rather say us, Sally. So you see, you can't say I've given it to us, for we—Henrietta and I—have been here so very much that we ought to pay something. We ought to contribute. I don't like to call it board, but—"

"Why not?" Sally asked, interrupting. "Why don't you like to call it board?"

"Well," Fox answered, rather lamely, "you don't take boarders, you know."

"I don't see," said Sally, brightening distinctly, "I can't see why we don't—why we shouldn't, if mother's well enough. I've been thinking."

"But that's just it. Your mother is not well enough for you to take regular, ordinary boarders. You mustn't think of it."

"Would you call you and Henrietta regular, ordinary boarders?" Sally asked, after a few moments of silence.

Fox laughed. "On the contrary, we are most irregular, extraordinary boarders. But why, Sally? [83] Would you like to have—"

"Oh, yes," cried Sally at once. "I should like it very much. But I don't know whether you would."

"Yes, I should like it very much, too. But there have seemed to be certain reasons why it wasn't best to live here."

"But you live here now," Sally objected; "all but sleeping. We've got rooms enough."

"I'll think it over; and, if I think we can come, we will."

"I hope you will. I should feel comfortabler. Because I don't see how we can ever pay you back; at any rate, not for a long time. We should have to wait until I'm old enough to earn money, or until Charlie is. And I'm four years older."

Fox smiled at the idea of waiting for Charlie. But Sally went on.

"And there's another thing. There's Doctor Galen."

"Oh, so the doctor's the other thing. I'll tell him."

"The money that we have to pay him is the other thing." Sally was very earnest. "Will it be much, do you think?"

"Sally, don't you worry. I asked the doctor just that question and he told me I had better wait until he sent his bill. He hasn't sent it yet."

"Well—will it be as much as a hundred dollars?"

"It is possible that it may be as much as that."

"Oh, will it be more?" Sally was distressed. When should she be able to save—even to earn a hundred dollars. "We can't ever pay it, Fox; not for years and years."

Again Fox told her not to worry. She did not seem to hear him. She was following her thought.

"And, Fox, if you have to pay it, we shall owe you an awful lot of money. Have—have you got money enough?"

Fox Sanderson did not have an "awful lot" of money. That very question had been giving him some anxiety. But he would not let Sally suspect it.

"I guess I'll be able to manage, Sally."

"I hope so. And I've been thinking, Fox, that I ought to help." [84]

"Why, Sally, you do help. Just think of the things you do, every day, helping about your mother, and about the house."

"Yes," she returned, "but I mean about earning money. Those things don't earn money. Couldn't I learn typewriting and go into somebody's office? Or couldn't I teach? Do you have to know a lot of things, to teach, Fox?"

Fox smiled. "Some teachers that I have known," he answered, "haven't known such an awful lot of things. But if you really want to teach, Sally, you ought to be trained for it. At least," he added, more to himself than to Sally, "that is the popular opinion."

Again Sally was distressed. "Do you have to go to college, Fox?"

"Well," answered Fox, smiling, "not exactly, but something of the sort. There's a normal school or the training school for teachers, or whatever they call it."

"Oh, dear!" Sally wailed. "Everything takes so long! I wanted to do something right away. Can't you think of anything, Fox?"

"Not right off the bat. I'll see what thoughts I can raise on that subject. But if I don't think of anything, would you like to plan to be a teacher, Sally?"

"If it would help mother, I would. If that's the best thing we can think of. I'd do anything to help mother. I'd go out scrubbing or I'd sell papers or—or anything."

"Bless your heart!" Fox exclaimed under his breath. "Bless your dear heart, Sally! You needn't go out scrubbing or washing dishes or selling papers or anything of the kind. You can do better than that. And your mother is likely to need your help about as much when you are fitted for teaching as she does now."

"Is—isn't mother getting better?" asked Sally, hesitating.

"Yes," said Fox, "but very slowly; very slowly indeed. Doctor Galen thinks it will be some years [85] before she is herself again. Think, Sally, how much better it will be for you to be getting ready.

Suppose she was well now. What would you and she do? How would the conditions be different?"

Sally murmured something about taking boarders.

"Well," Fox observed, "I never have taken 'em and so I have no experience with that end of it. But Henrietta and I have been boarding for a good many years now—ever since mother died—and we have seen a good deal of all kinds of boarders. On the average, they seem to be an unmannerly and ungrateful lot. Don't you be a party to making 'em worse, Sally. Don't you do it."

Sally laughed.

"Besides," he went on, "it's pretty apt to be humiliating."

"I suppose that's something unpleasant," Sally said quietly, "and, of course, it wouldn't be pleasant. I shouldn't expect it to be."

"I don't believe there's any money in it."

Sally paused a moment to digest that phrase. Then she sighed.

"You know more about it than I do. I'll do just what you say, Fox."

The gate clicked and they both looked around.

"Here comes Henrietta," said Fox. "Now we'll all go out in the shade and play. But, Sally," he added hastily, "have you got any rich relatives?"

"Rich relatives!" Sally exclaimed. "Not that I know of. Or, wait. There's Miss Hazen—Martha Hazen. She's a cousin of father's, but I don't know how rich she is. I've never seen her."

"Where does she live?"

"Up in Massachusetts, somewhere. I think she's queer."

"The queerer the better. Your father's cousin, is she? It wouldn't be strange. Can you find out where she lives, Sally?"

Sally thought she could. "And, Fox," she reminded him,—she was afraid he might forget,—"you see if you can't come here to live. Will you, Fox?" [86]

He nodded. Henrietta was at the piazza steps. "I'll ask Doctor Galen about it."

"What'll you ask Doctor Galen about, Fox?" inquired Henrietta. "Are you and Sally talking secrets?"

"I'll ask the doctor what should be done with a very troublesome little sister," he answered, smiling at her.

"You might get rid of her by sending her off to boarding-school," Henrietta remarked. "Not that she wants to go."

"No boarding-school for you yet, young lady. There are one hundred reasons why, and the first is—is so important that the ninety-nine others don't matter."

Fox had caught himself just in time. He had intended to say that he didn't have the money. Well, he hadn't; but he didn't mean to tell Sally so.

"I suppose that first reason," said Henrietta, "is that you can't spare me."

"Wrong. That is the second. And the third is that you are too young. Never mind the others. We are going out to play now, Henrietta." Sally darted into the house. "Where are you going, Sally?"

"After Charlie," she called softly. "I'll be right back. And let's be sauruses!"

"Sauruses it is," Fox returned. "I say, Henrietta, can you climb trees as well as Sally?"

"Well, not quite"—hesitating—"but I'm learning."

"You live in a cave with Charlie," he said decidedly.

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[87]

CHAPTER XII

ToC

To tell the truth, the question of money had been troubling Fox somewhat, for he did not have an "awful lot," to use Sally's words. There was enough for him and Henrietta to live upon in great comfort; but when the amount which will support two people in comfort has to take care of five, it needs to be spread pretty thin. To be sure, there was no particular reason why Fox should have felt obliged to look out for the Ladues. One wonders why he did it. That question had occurred to him, naturally, but only to be dismissed at once, unanswered. He could not leave that little family in their misfortunes without visible means of support, and that was the end of it.

These considerations will serve to explain Fox's state of mind: why he felt it to be necessary to

provide for Sally's future; to see to it that she should have a future of any kind. They may also explain his inquiries about rich relatives. Not that he had, at the moment, any definite idea as to his course of action in the event that she had such desirable and convenient appendages. In fact, it remained to be seen whether they were either desirable or convenient. And he wished very much that it might be considered no impropriety for him and Henrietta to live at the Ladues'. It would simplify many matters.

Doctor Galen, to whom he spoke, with some hesitation, of this wish of his, reassured him.

"I should say that it would be a very wise move," said the doctor, smiling. "Where is the impropriety?"

Fox murmured something about Professor Ladue and about his seeming to take the management of his family out of the professor's hands. He felt a little delicate about making any further move in the same direction.

"Pouf!" the doctor exclaimed scornfully. "Ladue has relinquished all right to management, and [88] it's a very fortunate thing that he has. Mrs. Ladue will be very much of an invalid for a number of years, unless all signs fail. There may be some prying people—but there are always. You had better tell Sally that you will come at once. I think it most necessary."

Fox was distinctly relieved. He went on to tell the doctor of his conversation with Sally. "And the other children—except Henrietta—have fought shy of coming to see her since that day of the party," he continued. "I suppose they were frightened. They have scarcely been near her. Not that Sally seems to care. I think she is glad when she thinks of them at all. But she has too much care. She takes life too seriously. Why, that party was on her eleventh birthday, and she wants to go out scrubbing or selling papers. Anything to earn money. We can't let her feel so, Doctor; we just can't."

"Bless her!" said the doctor; "of course we can't. She needn't worry about my bill, and you needn't. Between us, Sanderson, we must look out for these three babes in the wood."

"Thank you, Doctor."

"And, Sanderson," the doctor pursued confidentially, "if you find yourself short of money,—you might, you know,—just let me know. But don't tell anybody, or the Assyrians will be upon me, like the wolf on the fold; and their cohorts won't be gleaming with purple and gold. Not of mine, they won't."

Fox laughed. "Thank you again, Doctor. Thank you very much. But I think I shall be able to carry my end, on that basis."

Fox did carry his end. He and Henrietta moved to the Ladues' as soon as they could, Fox into the professor's old room, with the skeleton of the professor's little lizard on the floor, under the window, and with the professor's desk to work at. He seemed to have been pushed by chance into the professor's shoes, and he did not like it, altogether. He made a faint-hearted protest at the [89] room.

Sally's eyes filled. "Why, Fox," she said, "it's the best room we've got. Isn't it good enough?"

"It's much too good, Sally. I don't expect or want such a good room."

"Oh, is that all!" Sally was smiling now. "If it's good enough, I guess you'll have to be satisfied. It's ever so much convenienter to give you father's room."

So Fox had to be satisfied. Henrietta had the room next Sally's own. That arrangement was "convenienter," too.

One of the first things he did at the professor's desk was to write a letter to Miss Martha Havering Hazen. Sally had succeeded in finding her address.

"She lives in Whitby, Massachusetts," she announced. "I don't know the name of the street, and I don't know how rich she is."

With this, the affairs of Miss Martha Havering Hazen passed from Sally's mind. She had other things to attend to. Fox wrote Miss Hazen a letter in which he set forth, in a very business-like way, the plight in which the Ladue family found themselves, his desire, and Sally's, that Sally's future should be provided for, and the manner in which it was proposed to provide for the aforesaid future. He finished with the statement that the funds at his command were insufficient for all the purposes which it was desired to accomplish, and he inquired whether she were disposed to give any aid and comfort. Then, having posted this, he waited for the answer.

He waited for the answer so long that he began to fear that his letter might not have reached Miss Hazen; then he waited until, at last, he was convinced that she never received it, and he had begun to think that she must be a myth. When he reached this conclusion, he was sitting on the piazza and Sally and Henrietta and Doctor Galen were coming up the path together. Sally had her hands behind her. She came and stood before Fox, her eyes twinkling.

"Well," she began. [90]

But Fox would not wait. "Sally," he said, interrupting her, "what makes you think that Miss Martha Hazen is in existence at all. You've never seen her. I'll bet there's no such a person and never was. She's a myth."

"What'll you bet?" she asked promptly.

"Anything you like."

"No, I won't bet, for it wouldn't be fair." This settled it for Sally. In that respect she was different from her father. She was different from her father in some other important respects, too. "Which hand will you have, Fox?"

"I guess I'd better have both."

So Sally brought both hands around into view and cast a letter into his lap. Her eyes danced. "There!" she said. "Now, what'll you bet?"

Doctor Galen was leaning against the railing and Henrietta could not keep still.

"Oh, Fox," she cried, "open it and let's hear what she says. Sally showed it to us and we know about it."

"Open it, Sanderson," the doctor put in; "don't keep us all in the dark. It's suspense that kills."

So Sanderson opened it and read it. It was not a long letter.

The others grew impatient. "Come, come," said the doctor, "tell us. It doesn't matter what you wrote to her. What does she say?"

"She says," said Fox, smiling, "that, as of course she didn't know me, she has been obliged to have all my statements investigated. That accounts for the delay. She has found them all to be true. Gratifying, isn't it? But the important thing is that she offers to take Sally to live with her and agrees to educate her properly—if Sally will go."

They were all very sober and nobody spoke. Sally was solemn and the tears came slowly. None of them had contemplated this, Sally least of all. She felt as if there had been an earthquake or some such convulsion of nature.

"Well, Sally," Fox went on at last, in a low voice, "it seems to be up to you. Will you go?" [91]

"Oh, I don't know," Sally's eyes were wide with anxiety and with doubt, and the tears dropped slowly, one by one. "How can I, all of a sudden? It's a tremendous surprise. I don't want to, but if it will help more than staying at home, I'll go." Suddenly an idea seemed to have struck her. It must have given her great relief, for the tears stopped and she looked happy once more. "But," she said eagerly, "how can I? Who will take care of mother? And what would we do with Charlie? Really, Fox, I don't see how I can go."

Strangely enough, Fox seemed to be relieved, too. At any rate, he smiled as though he were.

"Sure enough," he replied, "how can you? We might possibly manage about your mother," he added, with a glance at the doctor, "but Charlie is a problem."

Doctor Galen had nodded, in answer to that glance of Fox's. "You needn't worry about your mother, Sally," he said then. "We would take good care of her. Do you know that I have a sanitarium for just such patients? There are nurses and everything to make it convenient. And there are no bothering children—with their brothers—always underfoot." As he said that, the doctor smiled and rested his hand, for a moment, on Henrietta's shoulder. Henrietta turned and laughed up at him.

"A base libel," Fox remarked. "But all that doesn't take care of Charlie."

"Might farm him out," the doctor suggested. "What do you think of that idea, Sally?"

"I don't believe I know what you mean," she answered. "Charlie wouldn't be much good on a farm, although I suppose a farm would be a good place for him. Some farms would," she added.

"It depends on the farm, doesn't it?" said Fox. "It generally does. But don't you care what the doctor meant, Sally. He didn't mean anything, probably. We aren't going to farm Charlie out [92] anyway. What shall I say to Martha? That's the immediate point."

Sally chuckled. "I'll write to Martha," she said, as soon as she could speak; "that is, if you'll let me. I'll thank her ever so much for offering to take me, and I'll tell her why I can't come. May I, Fox?"

"All right." Fox tossed her the letter. "And, Sally," he called softly, for she had started into the house, meaning to write her letter at once. "Sally, if Martha answers your letter, you tell me what she says."

So Sally wrote to Martha. It took her a long time and she used up several sheets of her mother's best note-paper before she got a letter written that she was satisfied to send. Miss Hazen was longer in replying, although she was not so long as she had been in replying to Fox. Sally did not care. Indeed, she did not give the matter a thought. She considered the question settled.

It was not. Miss Hazen must have liked Sally's letter, for she grudgingly consented to have Charlie come, too, if that was all that stood in the way of Sally's acceptance of her offer. This was a surprise to everybody; to none of them more than to Miss Hazen herself. She had no liking for young children. But she did it. There seemed to be no escape for Sally now, and she put the letter in Fox's hand without a word.

"What's the matter, Sally?" he asked, shocked at her tragic face. "Has the bottom dropped out?"

Sally smiled, but her chin quivered. "It seems to me that it has. You read it, Fox."

So Fox read it. He was very sober when he looked up and it was a long time before he spoke.

"Well," he said at last, whimsically, "Martha's put her foot in it this time, hasn't she? What do

you think you're going to do?"

"I don't see how I can refuse any longer," Sally answered, her voice quivering as well as her chin. "Charlie was the only objection that I could think of; the only real objection. I s'pose I'll have to go now, and take Charlie."

Fox did not reply immediately. [93]

Sally's chin quivered more and more, and her tears overflowed. "Oh, Fox," she wailed, "I don't want to. I don't want to leave mother and home and—and everybody."

Fox drew her toward him and patted her shoulder. "There, there, Sally," he said gently. "You shan't go if you don't want to. We'll manage somehow. Don't feel so badly, Sally. Don't."

Sally's fit of crying was already over. Her tears ceased and she felt for her handkerchief.

"I won't," she said, with a pitiful little attempt at a smile. "I'm not going to cry any more. Have —have you got a handkerchief, Fox?"

Fox wiped her eyes. "We'll call a council of war," he said; "you and Doctor Galen and I will talk it over and decide what shall be done. Not about Martha," he added hastily. "That's settled, Sally, if you don't want to go. I'll write to her and tell her that you can't come."

"No," Sally protested earnestly, "it's not settled; at least, not that way. I'll go if—if that's the best thing for us. I was only crying because—because I hate to think of leaving. I can't help that, you know, Fox."

"I know, Sally. I've been through it all."

"And so our council of war," Sally continued, "will decide about that, too."

The council of war held a long and earnest session and eventually decided that it was best for Sally to accept Miss Hazen's offer and to go to Whitby. Sally acquiesced in the decision, but it seemed to Fox necessary to do a little explaining.

"You know, Sally," he said, "your mother is likely to be a long time in getting back her health. She won't be herself for a number of years. It would only be painful to you—"

"I know all that, Fox," Sally interrupted, a little impatiently. She had had it pretty thoroughly drummed into her. "I know all that, and it doesn't make any difference whether I think so or not. I see that it's the best thing for us all that Charlie and I should go, and we will go. That's settled. [94] But you will write to me often, and let me know how mother gets along—and tell me the news, won't you?"

"Why, of course I am going to," Fox cried with emphasis. "What did you think—that we were going to let you slip away from us suddenly, altogether? Not much. I'm going to write you every blessed week. And see that you answer my letters every week, too."

Sally felt comparatively cheerful once more. "I will," she answered, smiling.

"Bless your heart!" said Fox.

Doctor Galen looked aggrieved.

"And where do I come in?" he asked. "Aren't you going to promise to write me, too? Your mother will be at my sanitarium and I have a good mind to give orders that Fox Sanderson is to be told nothing about her. Then you would have to get your information from me."

"I didn't s'pose you'd care to have me, you're so busy." Sally was pleased. "But I'd love to, Doctor, I'd love to. Do you really want me to?"

"If you don't, I'll never forgive you. I'm a very cruel man, and that is the only way to insure good treatment for your mother. You'd better, Sally." And the doctor wagged his head in a threatening manner.

Sally laughed. "It'll be your own fault if you get too many letters. But you needn't answer them, if you don't have time."

"We'll see. We'll see. I guess I shall manage to find a few minutes, now and then, to write to Miss Sally Ladue."

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[95]

CHAPTER XIII

ToC

It was September before Sally was ready to go to Whitby. Indeed, it cannot be said that she was ready then, or that she ever would have been ready, if her wishes only had been involved. But by the middle of September she had done all the things that she had to do, her belongings and Charlie's were packed in two small trunks, and there did not seem to be any excuse for delaying

her departure longer.

She had gone, with Doctor Galen, one memorable day, to see the sanitarium. He, I suppose, had thought that perhaps Sally would feel better about going if she saw for herself just the way in which her mother would be taken care of. So he took her all over the building, himself acting as her guide, and she saw it all. She did feel better. When she had seen the whole thing and had absorbed as much as the doctor thought was good for her, they went into town again and had lunch with Mrs. Galen. There weren't any children and there never had been. So much the worse for the doctor and for Mrs. Galen. They had missed the best thing in life, and they knew that they had and regretted it. After lunch, the doctor went home with Sally. She thought, with some wonder at it, that the doctor could not have had much to do that day, for he had given the whole of it to her. There were many of his patients who thought otherwise—a whole office full of them; and they waited in vain for the doctor.

A few days later Sally had bidden a last mournful farewell to all her favorite haunts. She had been devoting her spare time for a week to that melancholy but pleasant duty. The little lizard would never more sit high in the branches of the coal trees and look out over the prospect of treetops and swamp. Never again would the gynesaurus feed on stove coal plucked, ripe, from [96] the branches whereon it grew. Sally laughed, in spite of her melancholy, as this thought passed through her mind; and the gynesaurus stopped eating coal and incontinently slid and scrambled down the tree, landing on the ground with a thump which was more like that made by a little girl than that a lizard would make. And she ran into the house in rather a cheerful frame of mind. It was almost time for the man to come for their trunks.

Fox met her as she came in. "It's a good chance to say good-bye to your mother, Sally. She's wandering about in her room."

All of Sally's cheerfulness vanished at that. She knew just how she should find her mother: aimlessly wandering from one part of the room to another, intending, always, to do something, and always forgetting what it was she intended to do. But Sally found Charlie and, together, they went to their mother.

It was the same sweet, gentle voice that called to them to come in. It was the same sweet, gentle woman who greeted them. But in her dull eyes there was scarcely recognition. To Sally it was as though a thick veil hung always before her mother, through which she could neither see clearly nor be seen. Her processes of mind were as vague and as crude as those of a baby. If she was better than she had been, how very ill she must have been!

Mrs. Ladue did not realize what Sally's good-bye meant. She was utterly incapable of taking in the changes which were before Sally or before herself. She returned Sally's good-bye impassively, as though Sally were going no farther than downstairs; and when Charlie, impatient and a little frightened, fretted and pulled at Sally's hand, Mrs. Ladue did not seem to mind. It was as if Charlie were some strange child, in whom she had no interest. Poor lady!

"Why don't you take him away?" she asked. "He wants to go."

So Sally, choking with tenderness, took him away. She cried a little on Fox's shoulder. [97]

"It seems to me that I can't bear it, Fox," she sobbed. "To see mother so—is she really better?"

"You know she is, Sally."

"Yes, I s'pose I do." Sally's sobs gradually ceased. "But it's terribly slow. She'll have forgotten us by the time she gets well."

"No fear, Sally," Fox replied, with a gentle smile. "No fear of that. Come, here's the man for our things."

Fox was going with them. Sally dried her eyes while he went to see about the trunks.

As they walked out at the gate, Fox glanced at Sally. Her lips were tightly shut and she did not look back once, but she kept her gaze firmly fixed ahead, as if she were afraid of being turned into a pillar of salt. Nobody knew how much determination it took for her to do so. She would have liked to cry again and kiss every tree in the place. But she wouldn't cry again. She just would not.

Henrietta met them before they had gone far, and rattled on as though she had been talking on a wager. Sally couldn't talk. And Henrietta went to the station with them, still talking fast, and stayed with Sally and Charlie while Fox checked the trunks. Then the train came and Sally lingered at the door of the car.

"Good-bye, Sally," Henrietta called. "Perhaps I could come to visit you if you asked me."

"I will if I can," said Sally. "You know it won't be my house and I'm afraid that Cousin Martha may not find it convenient. If it was my house I'd ask you now."

The train started. "Good-bye, Sally," Henrietta called again as she ran along the platform; "I wish I were going with you."

"I wish you were," Sally answered. "Oh, I do wish you were, Henrietta. Good-bye."

For Henrietta had come to the end of the platform and had stopped. The train was going almost [98] too fast for her anyway.

"You'd better come inside, Sally." And Fox drew her inside and shut the door.

Doctor Galen met the little party upon its arrival in the city. There was nearly an hour before

their train left for New York, and the doctor suggested that they all have lunch together in the station. Sally started to protest, for did they not have a package containing cold chicken, hard-boiled eggs, and bread-and-butter? But the doctor observed that he had never yet seen the time when a cold lunch did not come in handy, and they might find use for it later; and, besides, he had the lunch ordered and a table reserved. A feeling almost of cheerfulness stole over Sally's spirits; and when, lunch over, they were parting from the doctor at the steps of the car, Sally looked up at him somewhat wistfully. He interpreted her look rightly, and bent down.

"Would you, Sally?" he asked. "And one for Mrs. Galen, too. Remember, we haven't any children of our own."

At that, Sally threw her arms around his neck and gave him two for himself and two for Mrs. Galen. The doctor straightened again.

"Bless you, Sally!" he said softly. "I wish you belonged to us. Don't forget your promise."

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[99]

CHAPTER XIV

ToC

It was very early, as the habits of the Ladue family went, when the train pulled into the station at Whitby. For Professor Ladue had not been an early riser. College professors of certain types are not noted for their earliness. One of these types had been well represented by Professor Ladue. He had not, to be sure, ever met his classes clad in his evening clothes; but, no doubt, he would have done so, in time, if his career had not been cut short.

The train did not go beyond Whitby. One reason why it did not was that there was nothing beyond but water and no stations of permanence. There was plenty of time to get out of the train without feeling hurried. Fox got out and helped Charlie down the steps; and Sally got out, feeling as if she had already been up half the night. Indeed, she had, almost, for she had been so afraid of oversleeping that she had been only dozing since midnight.

"I wonder, Fox," she said as she came down the steps, "whether there will be any one here to meet us."

"Cast your eye over the crowd," Fox whispered, "and if you see a thin, haughty lady standing somewhat aloof from the common herd, I'll bet my hat that's Martha."

Sally chuckled involuntarily, and she cast her eye over the crowd as Fox had told her to do. There *was* a lady, who seemed to be somewhat haughty, standing back by the wall of the station, aloof from the common herd, but she was not as thin as Sally had expected Cousin Martha to be. This lady was evidently expecting somebody—or somebodies—and was watching, with a shadow of anxiety on her face, as the crowd poured out of the doors and flowed down the steps. Then her gaze happened to alight upon Sally and her eyebrows lifted, quickly, and she smiled. Sally smiled as quickly in return and made up her mind, on the spot, that, if that was Cousin Martha, she should rather like Cousin Martha. [100]

The lady had come forward at once, with a rapid, nervous walk, and met them as soon as the crowd would let her.

"Sarah Ladue?" she asked.

"Sally, Cousin Martha," Sally replied. "Everybody calls me Sally."

"Well, I am very glad to see you, Sally." Cousin Martha kissed her on the cheek; a quick, nervous peck. Sally tried to kiss Cousin Martha while she had the chance, but she succeeded in getting no more than a corner of a veil. "How did you know me?"

"I didn't. I only saw that you were looking for somebody, and I thought it might be me you were looking for."

"Oh, so that was it!" Miss Hazen smiled faintly and sighed. "I thought that perhaps you might have recognized me from the photograph I once gave your father. But I forgot that that was a great many years ago." She sighed again.

Sally tried in vain to remember any photograph of Miss Martha Hazen. She did remember something else.

"This is Fox Sanderson," she said, holding on to Fox's arm, "who has just come on to bring us. Fox is *very* kind. And here is Charlie."

She dragged Charlie forward by the collar. He had been behind her, absorbed in the movements of the engine.

"Oh, what a pretty boy!" exclaimed Cousin Martha. "How do you do, Charlie?"

"Not a pretty boy!" cried Charlie.

Sally shook him. "Say very well, I thank you," she whispered.

"Very-well-I-thank-you," Charlie repeated sulkily. "I'm hungry."

Miss Hazen laughed. "Mercy on us!" she said. "We must be getting home to give you something to eat." She extended the tips of her fingers to Fox. "I'm very glad to see you, too, Mr. Sanderson. [101] You will come home with us, too? The carriage is waiting."

"Thank you, Miss Hazen. I must see about the trunks, I suppose; Sally's and Charlie's. I didn't bring any, for I must go back to-night."

"Then, perhaps, you will spend the day with us?"

Fox thanked her again and Cousin Martha told him what to do about the trunks. There was one baggageman, in particular, whom the Hazens had employed for years when there had been trunks to go or to come. That that baggageman was now old and nearly as decrepit as his horse and wagon made no difference.

They were soon in Miss Hazen's stout carriage, behind a single stout horse. Sally had not noticed, before, that the water was so near. They went through some very dirty streets, past saloons and tenement-houses. Miss Hazen regarded them sadly.

"One gets a poor impression of Whitby from the entrance into it," she observed. "This part of the city has changed very much since my young days; changed much for the worse. It is a great pity that the railroad does not come in at some different place. On the hill, now, one would get a very different impression. But there are parts of the city which have not changed so very much. Although," she added thoughtfully, "all the change is for the worse, it seems to me."

There did not seem to be anything to be said that would be of any comfort. Fox murmured something, and then they drove up an extraordinarily steep hill. The horse had all he could do to drag them at a walk. But, looking up the hill, Sally saw a pleasant street with elms arching over it.

"Oh, how lovely!" she cried. "Do you live in this part of the city, Cousin Martha?"

"No," Cousin Martha replied, with rather more than a suspicion of pride in her voice. "Where we live, it is prettier than this."

"Oh," said Sally. Then she recollected.

"There was a very nice man on the boat," she remarked. "He was some sort of an officer, but I [102] don't know exactly what. He said he lived in Whitby, and he had several children. The youngest girl is about my age. Do you know them, Cousin Martha? Their name is Wills."

"Wills? Wills? I don't think I know any Willses."

"He seemed to know who you were," Sally prompted. "He knew right away, as soon as ever I told him where I was going."

"It is likely enough," said Miss Hazen, trying to speak simply. The attempt was not a conspicuous success. "Many people, whom we don't know, know who we are. The Willses are very worthy people, I have no doubt, but you are not likely to know them."

"He said that, too," Sally observed.

Miss Hazen looked as if she would have liked to commend Mr. Wills's discrimination; but she did not and they continued their drive in silence. The streets seemed all to be arched over with elms; all that they drove through, at all events. Presently they reached the top of the hill and turned into a street that was as crooked as it could be. It turned this way and that and went, gently, uphill and down; but, always, it seemed to be trying to keep on the top of the ridge. Sally remarked upon it.

"You might call this the Ridge Road," she said; "like Ridge Road in Philadelphia. I have never been on the Ridge Road in Philadelphia," she added hastily, fearing that Cousin Martha might think she was pretending to be what she was not, "but I have always imagined that it was something like this."

Fox and Miss Hazen laughed. "Not much like it, Sally," said Fox.

"Or," Sally resumed, "you might call it the Cow Path. It is crooked enough to be one."

"That is just what it used to be called," said Miss Hazen. "It was not a very poetical name, but we liked it. They changed the name, some years ago."

"What?" Sally asked. "What did they change it to?" [103]

"Washington Street," answered Cousin Martha plaintively. "It seemed to us that it was not necessary to call it Washington Street. There is no individuality in the name."

Fox laughed again. "Not a great deal," he agreed.

Miss Hazen smiled and sighed.

"We cling to the old names," she continued. "We still call this street, among ourselves, the Cow Path, and Parker Street is still West India Lane, and Smith Street is Witch Lane. The old names are more picturesque and romantic. There seemed to be no sufficient reason for changing them. For us, they are not changed."

Washington Street—the Cow Path, as Miss Hazen preferred to call it—had upon it a great many handsome places. They were big houses, of stone, for the most part, or covered with stucco,

although a few of them were of wood; and they were set well back from the street, behind well-kept lawns with clumps of shrubbery or of trees scattered at careful random. Sally did not see one of these old places with the rather formal garden, with its box hedges, in front of the house, but she saw a good many with gorgeous gardens at the side, and many with the gardens, apparently, at the back.

They were very different, these great places, from her own home. Her own home might have occupied a whole square, as many of these did, if it had been in a city. It was not in a city, but in what was scarcely more than a village and the trees were where nature had set them. The whole place—Sally's own place—had an atmosphere of wildness quite in keeping with coal trees and sauri. These places, if they had had no more care than the professor had been accustomed to give to his, would have a pathetic air of abandon and desolation. What would a poor little gynesaurus do here?

They turned off of the Cow Path and Miss Hazen brightened perceptibly.

"We are getting near home," she remarked. "Our house is on the next corner."

"Oh, is it?" Sally asked. "What street is this?" [104]

"This is Box Elder and our house is on the corner of Apple Tree."

Sally laughed. "How funny!" she said. "And what pretty names!"

"We think they are pretty names. Now, here we are."

They were just turning in between granite gateposts that were green with dampness, and Sally looked up with a lively interest. She caught a glimpse of a wooden front fence of three octagonal rails; but it was only a glimpse, for the view was cut off, almost immediately, by the row of great evergreens which stood just back of the fence. There were two other evergreens in the middle of the plot of lawn, and the elms on the streets stretched their branches far over, nearly to the house. Altogether, it gave a depressing effect of gloom and decay, which the aspect of the house itself did not tend to relieve.

It was a wooden house, large and square, although not so large as those on the Cow Path. It had a deeply recessed doorway with four wooden columns extending up two stories to support the gable. The house was not clap-boarded, but was smooth and sanded and its surface was grooved to look like stone. It might once have been a fair imitation of granite, but the time was in the distant past when the old house would have fooled even the most casual observer. And it gave them no welcome; nobody opened the door at their approach, or, at least, nobody on the inside. The door did not open until Cousin Martha opened it herself, disclosing a dark and gloomy interior.

"Come in, Sally," she said; "and you, too, Mr. Sanderson, if you please. If you will wait in the parlor for a moment, I will see about some breakfast for you. I have no doubt you are both hungry as well as Charlie. We have had our breakfast."

Sally wondered who the "we" might be. It had not occurred to her until that moment that there might be somebody else in that great gloomy house besides Cousin Martha.

"Sally," cried Charlie fretfully as they entered the dark parlor. "I want to go home. I want to go [105] to my own home, Sally."

"Hush, Charlie," said Sally. "This is our home now. Hush. Cousin Martha may hear you."

Charlie would not hush. He was tired and hungry, although they had had an apology for a breakfast, the remains of their cold lunch, before six o'clock.

"Isn't my home. This old house isn't—"

The words died on his lips; for there was a sound behind the half-opened folding-doors at the end of the long room, and an old man appeared there. He seemed to Sally to be a very old man. He had a long white beard and stooped slightly as he made his way slowly toward them.

"Is this Sarah Ladue?" he asked as he came forward. He came near Sally and held out his hand.

"Yes, sir," answered Sally doubtfully, laying her hand in his. "It's Sally."

The old man must have detected the doubt. "Well, Sally," he said kindly, "I am your father's uncle, your Cousin Patty's father." So Cousin Martha and Cousin Patty were one.

"Oh!" returned Sally quickly. "I thought—that is, I'm very glad to see you."

The old gentleman smiled quietly. "And I'm very glad to see you. Don't you want to come into the back parlor? There's a fire in there. You, too, sir," turning to Fox.

"I forgot," interrupted Sally. "I am always forgetting to do it. This is Mr. Sanderson. He is a *very* kind friend of ours. He came all the way with us just to see that we got here safely. And this is Charlie, sir."

"I am happy to meet a very kind friend of Sally's," the old gentleman said, shaking hands with Fox. "From what I hear, she is in need of kind friends." He held his hand out to Charlie. "Will this little boy shake hands with his Uncle John?"

That appeared to be the last thing that Charlie wished to do, but he did it, sulkily, without a [106] word. Then the old gentleman led the way slowly into the back parlor.

Sally remembered, now, that she had heard her father speak of John Hazen—John Hazen, Junior—with that sneering laugh of his; that cold, mirthless laugh with which he managed to cast

ridicule upon anything or anybody. This nice old gentleman must be John Hazen, Junior. But why should a stooping old man with a long white beard be called Junior? Why, on earth, Sally wondered. Surely, such an old man—she would speak to Cousin Martha about it. Perhaps Cousin Martha had a brother who was John, Junior. As for Cousin Martha's father, she had always taken it for granted that he was a disembodied spirit.

There was a coal fire bubbling in the grate in the back parlor. A great easy-chair was drawn up to the fire, and beside it, on the floor, lay the morning paper, where Uncle John had dropped it. There were other easy-chairs in the room, and books and magazines were scattered over the centre table. The centre table had a much-stained green cloth top, Sally noticed. Altogether, this room was cheerful, in its own way, as any room which is lived in must be; as the great front parlor was not. Its way was not the way Sally had been used to. It was too dark, to begin with, and the heavy curtains only half drawn back from the windows kept out most of the light which managed to straggle past the trees.

The old gentleman began to place other chairs, but Fox did it for him.

"Thank you," he said. "And now, as soon as Patty comes back, I shall have to leave you, if you will excuse me. I usually go downtown earlier than this, but I wished to see Sally before I went. I hope you will make yourselves quite at home."

Consideration of just this kind was a new thing for Sally.

"Oh, thank you," she cried, flushing with pleasure. "It was very nice of you to want to wait for me."

The old gentleman again smiled his quiet smile; but before he could say anything, Cousin Martha came in. [107]

"I have some breakfast for you," she announced. "Will you go to your rooms first, or have something to eat first?"

There was no room for doubt as to Charlie's preference in the matter. Miss Hazen smiled.

"Very well, then," she said. "I think that will be better. Have your breakfast while it is hot. Then I can take you up and get you settled. The trunks will have got here by that time."

"I will go now, Patty," said her father, "if you will be good enough to help me with my overcoat."

So she stopped in the hall and held his coat and he bade good-bye to every one by name, and went out slowly.

"Does Uncle John go downtown every day?" Sally asked, soon after. She was busy with her breakfast.

"Oh, mercy, yes," Miss Hazen replied. "He is as well able to attend to his business as ever. And he always walks, unless it is very bad walking: icy or very muddy. I am afraid that he might slip and fall, and old bones, you know, do not mend easily."

"Is he—is he," Sally went on, hesitating, "John Hazen, Junior?"

"Yes," answered Cousin Martha. "He has kept the Junior."

Sally did not know just what she meant by that. "I've heard my father speak of John Hazen, Junior," she remarked, "and I didn't know but, perhaps, I might have a Cousin John."

[108]

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[109]

BOOK II

[110]

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[111]

CHAPTER I

ToC

Sally was tolerably happy after she got settled. She had cried a few tears into Fox's coat when

he was going away and she had sent many messages to Henrietta and to Doctor Galen and to her mother, although she knew that her mother would receive them with her pitiful, vacant smile and would go on wondering where Sally was. She had been told, of course, over and over, but could not seem to grasp the reason or, indeed, the fact.

Sally had wiped her eyes and sighed. "I'm not going to cry any more," she had said; "and I shan't be unhappy, Fox. I just won't be."

"You've had a good deal to make you unhappy, Sally," Fox had replied gently, "but I do hope that you won't be. You can trust Doctor Galen to do the very best for your mother."

"Yes," Sally had returned, smiling; "you and Doctor Galen. You forgot, Fox. And I'm glad that father has gone away. I'm glad—glad," Sally cried passionately. "He didn't do a thing for mother. He only liked to make her feel bad. She'd have died if he'd stayed. And I hope you'll never find him. I hope you never will."

"We're not breaking our necks, trying."

"I'm glad of it. Oh, Fox, I've never said such a thing before, and I never will again. But I just had to or I should have burst. Don't you tell, will you? Don't ever tell *anybody*."

Fox had promised and had kissed her and had started back, feeling comforted. It was very much better than he had expected, and Sally had made up her mind. There was everything in that.

Sally woke early the next morning. It was not quite light, if it ever could be said to be quite [112] light in that house. But a little light had begun to filter in around the curtains, and Sally looked about the great, dim room, wondering for a moment where she was. Then she remembered; she remembered, too, that Uncle John had breakfast early. Cousin Martha had forgotten to tell her at what time to get up, but there could be no harm in getting up now. Charlie had a little room off her own big one, probably the dressing-room. At that instant Charlie appeared, wandering hesitatingly, clad only in his little pajamas, which had caused some surprise on Cousin Martha's part.

"Oh, how very cunning!" she had exclaimed, as Sally unpacked them.

Now Charlie made a dive for Sally's bed. "I want to get in with you, Sally."

But Sally thought that they had better get dressed, and said so. When Sally said things in that way, there was no appeal, and Charlie submitted, with not more objection than would have been expected, to a rapid sponge; for it had not occurred to Sally, the night before, to find out about a bathtub. It might very well be that the house had been built before the era of bathtubs and that no such useless encumbrance had been added. Cousin Martha herself solved that difficulty for her. There was a gentle tap at her door.

"Sally," called Cousin Martha's voice, "here is your hot water. Do you know about the tub?"

"No," answered Sally, opening the door; "Charlie's had his bath, Cousin Martha, as good a one as I could give him, but I haven't."

"You didn't splash water over the floor, did you?" Cousin Martha asked anxiously, scrutinizing the floor for any signs of wetting.

"I tried not to," Sally replied. "It's hardly light enough to make sure."

Miss Hazen had disappeared into Charlie's room and now reappeared bringing a tub. It was a large shallow pan, a sort of glorified milk pan, and might have been made of cast iron, judging [113] from the way Miss Hazen carried it. It was not of cast iron, but of tin; the kind of tin that cannot be got in these days, even for love.

"There!" said she, setting it down.

"Thank you, Cousin Martha. It will be nice to have that. But you don't need to bring us hot water. We don't use it."

"Why, Sally!" Cousin Martha cried in a horrified voice. "You don't bathe in cold water!" Sally nodded. "Not tempered at all?"

"Just cold water," Sally responded.

"But it will be very cold, later on," remonstrated Cousin Martha. "The water sometimes freezes in the pitcher."

Sally chuckled. "Long as it doesn't freeze solid it's all right. I like it very cold. It prickles and stings me all over. We like it cold, don't we, Charlie?"

Charlie grunted. He did not seem enthusiastic. Miss Hazen sighed as she shut the door.

Breakfast was over, Uncle John had gone, and things had pretty well settled down for the day, and it still seemed very early to Sally. She and Charlie wandered in the yard before eight o'clock. That yard seemed very restricted. In the first place, it was bounded on every side except the front by a high wooden fence. The top of the fence was just about level with the top of Sally's head, so that she couldn't see over it without jumping up or climbing on something. Sally had thought of climbing, of course; but, first, she had to get Charlie acquainted with the yard, so that he would stay down contentedly. Charlie had not yet developed any particular aptitude for climbing trees.

They wandered to the stable, which was at the back of the house, a little to one side, and opened directly upon Box Elder Street. Here they found the man attending to his duties about the

stout horse. That man paid but little attention to the children, but continued his work in a leisurely manner. No doubt this was praiseworthy on his part, but it was not what the children had hoped for, and they soon wandered out again and went towards the back of the yard. Here [114] was a vegetable garden on one side and a flower garden on the other, together stretching across from Box Elder Street to a little street that was scarcely more than a lane. Sally had been in Whitby a long time before she found that this was Hazen's Lane. It was most natural to speak of it as "The Lane," and "The Lane" it was.

Back of the two gardens was another high wooden fence; and behind the fence was a row of maples bordering a street. Sally knew it was a street because she could see, over the top of the fence, the fronts of two houses on the other side of it.

"Oh, dear!" she sighed. "There doesn't seem to be anything very interesting here, does there, Charlie? You can't even see farther than across the street. I suppose Cousin Martha wouldn't like it if we should dig, for there isn't any place to dig but the garden."

Charlie began to whimper.

At this moment there came a thump on the fence at the corner of the Lane. The thumping continued, in a rhythmical manner, as if it were in time with somebody's walking, and progressed slowly along the Lane. Presently there was a double thump at each step, and Sally saw two cloth caps, exactly alike, bobbing up and down, almost disappearing behind the fence at each downward bob.

"It looks like twins," she said.

"Follow 'em along," said Charlie, in some excitement. "Come on, Sally."

So they followed 'em along until the twin caps had got almost opposite the house. Then two shrill voices broke into sudden song.

> "Monkey married the baboon's sister,
> Smacked his lips and then he kissed 'er;
> Kissed so hard he—"

Sally had jumped up on the stringer of the fence, just where the caps would be at the next step. "It is, Charlie!" she cried.

The owners of the two caps had jumped away with an alacrity born of experience, and had [115] started to run. They looked back and stopped.

"Hello!" they cried, together, in surprise. "Is wh—wh—what, Ch—Ch—Charlie?"

"Twins," Sally answered in triumph; "aren't you?"

The twins nodded. "C—c—course we are," said one. "Any—any—any—b—ody know that."

"Wh—wh—what's your n—n—name?" asked the other.

"And wh—wh—who's Ch—Ch—Charlie?"

"My name is Sally Ladue," replied Sally, "and Charlie's my brother." Charlie popped his head above the fence. "We've come," she continued, thinking that she might save the twins the painful process of speech, "we've come to live here."

"W—w—with P—P—Patty H.?" asked one of the twins, in a hoarse whisper.

It was impossible for any one who was not very familiar with them to tell whether it was the same twin who had spoken last or the other one; and Sally had taken her eyes off them when she spoke of Charlie.

"With Uncle John and Cousin Martha," she answered. "I've never called her Patty H. and I don't think it's very respectful."

The twins grinned. "W—w—we c—c—call her P—P—Patty H. be—be—bec—c—cause it's h—h—hard to s—s—say Haa—Ha—Ha—Ha—*Hav*ering."

Sally had hard work to suppress her chuckles. The other twin made no effort to suppress his; he laughed heartlessly.

His brother turned upon him. "Sh—sh—shut up, you b—b—bum, you! You c—c—couldn't s—s—say it."

Sally essayed to be peacemaker. "You know," she said hesitatingly, "that you are so much alike that I can't tell you apart. You're just like Tweedledum and Tweedledee, and you seem to quarrel just the same as they did. Now, you're Tweedledum," she went on, pointing at one, and then at the other, "and you're Tweedledee. If Dum would wear a red ribbon in his buttonhole and Dee [116] would wear a blue one, I should know. It's very convenient to know."

The idea of wearing ribbons in their buttonholes did not seem to strike the twins favorably. They shook their heads.

"Well," said Sally hastily, "there's another thing: you were thumping on the fence and singing —"

"We c—c—can s—s—sing all right when we c—c—can't t—t—talk. S—some d—days are go—g—good for t—talking and s—some are b—b—bad. Th—this is a b—bad d—day."

"Yes, I suppose so. But what I was going to say was this: you were singing something that may

have been meant to plague Cousin Martha. I want you to promise not to try to plague her. You will promise, won't you?"

The twins grinned again and promised with evident reluctance.

"You g—going to our s—s—school?" inquired Dum suddenly.

"I don't know about schools," Sally replied. "I suppose I'm going to some school, and Charlie, too."

"Ours," Dum began; but at the mention of school Dee started.

"G—g—gee!" he exclaimed. "We g—g—got to h—h—hurry or we'll be l—late. C—c—come on."

The twins were gone. Sally and Charlie got down from the fence.

"They were a funny pair, weren't they, Charlie?"

"Yes, they were. Now, Sally," Charlie went on dismally, "what you goin' to do?"

Sally sighed. It was not nine o'clock and Charlie was in the dumps already. She looked around and there was Miss Hazen just coming out of the front door.

"There's Cousin Martha, Charlie. Let's go and meet her."

Charlie was not in a state to be enthusiastic about anything, certainly not about Cousin Martha. He didn't care; but he went, in a condition of dismal melancholy that touched her. [117]

"Homesick, poor child!" she murmured. "Charlie," she said aloud, "I am going downtown in the carriage, to do some errands. Don't you want to go? You and Sally?"

Charlie thereupon brightened perceptibly. "I'll go if you want me to."

Cousin Martha smiled and turned to Sally, who accepted. "Although," she said, "I want to write a letter. But I suppose there'll be plenty of time after we get back. We've just been talking with the funniest pair of twins. They stutter."

Miss Hazen sighed. "I know. I heard them banging on the fence. They are the Carling twins. Their names are Henry and Horace."

"Harry and Horry," cried Sally. "But which is older?"

"Mercy! I don't know," Cousin Martha answered. "I can't tell them apart. One is just as bad as the other."

"I've an idea," Sally remarked, "that they aren't going to be so bad."

Cousin Martha looked curiously at Sally, but she said nothing and just then the carriage came.

Miss Hazen seemed to find especial delight in Charlie's society on that drive. She talked to him more and more while she went to do her errands. Charlie, on the whole, was not an especially attractive child. He was a handsome boy, but he was apt to be dissatisfied and discontented, which gave his face the kind of expression which such a disposition always gives. He seemed to be developing some of the characteristics of his father. Not that Sally was aware of the characteristics Charlie was developing. Charlie was Charlie, that was all. She saw too much of him—had had the care of him too continuously—to realize the little resemblances which might be evident to one who had less to do with him. It is not unlikely that Miss Hazen realized those resemblances, although she may not have been conscious of it, and that it was just that which was endearing him to her.

Whatever the reason, Cousin Martha got to taking him with her at every opportunity. Charlie [118] was in school every morning, for one of Miss Hazen's errands, on that first day, had been to arrange for school for both Sally and Charlie. Charlie, being at school every morning except Saturday, could not accompany Cousin Martha on her drives in the mornings. Consequently, Cousin Martha changed her habit of more than twenty years' standing and drove in the afternoon. Her father smiled when he heard of it and looked from Charlie to Sally.

"I know of no reason, Patty," he observed quietly, "why the afternoon is not as good a time for driving as the morning. Doesn't this little girl go?"

"Not very often, Uncle John," Sally replied, smiling up at him. "I'm—I'm very busy, and—and I'd rather go anywhere on my own feet."

He patted her head and smiled. He liked to go anywhere on his own feet, too.

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[119]

CHAPTER II

ToC

It was a blustery Saturday toward the last of March. Sally had written her letter to Fox and one

to Doctor Galen, more to take up time than because she had anything to say that she thought was worth saying; but the kind doctor seemed to like to get her rather infrequent letters, and he always answered them, although his answers were rather short. But what could she expect of a doctor who was as busy as Doctor Galen? Not much, truly. Cousin Martha had told her so. Perhaps I had better call her Patty. Everybody called her Patty or Miss Patty. Even Sally had fallen into that habit. Miss Patty may have preferred it or she may not have; her preference did not seem to matter. As I was saying, Cousin Patty had told her so, and had intended the telling, it seemed to Sally, rather as a rebuke. Now, Sally did not know why she should be rebuked,—for her conscience was clear. But the fame of Doctor Galen had gone forth in the land and Cousin Patty considered it a great honor that any one of her family connections was under his care. Hence her seeming rebuke.

Sally had finished her letter to the doctor and it was only half-past eight. She sighed as the hall clock—which, by the way, was in the back parlor—struck the half-hour, solemnly, as if it were aware of the importance of its office. That tall clock did its whole duty conscientiously—with Uncle John's help. Sally sat gazing at the clock and meditating. It was no less than astonishing, when you came to think of it, what a lot of things in that house depended upon Uncle John's help. He never made a show of giving it, but a quiet word here and a calm smile there did wonders. He was a regulator, that was what he was; a sort of a pendulum, to make things go right. Sally had become very fond of Uncle John. Cousin Patty—well—she seemed to need a regulator, not to put [120] it any more strongly. Sally smiled as the idea crossed her mind, and she took the end of the pen-holder from its place between her teeth and returned to the perusal of her letter.

Sally always read over her letters, and, having read this one over, she added a postscript telling the doctor—a very private joke between him and her—of Cousin Patty's rebuke. She knew that he would be amused. When she had the doctor's letter sealed, she looked up again at the clock.

"Oh, dear!" she murmured; "it must have stopped." She knew very well that the clock would not be guilty of such misbehavior as long as it had Uncle John's help. "I'll write to Henrietta."

To tell the truth, Sally had not missed Henrietta one half as much as she had missed Fox, but if she did not write her very often it was simply because she forgot it. When she remembered, she was always very sorry and wrote frequently, until she forgot again. Sally's letters to Henrietta came in bunches, with intervals of a month or more between the bunches.

She had not got very far on this one when Uncle John came in. He was very late that morning.

"Sally," he said, "they are flying kites in the Lot. You may like to see them."

For, as I said at the beginning, before I was led off into this digression, it was a blustery Saturday in March.

"Oh!" Sally cried, pushing back her chair. "Are they? Do you mind, Uncle John, if I climb a tree on that side? You can't see over the wall, you know."

Mr. Hazen smiled quietly. "Climb any tree you like," he replied. "You will be careful, Sally, I know; careful of yourself and of the trees. But where is Charlie?"

"Cousin Patty is getting him ready to go out with her." Sally was pretty well relieved of the care of Charlie by this time. "I'll finish this letter when I come in."

She jumped up, snatched up her hood and her coat and slipped her hand into Uncle John's and [121] they went out together. They parted at the foot of the steps and Mr. Hazen walked slowly downtown, smiling to himself in a satisfied way.

Just across Box Elder Street was a high wall. It seemed to Sally to be at least twenty feet high; and the builder of that wall had added insult to injury by cementing it smoothly on the outside—Sally had never seen the inside of it—and by capping it with a smooth and projecting wooden roof. The wooden roof was no longer smooth, but warped with the sun and the rains of many years, and the mouldings on the under edges were coming away in places. But the wall was still absolutely unclimbable, although it was possible to see over it from the upper windows of the house or from the evergreens which surrounded it. Sally preferred the evergreens. To be sure, their heavy branches somewhat interfered with the view, but, at least, they were trees and they were out of doors.

When Sally had found a comfortable perch in a spruce, she looked over into the Lot. The Lot was a relic of the past; of twenty-five or thirty years past. Its latest useful service had been, according to internal evidence, as a cornfield. The boys, running across it with their kites, were sure of this, for the hills were still there and made running on it a work of art, especially if there was a kite at the end of a string to need their attention. Indeed, perhaps I was wrong in putting the flying of kites in the class of useless service. At any rate, that was the only use to which Morton's lot had been put for many years. It was called "The Lot." There was no danger of ambiguity in so speaking of it, any more than there was in speaking of Hazen's Lane as "The Lane." No one would have any doubt at all—no one in Sally's set, at least—as to what was referred to, in either case.

Sally looked out as she best could between the branches of her spruce. She couldn't see much, only a little piece of the field at each opening. It was very unsatisfactory. She saw five or six boys, [122] two of them large boys, bending over something which lay upon the ground. Presently the group divided and the boys stood up; and she saw that what they had been working on was a huge kite of the old-fashioned six-sided kind. She saw, too, that the big boys were Everett Morton and Dick Torrington. At that moment the familiar figures of the Carling twins slipped through a break in the high picket fence from the other street. Immediately, Sally scrambled out of the spruce and

ran up Box Elder Street. She had a heightened color, but that might have been due to the exertion of scrambling. It might not have been due to the exertion of scrambling. Scrambling was no unusual exertion for Sally.

Sally's rapid change of base was not because of the restricted view from the tree, although her view was restricted. And it was not because of the Carlings. The Carlings were her devoted slaves; but that fact was an annoyance to her rather than a gratification, and it is conceivable that the presence of the Carlings might have had weight in inducing her to put up with the inconveniences of a restricted view. The object of interest must therefore have been either Everett or Dick or the kite.

At her school Sally was in the fifth class. They did not have forms or grades at that school. Grades are mysterious things which seem to run the wrong way, with no particular point of beginning and no particular ending. A man might be in the fiftieth grade if there were any teachers for it. There seems to be nothing to prevent. But when a boy graduates from the first class, there is a point that brings you up short. Something vital must happen then; and the thing that happens is that the boy either goes to college or goes to work, for it is out of the question to go any farther in that school. You know it without being told.

The boys in Sally's school usually went to college when they graduated from the first class. They were well prepared for it. Everett and Dick were in the first class and they would go away to college in the fall, or, at least, they hoped that they would. There was some doubt about it, for [123]
Dick was rather dull and plodding and Everett was neither dull nor plodding. They were four years ahead of Sally. I cannot tell why she had chosen those two to look up to. It is doubtful whether she could have shown adequate cause either, always supposing that she would have been willing to acknowledge the fact.

Dick was the type of the nice English boy. Sally had never seen an English boy or an English man in her whole life; but that did not prevent her from forming an ideal of the type, to which Dick measured up in every particular. He had light hair and that curious brunette coloring that sometimes goes with it; he was invariably pleasant and polite and deliberate in his speech; and he was generally well dressed. Sally was particular about that, almost finicky. If Dick had shown a tendency to overdressing—but he didn't. He had an air of distinction. He also had a sister, Emily, who was in the second class at school. Sally thought that Emily Torrington was the most beautiful girl she had ever seen. She could not imagine any girl more beautiful.

Everett was a great contrast to Dick in every respect. He had no sister. Everett was an only child and his family was very rich, so that he was in great danger of being spoiled. Not that it made any difference to Sally whether he was rich or not. And Everett was handsome, in quite a different way from Dick, and brilliant and dashing. In short, he was fascinating. Many others than Sally had found him so. It was quite likely that a woman would be more permanently happy and contented with Dick than with Everett. I do not mean to imply that Sally had ever indulged in any such reflection. She may have and she may not have; but he fascinated her, as he had fascinated those others of whom I spoke. He didn't know it. Everett Morton had never spoken to Sally. He had never even noticed her. Dick had in his good-natured, pleasant way, but Dick was always polite. Everett was not—always.

So Sally's heart was beating a little rapidly when she pushed through the break in the fence. [124]
But she had been running, you remember, for a square and a half.

The big kite was up on end, with one of the smaller boys holding it. It was a huge kite, nearly twice the height of the boy that held it and the top of it was a good foot above Everett's head as he stood in front of it; so big that they had a rope to fly it with, and the end of the rope was tied around Everett's waist. The smaller boys, of course, were clustered about the kite, the Carlings among them. Then Dick and Everett took the rope in their hands, called to the boy to let go, and began to run; and the kite rose, evenly at first, then twitching viciously from side to side. Then it hesitated for an instant, as the tail, dragging on the ground, caught around the legs of one of the Carlings. Sally had not yet become able to tell them apart, at any distance. She saw him struggle, go down with his feet in the air and with the tail of the kite still wrapped around them. She saw the other twin precipitate himself upon the fallen one, try vainly to undo the tail, then busy himself with one of his brother's shoes. The kite suddenly soared, bearing aloft, tied firmly into its tail, a shoe.

The twins remained upon the ground, one pounding the other. Sally thought that the pounded one had already had punishment enough and she ran toward them.

"You j—jay!" cried the upper twin to the under twin, as she came near. "You b—b—bum, you! D—don't you kn—know any b—b—better 'n t—to g—get c—c—caught th—that way? You—"

"Sh—sh—shut up," yelled the under twin, struggling wildly, "y—y—you r—r—rotten old b—beat! L—l—lemmeup!"

"Here," said Sally, imperatively, "let him up. Stop pounding him."

Harry stopped his pounding of Horry and both of the twins looked up, Harry with a sheepish grin and Horry with an expression of the most profound relief.

"S—S—Sally!" they began, in unison. "Oh, I ain't h—h—hurtin' 'im," continued Harry. "Oh, h—h [125]
—he ain't h—h—hurtin' m—me," said Horry.

Sally laughed. "Well," she said, "you'll get up." She took Harry by the shoulder. "It's positively disgraceful the way you brothers fight."

Harry got up slowly. "B—b—brothers always f—f—fight," he said apologetically, "if th—th—they're an—an—any—wh—where ne—n—near th—the s—s—same s—size. H—H—Horry 'n-n' I are j—just th—the s—s—same s—s—size. B—b—but I n—n—never h—hurt 'im," he added magnanimously.

Horry had got up, and was standing on one leg, with his stockinged foot against his other knee. He made Sally think of a belligerent stork.

"Y—yer c—c—couldn't, th—that's wh—why," he yelled. Then, sticking his head forward until his face was almost touching his brother's, he vented his scorn in a single yell. "Y—a—ah!"

This was too much for Harry's imitation of goodness, and he gave chase at once. Horry, handicapped by the loss of one shoe, which was now almost out of sight, had made but two jumps when Harry caught him. They clinched and went down in a heap. Sally couldn't tell whether the stockinged foot belonged to the under or the upper twin. She laughed again. They seemed to prefer to fight anyway, so why not let them?

The kite was now up as far as it could go. The rope was all out, and Everett was holding to a post of the fence. Dick came running over the field toward the prostrate twins.

"Here, you twins!" he called. "Stop your fighting. Get up!"

He seized the upper twin, jerked him to his feet and gave him a shake. It proved to be Horry.

"L—l—lemme 'l—l—lone!" cried Horry. "I ain't d—doin' an—an—yth—thing to y—you. Wh—wh—where's m—m—my sh—shoe? G—g—gimme m—my sh—shoe."

Harry scrambled to his feet. "Y—you l—l—let m—m—my b—brother al—l—lone, D—Dick. P— [126]
pitch in, H—H—Horry."

Accordingly they both pitched in. Dick had his hands full for a minute. Sally ran up.

"Everett is calling you."

"Pugnacious little beggars!" said Dick.

He knocked their heads together, gently, and ran off, leaving the twins with blazing eyes, looking after him. They began to splutter.

"It's all entirely your own fault," Sally began hastily, "and you know it. Look at the kite."

The kite was pitching in the gusty wind. The tail was not long enough nor the rope either. Occasionally it would dive head down, but Everett always managed to check it, and it rose again, twitching from side to side.

"M—m—my sh—shoe!" Horry cried, after one of the dives. He started off over the field. "I'm g—g—goin' t—to g—g—get it."

The kite dived again, straight down. Horry was almost under it, the sight of his shoe, not more than a hundred feet above his head, making him reckless—if anything was needed to make him so.

"Horry!" Sally called anxiously. "Come away. You'll get hurt."

But he showed no disposition to come away. He followed the kite, keeping just under it, his arms upraised. Sally ran towards him; and at that moment Everett succeeded in checking the downward dive of the great kite, which rose slowly, tugging and twitching at its rope viciously. It was like a live thing compelled to go up against its will and determined to come down. It was pretty low now and it seemed likely that the kite would have its way.

Dick seemed to think so. "It's no use, Ev," he said. "Better let it down easy and we'll put on more ballast."

Everett gritted his teeth and made no reply. If any kite was to get the better of him, it would [127]
have to fight for it. He wouldn't give in.

"You'll have it smashed up," Dick warned him quietly.

As he spoke, the kite gave two violent pitches and dived once more. Even Everett could not stop it and it came down like lightning, straight at Horry Carling. Sally saw it and so did Horry. Horry seemed to be paralyzed; and Sally precipitated herself upon him, bearing him to the ground, but a little away from the kite. The next instant the heavy kite struck the ground with great force and two of its sticks broke. It had struck Sally on her outstretched left foot and may have broken something more than kite sticks.

The broken kite fell over upon Sally and Horry. Horry began to struggle.

"L—l—lemme g—g—get out," he yelled.

"Keep still!" said Sally. "I'll get up and then—oh!" Sally was already part way up. There was a terrible pain in her left leg. She felt dizzy. "I—I think—I'll lie down," she murmured; and she fainted.

Sally opened her eyes presently, and smiled vaguely. The kite was gone, she was lying upon her back and Everett and Dick were bending over her, while the Carlings and the other small boys gazed in awe-struck silence.

"Where's the kite?" Sally asked weakly. She was not quite herself yet.

"Never mind about the kite, Sally," Dick answered; "it's broken and I'm glad of it. Where did it hit you?"

"I've a pain in my left leg," said Sally. "It's a pretty hard pain."

Her lips were white as she spoke, and she pressed them together to stop their quivering. She did not mean to cry.

"We'll carry you in," said Dick.

So he and Everett made a chair by crossing their hands, each hand clasping one of the other boy's. Then they stooped down and Sally managed to sit upon their clasped hands. It was the first time that she had seen this device.

"I'm afraid I shall fall off," she said. "Do you mind if I hold on to you?" [128]

Dick laughed quietly. "Put your arms round our necks and you won't fall. It's as easy as a cradle."

Sally's color was quite restored and she was conscious of no pain as she made a triumphal progress along Box Elder Street with one arm about Dick's neck and the other about Everett's. The Carling twins followed closely, Horry absent-mindedly carrying his shoe in his hand, and the other boys came after.

As Dick and Everett started to carry her upstairs, it was the happiest moment that Sally had ever known.

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[129]

CHAPTER III

ToC

Cousin Patty was in Sally's room. Cousin Patty was not, as it chanced, fully dressed.

"Well, Sally," she said, going towards the door, "I must go. It's almost time for the doctor." She paused an instant, then went on plaintively. "He hasn't been here, except professionally, for a long time—some years. But there was a time when he came often." Miss Hazen sighed involuntarily.

The sigh was long and quivering and it interested Sally. "Oh, Cousin Patty," she said eagerly, "will you tell me about it—about that time, I mean?"

Cousin Patty looked at Sally with the soft light of reminiscence in her eyes. "Oh, well," she replied, with affected carelessness and laughing lightly, "perhaps I will, if you are really interested to hear about it. Now I must go, but I'll be back in a few minutes."

She went out and shut the door; and Sally heard a muffled shriek and Cousin Patty's door slammed. An instant later, her own door opened and Doctor Beatty appeared. He was smiling.

"Nearly scared Patty into a fit," he said. "She ought to know my habits by this time."

Miss Patty soon came in again, clothed but not quite in her right mind. Her color was still high and she seemed a little flustered. Doctor Beatty did not turn around.

"Oh, there you are, Patty," he said. "I won't look, you know, until you give the word."

"How absurd!" Miss Patty exclaimed. She meant to be very dignified, but she was very nearly smiling. "But that is to be expected. You always were absurd."

The doctor's visit was a long one; and, when it was done, Miss Patty went to the door with him.

"It has seemed quite like old times," she said softly. [130]

For a moment the doctor did not know what she was talking about. "What?" he asked blankly. "Oh, yes, it has, more or less, hasn't it? Good-bye, Patty. Keep your liver on the job. You're looking a little bit yellow."

There were tears in Miss Patty's eyes when she went back to sit with Sally.

"Doctor Beatty," she remarked after a short silence, "is not what he was in the old days. He seems to have coarsened."

Sally did not know what reply to make, so she made none.

"He never used to say anything about my—my liver," resumed Miss Patty, "when he called. He was practising then, too. It is painful to me to see such a change in a man like him. Now, in the old days, when he used to be here a great deal,—a *very* great deal, Sally,—he was not at all like that." And Miss Patty sighed.

Just then the maid came up to announce the Carlings.

"An', Miss Patty," she continued significantly, "Charlie's in the kitchen."

"Oh, is he? I'll come right down and get him." The maid withdrew. "The dear little boy!" said Miss Patty. "I suppose he's eating what he ought not to. I'd like to let him have anything he

wants, but I know it wouldn't be good for him."

She rose rather hastily, but paused with her hand on the door. "Of course, Sally," she said with a short little laugh, "you are not to think that I had any—Oh, here are the twins, Sally."

Miss Patty fled and the Carlings entered.

"H—h—hello, Sally," they cried. "H—h—how's your l—l—leg?"

Sally laughed. "It's my foot, not my leg, and it doesn't hurt me at all, hardly."

This appeared to upset the concerted programme of the twins.

"B—but y—you s—s—said your l—l—leg hurt," objected Harry. [131]

"Well, so it did," Sally replied; "but it's my foot that's broken."

"Your f—f—foot b—b—broken!" said Horry in astonishment. "H—h—how c—can a f—f—foot b—be b—b—broken? D—d—does it w—work ar—r—round?"

"Not now, for it's all done up stiff in bandages."

Horry was not allowed to pursue his inquiries, for the maid was at the door again, announcing Richard Torrington. Sally sat up straighter, and her cheeks were flushed and her eyes rather bright. The twins eyed her with suspicion.

As they passed down the broad stairs Harry nudged Horry again.

"S—S—S—al—l—ly's s—stuck on D—D—Dick," he whispered.

"S—s—sing it," said Horry, chuckling.

"W—w—won't d—do it," replied Harry indignantly. His indignation rose at every step. "Y—you r—r—rotten b—bum, y—you! W—w—wanted t—to m—m—make m—me m—m—make a f—f—" The front door banged behind the twins, and Sally heard no more.

She had heard Harry's whispered remark and had glanced fearfully at Dick. He seemed unconscious, and a great joy surged in Sally's heart.

The first morning that Sally came downstairs—on crutches—she managed her crutches unskillfully and fell half the flight. Uncle John and Cousin Patty, followed closely by Charlie, hurried to her. Uncle John was the most alarmed. He stooped and would have raised her head, but Sally saved him that trouble and smiled at him.

"I'm not hurt one mite," she said. She was not. "Wasn't I lucky?"

He gave a great sigh of relief.

"I was afraid," he replied. "I'm thankful that you're not. Are you sure, Sally?" he asked anxiously.

"Oh, yes, I'm sure." And, to convince him, Sally jumped up, nimbly, and hopped about on one [132] foot.

Uncle John smiled. "It isn't very wise to try such experiments. Now, you're to sit beside me at the table, hereafter. We can't risk that foot, for it would be more of a misfortune to our Sally and to us if anything serious happened to it than she realizes."

Sally had noted the way he spoke of "our Sally"; it was affectionate, genuinely so. There could not be the least doubt about it.

"Now," he continued, "you will please to take my arm."

"Oh, father," remonstrated Miss Patty, "is it safe?"

"Quite safe, Patty," he returned quietly, "and I wish it."

It is not to be wondered at if Sally squeezed his arm a little. She could not say what she wanted to, right there before Cousin Patty and Charlie. It is hard to see why she couldn't, but Uncle John seemed to understand; and they walked solemnly in to breakfast, Sally wielding one crutch and Uncle John the other.

"We're two old cripples, Sally," said he.

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[133]

CHAPTER IV

ToC

Sally wrote Fox about it all, of course. There would have been no excuse for her if she had not; and she wrote Henrietta, too, although she had some difficulty in making the two letters cover the same ground without saying the same thing. This was one of the times when Sally's letters to Henrietta came in bunches. She alluded to her accident in one of her letters to Doctor Galen, and

he answered it almost immediately, giving her four pages of excellent advice and ending by taking it all back.

"Fox tells me," he wrote, "that you have Meriwether Beatty looking after you. In that case please consider all this unsaid. I know something of Doctor Beatty and I am sure you couldn't be in better hands—unless in the hands of Doctor Fox Sanderson. Have you heard that Fox has decided to be a doctor and that he is studying with me besides taking his course in the medical school?"

No, Sally had not heard it. Fox was strangely reticent about himself. He had not mentioned, even, that he had found a tenant for their house; a tenant who would respect all of Sally's little affections—or great affections, if you prefer—for trees from which the gynesaurus had been wont to gaze out over the coal swamps, ages ago; a tenant who, strangely enough, was named Sanderson. She learned this piece of news, or inferred it, from one of Henrietta's letters. Henrietta had supposed that Sally knew it already.

Sally was feeling very tenderly affectionate towards Fox over this news, and very much elated over the doctor's announcement, for it could hardly fail to be evident what prosperity for Fox was implied in Doctor Galen's great good will. She wrote to Fox at once, congratulating him.

"Everybody here seems to think that Doctor Galen is It, and so do I," she went on. "I read Doctor Beatty what Doctor Galen said about him, and you ought to have seen him. He looked [134] pleased as he could be and he smiled—he tried not to—and he positively blushed. Then he began to talk about my foot, but my foot is not worth talking about now. It is almost well. I go about quite easily with my crutches and Uncle John takes me for a walk every morning, before he goes downtown. It makes him late in getting down, but he doesn't seem to mind. Uncle John and I have got quite fond of each other. Really, Fox, Uncle John is the best person here. He is so kind and thoughtful and, Fox, so polite! His politeness seems to be a part of him. Yes, I am very fond of Uncle John. Of course, I am fond of Cousin Patty, too, but I like Uncle John more.

"And there are other ways I have of going out. Dick Torrington has come in every afternoon since I hurt my foot, and, now that I can get about so well, he takes me for a walk. It's very slow business for him, of course, but he doesn't seem to mind, either. It's astonishing how many people don't seem to mind. Dick is *very* nice and kind and satisfying. He reminds me of you in many ways. He always treats me like a person,—as if I were as old as he is,—not as if I was only a little girl and of no consequence, as Everett Morton seems to think. Dick seems to *like* to take me out. He is going to take his examinations for Harvard this June, and he is a little afraid he won't pass. He failed in a good many of his preliminaries—is that spelled right?—last year. He isn't very quick at his studies. He says so himself, so he knows it. I hope he will pass and I wish I could help him. Uncle John says Dick's all right. Uncle John takes me to walk again when he gets back, so that I have walking enough for a little girl with crutches. I shan't need them very much longer, but Doctor Beatty wants me to be careful and not to climb trees for quite a while. There aren't any good trees here.

"I hope you know, Fox, that I am very glad you and Henrietta are living in our house and that I appreciate it. Write me about all the old places, will you?"

Fox smiled with amusement at himself to find that he felt a distinct pang at Sally's account of [135] Dick. If Dick was good to her there was no reason in the world why he should not take her walking as much as he would. But he, Fox, missed her companionship. Sally was one to be missed.

Dick did not succeed very well with his examinations. He had as many conditions as it is permitted to a boy to have, and he had to study hard all that summer. So the walks with Dick became less and less frequent until they ceased altogether. Dick is not to be blamed. Sally was only twelve and he could not have known how much his daily companionship meant to her. If he had known, he would have managed, out of the goodness of his heart, to see her oftener than once a week. Dick was the only intimate friend that Sally had.

Uncle John did not desert her merely because Dick had done so. They became almost inseparable; so much so that old Cap'n Forsyth, chancing to meet Mr. Hazen alone, one afternoon, cried out in astonishment.

"Hello, John!" he cried in his great bluff voice, a voice that had been heard, often, above the roaring of the wind in the rigging and the hissing of the seas. "Hello, John! Where's the other one? Anything the matter with her?"

Uncle John smiled quietly. "I hope not, Stephen. I sincerely hope not. I haven't been home yet, or you wouldn't find me alone, I trust."

"I believe you're in love, John," Cap'n Forsyth cried again. He might have been heard a block away.

The smile had not left Mr. Hazen's face. "I believe I am, Stephen. I believe I am."

"She's worth it, is she?" roared Cap'n Forsyth.

Mr. Hazen nodded. "She's worth it, Stephen."

"I'm glad to hear it, John," Cap'n Forsyth shouted. No doubt he thought he was whispering. "It's getting to be as common a sight—you and Sally—as those Carling nuisances. And Patty's just as bad with that little boy brother of hers. I hope he's worth it, too. Good-bye, John."

There was some doubt in Uncle John's mind as to Charlie's being worth it. He and Patty were [136]

inseparable, too, and Charlie was not improved. He was in imminent danger of being spoiled, if the mischief was not already done. Uncle John sighed and turned homeward. He found Sally sitting on the front steps, waiting for him.

After Dick went, in the fall, Sally had nothing to do but to try to play by herself and devote herself to her studies and miss Dick. She found that she missed him almost as much as she had missed Fox. As for playing by herself, she had had that to do nearly all summer; for, although she had tried, conscientiously, she could not feel any interest in the other girls of her own age. They were uninteresting, somehow. Uncle John was better, and she got into the habit of going down to his office in the afternoons and coming home with him. Miss Patty was very glad to have her do it. It relieved her mind; in case, you know, he should stumble or slip or—or anything else should happen. She felt that Sally was to be relied upon, and so she was; but Miss Patty was putting a rather grave responsibility upon her and she was a little too lonely. It is not good for little girls to be lonely. She was unaware of the responsibility.

Sally's school was a diversion. Diversion seems to be the right word. There were about seventy scholars in the school; and, with six classes, that makes about a dozen scholars to a class, more or less. The lower classes had more and the upper classes, by natural processes of elimination, had less. Sally's class had fourteen; and Sally had no trouble at all in standing at the head of a class of fourteen. It had made Dick envious—no, not envious, for Dick was never that; but it was a constant wonder to him that any one should be able to stand first in fourteen with so little work.

In the great schoolroom, where all the scholars sat when they had no classes to go to, the boys sat on one side and the girls sat on the other. They were given seats according to their rank, the first class at the back of the room and the sixth class right under the eye of the principal, almost [137] under his very hand. In general, this was a good arrangement. It happened, however, that the worst behavior was not in the lowest class, but in the fourth, which was Sally's class. So Sally, from her seat in the fourth row from the front, saw Eugene Spencer, commonly called "Jane," suddenly haled from his seat at her side—Sally sat next to the boys and Jane next to the girls—and, after a severe lecture, assigned a desk within touch of the desk of the principal, Mr. MacDalie.

Jane was a boy of immaculate and ladylike appearance. He listened respectfully to the lecture and received the assignment of the desk with a bow of thanks; all of which behavior was, in itself, unobjectionable. Jane had a knack at that. But it drove the principal, who was a man of irascible temper, into a white-hot rage, which Jane respectfully sat through, apparently undisturbed. A suppressed excitement ran along the rows of boys, who were as if on tiptoe with expectation of what might happen. Sally, herself, was trembling, she found; for it seemed, for a few minutes, as though the principal would do Jane bodily harm. But nothing happened. The white-hot rage cooled quickly, as such rages do; and the principal smiled with amusement, changing in a moment, as such men change, and went on with his hearing of the class in Civil Government.

Sally was very glad that Jane was gone from his seat beside her, for he had almost convulsed her by his pranks on countless occasions and had very nearly made her disgrace herself by laughing aloud. She had fears, however, still; for Jane's new desk was between the principal and the classes that he was hearing, and was on the floor, while the principal's desk was on the platform. Jane, therefore, was, in a measure, concealed from the view of the astute MacDalie, but in full view of the class, which occupied benches a few feet behind him. Moreover, the desks on either side of Jane's—there were three of them in a row, of which Jane occupied the middle one—were occupied, respectively, by the Carlings. The Carlings always occupied those desks. They had [138] got to feeling a sort of proprietorship in them. Jane, however, knew too much to continue his mischief on that day. He was filled to the brim with it, that was all, and it was only a question how long before it would run over.

Sally was glad when the bell called her to a class downstairs; and she sat as if in a trance and watched Jane Spencer gravely fishing in the aquarium tank with a bent pin on the end of a thread. He kept on fishing all through the class hour, unhindered. The single little fish in the tank tugged at the pin occasionally, without result; and, when the bell sounded again, Jane folded up his line and put it in his book.

"No luck," he observed, bowing to the teacher.

"Too bad!" said the teacher sympathetically.

"Yes, isn't it?" said Jane; and he withdrew in good order, leaving the teacher smiling to himself. What was he smiling at, I wonder?

Jane never descended to such behavior as sitting with his feet in his desk, as Oliver Pilcher did. No doubt he considered it undignified and generally bad form, which unquestionably it was. Moreover he would thereby run the risk of getting caught in a situation which he regarded as unprofessional. Oliver Pilcher was caught several times, for it is somewhat difficult to get one's feet out of one's desk as quickly as is necessary to avoid that humiliation. If you do not believe it, try it.

Jane may have tried it or he may not. He preferred a different sort of misbehavior; it was especial balm to his soul to be thought to be misbehaving and then to prove that he was not, for that was a joke on the teacher which was apt, for reasons unknown, to make him hopping mad,

and Jane's end seemed to have been attained when he had made the teacher hopping mad. He was apt to appear to be very inattentive in class, thinking—but I do not know what he was thinking. Even Mr. MacDalie was deceived occasionally. Jane would be sitting, looking out of the [139] window, perhaps, with his book face down beside him, while the Latin translation dragged by painful jerks along the other end of the class. Mr. MacDalie would have noted Jane's attitude, as he noted everything, and would call upon him suddenly and, as he supposed, unexpectedly. And Jane would take up his book, deliberately, and, rising, begin at the very word and give a beautiful and fluent translation until he was stopped. Sally saw that happen four times that half-year.

The last time, the principal smiled broadly and lowered his book.

"Well, Eugene," he said,—he almost called him "Jane,"—"you fooled me nicely. That translation was very nearly perfect."

"Thank you, sir," Jane replied gravely; and he sat down and placed his book, face down again, upon the bench beside him and resumed his gazing out of the window.

One day during Dick's Christmas vacation there was a great sleighing party. There was no reason in the world why Sally should have expected to be asked or wanted to be. She told herself so, many times; but she was disappointed, grievously. Mr. Hazen saw it,—any one could see it plainly,—and, because he could not bear that Sally should feel so, he asked her if she wouldn't oblige him by going sleighing with him. And because she couldn't bear to disappoint Uncle John, Sally went. She was grateful to him, too. So it happened that two people, who would have much preferred going anywhere on their own feet, were wrapped in a buffalo robe,—one of the last of them; a robe of which Mr. Hazen was very proud,—and, thus protected against the cold, were being drawn easily behind the stout horse.

At the bottom of her heart, Sally despised sleighing only a degree less than she despised driving in a carriage. She thought she should like riding, but of riding a horse she knew nothing. She had never in her life been on a horse's back. As for sleighing, she thought, as they drove [140] along, that they might as well be in her room, sitting in a seat that was not wide enough for two, with a buffalo robe tucked around their knees. With the window wide open and bells jingled rhythmically before them and an occasional gentle bounce, the effect would not be so very different. As she thought of this, she began to chuckle at the humor of it. You may not see any humor in the idea, but Sally did.

A sleigh turned the next corner suddenly, and a look of anxiety came into Mr. Hazen's face. "That's Cap'n Forsyth," he said. "A most reckless driver. It's best to give him the road if we can."

Sally recognized the captain, in an old blue sleigh, very strongly built. The captain had need of vehicles that were strongly built and he had them built to his order, like a ship. He was standing up in the sleigh and urging on his horse, which was on the dead run. Captain Forsyth kept the middle of the road and made no attempt to turn out. Perhaps he could not.

"Hello, John," he roared, waving his whip. "Hello, Sally."

The horse must have considered that the waving of the whip was an indication that the captain wanted more speed, and he put on an extra burst of it. Captain Forsyth sat down suddenly. It only amused him.

"What d'ye think o' that, John?" he shouted.

"Turn out, turn out, Stephen!" Mr. Hazen called anxiously. He had not succeeded in getting completely out of the road.

"Can't do it, John," replied the captain, regaining his feet. The old blue sleigh struck the other on the port quarter with a crash. It was not the captain's sleigh that was injured.

"Charge it to me, John," the captain roared. He did not turn even his head. "By the sound I've carried away your after davits. Charge it to me." And Captain Forsyth was borne swiftly away.

That "Charge it to me" rang in Sally's ears as it died away upon the breeze. She picked herself [141] up, laughing. Mr. Hazen was not thrown out and was unhurt. The horse stood quietly.

"Are you hurt, Sally?" asked Uncle John anxiously.

"Not a bit; and you aren't, are you? Now, what shall we do?"

"I think there is enough of the sleigh left to carry us both if we go slowly. If not, we'll have to walk."

Presently Sally burst out into a new fit of chuckling. "How funny Captain Forsyth is! What shall you do, Uncle John? Shall you charge it to him, as he said to do?"

"Oh, yes," Uncle John replied. "It would hurt his feelings, if I didn't. He would consider it unfriendly. He has a good many to pay for."

"He had much better go on his own feet," said Sally reflectively.

CHAPTER V

ToC

Sally was fifteen when the final good news came from Fox. She was in Uncle John's office, waiting until he should be ready to go. Uncle John's office was on the second floor of a little old wooden building where it had always been since Uncle John had had an office. He had chosen it because it stood just at the head of a short street leading to a certain wharf—Hazen's Wharf; and because from its windows one could see the length of the street and the length of the wharf and note what was going on there and how many vessels were fitting. The number of vessels that were fitting was surprisingly great, even now, and Sally could see their yards sticking out over the wharf, although their hulls were mostly hidden behind projecting buildings. That view from his office windows had saved Mr. Hazen many steps in the course of a long life. The fact that the business centre of the town had moved up and had left him stranded disturbed him not at all. He was still in his business centre.

So Sally, thinking vaguely of Fox and Henrietta, sat at a window and watched and was very well content with the view of the harbor and the wharf and the ends of yards sticking over it, and as much of the hulls of vessels as she could see, and the row of oil casks with a rough fence of old ships' sheathing behind them, and the black dust of the street. The black dust was stirred up now and then by the feet of horses and by the wheels of the low, heavy truck that they were dragging. Then a man, with a heavy mallet in his hand, approached the row of casks and began to loosen the bungs. It was an operation that had become familiar to Sally and she knew it to be preparation for the work of the gauger, who would come along later and measure what was in [143] the casks. The man with the mallet and the gauger with his stick were familiar figures.

But certain other familiar figures drew into her view and watched the man loosening the bungs, and seemed to be greatly interested in the proceeding. They were the Carlings and Oliver Pilcher. Sally wondered what mischief they were up to. That they were up to some mischief she had not a doubt. The man with the mallet must have been a very trusting, unsuspicious man. It is not at all likely that the angelic faces of the singing twins and Oliver Pilcher were unknown about the wharves. Even if they were, why, boys are all—even the best of them—they are all cut by the same pattern, or they ought to be. Don't we—you and I—feel a sort of contempt for a boy who is not? And don't we call him "sissy" in our hearts? The other boys will not confine their calls of "sissy" to their hearts and it is likely to go hard with that boy.

When the bungs were all loosened, that trusting man with the mallet meandered slowly away, having paid no attention whatever to the boys who watched him so innocently. Sally saw the Carlings looking after him with an alert attention, whatever there was to be done being evidently postponed until he was out of sight. She could not help thinking how differently Jane Spencer would have acted. He would have disdained to wait for the man to disappear, for there would not be any fun in it for him unless there was some interested person present. But Jane Spencer was Jane Spencer and there was only one of him.

The man must have gone into some building, although Sally couldn't be sure, for she couldn't see; but the twins turned their heads and Oliver Pilcher gave a yell and leaped for the row of casks, closely followed by the Carlings, who began chanting loudly. Sally could not hear the words, but the chant marked the time to which Oliver Pilcher leaped into the air and came down with force and precision upon one bung after another. Just one cask behind him came Harry Carling. Sally supposed it was Harry, for the Carlings always went in that order. One cask behind [144] Harry came Horry; and the casks gave out a hollow sound, in accordance with their degrees of emptiness, after the manner of casks,—especially oil casks,—as the three boys landed on their respective bungs.

The boys disappeared behind the corner of a building, but as the chant continued, it was to be inferred that the exercise was not yet finished; and in a moment back they came in the reverse order, landing on the bungs with the same force and precision. For driving bungs solidly, this method is to be commended.

But Horry, perhaps feeling somewhat hurried as he got to the end, missed his last bung, came down with misdirected force upon the slippery staves and landed on his back in the oil-soaked dust. Harry, unable to stop, landed upon him; but Oliver Pilcher made a sidewise spring and cleared them. The twins had forgotten to sing—the moment was too full of excitement—and were stuttering and pounding each other. Their voices were just beginning to change.

Some sound made Oliver Pilcher turn his head. Evidently, he hated to.

"Cheesit!" he cried, beginning to run before the word was out of his mouth.

Harry did not wait to see what was coming, but got to his feet instantly, dragging Horry by an arm, and ran. Horry protested vehemently, but he ran, and the three boys came up the hill, directly toward the office windows, and disappeared around the corner. Down on the wharf the man with the mallet was patiently loosening the bungs again. They came hard.

Sally gasped and chuckled. "Did you see, Uncle John?" For Uncle John was standing at her elbow. "Whose are they? The barrels, I mean."

"They are mine, Sally," he replied, with a sigh. "I saw some of it."

"Oh, it's too bad," said she quickly, "if they are yours."

"It's no great matter. Patrick has plenty of time. It's only a little annoyance." [145]

"And did you see the back of Horry Carling's jacket?" asked Sally, horrified. "How will he ever get it clean?"

"He can't," answered Uncle John briefly.

"Their mother must have a hard time," said Sally thoughtfully, after a moment of silence. "Are you ready to go now?"

"Just about. Here's a letter for you, from Fox, I suppose. I'll be ready by the time you have read it."

Sally thanked him and took the letter. It contained rather momentous news; news about her mother. It was good news, the best that could be, Sally thought. She had been getting good news about her mother all along. Indeed, she had been getting letters from her mother occasionally for nearly two years; mere notes at first, her dear love, scribbled on a scrap of paper. Then they began to be a little longer and at lessening intervals; and for some months now they had been regular letters, not long, to be sure, but letters. The improvement was slow, very slow!

This news was different. Her mother was well enough, at last, to leave Doctor Galen's care. There were several things that she might do; and Fox suggested that Mrs. Ladue come out to her old home to live. Henrietta and he would be happy to continue there, if that met with the approval of all concerned. There would be money enough to carry on the establishment, he thought. But what were Sally's plans? What did she prefer? Meanwhile—

Sally knew very well whose money there would be enough of, if Fox's suggestion were accepted. It would mean that Fox would support them; for she knew, too, that they did not have money enough. Oh, mercy, no, not nearly enough; not enough even for them to pretend that it would do. But she must be with her mother, and Charlie must, too. She would not let Charlie be a bother. It would be a little harder than it used to be, the care of Charlie, for Cousin Patty had—well—and Sally did not say it, even to herself. She felt that it would be almost treason. What [146]
should she do? What could she do, for that matter? It needed thought.

So Uncle John found a sober and serious Sally waiting for him. He noted it at once.

"What is it, Sally?" he asked. "Not bad news, I hope?"

He spoke rather anxiously. Sally's worries were his concern; and that was not such a bad state of affairs either.

Sally smiled up at him. "Oh, no," she said. "It's good news, but I have to think what I shall do." And she told him all about it.

They were well on their way home by the time Sally had finished her exposition of the question which troubled her. It was too new to her to have been thought out and Sally presented every aspect as it occurred to her.

"It seems to be a large question," said Uncle John thoughtfully, "for a little girl to have to answer, all by herself." Suddenly he turned and looked at Sally. "Bless me! You aren't little any more. I must stop calling you a little girl. How old are you, Sally?"

"Fifteen last spring," Sally replied. "Had you forgotten, Uncle John?"

"No, oh, no, I suppose not, but it is hard to realize that you are growing up so fast. Why, you are nearly as tall as I am. And how long have you been with us?"

"Almost four years, Uncle John."

"Bless me! So you have, Sally. It seems only last week that you came; and yet, you have always been with us. Well, my dear, I don't find myself quite ready to send you off again, and so I advise you to dismiss the puzzling question from your mind for a day or two. Better let me bother over it awhile. Fox can wait for a few days. He won't mind, will he?"

"No," she said, smiling, "Fox won't mind. He has been waiting four years already."

"Fox is an excellent young man," Mr. Hazen murmured. "I must see what Patty has to say."

Patty had a good deal to say. She came to her father in a hurry and in some agitation that same [147]
evening, after Sally had gone to bed. It saved him the trouble of introducing the subject and put the burden of proof on the other side. Not that it mattered particularly to Mr. Hazen where the burden of proof lay. He was accustomed to have his own quiet way. In fact, consultation with Patty was rather an empty formality; but it was a form which he always observed scrupulously.

"Oh, father," she began, rather flurried, "what do you suppose Sally has just told me? Her mother—"

"I know. I was meaning to speak to you about it."

"I am all upset. I can't bear to think of sending Charlie away now." There were tears in poor Miss Patty's eyes.

Mr. Hazen could not quite repress a smile. "True," he said; "I had forgotten him."

"Oh, father!" Miss Patty exclaimed reproachfully. "How could you?"

"It is incomprehensible, but I was thinking of Sally. Never mind, Patty, it comes to the same thing in the end. Would it be quite convenient to ask Sarah Ladue to come here?"

"Ask Cousin Sarah to come here to *live*?" Miss Patty echoed, in some consternation.

"Why, yes, Patty. I understand that she is likely to live and—"

"Oh, father!" Miss Patty cried again. "You know I didn't mean—"

"I don't pretend," Mr. Hazen resumed, smiling, "to any particular love for Sarah, whom I never saw more than once or twice in my life. Even that must have been many years ago. But, as I recollect, she was a pretty, unassuming young woman whom I thought, at the time, altogether too good for Charles." Miss Patty looked shocked. "Oh, there is nothing gained by pretending to be blind to Charles's weakness. He was a gambler before he left college. I knew it very well. There was nothing to be done. Meddling with other people's children is a vice, Patty. It never does any good. I have some misgivings—" Mr. Hazen paused abruptly. There seemed to him [148] nothing to be gained by following out that line of thought either.

"Some misgivings about what, father?" Patty prompted.

"It doesn't matter, Patty. I have too many misgivings about everything. It is the fault of age. As I come to think of it, Sally looks like her mother. I hope her character—but Sally's character is all right. As to Sarah, we have spare rooms, haven't we?"

"Ye—es," assented Miss Patty reluctantly. She hated to give in, but she might have known that she would have to. She did know it. "But, father,—supporting the whole family—"

"There is no question," said Mr. Hazen quietly; and Patty knew that there was no more to be said. "It is a choice between letting that young Mr. Sanderson support them,—which he would be very glad to do, Patty,—and asking Sarah to come here. I much prefer to ask her. I wish to keep Sally with us and you are not willing to let Charlie go. On this plan we shall keep them both. Will you write to Sarah, proposing it? Write as cordially as you can, Patty, will you? Thank you."

So it happened that Mrs. Ladue came to Whitby in September. It could not be said to have happened, perhaps, but, at all events, she came. They all went down behind the stout horse to meet her; all but Uncle John. There were Cousin Patty and Charlie and Sally herself. Sally's eyes were very bright and there was the old spot of brilliant color in either cheek. Uncle John noticed it. He patted her hand as she got into the carryall, but he did not speak. Miss Patty did, after they got started. Sally was sitting up very straight and she was looking straight ahead and the spots of color were in her cheeks still. It was much as she had looked when she went away from her old home that she so loved. Miss Patty could not understand it. She was even a little afraid, I think.

"Sally," she said hesitatingly, "don't—don't look so—so *strained*. Surely, this is not a time to feel [149] worried or anxious. Surely, this is a—a joyous occasion."

To Miss Patty's surprise, Sally burst out laughing. As Miss Patty had implied, she did look strained. There may have been something a little hysterical about her laugh. Miss Patty was more afraid than ever. She proposed stopping at the apothecary's and getting a little camphor or—or something.

But Sally protested that she did not need camphor or anything. "You know, Cousin Patty," she went on, the tears standing in her eyes, "I haven't seen my mother for four years, and I don't know, quite, what to expect. I am very—very *fond* of my mother, Cousin Patty. I can't help my feelings, but you needn't be afraid"—and Sally laughed a little—"that I am going to have hysterics or anything, for I'm not."

Miss Patty murmured some reply. Sally did not know what it was, and Miss Patty didn't either.

"I don't suppose," Sally continued, "that Charlie remembers mother very well, for he—"

"I do, too," said Charlie, with the pleasant manner which had become usual.

"Very well, then, you do," replied Sally patiently. And she said no more, for they were already turning down the steep hill that led to the station.

In time—it seemed a very long time—but in time the train came in; and Sally watched eagerly the crowd flowing down the steps and spreading out on the platform. Presently, near the end, came Henrietta, as fast as the people would permit. Sally gave a great sigh of relief, for she was beginning to be afraid—and there was Fox. Sally edged impatiently toward the car steps. Fox was not looking at her; he was helping a lady whose eyes wandered eagerly over the waiting people. The lady's mouth drooped at one corner and her hair showed just a little gray behind her lifted veil.

Sally ran forward, elbowing her way without remorse; she had but one thought. Her chin [150] quivered. A wave of tenderness overwhelmed her.

"Oh, mother! Mother, dear! Don't you know me?"

The drooping lips parted in a lovely smile. Sally felt her mother's arms around her. How she had longed for that!

"Why, Sally! Why, my own great girl! Why, darling, don't cry!"

CHAPTER VI

ToC

They soon got used to Mrs. Ladue's gentle presence among them. Uncle John got used to it more quickly than Sally did herself; much more quickly than Cousin Patty did. But then, her coming was none of Cousin Patty's doing, in spite of the fact that it was Cousin Patty who sent the invitation. It took Patty some time to get over that. The things that we are forced to do, however gentle the force may be, are seldom wholly acceptable to us. As for Sally, her happiness was too great to make it possible for her to get used to it immediately. She used to run in when she got home from school and hug her mother. She wanted to make sure that her presence was a "true fact," as she said. She wanted to touch; to be certain that she had not dreamed it.

Mrs. Ladue used to sit beside the table with its stained green cover, in that very homelike back parlor, in the long evenings, with Uncle John in his great chair before the bubbling fire. Miss Patty ran—or, no, she did not run, literally. That would have been most undignified besides being unnecessary; but it was probably unnecessary for Miss Patty to go out so often and stay so long about her household duties. The duties of the household rather oppressed Miss Patty and sat heavily upon her. Household duties? Better be about them, Miss Patty thought. So she flitted nervously in and out twenty times during an evening. She was out more than she was in and her chair on the other side of the fire from Uncle John's was usually empty. She went to glance into the kitchen, to see what Bridget or Mary *could* be about, it was so quiet there. She hadn't heard a sound for the longest while. "Don't you think I'd better see, father?" And her father would smile quietly and tell her to do as she liked. Or she would wonder whether the maids had locked the [152] cellar door; or there was that window in the pantry; or she had to see Charlie safely into bed, although one would think that Charlie was very nearly old enough to see himself safely into bed. There were things without end; anything that *might* not be just as Patty thought it should be.

Uncle John and Mrs. Ladue sat quietly through it all, Mrs. Ladue with her sewing or her embroidery or her crochet work or her book. She was not much of an invalid, after all; not enough of an invalid to give any trouble. She had to be careful, that was all. She must not get too tired and she must have plenty of sleep. Those two things Doctor Galen had enjoined upon her at parting, with much impressiveness. And he thought that he might as well drop a line to Meriwether Beatty asking him to keep an eye on her and to let him know how she was getting along. "So you see, my lady, you are not out of my clutches yet," the doctor finished merrily. To which Mrs. Ladue had replied, almost tearfully, that she had no wish to get out of his clutches and that she never could repay him and she didn't want to and she shouldn't try. She *liked* to feel that she owed her life to him—

"Tut, tut!" said the doctor, smiling. "Don't forget Fox."

And Mrs. Ladue protested that there was not the least danger of her forgetting Fox. She didn't know where they would all be if it had not been for Fox, and she was very fond of him, and she thought—Then Fox, himself, had appeared, and she said no more upon that subject, and they got into their train and presently they came away. But, whatever Mrs. Ladue's thoughts may have been, on that subject or on any other, she said little and seemed to invite confidence. There is no reason to believe that she wished confidences from anybody. It may have been only that she kept her thoughts to herself, for the most part, as Sally did, and that she was straightforward and truthful, as Sally was. That is not to imply that Sally was an exact counterpart of her mother. [153] Probably Sally, in her mother's place, would have done very differently; almost certainly her relations with Professor Charles Ladue would have been different. Even as it was, it will be remembered that he seemed to have a certain fear of his little daughter. He had no fear of his wife. Mrs. Ladue's environment, to use a phrase that needs a deal of explaining before we know exactly what we mean, had been unsuited to her.

The new environment was not unsuited to her, at least as far as Uncle John was concerned. She helped to create an atmosphere of tranquillity; an atmosphere eminently suited to an old man and one to which that particular old man had not been accustomed. There was nothing tranquil or serene about Miss Patty. Uncle John, it is to be presumed, liked tranquillity and serenity. He succeeded in attaining to a surprising degree of it, in his own person, considering. Sally had been a help in the past four years; it was going on to five years now.

He was thinking upon these matters one evening as he sat reading. He was thinking more of them than of the page before him. He put the book down slowly, and looked up. Patty was upstairs with Charlie.

"Sarah," he remarked, "I find it very pleasant to have you with us."

Mrs. Ladue was surprised. There was no occasion for that remark unless Uncle John just wanted to make it. Sally, who had not yet gone upstairs, flushed with sudden pleasure and her eyes shone.

"There, mother!" she cried. "There now! You see. What did I tell—"

In Mrs. Ladue's face the faint color was coming and going. She spoke with some emotion.

"Thank you, Uncle John. It was kind of you to ask us. I find it very pleasant to be here. And that—it would be so easy not to make it pleasant. I haven't—I can't thank you suitably—"

"There is no question of thanks, Sarah," he replied, smiling gravely. "I hope you will put that [154] out of your mind. You give more than you get—you and Sally."

"I am very glad," Mrs. Ladue murmured; "very glad and grateful. Sally is a good girl." Uncle John smiled at Sally. "She would not bother you—"

Mr. Hazen reached forth and patted Sally's hand as it lay on the table. "No. Sally doesn't bother me very much."

"But Charlie," Mrs. Ladue continued, somewhat anxiously,—"Charlie, I'm afraid, does. He has changed a good deal in these four years. He's hard to manage."

"Patty can't manage him, if you mean that," Mr. Hazen agreed. "She doesn't try very hard. But he's developed in the wrong direction, that's all, I think."

"No." There was a curious hardness in Mrs. Ladue's voice and manner. It did not seem possible that she could be speaking of her own little son. "I doubt if he could be developed in any other direction. He's very much like his father. His father was—" She stopped abruptly. "But there is no use in going over that," she added.

Mr. Hazen nodded. "I knew Charles before you did," he observed, "and—but, as you say, there is nothing to be gained by going into that. I may as well speak to Patty—again."

"I have absolutely no influence with Charlie now," Mrs. Ladue sighed. "It is natural enough that I should not have any."

Mr. Hazen's talk with Patty amounted to nothing, as was to be expected. No doubt he did expect it, for it is not to be supposed that he could have lived with Patty Havering for nearly forty years without knowing her traits. She had no real firmness. She had obstinacy enough; a quiet, mulish obstinacy which left her exactly where one found her. She was absolutely untouched by argument or persuasion, to which she made little reply, although she sometimes fretted and grew restive under it. Nothing short of her father's quiet "I wish it, Patty" was of the least avail. She gave in to that because she knew that it was a command, not because she knew that it was right. [155] As to that, was not *she* always right? She never had the least doubt of it. She sometimes doubted the expediency of an act; it was not expedient to disobey her father's implied commands. Not that she had ever tried it, but she did not think that it would be expedient. I don't think that it would have been either. It was just as well, perhaps, that she never tried it. But, in a matter like this one of Charlie, there was no command direct enough to enforce obedience. You know what I mean, as Miss Patty might have said; thereby implying that she hoped that you did, for she didn't. She was not quite clear about it in her own mind, but there seemed little risk in doing as she wanted to rather than as her father wanted her to. Her own ideas were rather hazy and the more she tried to think it out the more muddled she got. Anyway, she said to herself, as she gave it up, she wouldn't, and she got up from the rocking-chair which she permitted herself in her own room and went briskly about her duties. She had sat there for as much as half an hour. She had been watching Charlie chasing about Morton's lot, for she could see over the high wall as she sat. Most of the boys were tolerant chaps, as most boys are, after a certain age; but some of them were not and some others had not reached that age of tolerance apparently. Fortunately for Miss Patty's peace of mind she did not happen to see any of that.

Miss Patty, however, did not make public her decision, but Mrs. Ladue knew what it was just as well as if she had shouted it from the housetop. Where did a talk with Patty end but where it began? And Mrs. Ladue had been sitting at her own window—she shared Sally's room—she had been sitting at her own window while Patty sat at hers and looked at Charlie over the wall. But Mrs. Ladue watched longer than Patty and she saw several things which Patty was spared; to be sure, the wall was very high and cut off the view from a large part of the lot, but she saw Ollie Pilcher run after Charlie at last and chase him into that part of the lot which she could not see. [156] Ollie was not noted for his patience, but Mrs. Ladue thought the loss of the remnants of it was excusable, in the circumstances. Then there was an outcry and it was not Ollie's voice that cried out.

Mrs. Ladue sighed and got out of her comfortable chair and went downstairs. She hoped she should be ahead of Patty when Charlie came in. She was not, but she and Patty waited together; and Charlie came. He was not crying, but the traces of tears were on his face. Miss Patty gave a little exclamation of horror.

"Charlie," began Mrs. Ladue hurriedly, before Patty could speak, "come up with me. I want to talk with you."

Charlie wanted to go with Cousin Patty; he didn't want to be talked to. He said so with much petulance.

"Let me take the poor child, Sarah," Patty began.

"After I have talked with him, Patty," said Mrs. Ladue patiently. Nobody should know how she dreaded this talk. "Come, Charlie."

She made Charlie mount the stairs ahead of her and she succeeded in steering him into her room. He washed his face with furious haste.

"Charlie, dear boy," she said at last, "I was watching you for a long time this afternoon. You know that I can see very well what goes on in the lot from this window."

He was wiping his face and he exposed his eyes for a moment, gazing at his mother over the edge of the towel. They were handsome eyes and they were filled now with a calculating thoughtfulness, which his mother noted. It did not make her feel any easier.

Charlie considered it worth risking. "Then you saw," he said, still with that petulant note in his

voice, "how the boys picked on me. Why, they—"

"I saw, Charlie," Mrs. Ladue interrupted, smiling wearily, "not how the boys picked on you, but how you bothered them. I thought Ollie was very patient and I didn't blame him a bit."

"But he *hurt* me," Charlie cried in astonishment. It was the most heinous sin that he knew of. [157]
Patty would think so.

"You deserved to be hurt. You are eleven, Charlie, and I'm surprised that you don't see that your actions will leave you without friends, absolutely without friends within a few years. Where should we be now, Charlie," continued Mrs. Ladue gently, "if we had had no friends?"

"Guess Cousin Patty'd be my friend," Charlie grumbled. "Guess she would."

"You will wear out even her doting affection if you keep on," replied his mother almost sharply. It was difficult to imagine her speaking with real sharpness. She regretted it instantly. "My dear little son, why won't you do differently? Why do you prefer to make the boys all dislike you? It's for your own good that I have talked to you, and I haven't said so very much. You don't please Uncle John, Charlie. You would be *so* much happier if you would only do as Sally does and—"

"Huh!" said Charlie, throwing down the towel. "Cousin Patty wants me, mother." And he bolted out of the door.

Tears came to Mrs. Ladue's eyes. Her eyes were still wet when Doctor Beatty came in. He could not help seeing.

"Not crying?" he asked. "That will never do."

Mrs. Ladue smiled. "I have been talking to Charlie," she said, as if that were a sufficient explanation.

Indeed, it seemed to be. That, in itself, was cause for grief. "Ah!" said the doctor. "Charlie didn't receive it with meekness, I judge."

She did not answer directly. "It seems hopeless," she returned at last. "I have been away from him so long that I am virtually a stranger. And Patty—" She did not finish.

Doctor Beatty laughed. "I know Patty. I think I may say that I know her very well. Why, there was one period—" He remembered in time and his tone changed. "Yes, there was one period when I thought I knew her very well. Ancient history," he went on with a wave of his hand, —"ancient history."

Mrs. Ladue said nothing, but she looked sympathetic and she smiled. Doctor Beatty sat down [158]
conveniently near her, but yet far enough away to be able to watch her closely.

Meanwhile the doctor talked. It was of little consequence what he talked about, and he rambled along from one subject to another, talking of anything that came into his head; of anything but Mrs. Ladue's health. And the strange thing about it was that she had no inkling as to what the doctor was about. She had no idea that she was under observation. She only thought it queer that he had so much time to devote to talking to her. He couldn't be very busy; but she liked it and would have been sorry to have him give up his visits.

Presently, in his rambling talk, the doctor was once more speaking of the period of ancient history to which he had already thoughtlessly alluded.

"There was a time," he said, regarding Mrs. Ladue thoughtfully, "when I thought I knew Patty pretty well. I used to be here pretty often, you know. She has spoken of it, perhaps?" Mrs. Ladue smiled and shook her head. "Ah, what a blow to vanity! I used to think—but my thoughts were of scarcely more value then than they are now, so it's no matter what I thought. It's a great while—fifteen or twenty years—struggling young doctor in the first flush of youth and a growing practice. Practice like an incubator baby; very, very frail. I suppose I must have been a sentimental young chap; but not so young either. Must have been nearly thirty, both of us. Then the baby got out of the incubator and I couldn't come so often."

He was speaking reminiscently. Then, suddenly, he realized what he was saying and roused himself with a start.

"Patty was charming, of course, charming," he went on, smiling across at Mrs. Ladue. "Yes, much as she is now, with the same charm; the same charm, in moderation."

His eyes were very merry as he finished, and Mrs. Ladue laughed gently.

"Oh, Doctor," she said, "I ought not to laugh—at Patty. It's your fault." [159]

Doctor Beatty looked horror-struck. "Laugh at Patty!" he exclaimed. "Never! Nothing further from my intention. I only run on, like a babbling brook. I'm really not responsible for what I say. No significance to be attached to any observations I may make. You won't mind, will you?"

"I won't mind," Mrs. Ladue agreed. "I don't."

"Thank you. I knew you wouldn't." Doctor Beatty rose and stood for a moment with his hand on the knob of the door. "You're all right for a couple of weeks anyway, or I'd warn you to keep your liver on the job. I always give that advice to Patty, partly because she needs it and partly because it is amusing to witness the starting of a certain train of emotions. Good-bye."

And the doctor went out, leaving Mrs. Ladue smiling to herself. She had forgotten about Charlie.

[160]

CHAPTER VII

ToC

Sally graduated from her school in the following June. Of all the persons immediately concerned in that affair, even including Sally herself, I am inclined to believe that Mr. Hazen was the most acutely interested. He was not excited over it. A man of his age does not easily get excited, even if he is of an excitable disposition, which Mr. Hazen was not; but there is reason to think that he had all the hopes and fears which Sally ought to have had, but of which she gave no sign. She had confidence in herself and had no doubts to speak of. At any rate, she did not speak of any, but took the whole thing as a matter of course and one to be gone through with in its due season. For that matter, nobody suspected Mr. Hazen of harboring fears, although it was taken for granted that he had hopes. He gave no outward sign of perturbation, and his fondness for Sally was no secret.

There was never, at that school, any long period without its little diversions. Jane Spencer, to be sure, was in the graduating class and his behavior had been most exemplary for some months; but there was no such inhibition on the behavior of Ollie Pilcher and the Carlings. The Carlings appeared one morning with grotesquely high collars, at the sight of which a titter ran about the schoolroom. The Carlings preserved an admirable gravity. Mr. MacDalie looked up, eyed the twins with marked displeasure, but said nothing, and the titter gradually faded out. The Carlings were aggrieved and felt that they had been guilty of a failure. So they had, in a measure, and Sally could not help feeling sorry for them. She reflected that Jane would never have done anything of that kind. Jane would never have made a failure of anything that he undertook, either. Jane would not have done what Ollie Pilcher did, later, although that effort of Ollie's was a [161] conspicuous success, after its kind.

It was the fashion, among certain of the boys, to have their hair clipped when the warm weather came on. Everett Morton had never had it done, nor had Dick Torrington, nor did Jane Spencer. They were not in the clipped-hair caste. But Ollie Pilcher was; and it was no surprise to the other boys when, a week before school closed, Ollie came with clipped hair showing below his cap. He was just in time, and he went at once and in haste to the schoolroom, removing his cap as he entered the door. The bell in Mr. MacDalie's hand rang as he took his seat.

Mr. MacDalie was not looking at Ollie, as it happened, but those behind Ollie could not help seeing him. A ripple of laughter started; it grew as more of those present caught sight of him. Mr. MacDalie saw him. He chuckled wildly and the laughter swelled into a roar. Rising from the top of Ollie's head of clipped hair was a diminutive braided lock about three inches long, tied with a bow of narrow red ribbon. And Ollie did not even smile while Mr. MacDalie was wiping his eyes before him. His self-control was most admirable.

The laughter finally subsided, for the time being, sufficiently to permit King Ahasuerus and Queen Esther and Mordecai and Haman to hold their audience spellbound for five minutes. That same audience had been held spellbound by that same story throughout the whole of the year just past and through other years; for Mr. MacDalie, for some reason known only to himself and which Sally had tried in vain to guess, had confined his reading so completely to the Book of Esther that his hearers knew the book pretty nearly by heart.

Although an unnatural solemnity prevailed through the reading, the laughter would break out afresh at intervals during the morning. Mr. MacDalie himself resolutely avoided looking in Ollie's direction as long as he remembered. But he would forget, becoming absorbed in his teaching, [162] and his eye would light upon Ollie; and forthwith he would fall to chuckling wildly and to wiping his eyes, and be unable to continue for some minutes. He said nothing to Ollie, however, although that youngster expected a severe reprimand, at least. It is not unlikely that that was the very reason why he did not get it. The next day the braided lock was gone.

These were mere frivolities, perhaps unworthy of being recorded; and there may seem to be an undue prominence given to mental comparisons with Jane. But just at this time there was a good deal of Jane in everything, and whatever was done by anybody naturally suggested to Sally a comparison with what Jane would do. Sally was not without her share of romance, which was, perhaps, more in evidence at this age than at any other. She was just past sixteen, and she happened to be devoted, at this period, to her English history. She is to be excused for her flights of imagination, in which she saw Jane's ancestry traced back, without a break, to the beginning of the fourteenth century; and if the two Spencers of that time were not very creditable ancestors, why, history sometimes distorts things, and if Edward II had chanced to prevail over his wife and son, its verdict might have been different. Jane was not responsible for his ancestors anyway.

Everybody was present at the graduation exercises; everybody, that is, of consequence in Whitby who was not prevented from being present by illness. I allude more especially to the older generation, to the generation of parents. All the mothers, not only of the members of the graduating class, but of any members of any class and even of prospective members, were there

because they liked to be; the fathers were there because they thought they ought to be. And there were many besides, of a different generation, who were there for one reason or another. Mr. Hazen was one of these and Everett Morton was another.

[163] It was easy to account for Mr. Hazen's presence, but not so easy to account for Everett's, except that he was not doing much of anything and thought the exercises might prove to be a diversion. Everett spent his time, for the most part, in the pursuit of diversion. He was through college. That does not mean that he had graduated, but, as he said, it meant that he had left it in his sophomore year, upon the breaking-out of the Spanish War, to volunteer; and after a hollow and bloodless campaign in Porto Rico, he had returned, well smeared with glory. Fortunately—or unfortunately, as you look at it—he had escaped the camps. He did not think it worth while to go back to college, and between ourselves, the faculty agreed with him completely. It was the only instance of such agreement in the history of their connection. Then he had got a place in a broker's office which he held for a year and a half, but he had found it not to his liking and he had given it up. Then came a long interval when his only occupation seemed to be the pursuit of diversion. This was in the interval. No doubt he managed to capture, occasionally, the elusive diversion which he pursued so persistently, and no doubt, too, it was of much the kind that is usual in such cases; but, one would think, he found the pursuit of it an occupation more strenuous than that of the broker's office.

Dick could not come, for he was to have a graduation of his own in a short time; in fact, it was hardly more than a few days. But he sent Sally a little note, regretting that he could not be present and wishing her luck; and further and more important, he asked if she and her mother or Miss Patty or all of them would not come up to Cambridge for his Class Day.

Sally had got Dick's note just as they were starting. She handed it to her mother, her gray eyes soft with pleasure—as they had got into the habit of being, these last few years.

"See, mother, dear," she said, "what Dick has asked. Do you suppose we can go, mother, or would it be too much for you? I should like to go."

[164] Mrs. Ladue smiled fondly at her daughter. "Of course you would, darling. I'll see what Patty says, but I guess you can go. Perhaps, if Patty doesn't want to, I can get Doctor Beatty to let me. I believe I should like it myself. Now, don't let the prospect make you forget your part."

"No danger," replied Sally reassuringly. "Now I must run."

Sally had the valedictory, or whatever it is to which the first scholar in the class is entitled. I am not versed in such matters, not having been concerned, at my graduation, with the duties or the privileges of the first scholar of the class. But Sally had kept her place at the head of a dwindling class with no difficulty and Mr. MacDalie expected great things of her. She acquitted herself as well as was expected, which is saying a good deal; and after the exercises were over, she went out with Jane Spencer, leaving her mother and Uncle John and Mr. MacDalie talking together. Patty was talking with Doctor Beatty, who had come in late.

Patty glanced up at Doctor Beatty with a smile. "Does that remind you of anything?" she asked gently, nodding in Sally's direction.

It is to be feared that the doctor was not paying attention. "What?" He brought his chair and his gaze down together. He had been tilting back in the chair and looking at the ceiling. "What? Sally? Her foot, perhaps,—but that's all right years ago and it isn't likely that you meant that. No, Patty, I give it up. What's the answer?"

Miss Patty was disappointed. Perhaps she ought to have got used to being disappointed by Meriwether Beatty, by this time, but she hadn't. She sighed a little.

"No, I didn't mean her foot. I meant her wandering off with Eugene Spencer. He's the handsomest boy in the class. Doesn't it remind you of—of our own graduation and our wandering away—so?"

[165] The doctor roared. "That was a good many years ago, Patty." It was unkind of him to remind her of that. "You couldn't expect me to remember the circumstances. I believe I am losing my memory; from old age, Patty, old age." That was more unkind still, for Patty was but a few months younger than he, and he knew it and she knew that he knew it. "So we wandered away, did we?"

Sally did not hear this conversation, for she was already halfway downstairs with Jane. Neither of them had spoken.

"Jane," she said suddenly.

A shadow of annoyance crossed his face. "Sally," he mildly protested, "I wish you wouldn't call me Jane—if you don't mind."

"Why," returned Sally in surprise, "don't you like it? I supposed you did. Of course I won't call you by a name you don't like. I'm very sorry. Eugene, then?"

"If you will. It's rather better than Jane, but it's bad enough."

Sally laughed. "You're hard to please. How would it do for me to call you Hugh—or Earl Spencer. Or, no. I'd have to call you your Grace." She stopped and made him a curtsy; Jane was not to be outdone and, although taken somewhat off his guard, he made her a bow with as much grace as even Piers Gaveston could have put into it.

"Your Highness does me too much honor," he replied solemnly; and they both laughed from sheer high spirits. "No, Sally, you're wrong," he added. "The old gentleman was no relative of

mine. But I believe I interrupted you. What were you going to say—right first off, you know, when I asked you not to call me Jane?"

"I was going to tell you that Dick Torrington has asked me to go up for his Class Day."

"Dick Torrington!" exclaimed Jane, mystified. "Why, Sally, he's ever so much older than you."

"Now, Jane, what has—I beg your pardon,—Eugene, but it's hard to remember. But, Eugene, what has the difference in age to do with it? It has never seemed to make any difference to Dick. You know that he's as kind as he can be and probably he just thought that I would enjoy it."

They had passed through the crowded corridor—crowded because, in one of the rooms on that [166]
floor, there was in preparation what the papers would call a modest collation—and they were out in the yard. Jane stopped short and looked at Sally with a puzzled expression.

"I wonder, Sally," he said slowly, "if you know—but you evidently don't," he added. He seemed relieved at the result of his inspection. "Of course you'll go, but I can't help wishing you wouldn't."

"Why?" she asked. "I mean to go if I can. Why would you rather I wouldn't?"

He hesitated for some moments. "I don't know that I can tell you. Perhaps you'll understand sometime. Hello! What do you suppose they've got?"

Ollie Pilcher and the Carlings passed rapidly across their line of vision.

"Furtive sort of manner," continued Jane hurriedly. "I'll bet they're hiding something. Let's see what it is. What do you say, Sally?"

Sally nodded and they ran, coming upon the three suddenly. The Carlings started guiltily and seemed about to say something; but although they had opened their mouths, no speech issued.

"Sing it, you twins. What have you got? Come, pony up. We spotted you. Or perhaps you want the free-lunch committee to swoop down on you."

If Sally had not been there the result might have been different. No doubt Jane had made allowance for the moral effect of her presence. The Carlings, severally, were still her slaves; or they would have been if she had let them. They grinned sheepishly and Horry drew something from under his jacket. It was done up in paper, but there was no mistaking it.

Jane reached forth an authoritative hand. Ollie remonstrated. "I say, Jane,—"

"Filcher," remarked Jane, "for filcher you are, although you may have persuaded these poor innocent boys to do the actual filching—Filcher, you'd better suspend further remarks. Otherwise [167]
I shall feel obliged to divide this pie into quarters instead of fifths. Quarters are much easier. It is a pie, I feel sure; a squash pie, I do not doubt. Is it quarters or fifths, Filcher?"

As Jane was in possession of the pie, Ollie thought it the part of discretion to compromise. A clump of lilacs hid them from the schoolhouse, and Jane divided the pie, which proved to be filled with raisins, into five parts with his knife.

"I wish to congratulate you, Horry, upon your excellent care of this pie in transit." He passed the plate to Horry as he spoke. "No, this is your piece, Horry. That piece is destined for me. In view of the unavoidable inequality of the pieces, we will give Filcher the plate."

Sally was chuckling as she ate her piece of pie, which she held in her hand.

"Th—th—this w—w—weath—ther's t—t—terrible h—h—hard on p—p—pies," observed Horry thoughtfully, after a long silence.

"It w—w—wouldn't k—k—keep," said Harry, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand.

"It wouldn't," Jane agreed.

Ollie was scraping the plate. "Can't get any more out of that plate," he sighed at last; and he scaled the tin plate into an inaccessible place between the lilacs and the fence.

They moved away slowly. "I wonder," Jane remarked, reflectively, "who sent that pie."

Sally chuckled again. "Cousin Patty sent it," she said.

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[168]

CHAPTER VIII

ToC

Sally found that summer very full. To begin with, there was Dick's Class Day, which was her first great occasion. I do not know what better to call it and it must have been a great occasion for her, for, although it did not last very long,—days never do,—the memory of it has not completely faded even yet; and it was twelve years ago.

As if to make her joy complete, her mother had gone and Miss Patty had not. Not that Sally had ever the least conscious objection to Miss Patty's going anywhere, but Patty always acted as a sort of damper upon too much joy. Poor Patty! She had not the slightest wish to be a sort of a damper and she did not suspect that she was.

Mrs. Ladue was no damper. She had sat in Dick's particular easy-chair, very smiling and content, while Dick brought things to eat and to drink to her and to Sally in the window-seat. And there had been a puzzled look in Dick's eyes all the time that made Mrs. Ladue laugh and made Sally blush whenever she saw it. It was as if Dick's eyes had just been opened; and he found it hard to realize that the blossoming young creature in his window-seat was the same Sally that he had known so well. That and other considerations will explain Mrs. Ladue's laughter well enough, but hardly explain why Sally should have blushed. I don't know why she did and I doubt if she could have told.

Then—for Dick's Class Day was only to begin with—there were his further good-natured attentions, which did not mean anything, of course, Mrs. Ladue told herself, over and over. Of course Dick liked Sally—who would not? And there was more fun in doing anything for her than in doing it for anybody else, for Sally enjoyed everything so much. Dick even took her sailing half [169]
a dozen times, although there was nobody else on his parties younger than his sister Emily. And there was Jane; but not on Dick's sailing parties.

Jane's attentions to Sally were constant and rather jealous. How could he help it? Dick was five years older than he, and, at seventeen, five years is a tremendous advantage and one not to be made up by a difference in natural gifts, concerning which there could be no doubt either. Sally had some difficulty in keeping Jane pacified. She may have made no conscious effort to that end, but she accomplished it, none the less.

When fall came, Sally went away to Normal School. It was not far from Whitby, so that she was always within reach, but she had to be away from home—Uncle John Hazen's was really home now—for the greater part of two years. Her absence was a great grief to Uncle John, although nobody suspected it but Sally. It would never have occurred to Patty that it could make much difference to her father whether Sally was here or there. Indeed, she did not think of it at all, being more than ever engrossed in Charlie's career; and Charlie was in need of a friend, although that friend was not Miss Patty.

Another person who missed Sally's presence, if one could judge from his behavior, was Jane Spencer. To be sure, it could have made little difference to him that she was no longer in Whitby, except that Whitby, although farther from Cambridge than Schoolboro', was easier to get to. Nevertheless, as soon as Jane could snatch a day from his arduous academic duties, he went to Schoolboro' and not to Whitby. That was hardly a month after Sally had gone there, and she was unaffectedly glad to see him. Therefore, Jane enjoyed his visit immensely, and he made other visits, which were also to his immense satisfaction, as often as Sally would let him come. There were four that year.

In November of her second year, Sally was called home unexpectedly by an incoherent summons from Patty. She hurried home, filled with fears and misgivings. What had happened to [170]
Charlie? She had no doubt that Charlie was at the bottom of it, somehow, or it would not have been Patty who sent the message. Had he had an accident? But Charlie himself met her at the door, looking sulky and triumphant.

Patty was almost hysterical, and it was a long time before Sally could make out what was the matter. It seemed that Charlie had been subjected to the usual mild hazing and, proving a refractory subject, he had had his hands and feet strapped together and had been left lying helpless in the yard. That was a final indignity, reserved for boys who had earned the thorough dislike of their fellows, Sally knew. She was deeply mortified.

Her lips were compressed in the old way that she had almost forgotten.

"I will settle it, Cousin Patty. It won't take long."

Patty had, perhaps, mistaken the meaning of Sally's expression. At all events, Sally looked very decided, which Patty was not.

"Oh, will you, Sally? I felt sure that you would be touched by Charlie's sufferings. He is your brother, you know, and—and all that," she finished, ineffectively, as she was painfully aware.

"Yes," Sally replied, still with that compression of the lips, "he is." She had been about to say more, but had thought better of it.

"Well," said Patty, after waiting some time for Sally to say what she had decided not to, "thank you, Sally. Nobody else could attend to it so well as you." At which speech Sally smiled rather grimly, if a girl of seventeen can smile grimly. Her smile was as grim as the circumstances would allow.

She found Charlie suspiciously near the door.

"Will you go and see old Mac, Sally? Will you?"

"You come into the back parlor with me, Charlie," Sally answered, "and I'll tell you what I'll do."

When Charlie emerged, half an hour later, he was sulkier than ever, but he was no longer [171]
triumphant. Sally went back to school that same night. Patty did not summon her again. Sally had a way of settling things which Miss Patty did not altogether like.

Now it chanced that Jane chose the next day for one of his visits. It was not a happy chance.

The day itself was dull and gloomy and chilly and Sally had not yet got over the settling of Charlie. Jane, to be sure, did not know about Charlie, but it would have made no difference if he had known about him. Sally greeted him with no enthusiasm; it almost seemed to Jane that she would rather not have seen him.

He looked at her in surprise. "What's the matter, Sally?" he asked. "Why this—this apathy?" He had been about to call it indifference, but decided against it.

Jane was not without wisdom, if he did not show much of it on this particular day. If it had been the case of another and that other had asked his advice, he would have advised him to drop it all and go home again. But, in our own cases, we are all more or less fools. Therefore Jane did not drop it all and go home.

Sally did not smile. "I don't know, Jane," she replied. "There's nothing in particular the matter." Sally had given up the attempt to break the Jane habit and Jane had given up objecting.

"Well?" he asked, after waiting vainly for her to propose a walk. "Shall we go for our usual walk? You know you don't like to stay in, and neither do I."

"I think," said Sally, "that I don't like anything to-day, so what does it matter?" Surely Jane should have taken warning and run. "We'll go out if you like."

Jane looked at her doubtfully, but said nothing, which was probably the best thing he could have said; and they went out, walking side by side, in silence, until they came to a little stream which was dignified by the name of "The River." There was a path along the bank. That path by the river was much frequented at other seasons, but now the trees that overhung it were bare [172] and the wind sighed mournfully through the branches, after its journey across the desolate marsh beyond. On such a day it was not a place to cheer drooping spirits. It did not cheer Sally's.

Jane's spirit began to be affected. He looked at Sally anxiously, but she gave no sign of ever meaning to say another word.

"Sally!" he said.

She glanced at him and tried to smile, but she made no great success of it.

"Well?"

"Now, what is the matter, Sally? Won't you tell me?"

"There's nothing the matter, Jane. I'm simply not in very good spirits."

"Sally," said poor Jane softly, "please cheer up and be light-hearted. This isn't like you at all."

"I can't help it," Sally answered, sighing. "I've tried. It doesn't happen to me often. I'm not good company, am I?"

"You're always good company for me," Jane said simply. Sally did not seem to hear. "Try a pleasant expression," he continued, after a pause, "and see what that does to your spirits."

"Thank you," said she coldly, "for nothing." Then she changed suddenly. "I beg your pardon again, Eugene. I was getting ill-tempered. Would you have me put on a pleasant expression when I don't feel like it?"

He nodded, smiling. "To see the effect upon your spirits."

"As if I were having my photograph taken?" Sally went on, "A sort of 'keep smiling' expression? Think how absurd people would look if they went about grinning."

"There is a certain difference between grinning and smiling," Jane replied, "although I can't define it. And you would not look absurd, Sally, whatever you did."

"Oh, yes, I would," Sally said, more cheerfully than she had spoken yet, "and so would you. No doubt I am absurd very often; as absurd as you are now."

Jane sighed heavily. "I've never seen it, Sally, although I should like to see you absurd in the [173] same way that I am now. I long to. You couldn't be, I suppose."

There was no answer to this remark. Waiting for one and listening, Jane heard only the sighing of the wind across the desolate marsh and in the trees, and the soft noise of the water flowing past. Poor Jane was very wretched, largely, no doubt, because of the dreary day and because Sally was wretched. He did not stop to ask why. Then he did something which was very unwise. Even he, in more sober moments, acknowledged its unwisdom. But, after all, would it have made any great difference if the circumstances had been different—Sally being what she was? I think not. Jane thought not.

Jane leaned a little nearer. "Sally," he said softly, "can't you like me a little? Can't you—"

Sally looked up in surprise. "Why, Jane," she replied simply—and truthfully, "I do like you. You know it."

"But, Sally,"—Jane's heart was pounding so that he could not keep the sound of it out of his voice, and his voice was unsteady enough without that,—"but, Sally, can't you—can't you care for me? I—I love you, Sally. I couldn't keep it to myself any longer. I—"

"Oh, *Jane*!" Sally was the picture of dismay; utter and absolute dismay. She had withdrawn from him a little. And she had forgotten the state of her spirits. She was startled out of her apathy. "I didn't know you were going to say that. Why, oh, why did you? What made you?"

"I simply had to. I have been holding it in as long as I could, and I couldn't see you feeling so,

without—well, I had to." Jane spoke more rapidly now. "And, Sally, I realize the absurdity of asking you now, when I am not half through college and you are not through school, but we could wait—couldn't we?—and if you only felt as I do, it would be easier. I am—I shall have some money and I—"

With an impatient wave of her hand Sally brushed all that aside. [174]

"That is of no consequence," she said,—"of no sort of consequence. But why did you do it, Jane? Oh, why did you? You have spoiled it all. I suppose we can't be good friends any more." There were tears in her eyes.

"I can't see why." Jane regarded her for some while without speaking. Sally, I suppose, had nothing to say. "Does that mean," he asked at last, "that you don't care for me in the way that I want?"

"I should think you would know," replied Sally gently.

"And—and you can't?"

Sally shook her head.

"Not ever?"

Sally shook her head again.

Jane stood, for a minute, gazing out over the desolate marsh. Then he drew a long breath and turned.

"Well," he said, smiling mirthlessly and raising his hat, "shall I—shall we go back?"

Sally was angry, but I don't know what for. "No," she was decided about it; much more decided than was at all necessary. "You need not trouble to go back with me."

"Oh," said Jane. He smiled again and flushed slowly. "Then, if you will excuse me, I will go to the station."

So Jane was gone—or going—with head held high and a flush on his face. He did not look back. Sally, as she watched him go, had a revulsion of feeling and would have called to him. To what end? She could not change her answer. And the sound died on her lips and she stamped her foot angrily, and watched him out of sight. Then she fled to her room and wept. Why, I wonder? Sally did not know. Suddenly she had lost something out of her life. What? Sally did not know that either. It was not Jane she wept for. Whatever it was, she knew that she could never get it back again; never, never.

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BOOK III

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CHAPTER I

ToC

Mrs. Ladue was sitting in her room with a letter in her lap. The letter was unfinished and it seemed likely that it might not be finished; not, at any rate, unless Mrs. Ladue brought her wandering thoughts back to it, although, to be sure, her thoughts may have had more to do with it than appeared. She was gazing absently out of the window and in her eyes there was a look both tender and sad; a look that said plainly that her thoughts were far away and that she was recalling some things—pleasant things and sad—dwelling upon them with fond recollection, no doubt. It was a pity that she had not more things which could be dwelt upon with fond recollection; but it may be that she was dwelling fondly upon the recollection of what might have been. There is much comfort to be got out of that kind of recollection even if it is not very real.

What was before her eyes was the Lot covered with untouched snow billowed by the high wind

and glistening, here and there, where that same wind had hardened and polished the surface into a fine crust. There was the same high wall, its cement covering a trifle less smooth, perhaps, than it had been when Sally first saw it, but giving a scant foothold even yet. And the wall was capped, as it had been since it was built, with its projecting wooden roof, more weather-beaten than ever and with the moulding on the under edges warped away a trifle more, but still holding. There was snow upon that old roof in patches, but the wind had swept most of it clean. And over it all was a dull, leaden sky with more snow in it.

Although all this was before her eyes, she may not have seen any of it; probably she had not. Judging from her look, it was something quite different that she saw. It may have been the early [178] years of her marriage—very early years they must have been and very far away now—when Professor Ladue was still good to her and she still believed in him. Or, perhaps, she was passing in review the many kindnesses of Uncle John Hazen and Patty. For Patty had been kind in her own way; and what other way could she use? Every one of us has to be kind or unkind in his own way, after all, in accordance with the natures God has given us. Perhaps Mrs. Ladue was thinking of Doctor Galen's care—four years of it—or of Fox's goodness. Fox had not got over being good to them yet. And she called down blessings on his head and sighed a tremulous sigh, and looked down at the letter which she had held in her hand all this time, and she began to read it again, although she had already read it over twice.

She had not got very far with her reading when the front door opened and shut. At the sound of it Mrs. Ladue came back, with a start, to the present. She flushed slightly and made a motion as if to hide the letter hastily; but she thought better of it instantly, and she held the letter in her hand, as she had done for some time. But the flush grew and flooded her face with color. And the wave of color receded, according to the manner of waves, and left her face unnaturally pale. There was the sound of steps on the stairs and the door of the room opened and Sally came in.

A breath of the cold still clung about her. "Well, mother, dear," she said, stooping for a kiss, "here I am, at last. I thought I never should get out to-day."

"Some poor infants have to stay after?" asked her mother. "How cold you are, Sally! Is it as bleak and dreary as it looks?"

"Oh, no. It's nice enough, after you've been out a few minutes. At least it's fresh, and that's something, after hours of a schoolroom. And I don't teach infants, if you please, madam."

Mrs. Ladue laughed quietly. "It's all the same to me, Sally," she replied. "I don't know the difference."

Sally sat down on the bed; which was a very reprehensible old habit that she had never been [179] able to shake off. Not that she had ever tried.

"I'm going to get something done about the ventilation," she observed decidedly; "at least in my room. It's wicked to make children breathe such air." She glanced at the letter which her mother still held. "Been writing letters, mother? Who to—if you don't mind my asking?"

"'Who to,' Sally! A fine schoolmarm you are!" said Mrs. Ladue, smiling, in mock reproach. "I hope that is not the example you set."

Sally laughed lightly. "It was pretty bad, wasn't it? But there are times when even the schoolmarm must relax. It hasn't got into my blood yet, and I'm not a universal compendium. But I noticed that you didn't answer my question. You may have objected to its form. To whom is your letter written?"

"Well," her mother answered, hesitating a little, "it isn't written yet. That is, it isn't finished. It is to Fox. Don't you want to add something, dear? Just a few lines? I have asked him if he doesn't want to come on—and bring Henrietta, of course. See, there is room at the end."

Sally took the letter, but she could not have read more than the first two or three lines when she glanced up, with a little half smile of surprise and amusement.

"Perhaps I had better not read it, mother, dear," she said gently. "Did you mean that I should?"

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Ladue answered carelessly, "read it if you like. There is nothing in my letters to Fox that I want to keep secret from you, Sally."

There was the same little half smile of amusement on Sally's lips as she read, and a sort of suppressed twinkle in her eyes. If you wanted to know what Sally's thoughts were—what kind of thoughts—you would soon have got into the habit of watching her eyes. They were merry and grave and appealing and solemn and tender and reproachful and thoughtful and disapproving, according to the need of the hour, although they were seldom solemn or sad now. I suppose the [180] need of the hour did not lie in that direction now; at least, not nearly so often as it had, ten years before. Sally's eyes were well worth watching anyway. They were gray and rather solemn, normally, shaded by long, dark lashes, and gave the impression of darkness and depth; but when she was stirred to anger, whether righteous or not, they could be as cold and as hard as steel. But enough of Sally's eyes. Too much, no doubt.

Mrs. Ladue's reflections, as Sally read, might be supposed to have been rather disquieting. They were not. Presently she laughed. "The letter may seem queer," she said, "but you must remember that I have not seen Fox for four years, and I want to see him. I got very fond of Fox in my years at Doctor Galen's."

Sally looked up. "Of course you did, mother, dear. Of course you did. It would be very strange if you had not. I am fond of him, too."

Mrs. Ladue smiled in reply and Sally returned to her reading. She began again at the beginning, with the "Dear Fox."

"Dear Fox:" she read. She was not reading aloud. "To begin with what should come last, according to all the rules, in a woman's letter, I want to see you. It is the sole purpose of this letter to tell you that, so you need not look for the important matter in a postscript. It won't be there, for it is here. Do you know that it is nearly four years since you were here? Is there no matter in connection with my trifling affairs that will serve as an excuse—or is any excuse needed? Can't you and Henrietta come on for a long visit? I know the engagements of a doctor—such a doctor, Fox!—are heavy and that I am very selfish to ask it. Sally would be as glad as I should be to see you both here, I am sure. I will ask her to add a few lines to this when she comes in. She has not got back from school yet.

"Sally seems to be quite happy in her teaching. I remember when she got her first month's salary—she got a position right away, with Mr. MacDalie—she came flying into the house and met [181] Uncle John in the hall—I was halfway down the stairs—and threw her arms around his neck. The dear old man was startled, as he might well have been. I may have told you all this before. If I have, don't read it. Well, he was startled, as I said, but he smiled his lovely, quiet smile.

"'Bless me, Sally!' he said. 'What's happened? What's the matter?'

"'This is the matter,' she cried, waving something about, somewhere behind his ear. 'I've got my salary. And it's all my own and the first money I ever earned in my whole life.'

"The dear old man smiled again—or rather he hadn't stopped smiling. 'Bless your heart!' he said. 'What a terribly long time to wait, isn't it? But it's hardly true that it is the first money you ever earned. The first you ever were paid, perhaps, but you've been earning it for years, my dear, for years.'

"Sally kissed him. 'I'm afraid you're partial, Uncle John. But do you know what I'm going to do with my munificent salary?'

"Uncle John shook his head.

"'I should like to pay it to you, on account,' said Sally. 'Oh, I'm not going to,' she added hastily, seeing that he looked hurt, 'but I'm going to pay for all my clothes, after this, and mother's and Charlie's. I'm afraid it won't do much more, yet awhile, but give us pocket-money.'

"'Very well, Sally, if that will give you pleasure,' said Uncle John. 'I like to pay for your clothes, my dear, but just as you please.'

"Those are sentiments which a girl does not often hear. Have you, perhaps, said to somebody—but I won't ask. Sally's salary is enough to do much more than pay for our clothes now.

"Charlie goes to college this next fall. I think there is little or no doubt of his getting in. He did very well with his preliminaries last June. He is very bright, I think, but I sometimes tremble to [182] think of all that lies before him. Do you realize, Fox, that Sally is almost twenty-one and that it is ten years—almost ten years—since that terrible time when—"

The letter broke off here. That last sentence must have started Mrs. Ladue upon her gazing out of the window.

Sally looked up soberly. "I'll add my request to yours, if you like," she remarked; "but it's hardly likely that Fox will come just because we ask him—in the middle of winter. He must be very busy. But I hope he'll come. I should dearly like to see him—and Henrietta, of course—" She interrupted herself.

"Have you spoken to Patty about Fox, mother?" she asked,—"about his coming here?"

Her mother smiled whimsically. "Not exactly to Patty," she replied. "I spoke to Uncle John."

"That is the same thing, in effect," said Sally, chuckling. "Much the same thing, but speaking to Patty might save her self-respect."

"I thought," Mrs. Ladue suggested gently, "that if the idea seemed to come from Uncle John it would do that. It is a little difficult to convince Patty and—and I didn't like to seem to press the matter."

Sally bent forward and kissed her. "I beg your pardon," she said. "No doubt you are right."

She took the pen and wrote a few lines in her firm, clear hand. Then she tossed the letter into her mother's lap and sat silent, gazing out of the window, in her turn, at the old, familiar wall and at the snow beyond.

"Mother," she asked suddenly, "what would you do—what would you like to do if father should happen to turn up?"

Her mother was startled out of her usual calm. Her hand went up instinctively to her heart and she flushed and grew pale again and she looked frightened.

"Why, Sally," she said. She seemed to have trouble with her breathing. "Why, Sally, he hasn't— [183] you don't mean—"

Apparently she could not go on. "No, no," Sally assured her hastily, "he hasn't. At least, he hasn't that I know of."

"Oh." It was evidently a great relief to Mrs. Ladue to know that he hadn't. The tears gathered in her eyes and dropped slowly upon the open letter in her hand as she spoke. "I—thought—I

thought that—that—perhaps—"

Sally understood. "Oh, mother, dear, I only wanted to know what you would do—what you would want to do. The thought occurred to me suddenly. I don't know why."

"I don't know, Sally. I don't know. I suppose we ought to go back to him. But I don't know."

Sally laughed and her eyes were cold and hard. If Mr. Ladue had heard that laugh and seen her eyes, I think he would not ask Sally to go back to him. "Oh," she said lightly—but her voice was as hard as her eyes—"oh, there is no doubt about what I would do. I would never go back to him; never at all. You shouldn't, either, mother. So put that bugaboo out of your mind. I hope he won't ever turn up, not ever."

Mrs. Ladue laughed and her laugh was ready and cheerful enough. "Oh, Sally," she said, mildly remonstrating, "we ought not to say that. We ought not even to think it."

"We poor mortals seldom do as we ought, mother, dear," Sally replied lightly. "You needn't have that fear a single minute longer."

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[184]

CHAPTER II

ToC

Much to Sally's surprise, Fox came on and he brought Henrietta.

"Doctor Sanderson's engagements cannot be very pressing," she said to him, smiling, as she gave him her hand, "to permit of his coming several hundred miles merely to see two lone women."

Now Doctor Sanderson's engagements, as it chanced, were rather pressing; and it was a fair inference from Sally's words that she was not as glad to see him as he wished and had hoped. But her smile belied her words.

"Miss Ladue forgets, perhaps," he replied, bowing rather formally, "that most of our patients are women, lone or otherwise, and that it is all in the way of business to travel several hundred miles to see them—and to charge for it. Although there are not many that I would take that trouble for," he added, under his breath. "So look out, Sally," he concluded gayly, "and wait until our bill comes in."

That sobered Sally. "Oh, Fox," she said, "we owe you enough already." Which was not what he had bargained for. Sally was looking at him thoughtfully and seemed to be calculating. "Perhaps," she began, "I could manage to—"

"Sally," he interrupted hastily—he seemed even fierce about it—"Sally, I'd like to shake you."

Sally laughed suddenly. "Why don't you?" she asked. "I've no doubt it would do me good."

"That's better," Fox went on, with evident satisfaction. "You seem to be coming to your senses." Sally laughed again. "That's still better. Now, aren't you glad to see me?"

"Why, of course I am."

"Then, why didn't you say so?" he challenged. "Merely to gratify my curiosity, tell me why you didn't." [185]

"Why didn't you?" Sally retorted, still chuckling a little.

Fox looked blank. "Didn't I? Is it possible that I omitted to state such an obvious truth?"

Sally nodded. She was looking past him. "Oh," she cried quickly, "there's Henrietta."

"Another obvious truth," he murmured, more to himself than to Sally. "There's Henrietta."

Henrietta came quickly forward; indeed, she was running. And Sally met her. Sally was quick enough, but she seemed slow in comparison with Henrietta.

"Sally, dear!" exclaimed Henrietta, kissing her on both cheeks. "How glad I am to see you! You can't imagine." Which was a statement without warrant of fact. If there was one thing that Sally could do better than another, it was to imagine. "Come up with me and show me my room. I've an ocean of things to say to you. Fox will excuse us, I know."

"Fox will have to, I suppose," he said, "whether he wants to or not."

"You see," laughed Henrietta, "he knows his place."

"Oh, yes," Fox agreed. "I know my place."

Sally had not seen Henrietta for four or five years. Henrietta was a lively girl, small and dainty and very pretty. Her very motions were like those of a butterfly, fluttering with no apparent aim and then alighting suddenly and with great accuracy upon the very flower whose sweetness she

had meant, all along, to capture; but lightly and for a moment. The simile is Sally's, not mine, and she thought of it at the instant of greeting her; in fact, it was while Henrietta was kissing her, and she could not help wondering whether Henrietta—But there she stopped, resolutely. Such thoughts were uncharitable.

In spite of Sally's wonderings, she was captivated by Henrietta's daintiness and beauty. Sally never thought at all about her own looks, although they deserved more than a thought; for—well, [186] one might have asked Jane Spencer or Richard Torrington, or even Fox, who had just seen her for the first time in years. Or Everett Morton might have been prevailed upon to give an opinion, although Everett's opinion would have counted for little. He would have appraised her good points as he would have appraised those of a horse or a dog; he might even have compared her with his favorite horse, Sawny,—possibly to the disadvantage of Sawny, although there is more doubt about that than there should be,—or to his last year's car. But he was driving Sawny now more than he was driving his car, for there was racing every afternoon on the Cow Path by the members of the Gentlemen's Driving Club. No, on the whole, I should not have advised going to Everett.

Sally, I say, not being vain or given to thinking about her own looks, thought Henrietta was the prettiest thing she had ever seen. So, when Henrietta issued the command which has been recorded, Sally went without a word of protest, leaving Fox and her mother standing in the back parlor beside the table with its ancient stained and cut green cloth. Fox was not looking at her, but at the doorway through which Sally had just vanished.

"Well," he said at last, turning to her, "I call that rather a cold sort of a greeting, after four years."

Mrs. Ladue laughed softly. "What should she have done, you great boy?" she asked. "Should she have fallen upon your neck and kissed you?"

"Why, yes," Fox replied, "something of the sort. I shouldn't have minded. I think it might have been rather nice. But I suppose it might be a hard thing to do."

"Fox," she protested, "you are wrong about Sally. She isn't cold at all, not at all. She is as glad to see you as I am—almost. And I am glad."

"That is something to be grateful for, dear lady," he said. "I would not have you think that I am not grateful—very grateful. It is one of the blessings showered upon me by a very heedless [187] providence," he continued, smiling, "unmindful of my deserts."

"Oh, Fox!" she protested. "Your deserts! If you had—"

He interrupted gently. "I know. The earth ought to be laid at my feet. I know what you think and I am grateful for that, too."

To this there was no reply.

"I think," he resumed reflectively, "that enough of the earth is laid at my feet, as it is. I shall not be thirty until next fall." He spoke with a note of triumph, which can easily be forgiven.

"And I," she said, "am forty-three. Look at my gray hairs."

He laughed. "Who would believe it? But what," he asked, "was the special reason for your wanting to see me now? I take it there was a special reason?"

She shook her head. "There wasn't any *special* reason. I meant to make that plain and I thought I had. I feel as if I ought to apologize for asking you at all, for you may have felt under some obligation to come just because you were asked. I hope you didn't, Fox, for—"

Fox smiled quietly. His smile made her think of Uncle John Hazen. "I didn't," he said.

"I'm glad you didn't. Don't ever feel obliged to do anything for me—for us." She corrected herself quickly. "We are grateful, too,—at least, I am—for anything. No, there wasn't any special reason. I just wanted to see you with my own eyes. Four years is a long time."

Fox, who had almost reached the advanced age of thirty, was plainly embarrassed.

"Well," he asked, laughing a little, "now that you have seen me, what do you think?"

"That," she answered, still in her tone of gentle banter, "I shall not tell you. It would not be good for you." A step was heard in the hall. "Oh," she added, hastily, in a voice that was scarcely more than a whisper, "here's Patty. Be nice to her, Fox."

However much—or little—Mrs. Ladue's command had to do with it, Fox was as nice to Patty as [188] he knew how to be. To be sure, Fox had had much experience with just Patty's kind in the past four years, and he had learned just the manner for her. It was involuntary on his part, to a great extent, and poor Patty beamed and fluttered and was very gracious. She even suggested something that she had had no expectation of suggesting when she entered the room.

"Perhaps, Mr. Sanderson," she said, with a slight inclination of her head, "you would care to accompany us out on the harbor to-morrow afternoon. It is frozen over, you know, and the ice is very thick. There is no danger, I assure you. It doesn't happen every winter and we make the most of it." She laughed a little, lightly. "The men—the young men—race their horses there every afternoon. They usually race on the Cow Path—Washington Street, no doubt I should call it, but we still cling to the old names, among ourselves. These young men have taken advantage of the unusual condition of the harbor and it is a very pretty sight; all those horses flying along. We shall not race, of course."

If Sally had heard her, I doubt whether she would have been able to suppress her chuckles at the idea of the Hazens' stout horse—the identical horse that had drawn her on her first arrival—at the idea, I say, of that plethoric and phlegmatic and somewhat aged animal's competing with such a horse as Sawny, for example. Mrs. Ladue had some difficulty in doing no more than smile.

"Why, Patty," she began, in amazement, "were you—but I must not keep Fox from answering."

Patty had betrayed some uneasiness when Mrs. Ladue began to speak, which is not to be wondered at. She quieted down.

"I ought to have called you Doctor Sanderson," she observed, "ought I not? I forgot, for the moment, the celebrity to which you have attained." Again she inclined her head slightly.

Fox laughed easily. "Call me anything you like," he replied. "As to going with you to see the [189] races, I accept with much pleasure, if you can assure me that there is really no danger. I am naturally timid, you know."

Patty was in some doubt as to how to take this reply of Fox's; not in much doubt, however. She laughed, too. "Are you, indeed?" she asked. "It is considered quite safe, I do assure you."

Mrs. Ladue looked very merry, but Patty did not see her.

"We will consider it settled, then," Patty concluded, with evident satisfaction.

On her way to her room, half an hour later, Mrs. Ladue met Patty on the stairs.

"Sarah," said Patty graciously, "I find Doctor Sanderson very agreeable and entertaining; much more so than I had any idea."

Mrs. Ladue was outwardly as calm as usual, but inwardly she felt a great resentment.

"I am glad, Patty," she replied simply; and she escaped to her room, where she found Sally and Henrietta.

"Sally," she said abruptly, "what do you think? Patty has asked Fox to go with us to see the racing to-morrow afternoon. I don't know who the 'us' is. She didn't say."

Sally stared and broke into chuckling. "Oh, *mother*!" she cried.

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[190]

CHAPTER III

ToC

Whitby has a beautiful harbor. It is almost land-locked, the entrance all but closed by Ship Island, leaving only a narrow passage into the harbor. That passage is wide enough and deep enough for steam-ships to enter by; it is wide enough for ships of size to enter, indeed, if they are sailed well enough and if there were any object in sailing-ships of size entering Whitby Harbor. Many a ship has successfully navigated Ship Island Channel under its own sail, but that was before the days of steam.

Before the days of steam Whitby had its shipping; and in the days of shipping Whitby had its fleets of ships and barks and brigs and a schooner or two. Although the industries of Whitby have changed, the remnants of those fleets are active yet, or there would have been nothing doing at the office of John Hazen, Junior, or at his wharf. Patty and some others of the old régime, as she would have liked to put it, were wont to sigh and to smile somewhat pathetically when that change was alluded to, and they would either say nothing or they would say a good deal, according to circumstances. The old industry was more picturesque than the new, there is no doubt about that, and I am inclined to the view of Miss Patty and her party. It is a pity.

But some of those old barks and brigs are in commission still. Only a few years ago, the old bark Hong-Kong, a century old and known the world over, sailed on her last voyage before she was sold to be broken up. They were good vessels, those old barks; not fast sailers, but what did the masters care about that? There was no hurry, and they could be depended upon to come home when they had filled, for the weather that would harm them is not made. In the course of [191] their voyages they pushed their bluff bows into many unknown harbors and added much to the sum of human knowledge. They could have added much more, but ship captains are uncommunicative men, seldom volunteering information, although sometimes giving it freely when it is asked; never blowing their own horns, differing, in that respect, from certain explorers. Perhaps they should be called lecturers rather than explorers. Poor chaps! It may be that if they did not blow them and make a noise, nobody would do it for them, but they never wait to find out. Let them blow their penny trumpets. It is safe and sane—very.

Captain Forsyth had pronounced views on this subject. "Explorers!" he roared to Sally one day. "These explorers! Huh! It's all for Smith, that's what it is, and if Jones says he has been there, Jones is a liar. Where? Why, anywhere. That previously unknown harbor Smith has just discovered and made such a fuss over—I could have told him all about it forty years ago.

Previously unknown nothing! It's Wingate's Harbor, and when I was in command of the Hong-Kong we poked about there for months. And there's another, about a hundred miles to the east'ard that he hasn't discovered yet, and it's a better harbor than his. Discover! Huh!"

"But why," Sally asked in genuine surprise,—"why, Captain Forsyth, haven't you told about it? Why don't you, now?"

"Why don't I?" Captain Forsyth roared again. "Nobody's asked me; that's why. They don't want to know. They'd say I was a liar and call for proofs. Why should I? Cap'n Wingate found it, as far as I know, but there might have been a dozen others who were there before him. I don't know. And Cap'n Sampson and Cap'n Wingate and Cap'n Carling and Cap'n Pilcher and—oh, all the masters knew them almost as well as they knew Whitby Harbor. They're mostly dead now. But I'm not. And if anybody comes discovering Whitby Harbor, why, let him look out." And the old captain went off, chuckling to himself. [192]

Many a time the old Hong-Kong had entered Whitby Harbor under her own sail. Later, the tugs met the ships far down the bay and brought them in, thereby saving some time. Whether they saved them money or not I do not know, but the owners must have thought they did. At least, they saved them from the danger of going aground on Ship Island Shoal, for that passage into the harbor was hardly wide enough for two vessels to pass in comfort unless the wind was just right.

Once in, it must have been a pretty sight for the returned sailors and one to warm their hearts —a pretty sight for anybody, indeed; one did not need to be a returned sailor for that. There, on the left, was the town, sloping gently down to the water, with its church spires rising from a sea of green, for every street was lined with elms. And there were the familiar noises coming faintly over the water: the noise of many beetles striking upon wood. There were always vessels being repaired, and the masters of Whitby despised, for daily use, such things as marine railways or dry-docks. They would haul down a vessel in her dock until her keel was exposed and absolutely rebuild her on one side, if necessary; then haul her down on the other tack, so to speak, and treat that side in the same way. Even in these later years the glory of Whitby Harbor, although somewhat dimmed, has not departed. On the right shore there was nothing but farms and pastures and hay-fields with the men working in them; for there is less water toward the right shore of the harbor.

There were no hay-fields visible on this day of which I am speaking, but almost unbroken snow; and there were no noises of beetles to come faintly to a vessel which had just got in. Indeed, no vessel could have just got in, but, having got in, must have stayed where she happened to lie. For Whitby Harbor was more like Wingate's Harbor, of which Captain Forsyth had been speaking, in connection with explorers, than it was like Whitby Harbor. It presented a hard and shining surface, with a bark and three schooners frozen in, caught at their anchorages, and with no open water at all, not even in the channel. [193]

If you will take the trouble to recall it, you will remember that the winter of 1904-05 was very cold; even colder, about Whitby, than the previous cold winter had been. Toward the end of January, not only was Whitby Harbor frozen, but there was fairly solid ice for miles out into the bay. Whitby, not being, in general, prepared for such winters, was not provided with boats especially designed for breaking the ice. The two tugs had kept a channel open as long as they could; but one night the temperature fell to twenty-three below zero and the morning found them fast bound in their docks. So they decided to give it up—making a virtue of necessity—and to wait; which was a decision reached after several hours of silent conference between the tugboat captains, during which conference they smoked several pipes apiece and looked out, from the snug pilothouse of the Arethusa, over the glittering surface. At a quarter to twelve Captain Hannibal let his chair down upon its four feet and thoughtfully knocked the ashes out of his pipe.

"I guess we can't do it," he said conclusively. "I'm goin' home to dinner."

The condition, now, reminded Captain Forsyth of other days. For nearly two weeks the temperature had not been higher than a degree or two above zero and the ice in the harbor, except for an occasional air-hole, was thick enough to banish even those fears which Doctor Sanderson had mentioned. Any timidity was out of place.

If any fear lingered in the mind of the stout horse as to the intention of his driver; if he had any lingering fear that he might be called upon to race, that fear was dispelled when he saw his load. He knew very well that he would be disqualified at once. There were Patty and Sally, and Mrs. Ladue, Fox and Henrietta, all crowded into the two-seated sleigh. Mr. Hazen had said, smiling, that he would come, later, from his office, on his own feet. Charlie, seeing the crowded condition, absolutely refused to go. This was a blow to Miss Patty, who had intended that he should drive, but was obliged to take the coachman in his place. Sally did not blame him and made up her mind, as she squirmed into the seat with Patty and the coachman, that she would join Uncle John as soon as she saw him. [194]

It seemed as if the entire population of Whitby must be on the ice. The whole surface of the harbor was dotted thickly with people, skating, sliding, or just wandering aimlessly about, and, on occasion, making way quickly for an ice-boat. There was not usually ice enough to make ice-boating a permanent institution in Whitby, and these ice-boats were hastily put together of rough joists, with the mast and sail borrowed from some cat-boat; but they sailed well.

The most of the people, however, were gathered in two long lines. The harbor was black with them. They were massed, half a dozen or more deep, behind ropes that stretched away in a straight line for more than a mile; and between the ropes was a lane, fifty feet wide or more, white and shining, down which the racing horses sped. The racing was in one direction only, the

returning racers taking their places in the long line of sleighs which carried spectators and went back at a very sober pace to the starting-point. Here the line of sleighs divided, those not racing making a wide turn and going down on the right, next the ropes, leaving the racers a wide path in the middle.

As the Hazens' sleigh approached to take its place in the line, a great shouting arose at a little distance. The noise swelled and died away and swelled again, but always it went on, along both sides of the line, marking the pace. Fox could see the waving hands and hats.

"They seem to be excited," he said, turning, as well as he could, to Mrs. Ladue, who sat beside him. Henrietta sat on his other side. "Do you happen to know what it is about?"

Mrs. Ladue was smiling happily. "Some favorite horse, I suppose," she replied, "but I don't know anything about the horses. You'd better ask Sally." [195]

So Fox asked Sally; but, before she could answer, Patty answered for her. "I believe that it is Everett Morton and Sawny racing with Mr. Gilfeather. I am not sure of the name, of course," she added hastily. "Some low person."

Sally looked back at Fox with a smile of amusement. It was almost a chuckle. "Mr. Gilfeather keeps a saloon," she remarked. "I believe it is rather a nice saloon, as saloons go. I teach his daughter. Cousin Patty thinks that is awful."

"It *is* awful," Patty said, with some vehemence, "to think that our children must be in the same classes with daughters of saloon-keepers. Mr. Gilfeather may be a very worthy person, of course, but his children should go elsewhere."

Sally's smile had grown into a chuckle. "Mr. Gilfeather has rather a nice saloon," she repeated, "as saloons go. I've been there."

Fox laughed, but Miss Patty did not. She turned a horrified face to Sally.

"Oh, *Sally*!" she cried. "Whatever—"

"I had to see him about his daughter. He was always in his saloon. The conclusion is obvious, as Mr. MacDalie says."

"Oh, *Sally*!" cried Patty again. "You know you didn't."

"And who," asked Fox, "is Sawny?"

"Sawny," Sally answered, hurrying a little to speak before Patty should speak for her, "Sawny is a what, not a who. He is Everett Morton's horse, and a very good horse, I believe."

"He seems to be in favor with the multitude." The shouting and yelling had broken out afresh, far down the lines. "Or is it his owner?"

Sally shook her head. "It is Sawny," she replied. "I don't know how the multitude regards Everett. Probably Mr. Gilfeather knows more about that than I do."

They had taken their place in the line of sleighs and were ambling along close to the rope. The sleighs in the line were so close that the stout horse had his nose almost in the neck of a nervous man just ahead, who kept looking back, while Fox could feel the breath of the horse behind. [196]

He looked at Mrs. Ladue. "Does it trouble you that this horse is so near?" he asked. "Do you mind?"

"Nothing troubles me," she said, smiling up at him. "I don't mind anything. I am having a lovely time."

And Fox returned to his observation of the multitude, collectively and individually. They interested him more than the horses, which could not truthfully be said of Henrietta. Almost every person there looked happy and bent upon having a good time, although almost everybody was cold, which was not surprising, and there was much stamping of feet and thrashing of arms, and the ice boomed and cracked merrily, once in a while, and the noise echoed over the harbor. Suddenly Fox leaned out of the sleigh and said something to a man, who looked surprised and began rubbing his ears gently. Then he called his thanks.

"That man's ears were getting frost-bitten," Fox remarked in reply to a questioning glance from Mrs. Ladue. "Now here we are at the end of the line and I haven't seen a single race. I say, Sally, can't we get where we can see that Sawny horse race? I should like to see him and Mr. Gilfeather."

"He's a sight. So is Mr. Gilfeather." And Sally laughed suddenly. "If we should hang around here until we hear the noise coming and then get in the line again, we should be somewhere near halfway down when he comes down again. Can we, Cousin Patty?"

Patty inclined her head graciously. "Why, certainly, Sally. Anything Doctor Sanderson likes."

"Doctor Sanderson is greatly obliged," said Fox.

The nervous man appeared much relieved to find that they were to hang around and that he was not condemned to having the nose of their horse in his neck all the afternoon. They drove off to join a group of sleighs that were hanging around for a like purpose. [197]

A light cutter, drawn by a spirited young horse, drew up beside them.

"Good afternoon," said a pleasant voice. "Won't some one of you come with me? You should have mercy on your horse, you know."

"Oh, Dick!" Sally cried. There was mischief in her eyes. "It is good of you. Will you take Edward?"

Even Edward, the stolid coachman, grinned at that.

"With pleasure," said Dick, not at all disconcerted, "if Miss Patty can spare him."

"Oh," cried Miss Patty, "not Edward."

"Well," continued Sally, "Miss Sanderson, then."

"With pleasure," said Dick again. There was no need to ask Henrietta. The introductions were gone hastily through, and Henrietta changed with some alacrity.

"You are not racing, Dick?" Sally asked, as he tucked the robe around Henrietta.

"Oh, no," Dick replied solemnly, looking up. "How can you ask, Sally? You know that I should not dare to, with this horse. He is too young."

"Gammon!" Sally exclaimed. "I shall keep my eye on you, Dick."

"That's a good place for it," Dick remarked. "Good-bye."

Henrietta was laughing. "Will you race, Mr. Torrington?" she asked.

"Oh, no," Dick repeated, as solemnly as before. "I have no such intention. Of course, this horse is young and full of spirits and I may not be able to control him. But my intentions are irreproachable."

Henrietta laughed again. "Oh, I hope so," she said, somewhat ambiguously.

Another cutter, the occupant of which had been waiting impatiently until Dick should go, drew up beside the Hazens'. The aforesaid occupant had eyes for but one person.

"Won't you come with me, Sally?" He did not mean that the wrong one should be foisted upon him. [198]

Sally smiled gently and shook her head. There were so many things she had to deny him! "Thank you, Eugene. I shall join Uncle John as soon as he comes down—as soon as I see him."

"Well, see him from my sleigh, then. The view is as good as from yours. Isn't it a little crowded?"

Sally shook her head again.

"Won't you come?" he persisted.

Sally sighed. "No, I thank you, Eugene. I will stay until I see Uncle John."

Bowing, Eugene Spencer drove off, leaving Sally rather sober and silent. Fox watched her and wondered, and Mrs. Ladue, in her turn, watched Fox. She could do that without being observed, now that Henrietta was gone. But the noise that told of that Sawny horse was coming, and they got into line.

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[199]

CHAPTER IV

ToC

Whatever the things in which Everett Morton had failed, driving was not one of them. There was some excuse for his not succeeding in any of the things he had tried: he did not have to. Take away the necessity and how many of us would make a success of our business or our profession? For that matter, how many of us are there who can honestly say that we have made a success of the profession which we have happened to choose? I say "happened to choose," because it is largely a matter of luck whether we have happened to choose what we would really rather do. Any man is peculiarly fortunate if he has known enough and has been able to choose the thing that he would rather do than anything else, and such a man should have a very happy life. He should be very grateful to his parents. I envy him. Most of us are the slaves of circumstances and let them decide for us; and then, perhaps too late, discover that which we had rather—oh, so much rather—do than follow on in the occupation which fate has forced us into. We have to labor in our "leisure" time in the work which we should have chosen, but did not; as if the demands of to-day—if we would succeed—left us any leisure time!

It is not to be supposed that Everett had such thoughts as these. He was concerned only with Sawny, at the moment, and with Mr. Gilfeather. He may have had the fleeting thought that he made rather a fine figure, in his coat and cap of sables and with his bored, handsome face. Indeed, he did. A good many people thought so. Even Sally may have thought so; but Sally did not say what she thought. As Everett made the turn at the head of the course, he looked around for Mr. Gilfeather, and presently he found him. Mr. Gilfeather was a hard-featured man, with a red face and a great weight of body, which was somewhat of a handicap to his horse. But if the horse [200]

expressed no objection to that and if Mr. Gilfeather did not, why, Everett was the last person in the world to raise the question.

"Try it again?" Mr. Gilfeather called, smiling genially.

Everett nodded. He did manage a bored half-smile, but it could not be called genial, by any stretch of the word.

They manœuvred their horses until they were abreast, and jogged down the course. They wanted it clear, as far as they could get it; and Mr. Gilfeather's horse fretted at the bit and at the tight hold upon him. Sawny did not. He knew what he had to do. And presently the course opened out clear for a good distance ahead.

"What do you say, Everett?" asked Mr. Gilfeather. A good many people heard it and noted that Gilfeather called Morton Everett. "Shall we let 'em go?"

Everett nodded again, and Mr. Gilfeather took off one wrap of the reins. The nervous horse sprang ahead, but Sawny did not. He knew what was expected of him. Everett had not been keeping a tight hold on him; not tight enough to worry him, although, to be sure, it was not easy to worry Sawny. So, when Everett tightened a little upon his bit, Sawny responded by increasing his stride just enough to keep his nose even with Mr. Gilfeather. He could look over Mr. Gilfeather's shoulder and see what he was doing with the reins. Perhaps he did. Sawny was a knowing horse and he almost raced himself.

Mr. Gilfeather's horse had drawn ahead with that first burst of speed, and now, seeing that Everett was apparently content, for the time, with his place, Mr. Gilfeather tried to check him, for he knew Everett's methods—or shall I say Sawny's?—and there was three quarters of a mile to go. But Sawny's nose just over his shoulder made him nervous; and the rhythmical sound of Sawny's sharp shoes cutting into the ice—always just at his ear, it seemed—made him almost as nervous as his horse, although Mr. Gilfeather did not look like a nervous man. So he let his horse [201] go a little faster than he should have done, which was what the horse wanted; anything to get away from that crash—crash of hoofs behind him.

But always Sawny held his position, lengthening his stride as much as the occasion called for. He could lengthen it much more, if there were need, as he knew very well; as he knew there soon would be. Mr. Gilfeather's horse—and Mr. Gilfeather himself—got more nervous every second. The horse, we may presume, was in despair. Every effort that he had made to shake Sawny off had failed. He hung about Mr. Gilfeather's shoulder with the persistence of a green-head.

In these positions, the horses passed down between the yelling crowds. Mr. Gilfeather may have heard the yelling, but Everett did not. It fell upon his ears unheeded, like the sound of the sea or of the wind in the trees. He was intent upon but one thing now, and that thing was not the noise of the multitude.

When there was but a quarter of a mile to go, Sawny felt a little more pressure upon the bit and heard Everett's voice speaking low.

"Now, stretch yourself, Sawny," said that voice cheerfully.

And Sawny stretched himself to his full splendid stride and the sound of that crash of hoofs came a little faster. It passed Mr. Gilfeather's shoulder and he had a sight of red nostrils spread wide; then of Sawny's clean-cut head and intelligent eye. Did that eye wink at him? Then came the lean neck and then the shoulder: a skin like satin, with the muscles working under it with the regularity of a machine; then the body—but Mr. Gilfeather had no time for further observation out of the corner of his eye. His horse had heard, too, and knew what was happening; and when Mr. Gilfeather urged him on to greater speed, he tried to go faster and he broke.

That was the end of it. He broke, he went into the air, he danced up and down; and Sawny, who [202] never was guilty of that crime, went by him like a streak.

Everett smiled as he passed Mr. Gilfeather, and his smile was a little less bored than usual. "If I had known that this was to be a running-race," he said; but Mr. Gilfeather lost the rest of Everett's remark, for Sawny had carried him out of hearing.

It chanced that they had passed the Hazens' sleigh just before Mr. Gilfeather's horse broke. Sally watched the horses as they passed, with Sawny gaining at every stride. Her face glowed and she turned to Fox.

"There!" she said. "Now you've seen him. Isn't he splendid?"

"Who? Mr. Morton?" Fox asked innocently. "He does look rather splendid. That must be a very expensive coat and the—"

Sally smiled. "It was Sawny that I meant."

"Oh," said Fox.

"Everett might be included, no doubt," she continued.

"No doubt," Fox agreed.

"He is part of it, although there is a popular opinion that Sawny could do it all by himself, if he had to."

"Having been well trained," Fox suggested.

Sally nodded. "Having been well trained. And Everett trained him, I believe."

Fox was more thoughtful than the occasion seemed to call for. "It speaks well for his ability as a trainer of horses."

"It does." Sally seemed thoughtful, too.

"And what else does Mr. Morton do," asked Fox, "but train his horse?"

"Not much, I believe," Sally replied. "At other seasons he drives his car; when the roads are good."

"A noble occupation for a man," Fox observed, cheerfully and pleasantly; "driver and chauffeur. Not that those occupations are not quite respectable, but it hardly seems enough for a man of Mr. Morton's abilities, to say the least."

Sally looked up with a quick smile. "I am no apologist for Everett," she said. "I am not defending him, you observe. I know nothing of his abilities." [203]

"What do you know, Sally," Fox inquired then, "of popular opinion?"

"More than you think, Fox," Sally answered mischievously, "for I have mixed with the people. I have been to Mr. Gilfeather's saloon."

"Oh, *Sally*!" cried Patty, "I *wish* you wouldn't keep alluding to your visit to that horrible place. I am sure that it was unnecessary."

"Very well, Cousin Patty, I won't mention it if it pains you." She turned to Fox again. "I was going to say that it is a great pity."

Fox was somewhat mystified. "I have no doubt that it is, if you say so. I might fall in with your ideas more enthusiastically if I knew what you were talking about."

"I am talking about Everett," Sally replied, chuckling. "I don't wonder that you didn't know. And I was prepared to make a rather pathetic speech, Fox. You have dulled the point of it, so that I shall not make it, now."

"To the effect, perhaps, if I may venture to guess," Fox suggested, "that Everett might have made more of a success of some other things if he had felt the same interest in them that he feels in racing his horse."

"If he could attack them with as strong a purpose," Sally agreed, absently, with no great interest herself, apparently, "he would succeed, I think. I know that Dick thinks he has ability enough."

Fox made no reply and Sally did not pursue the subject further. They drove to the end of the course in silence. Suddenly Sally began to wave her muff violently.

"Oh, there is Uncle John," she said. "If you will excuse me, I will get out, Cousin Patty. You needn't stop, Edward. Just go slow. I find," she added, turning again to the back seat, "that it is the popular opinion that it is too cold for me to drive longer in comfort, so I am going to leave you, if you don't mind."

"And what if we do mind?" asked Fox; to which question Sally made no reply. She only smiled at him in a way which he found peculiarly exasperating. [204]

"Take good care of father, Sally," said Patty anxiously.

"I will," Sally replied with a cheerful little nod. "Good-bye." And she stepped out easily, leaving Patty, Fox, and her mother. This was an arrangement little to Patty's liking. Doctor Sanderson was in the seat with Mrs. Ladue. To be sure, he might have changed with Patty when Sally got out, but Mrs. Ladue would not have him inconvenienced to that extent. She noted that his eyes followed Sally as she ran and slid and ran again. Mr. Hazen came forward to meet her and she slipped her hand within his arm, and she turned to wave her muff to them. Then Sally and Uncle John walked slowly back, toward the head of the course.

Fox turned to Mrs. Ladue and they smiled at each other. "I guess," Fox remarked, "that she is not changed, after all; except," he added as an afterthought, "that she is more generally cheerful than she used to be, which is a change to be thankful for."

Sally and Uncle John took Dick Torrington home to dinner; and Henrietta very nearly monopolized his attention, as might have been expected. It was late, as the habits of the Hazens went, when they went up to bed, but Henrietta would have Sally come in for a few minutes. She had *so* many things to say. No, they wouldn't wait. She would have forgotten them by the next day. And Sally laughed and went with Henrietta.

Henrietta's few minutes had lengthened to half an hour and she had not said half the things she had meant to say. She had told Sally how Mr. Spencer—Eugene Spencer, you know—had overtaken them at the head of the course and had accosted Mr. Torrington, challenging him to race.

"Mr. Spencer," continued Henrietta, with a demure glance at Sally, "seemed out of sorts and distinctly cross. I'm sure I don't know why. Do you, Sally?"

Sally looked annoyed. "He is very apt to be, I think," she remarked briefly. "What did Dick do? He said he was not going to race." [205]

"Yes, that's what he told Mr. Spencer, and Mr. Spencer said, in a disagreeable kind of way, 'You promised Sally, I suppose.' And Dick—Mr. Torrington—smiled and his eyes wrinkled. I think he was laughing at Mr. Spencer—at the pet he was in. Don't you, Sally?"

Sally nodded. She thought it very likely.

"And Dick—I must ask Mr. Torrington's pardon, but I hear him spoken of as Dick so often that I forget—Mr. Torrington told him, in his slow, quiet way, that he hadn't exactly promised you; that, in fact, he had warned you that his horse was spirited and somewhat fractious and he might not be able to hold him. He had warned somebody, anyway, and he thought it was you. It wasn't you, at all, Sally. It was I, but I didn't enlighten him."

"I knew, very well, that he would," Sally observed. "So he raced with Jane?"

"With Mr. Spencer," Henrietta corrected. "Do you call him Jane? How funny! And we beat him and he went off in a shocking temper, for Dick laughed at him, but very gently."

"I'm not sure that would not be all the harder for Jane. I suppose you were glad to beat him."

"Why, of course," said Henrietta, in surprise. "Wouldn't you have been?"

Sally was rather sober and serious. "I suppose so. It wouldn't have made any particular difference whether you beat him or not."

Henrietta made no reply to this remark. She was sitting on the bed, pretty and dainty, and was tapping her foot lightly on the floor. She gazed at Sally thoughtfully for a long time. Finally Sally got up to go.

"Sally," Henrietta asked then, smiling, "haven't you ever thought of him—them—any one"—she hesitated and stammered a little—"in that way?" She did not seem to think it necessary to specify more particularly the way she meant. "There are lots of attractive men here. There's Everett [206] Morton and there's Eugene Spencer, though he's almost too near your own age; but anybody can see that he's perfectly dippy over you. And—"

"And there, too," Sally interrupted, "are the Carlings, Harry and Horry, neither of whom you have seen because they happen to be in college. The last time they came home, Harry was wearing a mustache and Horry side-whiskers, so that it would be easy to tell them apart. The only trouble with that device was that I forgot which was which. And there is Ollie Pilcher, and there is—oh, the place is perfectly boiling with men—if it is men that you are looking for."

Henrietta gave a little ripple of laughter. "You are too funny, Sally. Of course I am looking for men—or for a man. Girls of our age are always looking for them, whether we know it or not—deep down in our hearts. Remember Margaret Savage? Well, she seems to be looking for Fox, and I shouldn't wonder if he succumbed, in time. She is very pretty."

There was a look of resentment in Sally's eyes, but she made no remark.

"And I have not finished my list," Henrietta went on. "I can only include the men I have seen to-day. To end the list, there is Dick Torrington. Haven't you—haven't you thought—"

Sally flushed slowly; but she smiled and shook her head. "You see, Henrietta," she said apologetically, "I have my teaching to think of—"

"Oh, bosh!" cried Henrietta, smiling.

"Fox knows," Sally continued, defensively, "and you can't have wholly forgotten, Henrietta."

"Bosh, Sally!" said Henrietta again.

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[207]

CHAPTER V

ToC

IT was but a few steps from Henrietta's door to Sally's own. Sally, her ideas a little confused by that exclamation of Henrietta's and by what it implied, walked those few steps softly and had her hand upon the knob of her own door when she found herself sniffing and realized that she smelt smoke. It was a very faint smell and she hesitated, even then, and stood there in the dark hall, recalling the fires that had been left. There had been no wood fire.

She took her hand softly from the knob. "I believe I'll just look around," she told herself. "It's a terrible night for a fire. I hope nobody'll take me for a burglar."

She went downstairs quickly, taking no pains to be quiet. If she were not quiet, she thought, with an involuntary chuckle, Uncle John would not be likely to think she was the sort of person that had no business to be in the house at all. She looked into the back parlor. All was right there. Then she opened the door leading into the back hall. The smell of smoke was stronger. She glanced into the kitchen. The top of the range was red-hot, to be sure, but that was not unusual enough to excite surprise, and the great old chimney, with its brick oven and broad brick breast and the wide brick hearth reaching out well beyond the range were enough assurance. The smoke must come from the cellar.

The cellar door was in the back hall, just at Sally's hand as she stood. She opened it; and was almost stifled by the smoke that poured out. She gasped and shut the door again quickly, and ran and opened a kitchen window, fumbling a little at the fastening, and drew two or three long breaths of the crisp night air, thinking how cold it was. Then she opened the cellar door again, held her breath, and went down.

It was a little better when she got down, although the smoke was thick up by the floor beams. [208] Sally glanced in the direction of the furnace; and she saw, through the smoke, a dull red glow, with little licks of flame running up from it, now and then. The man had forgotten the furnace and had left it drawing. That pipe was perilously near the beams.

"The idiot!" Sally exclaimed. And she held her breath again while she ran up the cellar stairs.

She was angry with herself because her hands trembled as she lighted the gas in the kitchen and found the lantern and lighted it. The slight trembling of her hands did not matter so much in filling a pitcher with water and by the time the pitcher was full her hands were steady enough. She ran down cellar again, the lantern in one hand and the pitcher in the other; and she shut the drafts in the furnace as far as she could. She heard the flame roaring in the pipe and the damper was red-hot.

"Oh, dear!" she said, under her breath. "If there was only something to take hold of it with! And the beams are all afire. Well,—"

She threw the water from her pitcher upon the beams in little dashes.

"Oh, dear!" she said again. "I can't do it."

A quiet voice spoke behind her. "Better give it up, Sally, and rouse the people."

Sally was too intent upon her purpose to be startled. "Oh, Uncle John!" she cried. "You are a very present help in trouble. We could put it out if this was all, but I'm afraid it has already got up between the walls."

"Come up, then," Uncle John spoke calmly and without haste. "Never mind the lantern. I will rouse Patty and Doctor Sanderson and you get at Henrietta and your mother and the servants. Don't send Patty to the servants," he added, with a smile. "I will send in the alarm."

Mr. Hazen had forgotten Charlie. Sally ran upstairs. There was still a light showing under Henrietta's door and Sally went in.

"You'd better not undress, Henrietta," she said. "There is a fire and we may have to get out. You [209] may have time to do a good deal, if you hurry—even to pack your trunk. You'd better put on your furs. It's terribly cold."

Henrietta was not flurried. "I'll be ready in a jiffy, Sally. Run along now."

Sally ran and woke her mother, telling her to get dressed quickly while she went for the servants. On her way up, she knocked at Charlie's door. She came downstairs presently, settled the servants in the hall, and went up to her room to help her mother.

Then the firemen came with a tremendous clanging of bells and shrieking of whistles, reveling in noise. Sally laughed when she heard them, and her mother laughed with her, rather nervously. The rest of it was a sort of nightmare to Sally and she had no very distinct recollection of any part of it. There was great confusion, and firemen in the most unexpected places, and hose through the halls and on the stairs. Fox and Henrietta had packed their trunks and Patty had two pillows and a wire hair-brush, which she insisted upon carrying about with her.

Then they were ordered out, and Sally found herself out in the night and the cold amid the confusion of firemen and engines and horses and ice. For both Appletree and Box Elder streets seemed full of hose, which leaked at every pore and sent little streams of water on high, to freeze as soon as they fell and form miniature cascades of ice on which an old man—a young man, for that matter—might more easily slip and fall than not. It was very dark out there, the darkness only made more dense by the light from the lanterns of the firemen and the sparks from an engine that was roaring near. They were throwing water on the outside of the house—two streams; and Sally wondered why in the world they did it. There was no fire visible. Perhaps Fox would know. And she looked around.

Their faces could just be made out, in the gloom; her mother and Charlie, Charlie with the bored look that he seemed to like to assume, copied after Everett; and Patty, still with her two [210] pillows and her wire hair-brush, looking frightened, as she was; and Henrietta and Fox and the huddled group of the servants. She could not see Uncle John. There were not many spectators, which is not a matter for surprise. There is little interest in trying to watch a fire which one cannot see, late on a night which is cold enough to freeze one's ears or fingers, and the curbstone is but cold comfort.

Fox and Henrietta were talking together in low tones. "Fox," asked Sally, "do you know why they are throwing water on the outside of the house. For the life of me, I can't make out."

"For their own delectation, I suppose," he answered soberly. "It is a fireman's business—or part of it—to throw water on a building as well as all over the inside, when there is any excuse. Besides, the water, as it runs off the roof and all the little outs, forms very beautiful icicles which, no doubt, delight the fireman's professional eye. Think how pretty it will look to-morrow morning with the early sun upon it."

Sally chuckled. "I see them dimly," she returned, "but very dimly. They ought to have a search-light on them."

"I believe there is one," he observed. "They will have it going presently."

"Oh," Sally exclaimed; and she chuckled again.

Thereupon, as if it had been a signal, a brilliant white light shone forth. It happened to be pointed exactly upon the little group, but shifted immediately so that it illuminated the roof. There were great rippling cascades of ice down the slope of it and icicles forming at each edge and the water streaming off them.

Sally was silent for a few moments. "It is certainly very pretty," she said then, "and should delight the fireman's professional eye. I suppose that I might enjoy it more if it were not our house."

The moment's illumination had served to point them out to somebody. Mrs. Ladue touched Sally on the arm.

"Sally, dear," she said, "I think that we may as well go now. Mrs. Torrington has asked us all to [211]
stay there. Won't you and Henrietta come?"

"She is very kind," Sally replied. "I had not thought about going anywhere, yet. I am warm, perfectly warm. I have my furs, you see. I think I will wait until I see Uncle John, mother, and we can go somewhere together. I don't like to leave him. But probably Fox and Henrietta will go." She looked around. "But where is Patty?"

"Gone to Mrs. Upjohn's a few minutes ago. Poor Patty! I am very glad to have her go."

Henrietta had gathered the drift of the talk, although she had not heard any names. She turned. "I could stay here with you, Sally, or I could go if it would be more convenient. I am warm enough. Who has asked us?"

Mrs. Ladue answered for Sally. "Mrs. Torrington sent Dick to find us," she said. "Here he is."

Henrietta's decision changed instantly. "Oh," she cried, "Mr. Torrington! It is very kind, and I accept gratefully. When shall we start, Mrs. Ladue?"

Sally barely repressed a chuckle. "I'll stay, thank you, Dick; for Uncle John, you know."

"Good girl, Sally. I hope I'll fare as well when I'm old. Come whenever you get ready. Somebody will be up and I think we have room for everybody. Will Doctor Sanderson come now?" Dick added.

Doctor Sanderson thanked him, but elected to stay with Sally, and Sally urged Dick not to expect them and on no account to stay up for them.

Dick and Henrietta and Mrs. Ladue had scarcely gone when the roaring engine choked, gave a few spasmodic snorts and its roaring stopped.

"What's the matter with it?" Sally asked. "Why has it stopped?"

"Colic," Fox replied briefly.

Sally chuckled again and took his arm. He made no objection. The engine seemed to be [212]
struggling heroically to resume its roaring and there was much running of firemen and shouting unintelligible orders, to which nobody paid any attention. In the midst of the confusion, Mr. Hazen appeared. He was evidently very tired and he shivered as he spoke to Sally.

"I have done all I could," he said. "That wasn't much. Where are the others, Sally?"

Sally told him. "You must be very tired, Uncle John," she went on, anxiously. "And you are wet through and colder than a clam. Your teeth are positively chattering."

He looked down at himself and felt of his clothes. The edge of his overcoat and the bottoms of his trousers were frozen stiff. "I guess I am tired," he replied, trying to call up a smile, "and I am a little cold. I've been so occupied that I hadn't noticed. And I slipped on one of their piles of ice. It didn't do any harm," he added hastily. "I think I'll go over to Stephen's—Captain Forsyth's. He won't mind being routed out. What will you do, Sally? Why don't you and Fox come, too?"

Sally hesitated. There was no object in their staying any longer, but she did not like to impose upon Captain Forsyth. If she had only known it, Captain Forsyth would have liked nothing better than to be imposed upon by Sally in any way that she happened to choose.

While she was hesitating she heard a voice behind her. "Mr. Hazen," said the voice, rather coldly and formally, "won't you and Sally—Miss Ladue—and—any others—"

Sally had turned and now saw that it was Everett. She knew that well enough as soon as he had begun to speak. And she saw, too, that he was looking at Fox. She hastened to introduce them. It was necessary, in Everett's case. They both bowed.

"My mother sent me," Everett resumed, in the same formal tone, "to find any of the family that I could and to say that we hope—my father and my mother and myself—we hope that they will [213]
come to-night and stay as long as they find it convenient." He seemed to have no great liking for his errand. "It is very awkward," he added, with his bored smile, "to be burned out of your house at night and on such a very cold night, too."

"Oh, but think," said Sally, "how much worse it might be. It might have been at three o'clock in the morning, when everybody would have been sleeping soundly."

"That is very true," he returned. "I suppose you are thankful it was not at three o'clock in the morning." He looked at them all in turn questioningly. "Will you come? We should be very glad if you would."

Again Sally hesitated. Uncle John saved her the trouble of answering.

"I had just expressed my intention of going to Stephen Forsyth's, Everett," he said, "and I think I will. Stephen and I are old cronies, you know. We are very much obliged to you and I have no doubt that Sally and Dr. Sanderson will go, with pleasure. They must have had about enough of this."

Everett bowed. Sally could hear Uncle John's teeth chattering and his voice had been very shaky as he finished.

"Let Fox prescribe for you, Uncle John," she said. "I'm worried about you. What's the use of having a doctor in the family if he doesn't prescribe when there is need?" And then Sally was thankful that it was dark.

Uncle John smiled his assent and Fox prescribed. "I have no doubt that Captain Forsyth will have certain remedies at hand," he concluded, "and I should think there would be no harm in your taking them, in moderation."

Uncle John laughed. "He will press them upon me," he said. "I will observe Doctor Sanderson's prescription. Now, good-night. No, Sally, Stephen's is just around the corner, you know."

He disappeared into the darkness and Sally, with much inward misgiving, prepared to follow Everett. She was really worried about Uncle John. He was an old man, just upon eighty, and he had gone through a great deal that night and was chilled through, she was afraid, and— [214]

She stopped short. "Oh, Fox," she cried. "The servants! I had forgotten them. What in the world shall we do with them?"

Everett had stopped, too, and heard Sally's question. "That is not difficult," he said. "Send them to our house. It is a large house and there is room for them in the servants' wing. Perhaps I can find them."

Everett was back in a moment. "That was easy," he remarked. "You need give yourself no concern."

They walked in silence up the long driveway, between the rows of shadowing spruces, and up the broad granite steps. Everett had his key in the latch and threw open the door.

"My mother did not come down, apparently. You will see her in the morning."

As she took off her furs in the hall, Sally was very grateful for the warmth and the cheerfulness and the spaciousness of the great house. Everett slipped off his coat of sables and led the way up the stairs.

"Your room, Sally—I shall call you Sally?" He looked at her, but not as if in doubt.

"Why, of course," said Sally in surprise.

"Your room, Sally," he resumed, "is down that hall, just opposite my mother's. The door is open and there is a light. Doctor Sanderson's is this way, near mine. I will show him. Good-night, Sally."

"Good-night," she answered; "and good-night, Fox."

They turned and she went down the hall, her feet making no sound in the soft carpet. The door which Everett had pointed out as his mother's stood ajar, and, as Sally passed, it opened wider and Mrs. Morton stepped out.

"You are very welcome, Sally, dear," she said, kissing her; "as welcome as could be. I will see Doctor Sanderson in the morning. Come down whenever you feel like it. It has been a trying night for you."

Sally's eyes were full of tears as she softly closed her own door.

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[215]

CHAPTER VI

ToC

There were times when, in spite of disease, death, or disaster, Mrs. John Upjohn had to have clothes; more clothes, no doubt I should say, or other clothes. At any rate, when such occasions were imminent, Mrs. Upjohn was wont to summon the dressmaker to come to her house, and the dressmaker would come promptly and would camp in the house until the siege was over, going home only to sleep. One would think that Mrs. Upjohn might have offered Letty Lambkin a bed to sleep in, for Letty had been a schoolmate of hers before misfortune overtook her; and Mrs. Upjohn had beds to spare and Letty always arrived before breakfast and stayed until after supper. Perhaps such an offer would have offended a sensitive spirit. That is only a guess, of course, for I have no means of knowing what Mrs. Upjohn's ideas were upon that subject. At all

events, she never gave Letty a chance of being offended at any such offer.

An occasion such as I have mentioned arose on the day of the Hazens' fire, and Mrs. Upjohn had accordingly sent John Junior around to Letty's house with the customary message. Which message John Junior had delivered with an air of great dejection and with the very evident hope that Miss Lambkin would be unable to come. But, alas! Miss Lambkin smiled at John cheerfully and told him to tell his mother that she would be there bright and early in the morning; that she had felt it in her bones that Alicia Upjohn would be wanting her on that day, and she had put off Mrs. Robbins and Mrs. Sarjeant on purpose so's Alicia wouldn't have to wait.

Whereupon John Junior muttered unintelligibly and turned away, leaving Miss Lambkin gazing fondly after him and calling after him to know if it wasn't cold. John Junior muttered again, [216] inaudibly to Miss Lambkin, but not unintelligibly. He was not fond of those sieges, to say the least.

"Darn it!" he muttered, kicking viciously at the ice. "That means two weeks and I can't stay at Hen's all the whole time for two weeks. A fellow has to be at home for meals. If she only wasn't there for breakfast and supper!" John Junior kicked viciously at the ice again; and, the ice proving refractory, he stubbed his toe and almost fell. "Ow!" he said; "darn it!" But that was an afterthought. He betook him to the harbor.

There is some reason to believe that the late John Senior had not regarded these visitations with more favor than did his son; there were some that did not hesitate to say that his end had been hastened by them and by the semiannual house-cleaning. Mrs. Upjohn was considered a notable housekeeper. "She takes it hard," he had said to Hen's father in an unguarded moment of confidence. Hen's father had laughed. Hen's mother was not a notable housekeeper. John Senior had sighed. At that time there was but one club in Whitby. He was not a member of that club. Such men as Hugh Morton and Gerrit Torrington were members; even John Hazen was said to be a member, although he was never at the club-rooms. So even that solace was denied to John Senior. He couldn't stay at Hen's house all the time either; and, there seeming to be no other way of escape, he up and had a stroke and died in two hours. At least, so rumor ran, the connection between cause and effect being of rumor's making. I have no wish to contradict it. I have no doubt that I should have wanted to do as John Senior had done. Very possibly Patty had some such wish.

The two weeks of Letty were now up and the end was not in sight. She and Mrs. Upjohn sat in Mrs. Upjohn's sewing-room, which was strewn with unfinished skirts and waists and scraps of cloth. Letty sewed rapidly on the skirt; Mrs. Upjohn sewed slowly—very, very slowly—on something. It really did not matter what. If the completion of Mrs. Upjohn's clothes had depended [217] upon Mrs. Upjohn's unaided efforts she would never have had anything to wear.

"Where's Patty gone, Alicia?" asked Letty, a thread between her teeth. "Hospital?"

Mrs. Upjohn stopped sewing. "Yes," she replied in her deliberate way. "I believe her father is worse. She got a message this morning before you came, and I think it was unfavorable, to judge by her face."

"Land!" said Miss Lambkin. "I guess he's going to die. He's a pretty old man. Eighty, if he's a day, would be my guess."

Mrs. Upjohn nodded. "Just eighty."

"Pretty good guess, I call it." Miss Lambkin laughed. "I thought he must be pretty sick, or Patty wouldn't be out of the house as soon as ever breakfast was over and not turn up again until dinner-time. Then, as like as not, she'd be gone the whole afternoon. I hear he's got pneumonia."

Mrs. Upjohn nodded again.

"And I hear," Letty continued, "that he got it getting chilled and wet the night of the fire. 'T was an awful cold night, and he would stay around the house and try to tell the firemen what they sh'd do. Of course, they couldn't help squirting on him some."

"I hope," said Mrs. Upjohn, "that they didn't mean to."

"I hope not," Miss Lambkin returned. "I sh'd think the ones that did it would have it on their consciences if they did. They tell me that Sally Ladue discovered the fire. She and that Doctor Sanderson have been at the Mortons' ever since and, if you can believe all you hear, neither of 'em likes it any too well. Mrs. Morton's nice to her—she can be as nice as nice to them that she likes, though you wouldn't always think it—but Everett's the trouble."

It was contrary to Mrs. Upjohn's principles to look surprised at any piece of information—and as if she had not heard it before. She gave a little laugh.

"A good many girls," she remarked, "would give their eyes to be at the Mortons' for two weeks."

"I guess that's what's the trouble with Everett," said Miss Lambkin pointedly. "Too much girl; [218] and I guess he isn't any too particular about the kind either."

Mrs. Upjohn was curious. To be sure, she was always curious, which was a fact that she flattered herself she concealed very neatly. Other people were not of the same opinion.

"Why, Letty?" she asked frankly. She seldom allowed her curiosity to be so evident. "I've never heard of his being seen with any girls that he ought not to be with. Have you?"

"Oh, not in Whitby," replied Miss Lambkin. "Not for Joseph! As far's that goes, he isn't seen very often with girls that he ought to be with. But I hear that when he's in Boston it's a different

story. Of course, I haven't seen him with my own eyes, but I have reliable information. You know he goes to Boston for weeks at a time."

"M-m," assented Mrs. Upjohn, rocking quietly and comfortably. "He stays at the best hotels, I believe."

"*Registers* at the most expensive," corrected Miss Lambkin, "I have no doubt. I s'pose he stays there some of the time. To tell the truth," she confessed, somewhat crestfallen at having to make the humiliating confession, "I didn't just hear what Everett does that Sally Ladue doesn't like."

"Oh," said Mrs. Upjohn. She did not look up and there was a certain air of triumph in the way she uttered that simple syllable which grated on Miss Lambkin's sensibilities.

"Sally's a sort of high-and-mighty girl," continued Miss Lambkin tentatively.

"Sally's a nice girl and a good girl," said Mrs. Upjohn cordially; "capable, I should say."

"No doubt she is," Letty returned without enthusiasm. "It's rather strange that she is all that, considering what her father did."

Mrs. Upjohn laughed comfortably. "I used to know her father. There was no telling what he would do."

"Ran off with another woman," said Letty, "and some money. That's what I heard." [219]

Mrs. Upjohn laughed again. "He disappeared," she conceded. "I never heard that there was any other woman in the case and I'm reasonably sure there wasn't any money."

"He hasn't ever been heard of since?"

Mrs. Upjohn shook her head.

"And he left them without any money? I thought he stole it."

"I don't think so. Doctor Sanderson kept them afloat for some time, I believe, until Patty asked Sally here. Then he got Mrs. Ladue into Doctor Galen's hospital."

"M-m," Letty murmured slowly. She had a needle between her lips or she would have said "o-oh." She removed the needle for the purpose of speech. "So that's Doctor Sanderson's connection with the Ladues. I always wondered. It might have been 'most anything. His sister's up and coming. She'll have Dick Torrington if he don't look out. She's made the most of her visit."

Letty's murmur might have meant much or it might have meant nothing at all. At all events, Mrs. Upjohn let it go unchallenged, possibly because her curiosity was aroused by what Letty said later. She asked no questions, however. She only waited, receptively, for further communications on the subject of Henrietta and Dick. Miss Lambkin did not vouchsafe further information on that subject, but immediately branched off upon another.

"I'm told," she said, with the rapidity of mental change that marked her intellectual processes, "that John Hazen's house was in an awful state the morning after the fire. I went around there as soon's ever I could, to see what I could see, but the door was locked and I couldn't get in. I looked in the windows, though, and the furniture's all gone from some of the rooms, even to the carpets. There was a ladder there, and I went up it, and the bedroom was all stripped clean. I couldn't carry the ladder, so I didn't see the others. I made some inquiries and I was told that the furniture was all stored in the stable. That wasn't burned at all, you know. I thought that perhaps [220] Patty'd been and had it moved, though it don't seem hardly like her. It's more like John Hazen himself. But he wasn't able."

Mrs. Upjohn smiled and shook her head. "It wasn't Patty," she replied, "or I should have known it. I guess it was Sally. Perhaps Doctor Sanderson helped, but it is just like Sally. She's a great hand to take hold and do things."

"You don't tell me!" said Miss Lambkin. "But I don't suppose she did it with her own hands. I shouldn't wonder," she remarked, "if she'd find some good place to board, the first thing you know. She might go to Miss Miller's. She could take 'em, I know, but she wouldn't have room for Doctor Sanderson, only Sally and her mother and Charlie. Charlie's a pup, that's what he is. But I can't see, for the life of me, what Doctor Sanderson keeps hanging around here for. Why don't he go home?"

Not knowing, Mrs. Upjohn, for a wonder, did not undertake to say. Miss Lambkin hazarded the guess that the doctor might be sparking around Sally; but Mrs. Upjohn did not seem to think so.

"Well," Letty went on, "I wonder what the Hazens'll do. It'd cost an awful sight to repair that house; almost as much as to build a new one. What insurance did you hear they had? Has Patty said?—This skirt is about ready to try on, Alicia. I want to drape it real nice. Can't you stand on the table?"

She spread a folded newspaper on the top of the table.

"There! Now, you won't mar the top. Take your skirt right off and climb up."

Mrs. Upjohn was a heavy woman and she obeyed with some difficulty. Miss Lambkin continued in her pursuit of information while she draped the skirt.

"You haven't answered about the insurance, Alicia. What did Patty say about it? I don't suppose Patty'd know exactly and I wouldn't trust her guess anyway. John Hazen never seemed to, to any [221] extent. Patty's kind o' flighty, isn't she, and cracked on the men, although you wouldn't think it from her highty-tighty manner. She used to think she was going to marry Meriwether Beatty, I

remember. Land! He had no more idea of marrying her than I had. And she's been cracked on every man that's more'n spoken to her since. She's got the symptoms of nervous prostration; all the signs of it. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if she went crazy, one o' these days. If Doctor Sanderson is looking for patients for his sanitarium he needn't look any farther. Patty's it. Turn around, Alicia. I don't get a good light on the other side. Why, Patty's—"

Mrs. Upjohn had heard the front door shut. "Sh-h-h!" she cautioned. "Here's Patty now."

They heard Patty come slowly up the stairs and, although there were no sounds of it, she seemed to be weeping.

"Now, I wonder," whispered Miss Lambkin, "what's the matter. Do you s'pose her—"

"Sh, Letty! She'll hear you. I'll get down and go to her."

"Without a skirt, Alicia?"

But Mrs. Upjohn did not heed. She got down from the table, clumsily enough, and went to the door. Patty had just passed it.

"Patty!" Mrs. Upjohn called softly. "Is there anything the matter?"

Patty turned a miserable, tear-stained face. "It—it's all o-over," she said dully.

"Your father?" asked Mrs. Upjohn. She spoke in an awe-struck whisper in spite of herself. Did not Death deserve such an attitude?

Patty nodded silently. "I'm so sorry, Patty," Mrs. Upjohn's sympathy was genuine. "I *am* so sorry."

"Oh, Alicia," Patty cried in a burst of grief, "my father's d-dead."

Mrs. Upjohn folded ample arms about her and patted her on the shoulder as if she had been a child. "There, there, Patty! I'm just as sorry as I can be; and so will everybody be as soon as they [222] hear of it. But you just cry as much as you want to. It'll do you good."

So they stood, Mrs. Upjohn unmindful of the fact that she had no skirt and Patty crying into a lavender silk shoulder.

"Land!" The voice was the voice of Miss Lambkin and it proceeded from the doorway. "I'm awfully sorry to hear your father's dead, Patty. How did—"

Patty lifted her head majestically from the lavender silk shoulder. "My grief is sacred," she murmured; and fled to her room.

"Mercy me!" muttered Miss Lambkin. "I didn't have my kid gloves on. I ought to have known better'n to speak to Patty without 'em. You may as well come back, Alicia," she continued in a louder voice, "and finish with that skirt. Perhaps, now, you'll be wanting a new black dress. Your old one's pretty well out of fashion."

She filled her mouth with pins while Mrs. Upjohn again mounted the table.

Mrs. Upjohn shook her head slowly. "No," she answered, "I guess the old one will do for a while yet. I shouldn't want one for anything but the funeral anyway, and you couldn't begin to get one done by that time. It would be different if it was a relative."

"It's curious," remarked Miss Lambkin, as well as she could with her mouth full of pins, "how things go. Now, there's many of our relatives—mine, anyway—that we could spare as well as not; better than some of those that are no kin to us. And we have to wear black for them and try to look sorry. Black isn't becoming to some, but it seems to me you'd look full as well in it as you do in that lavender, and that place on your shoulder where Patty cried tears is going to show anyway. But, as I was going to say, a man like John Hazen is going to be missed. I wonder who was there, at his death-bed. Patty, of course, and Sally Ladue, I s'pose, and maybe Mrs. Ladue and Meriwether Beatty. Sally was real fond of her Uncle John and he of her. It's my opinion that Sally'll be sorrier than Patty will. Come right down to it, Patty isn't so broken-hearted as she likes [223] to think, though she'll miss him."

To this Mrs. Upjohn agreed, but Letty did not wait for her reply.

"And I wonder," she went on, working rapidly while she talked, "how much he's left. Patty hasn't said, I s'pose. I don't s'pose she'd have much of an idea anyway, and I don't know's anybody could tell until his business is all settled up. He had quite a number of vessels, and it seems a great pity that there isn't anybody to take his business up where he left it. He did well with it, I'm told. It's my guess that you'll find that John Hazen's left Sally a good big slice."

"I hope so, with all my heart." Mrs. Upjohn spoke cordially, as she did invariably of Sally.

"My!" Letty exclaimed with an anticipatory squeal of delight. "Wouldn't it put Patty in a proper temper if he had! Now, Alicia," she said, standing back and looking the skirt up and down, "we'll call that skirt right. It hangs well, if I do say it. Take it off and I'll finish it right up. You can come down now."

CHAPTER VII

ToC

Miss Lambkin was right. Sally found a place to board—a nice place, to quote Letty Lambkin, although it was not Miss Miller's. No doubt Letty was sorry that Sally had not chosen Miss Miller's, for Miss Miller was an especial friend of Letty's; and, by choosing another place, Sally had cut off, at a blow, a most reliable source of information. Very possibly Sally did not think of this, but if she had, it would have been but one more argument in favor of her choice, for Mrs. Stump couldn't bear Letty, and she had vowed that she should never darken her door. Letty would not have darkened the door very much. She was a thin little thing. But, if Sally did not think of it, Letty did, and she regretted it. She even went so far as to mention it to Mrs. Upjohn.

"If Sally Ladue thinks she's getting ahead of me," she said, with sharp emphasis, "she'll find she's mistaken. I have my sources of information."

Mrs. Upjohn did not reprove her. She had an inordinate thirst for information which did not concern her, and Letty was the most unfailing source of it. So she only smiled sympathetically and said nothing. She was sorry to be deprived of such accurate information about Sally as Miss Miller would have supplied, but she still had Patty. In fact, Mrs. Upjohn was beginning to wonder how much longer she was to have Patty. Patty seemed to have no thought of going. Indeed, she would not have known where to go. Patty was entering upon some brand-new experiences, rather late in life. Already she was beginning to miss the pendulum.

Before Sally took this step which seemed to be so much more important to others than to herself, various things had happened, of which Miss Lambkin could have had no knowledge, even [225] with her reliable sources of information. Everett Morton had had an interview with his mother, at her request. He would not have sought an interview, for he had a premonition of the subject of it.

Mrs. Morton was one of those rare women whom wealth had not spoiled; that is, not wholly; not very much, indeed. There was still left a great deal of her natural self, and that self was sweet and kind and yielding enough, although, on occasions, she could be as decided as she thought necessary. This was one of the occasions. The interview was nearly over. It had been short and to the point, which concerned Sally.

"Well, Everett," said Mrs. Morton decidedly, "your attitude towards Sally Ladue must be changed. I haven't been able to point out, as exactly as I should like to do, just where it fails to be satisfactory. But it does fail, and it must be changed."

Everett was standing by the mantel, a cigarette between his fingers. "You do not make your meaning clear, my dear mother," he replied coldly. "If you would be good enough to specify any speech of mine? Anything that I have said, at any time?" he suggested. "If there has been anything said or done for which I should apologize, I shall be quite ready to do so. It is a little difficult to know what you are driving at." And he smiled in his most exasperating way.

Mrs. Morton's color had been rising and her eyes glittered. Everett should have observed and taken warning. Perhaps he did.

"Everett," she said, as coldly as he had spoken and more incisively, "you exhibit great skill in evasion. I wish that you would use your skill to better advantage. I have no reason to think that there have been any words of yours with which I could find fault, although I do not know what you have said. But Sally could be trusted to take care of that. It is your manner."

Everett laughed. "But, my dear mother!" he protested, "I can't help my manner. As well find [226] fault with the color of my eyes or—"

His mother interrupted him. "You can help it. It is of no use to pretend that you don't know what I mean. You have wit enough."

"Thank you."

"And your manner is positively insulting. You have let even me see that. Any woman would resent it, but she wouldn't speak of it. She couldn't. Don't compel me to specify more particularly. You put Sally in a very hard position, Everett, and in our own house, too. You ought to have more pride, to say the least; the very least."

Everett's color had been rising, too, as his mother spoke. "I am obliged for your high opinion. May I ask what you fear as the consequence of my insulting manner?"

"You know as well as I," Mrs. Morton answered; "but I will tell you, if you wish. Sally will go, of course, and will think as badly of us as we deserve."

"That," Everett replied slowly, "could perhaps be borne with equanimity if she takes Doctor Sanderson with her."

Mrs. Morton laughed suddenly. "Oh," she exclaimed, "so that is it! I must confess that that had not occurred to me. Now, go along, Everett, and for mercy's sake, be decent."

Everett's color was still high, but if he felt any embarrassment he succeeded in concealing it under his manner, of which his mother seemed to have so high an opinion.

He cast his cigarette into the fire. "If you have no more to say to me, then, I will go," he said, smiling icily. His mother saying nothing, but smiling at him, he bowed—English model—and was

going out.

Mrs. Morton laughed again, suddenly and merrily. "Oh, Everett, Everett!" she cried. "How old are you? I should think you were about twelve."

"Thank you," he replied; and he bowed again and left her.

So Mrs. Morton had not been surprised when Sally came to her, a day or two later, to say that she thought that they—Doctor Sanderson and she—had imposed upon Mrs. Morton's kindness [227] long enough and that she had found a boarding-place for her mother and Charlie and herself.

"I am very sorry to say that I am not surprised, Sally, dear," Mrs. Morton returned, "although I am grievously disappointed. I had hoped that you would stay with us until the house was habitable again. I have tried," she added in some embarrassment, "to correct—"

Sally flushed quickly. "Please don't speak of it, dear Mrs. Morton," she said hastily. "It is—there has been nothing—"

"Nonsense, Sally! Don't you suppose I see, having eyes? But we won't speak of it, except to say that I am very sorry. And I think that you wouldn't be annoyed again. Won't you think better of your decision and stay until you can go to your own house?"

"Oh, but nobody knows when that will be," Sally replied, smiling. "Nothing has been done about it yet. Patty doesn't seem to know what to do. Uncle John was the moving spirit." There were tears in her eyes.

"I know, Sally, dear, I know. I am as sorry as I can be. I am afraid," she added with a queer little smile, "that I am sorrier for you than I am for Patty."

"Thank you. But you ought not to be, you know, for he rather—well, he steadied Patty."

Mrs. Morton laughed. "Yes, dear, I know. And you didn't need to be steadied. But I'm afraid that I am, just the same."

So it was settled, as anything was apt to be concerning which Sally had made up her mind. Mrs. Ladue did not receive the announcement with unalloyed joy. She smiled and she sighed.

"I suppose it is settled," she said, "or you would not have told me. Oh," seeing the distress in Sally's face, "it ought to be. It is quite time. We have made a much longer visit upon Mrs. Torrington than we ought to have made, but I can't help being sorry, rather, to exchange her house for Mrs. Stump's. But why, Sally, if you found it unpleasant—"

"Oh, mother, I didn't say it was unpleasant. Mrs. Morton was as kind as any one could possibly [228] be."

"I am glad, dear. I was only going to ask why Fox stayed."

Fox murmured something about Christian martyrs and a den of lions, and Mrs. Ladue laughed. Then she sighed again.

"Well," she said, "all right, Sally. You will let me know, I suppose, when we are to go. We can't stay on here forever, although I'd like to."

At that moment Dick came in. "Why not?" he asked. "Why not stay, if you like it?"

"How absurd, Dick!" Sally protested. "You are very kind, but you know mother will have to go pretty soon. And I've found a very good place."

"If Sally says so, it's so," Dick retorted, "and there's no use in saying any more about it. Mrs. Stump's or Miss Miller's?"

Fox had been looking out of the window. He turned. "Mrs. Ladue," he asked suddenly, "will you go sleighing with me to-morrow? It will be about my last chance, for I go back when Sally leaves the Mortons'."

"Oh," cried Sally, "why not me, too? And Henrietta?"

Fox smiled at her. "There's a reason," he said. "I'll take you when the time is ripe. I have something to show your mother and we have to go after it."

"Can't you get it and show it to me, too?"

Fox shook his head. "I'm afraid not. It isn't mine, for one thing."

"Oh," said Sally, her head in the air. "And I suppose you'll go in the morning, when I'm in school."

"That might not be a bad idea. We might be followed. Can you go in the morning, Mrs. Ladue?"

She laughed and nodded. She would go at any time that suited him.

So it chanced that Fox and Mrs. Ladue started out, the next morning. Fox drove along Apple Tree Street and turned into another street.

"Isn't this Smith Street?" asked Mrs. Ladue doubtfully. "Where are we going, Fox?" [229]

"I'm astonished at your question," he replied. "You ought to know that this is still Witch Lane for all the old families, in spite of the fact that it is known, officially, as Smith Street. I have yet a very distinct recollection of Miss Patty's lamentations over the change. That was ten years ago, when Sally first arrived."

Mrs. Ladue laughed. She would have laughed at anything that morning.

"But, do you mind telling me where we are going?"

"I can't tell you exactly, as I am not very familiar with the country here. I know where I am going," he explained hastily, "but I doubt if I could tell you. We shall come to the end of the built-up part pretty soon, and then it takes us out into the country. There'll be a turn or two, and what I want you to see is about two miles out. Mr. Morton," he added, "put a horse at my service, and I have been exploring. I have not wasted my time."

Mrs. Ladue made no reply. She was happy enough, without the need of speech. They drove on, past the built-up part, as Fox had said, past more thinly scattered houses, with little gardens, the corn-stubble already beginning to show above the snow, here and there, for it had been thawing. Then they began to pass small farms, and then, as they made the first of the turn or two, the farms were larger, and there were rows of milk-cans on their pegs in the sun.

Suddenly Mrs. Ladue laughed. "Now I know where I am," she exclaimed. "That is, I remember that Uncle John Hazen brought me out here one day, nearly two years ago. He wanted to show me something, too."

Fox turned and looked at her. "That is interesting," he said. "I wonder if he showed you the same place that I am going to show you."

Mrs. Ladue only smiled mysteriously; and when, at last, Fox stopped his horse and said "There!" she was laughing quietly. He looked puzzled.

"The same," she said. "The very same." [230]

"Well," Fox replied slowly, "I admire his taste. It is worth looking at."

It was a very large house, looking out from beneath its canopy of elms over a wide valley; a pleasant prospect of gentle hills and dales, with the little river winding quietly below.

"It is worth looking at," said Fox again. He looked at her, then. She was not laughing, but there was a merry look in her eyes. "What amuses you? I should rather like to know. Isn't my hat on straight?"

She shook her head. "I'll tell you before long. But it is really nothing." Truly it didn't need much to amuse her on that day.

He looked at her again, then looked away. "The house looks as if it might have been a hotel," he remarked; "a little hotel, with all the comforts of home. It is very homelike. It seems to invite you."

"Yes," she replied, "it does."

"And the barn," he went on, "is not too near the house, but yet near enough, and it is very well ordered and it has all the modern improvements. All the modern improvements include a tiled milking-room and, next to it, a tiled milk-room with all the most improved equipment, and a wash-room for the milkers and a herd of about twenty-five registered Guernseys. I know, for I have been over it."

"That sounds very good. I know very little about such things."

"I have had to know. It is a part of my business. That barn and that outfit would be very convenient if the house were—for instance—a private hospital. Now, wouldn't it?"

She made no reply and he turned to her again. She was looking at him in amazement, and her face expressed doubt and a dawning gladness.

"Oh, Fox!"

"Now, wouldn't it?" [231]

"Yes," she murmured, in a low voice.

"And the house seems not unsuitable for such a purpose. I have not been over the house."

"Fox! Will you tell me what you mean?"

He laughed out. "The old skinflint who lives there says he can't sell it. He seemed very intelligent, too; intellect enough to name a price if he wanted to. And I would not stick at the price if it were within the bounds of reason."

"I think," Mrs. Ladue remarked, "that I could tell you why your old skinflint couldn't sell it."

"Why?" Fox asked peremptorily.

"When you have shown me all you have to show," she answered, the look of quiet amusement again about her eyes and mouth, "I will tell you; that is, if you tell me first what you mean."

He continued looking for a few moments in silence. She bore his scrutiny as calmly as she could. Then he turned, quickly, and drew the reins tight.

"Get up, you ancient scion of a livery stable." The horse started reluctantly. "There is something else," he added, "just down the road a bit."

"I thought so," she said. "It is a square house, painted a cream color, with a few elms around it, and quite a grove at a little distance behind it."

"It is. But you forgot the barn and the chicken-houses."

She laughed joyously. "I didn't think of them."

"And the well-sweep."

"I'm afraid I didn't think of that, either."

"I should really like to know how you knew," he observed, as if wondering. "Perhaps it is not worth while going there. But I want to see it again, if you don't."

"Oh, I do. I am very much interested, and you know you are to tell me what you are planning."

"Yes," he replied. "I meant to tell you. That was what I brought you for. But I thought you would be surprised and I hoped that you might be pleased."

"Trust me for that, Fox, if your plans are what I hope they are. If they are, I shall be very happy." [232]

They stopped in the road before the square house that was painted cream color. Fox gazed at it longingly. It seemed to be saying, "Come in! Come in!" and reaching out arms to him. There was the old well at one side, with its great sweep. The ground about the well was bare of snow and there was a path from it to the kitchen door. Thin curls of smoke were coming lazily from each of the great chimneys.

He sighed, at last, and turned to Mrs. Ladue. "I should like to live there," he said.

"You would find it rather a hardship, I am afraid," she returned, watching him closely, "depending upon that well, picturesque as it is."

He laughed. "Easy enough to lay pipes from the hotel, back there." He nodded in the direction of the larger house, the one of the twenty-five Guernseys and the model barn. "They have a large supply and a power pump. Ask me something harder."

"The heating," she ventured. "Fires—open fires—are very nice and necessary. But they wouldn't be sufficient."

He laughed again. "It is not impossible to put in a heating-system. One might even run steam pipes along with the water pipes and heat from their boilers. I press the button, they do the rest."

"Well, I can't seem to think of any other objection. And there is a very good view."

"A very good view," he repeated. He was silent for a while. "I have done very well in the past five or six years," he said then, "and the wish that has been growing—my dearest wish, if you like—has been to establish a sort of private hospital about here somewhere. It wouldn't be a hospital, exactly; anyway, my patients might not like the word. And I should hate to call it a sanitarium. Call it Sanderson's Retreat." He smiled at the words. "That's it. We'll call it Sanderson's Retreat."

It would have warmed his heart if he could have seen her face; but he was not looking. [233]

"I am very glad, Fox," she murmured. "That makes me very happy."

"Sanderson's Retreat?" he asked, turning to her. "But I haven't got it. Just as I thought I had found it I found that I couldn't get it."

"Perhaps that old skinflint who lives there doesn't own it," she suggested.

"Of course I thought of that," he answered, with some impatience. "But how am I to find out about it without exciting the cupidity of the native farmers? Once aroused, it is a terrible thing. I might advertise: 'Wanted, a place of not less than fifty acres, with large house commanding a good view over a valley, a herd of about twenty-five Guernseys, a barn with all the modern improvements, and a power pump. Price no object.' Rather narrows it down a trifle."

Mrs. Ladue almost chuckled. "I won't keep you in suspense," she said. "Uncle John owned it when he brought me out here. He told me so. And he owned this house, too."

"Uncle John!" cried Fox. "He knew a thing or two, didn't he? I wish I had found it while he was living. Now, I suppose I shall have to buy it of Miss Patty; that is, if I can. Who is the executor of the will? Do you know?"

She shook her head. "I haven't heard anything about the will, yet. I think it's likely to be Dick Torrington. Uncle John seemed to like Dick very much and he thought very well of him."

"I'll see Dick Torrington to-day. We may as well go back." He turned the horse about; then stopped again, looking back at the cream-colored house. He looked for a long time. "It's very pleasant," he said, at last, sighing. "Those trees, now—those in the grove—do they strike you as being suitable for a gynesaurus to climb? Do they?" he asked softly.

His eyes looked into hers for a moment. His eyes were very gentle—oh, very gentle, indeed, and somewhat wistful; windows of the soul. At that moment he was laying bare his heart to her. She knew it; it was a thing she had never known him to do before. [234]

She put her hand to her heart; an involuntary movement. "Oh, Fox!" she breathed. "Oh, Fox!" Then she spoke eagerly. "Will you—are you going to—"

He smiled at her, and his smile was full of gentleness and patience. "I hope so," he answered. "In the fullness of time. It is a part of my dearest wish. Yes, when the time is ripe, I mean to. Not yet. She is not ready for it yet."

"She is nearly twenty-one," Mrs Ladue said anxiously, "and beginning to be restless under her teaching. Don't wait too long, Fox. Don't wait too long."

"I have your blessing, then? I have your best wishes for my success?"

"You know you have," she murmured, a little catch in her voice.

"I thought that I could count on them," he replied gratefully, "but I thank you for making me certain of it."

She seemed as if about to speak; but she said nothing, after all. Fox smiled and took up the reins again. The drive back was a silent one. Fox was busy with his own thoughts; and Mrs. Ladue, it is to be supposed, was busy with hers.

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[235]

CHAPTER VIII

ToC

Dick Torrington was out when Fox called at his office, early that afternoon. They were expecting him at any moment. He had not come back from lunch yet. He did not usually stay so long and wouldn't Doctor Sanderson take a seat and wait a few minutes? Accordingly, Doctor Sanderson took a seat and waited a few minutes. He waited a good many minutes. He read the paper through; then paced slowly up and down the waiting-room. Were they sure Mr. Torrington would come back? Oh, yes, they thought so. They did not know what could be keeping him. So Doctor Sanderson thought he would wait a few minutes longer.

The truth was that it was Henrietta who was keeping Dick away from his office and his waiting clients. As she was to go within a few days, Dick thought the time propitious for taking her for a last sleigh ride; it might happen to be the last and it might not. Henrietta, too, thought the time propitious. I don't know what Fox would have thought, if he had known it. Most likely he would have grinned and have said nothing, keeping his thoughts to himself. He was an adept at keeping his thoughts to himself. But there is reason to believe that he would not have waited. Just as his patience was utterly exhausted and he was going out, Dick came in. There was a rather shamefaced grin of pleasure on his face which changed to a welcoming smile when he saw Fox. It was a very welcoming smile; more welcoming than the occasion seemed to call for. Fox wondered at it. But he was not to find out the reason that day.

They came to business at once. Dick was the executor, but he had not notified the beneficiaries under the will yet. It was really a very short time since Mr. Hazen's death. Fox, wondering what [236] that had to do with the matter, protested mildly that the only question with him was whether he could buy certain properties of the estate. He would prefer to deal with Dick rather than with Miss Patty.

Dick laughed. "Oh," he said, "I forgot that you didn't know. Those pieces of property that you are after—I know very well what they are," he interrupted himself to say, "and I can guess what you want them for—those pieces of property were left to Sally. I shall have to refer you to her."

Fox's amazement was comical. "Left to Sally!" he exclaimed. "Well! And it never occurred to me."

"It probably has never occurred to Sally either," Dick suggested. "She has more than that. Her uncle John was very fond of her."

"I am sure that it has not occurred to Sally. What will Miss Patty think?"

Dick shook his head. "I don't know," he said. "Nobody does. I don't know just how she feels toward Sally. If it were Charlie, now,—but it isn't. About these properties, you will have to see Sally. She isn't at liberty to dispose of them yet, but if she agrees to, there will be no difficulty. I shall not stand in the way of your doing anything you want to do with them. It happens that the lease of them runs out in a few months. I really don't believe that Miss Patty will contest the will, even if she doesn't just like it. Mr. Hazen's word was the law, you know."

Fox was looking out of the window and, as he looked, his glance chanced to fall upon Miss Patty herself, stepping along in a way which she had fondly flattered herself was dainty.

He smiled. "You never can tell about these nervous patients," he observed. "They may do anything—or they may not. But I think I'd better see Sally and break the news."

He found the chance on the evening of that same day. Everett went out, immediately after [237] dinner, as was his habit, and Mrs. Morton left them alone. Sally was reading.

"Sally," said Fox, "I understand that you are an heiress."

Sally put down her book suddenly and gave him a startled glance. "Oh," she exclaimed, "I hope not! Who told you?"

"Dick Torrington. He is the executor."

"Oh, Fox!" she cried. She seemed dismayed. "And Dick knows. But Patty will never forgive me. Can't I help it?"

"No doubt," he replied, smiling, "but I hope you won't, for I want to buy some of your property."

She laughed joyously. "I'll give it to you, you mercenary man! At last, Fox, I can get even with you—but only partly," she hastened to add; "only partly. Please say that you'll let me give it to you."

Fox was embarrassed. "Bless you, Sally!" he said. At that moment, he was very near to heeding Mrs. Ladue's injunction not to wait too long. He stopped in time. "Bless you, Sally! You have paid me. I don't need money anyway."

"Neither do I."

"The time may come when you will. It is a handy thing to have," he went on. "I promise to let you pay me some day," he added hastily, seeing that she was about to insist, "in kind."

Sally nodded with satisfaction. "I'll do it," she said, "in kind. That usually means potatoes and corn and firewood, doesn't it."

"Not this time, it doesn't. But I can't let you think of giving me these places."

"You can't help my thinking of giving them to you," she interrupted.

"For you don't even know what they are," Fox continued. "I didn't mean to tell you yet, but I have to." And he told her what he wanted to do; but only a part. It is to be noted that he said nothing about gynesauruses and coal-trees.

When he had finished Sally sighed. "It's too bad that I can't give them to you, Fox. I think it [238] would be a very good way; an excellent way."

"Excellent?" he asked.

"Yes, excellent," Sally answered, looking at him and smiling in her amused way. "Why isn't it?"

"Nonsense! It's absurd; preposterous. It's positively shocking. Sally, I'm surprised at you."

Sally shook her head. "No," she said obstinately, "it's an excellent way to do. You can't say why it isn't. Why, just think, then I should feel that I could come there when I am old or when I break down from overwork. Teachers are apt to break down, I understand, and now, when they do, there seems to be no course open to them but to hire a hearse—if they've saved money enough. Think how much easier I should feel in my mind if Sanderson's Retreat were open to me." And Sally chuckled at the thought.

"But Sanderson's Retreat would be open to you in any case," Fox protested. "You would not have to hire a hearse. It is my business to prevent such excursions. Have I ever failed you, Sally?"

"Oh, Fox, never." There were tears in her eyes as she got up quickly and almost ran to him. "Never, never, Fox. That is why, don't you see? I want to do something for you, Fox. You have done so much for me—for us."

He was standing by the fire. As she came, he held out his hands and she gave him both of hers. Ah! Doctor Sanderson, you are in danger of forgetting your resolution; that resolution which you thought was so wise. In truth, the words trembled on the tip of his tongue. But Sally's "for us" brought him to his senses.

"Oh, Sally, Sally!" he said ruefully. "You don't know. You don't know."

"Well," Sally replied impatiently, after she had waited in vain for some moments for him to finish, "what don't I know? I don't know everything. I am aware of that, and that is the first step to knowledge."

"You come near enough to it," he returned, as if speaking to himself. He was looking down, as [239] he spoke, into great gray eyes which, somehow, were very soft and tender. He looked away. "Sometime you will know."

"Everything?" asked Sally, smiling.

"Everything that is worth knowing," he answered gently. "Yes, everything that is worth knowing," he repeated, slowly.

Sally pondered for a brief instant; then flushed a little, but so little that you would scarcely have noticed it, especially if you had been looking away from her, as Fox was at some pains to do.

"We have not settled that question, Fox," she said. He still held her hands, but he scarcely glanced at her. "Fox,"—giving him a gentle shake,—"pay attention and look at me." He looked at her, trying not to let his eyes tell tales. Very likely Sally would think they told of no more than the brotherly affection which she had become used to, from him. Very likely that was what she did think. She gave no sign that she saw more than that, at any rate. "*Please* let me give them to you," she pleaded, eagerly. "I want to."

He shook his head. "Oh, Sally, Sally!" he said again. "It is hard enough to refuse you anything; but I can't let you do this, for your own sake. What would people think?"

"Oh, fiddle! What business is it of theirs? And how would they know anything about it?"

"I have no doubt there are some who would at once institute inquiries. You probably know such people."

Sally chuckled. "Letty Lambkin might. But what would it matter if they did?"

"I should hate to think that I was responsible for making you talked about."

"Then you won't take them, Fox? Not even if I get down on my knees?" Again there were tears in her eyes.

Fox shook his head. "I can't," he said gently. "I can't take them on those terms."

Sally sighed and smiled. "So I am repulsed, then. My gifts are spurned."

Fox was very uncomfortable. "But, Sally—" he began. [240]

She brightened suddenly. "I know!" she cried. "I'll lease them to you for ninety-nine years. Isn't that what they do when they can't do anything else? And you'll have to pay—oh, ever so much rent."

He laughed. "All right. I guess that'll be as long as I shall have use for them. But you'll have to charge me enough."

"Oh, I'll charge you enough," she said nodding; "never fear. I'll consult Dick and take his advice. *Then* perhaps you'll be satisfied."

"I'll be satisfied," he replied. "I'm very grateful, Sally."

"Nonsense! You're not. You're only complacent because you think you've had your own way, and I didn't mean that you should have it." She took her hands away at last. "Here's Mrs. Morton," she said gently.

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[241]

CHAPTER IX

ToC

What Patty really thought about the provisions of her father's will is not recorded. Indeed, it is doubtful whether she had anything more nearly approaching consecutive thought on the subject than a vague resentment toward Sally and a querulous disposition to find fault with her. For, with the lapse of years, Patty was becoming less and less able to think rationally—to direct her thoughts—or to think consecutively on any subject. She had never been conspicuous for her ability in that direction. What she said was another matter. What business had Sally to benefit by her father's will? A poor relation whom she, Patty, had befriended, no more. It never occurred to her to blame her father any more than it occurred to her to tell the whole truth about that little matter of befriending. Patty thought that she told the truth. She meant to.

There was some excuse for Patty's disappointment. One does not easily rest content with but little more than half a fortune when one has, for years, had reason to expect the whole of it. It was a modest fortune enough, but the fact that it turned out to be nearly twice what Patty had counted upon, and that, consequently, she was left with just about what she had expected, did not make her disappointment any the lighter, but rather the reverse. And she did not stop to consider that she would be relieved of what she was pleased to term the burden of supporting the Ladues, and that she would have, at her own disposal, more money than she had ever had. Not at all. Even when Dick pointed out to her that very fact, it did not change her feeling. Somehow, she did not know exactly how, Sally had cheated her out of her birthright. She wouldn't call it stealing, but—

"No," Dick observed cheerfully. "I should think you had better not call it that. It will be as well if you restrain your speech on the subject." [242]

That was rather a strong remark for Dick Torrington to make, but he felt strongly where Sally was concerned. He felt strongly where Patty was concerned; but the feeling was different.

It was not strange that, in the face of such feeling on Patty's part, Sally should feel strongly, too. She did feel strongly. She was genuinely distressed about it and would have been glad to give up any benefits under the will, and she went to Dick and told him so. He tried to dissuade her from taking such a course. There were other aspects of such a case than the mere feeling of one of the heirs about another. Why, wills would be practically upset generally if any one heir, by making a sufficiently strong protest, could, to use Dick's own words, freeze out the others, and it would be of little use for a man to make a will if many were of Sally's mind. In this case, as usually in such cases, the will expressed the testator's own well-founded intention. Mr. Hazen had expected some such outburst from Patty. Was that to prevent his wish, his will from being carried out? He earnestly hoped not. All socialists to the contrary, notwithstanding, he was of the opinion that any man, living or dead, should be able to do as he liked with his own; that is, with certain reasonable reservations, which would not apply in the case of her Uncle John.

"I suppose, Sally," he concluded, "that if he had given it to you while he was living, you would have taken it, perhaps?"

"No, indeed," Sally replied indignantly. "Of course I wouldn't. What made you think that, Dick?"

"To tell the truth," he said, "I didn't think it. Well, would it make any difference in your feeling about it to know that he felt that Miss Patty was not competent to take care of it?"

She shook her head and sighed. "I don't see that it would; I can't unravel the right and wrong of

it. If you think that my taking it would have pleased Uncle John, and if you tell me that Patty has as much as she can wish—" [243]

"Oh, not that. But she has enough to enable her to live in luxury the rest of her life."

Sally laughed. "We have great possibilities when it comes to wishing, haven't we? And you advise my taking it?"

"Most certainly."

"Then I will."

"I wonder why," Dick asked, "you don't want it?"

She hesitated for an instant. "I do," she said, then, laughing again. "That's just the trouble. If I hadn't wanted it I might have been more ready to take it."

She met Captain Forsyth on the way home. She had just been thinking that, after all, she could let Fox go ahead with his Retreat. She would not have to back out of that bargain, for which she was glad. And there were other things—

It was at this point in her reflections that Captain Forsyth bore down and hailed her. She answered his hail with a smile and waited.

"I was just going into Dick Torrington's office," he began, in a gentle roar, "to get him to reason with you. I heard, Sally, that you were thinking of refusing the legacy of your Uncle John."

She nodded. "I was, but—"

"Don't you do it," he shouted earnestly. He could have been heard for a block, if there had been anybody to hear him. "Don't you do it, Sally! You mustn't let Patty scare you out of taking what he meant that you should have—what he wanted you to have. She'll have enough; more than she can take care of. Patty couldn't take proper care of a cat. And John Hazen was very fond of you, Sally. You do this much for him."

"I'm going to, Captain Forsyth," she answered gently. "I've just told Dick so."

"Well, I'm glad," he said, with satisfaction. "It's been on my mind for some days, and I thought I'd better see what I could do about it. Your Uncle John said a good deal about you, first and last. [244] He'd be pleased. When you want anything, come to me; though you're not likely to be wanting anything unless it's advice. I've barrels of that ready. Good-bye, Sally."

Sally went home—if Mrs. Stump's could be called home—rather depressed in spirits. In spite of what people considered her good fortune, she continued in low spirits all through that spring and summer. Patty, to be sure, was covertly hostile, but that was hardly enough to account for it. Sally was aware of the unhealthy state of her mind and thought about it more than was good for her. It is a bad habit to get into; a very reprehensible habit, and she knew it, but she couldn't help it. You never can help doing it when you most shouldn't. It reminded her of the shiftless man's roof, which needed shingling.

Very likely she was only tired with her winter's teaching and with the events which had been crowded into those few weeks. They were important events for her and had been trying. She began to hesitate and to have doubts and to wonder. It was not like Sally to have doubts, and she who hesitates is lost. She said so to herself many times, with a sad little smile which would almost have broken Fox's heart if he had seen it, and would surely have precipitated an event which ought to have been precipitated.

But Fox was not there to see it and to help her in her time of doubt, and to be precipitate and unwise. She found herself wondering whether she had better keep on with her teaching, now that she did not have to. There was less incentive to it than there had been. Was it worth while? Was anything worth while, indeed? What had she to look forward to after years of teaching, when her enthusiasm was spent? Was it already spent? What was there in it but going over the same old round, year after year? What was there at the end? If the children could be carried on, year after year—if they were her own—and Sally blushed faintly and stopped there.

But she wondered whether Henrietta had been right. What Henrietta had said so lightly, the [245] night of the fire, had sunk deeper than Sally knew or than Henrietta had intended. Sally was beginning to think that Henrietta was right and that girls, down at the bottom of their hearts, were looking for men. She didn't like to confess it to herself. She shrank from the whole subject; but why shouldn't they—the girls—provided it is only at the bottom of their hearts? They did; some of them did, at any rate. It is doubtful whether Sally probed as deep as the bottom of her heart. Perhaps she was afraid to.

Yes, as I started out by saying, no doubt she was only tired,—beat out, as Miss Lambkin would have said; and she was lonelier than she had ever been. She missed Uncle John. It seemed to her that there was nobody to whom she could turn. Probably Captain Forsyth had had some such idea when he made his clumsy offer of advice. But Captain Forsyth would not do. Sally would have been glad enough of somebody to turn to. It was a peculiarly favorable time for Fox, if he had only known it. It was a rather favorable time for anybody; for Jane Spencer, or even for Everett Morton. For Everett had begun, as anybody could see with half an eye, as Letty Lambkin put it briskly. Altogether Sally's affairs had become a fit topic of conversation for people who bother themselves about other people's business.

Miss Lambkin did. She had tried to talk with Mrs. Sarjeant about the matter, but Mrs. Sarjeant had promptly shut her up. Whereupon Miss Lambkin, with her head in the air, had betaken herself to Mrs. Upjohn.

Mrs. Upjohn did not shut her up. She wanted to hear what Letty had to tell and she wished to contribute whatever she could, that Letty did not know, to the fund of general information; without seeming to, of course.

"Well, Alicia," Letty began, as soon as she had got into the house and before she had had time to remove her hat, "I thought I'd come and do for you now, even if it is a week before the time I [246] set. Mrs. Sarjeant can wait awhile, I guess. She can't need me. She told me yesterday that she didn't care to listen to gossip. As if I gossiped, Alicia! Why, I was only saying that Sally Ladue and Everett seemed to be pretty thick now, and I shouldn't wonder if they hit it off. And I shouldn't, either, Mrs. Sarjeant or no Mrs. Sarjeant. Anybody can see he's paying her attention and she's letting him." Miss Lambkin shut her lips with a snap. "Now, isn't he?"

Mrs. Upjohn did not answer her directly. She only laughed comfortably and suggested that they go right up to the sewing-room.

"Patty made you quite a visit, didn't she?" Letty began again, while she hunted scissors and needles and a tape. "Did you have to send her off to Miss Miller's?"

Mrs. Upjohn shook her head.

"That's a good thing. It wouldn't have been pleasant," Miss Lambkin resumed. "I hear that she's feeling real bitter towards Sally and that Sally means to live somewhere else, whether Patty repairs the house or not, but Patty won't hear to it. I notice, though, that nothing's been done to the house yet. I'm told that Patty's going right at it. She'd better, if she wants to live there before next summer, for this is September and the builders are awful deliberate. Now that Doctor Sanderson doesn't let the grass grow under his feet. Did you know that his new hospital's going to be ready before cold weather? And he hasn't been here, himself, more 'n a day at a time. Where's that little cutting-table, Alicia? In your room? I'll just run in and get it. You sit still."

Mrs. Upjohn did not like to trust Letty alone in her room, for she had the eye of a hawk; but Letty was gone before she could prevent her. She was back in a moment, and Mrs. Upjohn breathed more freely.

"As I was saying," Miss Lambkin continued, "that Doctor Sanderson had better be looking out if he wants Sally Ladue. Maybe he don't, but I notice that Eugene Spencer's fluttering around her [247] again and Everett's doing more'n flutter.

"It seems queer to think of Everett as anything but what he has been for some years. He isn't much in favor with some of the older men. I heard that Cap'n Forsyth said that he wouldn't trust him with a slush-bucket. And that pup of a brother of Sally's is copying after Everett as well as he can. He's going to college in a couple of weeks and there's no telling what he'll be up to there. I'm glad I don't have the running of him. Everett's no pattern to cut *my* goods to."

"No," agreed Mrs. Upjohn soberly. "I can't think what has come over Sally. I never thought she would be dazzled, though I won't deny that Everett can be attractive."

"Come to that," snapped Miss Lambkin, "Everett's handsome and rich and, as you say, he knows how to be attractive. Anyway, there's a plenty that would be only too glad to have a chance at him. Now, if you were of a suitable age, Alicia, you'd snap him up quick enough if you had the chance, and you know it."

Mrs. Upjohn only murmured an unintelligible protest, but her color rose. She would have snapped him up, and she knew it. Letty Lambkin was really getting to be unbearable.

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[248]

CHAPTER X

ToC

Charlie Ladue was a bright boy and a handsome boy, and he had good enough manners. His attempts at seeming bored and uninterested only amused certain intelligent persons in Cambridge, to whom he had introductions, and attracted them. He was very young and rather distinguished looking and these were the hallmarks of youth; of youth which wishes to be thought of an experience prehistoric; of youth which dreads nothing else so much as to appear young. He would get over these faults quickly; and these intelligent persons laughed quietly to themselves and continued to ask him to their houses—for a time. But the faults rather grew upon him than lessened, so that he became a nuisance and seemed likely to become worse, and they quietly dropped him, before he was half through his freshman year.

His faults were his own, of course. Faults always are one's own when all is said and done, and they usually come home to roost; but that they had developed to such an extent was largely due to Patty's indulgence and over-fondness. She was to blame, but not wholly. It is hard to fix the blame, even supposing that it would help the matter to fix it. When they came to Whitby, Sally was too young to oppose Miss Patty, and for four years Charlie had no mother; much longer,

indeed. The circumstances may have been Charlie's undoing, but it is a little difficult to see why the circumstances did not do the same for Sally, and she was not undone yet. No, I am forced to the conclusion, that, in Charlie's case, circumstances could not be held responsible for anything more than hurrying things up a little.

As I said, Charlie was very young. He had passed his finals with flying colors in the preceding June, nearly two months before his seventeenth birthday, and he was but just seventeen when he [249] began his college career. Whatever may be said, seventeen is too young for a boy to enter college and to be given the large liberties which a boy—a college "man"—has in any of our large colleges. Eighteen or nineteen is a much safer age, especially for a boy like Charlie Ladue. The faults which I have mentioned soon disgusted and repelled the most desirable elements in college and left him with—not one of—the least desirable. Even with them he was only tolerated, never liked, and they got out of him what they could. With them there was no incentive to study, which was a pity, for Charlie did very well with a surprisingly small amount of work, and would have done exceedingly well with a little more, but he needed compulsion in some form. As it was, he very soon got to doing just enough to keep himself afloat. He could study hard when he had to, and he did.

Patty had got to work, at last, upon the repairs to her house. It was October before she made up her mind and well into November before work began; and builders are awful deliberate, as Miss Lambkin had remarked. As the work went on, the time when the house would be ready retreated gradually into the future. But Miss Patty consoled herself with the thought that Charlie would not be able to help her occupy it before the next summer anyway. Although she had insisted that Mrs. Ladue and Sally should live there as soon as it was ready,—it was a question of pride with Miss Patty, not a question of her wish in the matter,—and although she was expecting them to live there, it was by no means sure that Sally would consent to come. Miss Patty did not trouble herself greatly about that. But the thought that Charlie might not would have filled her with consternation. She was looking forward to the Christmas recess, and to having Charlie with her for two weeks, at least.

But when the Christmas recess arrived and work was over, Charlie, feeling much relieved, sat down to a quiet evening with four congenial spirits who also felt much relieved and who wished [250] to celebrate their temporary freedom in the only way they knew. I was wrong in calling it the only way. It was one of the few ways they knew in which to celebrate anything. When Charlie rose from the table, about midnight, he felt rather desperate, for he had lost heavily. He could not afford to lose heavily.

One of the congenial spirits saw the look upon his face and laughed. "Don't you care, Ladue," he cried. "All is not lost. You needn't commit suicide yet. We'll stake you. Haven't you got a dollar left?"

Charlie forced a sickly smile, which disappeared the instant he ceased to force it. He pulled out the contents of his pockets. "I've got," he answered, counting soberly, "just fifty-four cents in cash. They'll expect me home to-night—they expected me last night," he corrected himself, "I can't go, for I haven't got the price of a ticket. And I've given you fellows my IOU's," he went on, looking up with an attempt to face it out,—a pitiful attempt,—"for—how much, Ned?"

"Two hundred for mine," Ned replied, spreading Charlie's poor little notes on the table. "Anybody else got 'em?" He looked around, but the others shook their heads. "It seems to be up to me to lend you, Ladue." Carelessly, he tossed a ten-dollar bill across the table. "Go home on that and see if you can't work the house for three hundred or so and take these up. Don't thank me." Charlie had taken the bill and begun to speak. "I'm doing it for cash, not sentiment. What do you suppose these IOU's are worth if you can't work somebody for the money?"

Charlie, reduced to silence, pocketed the bill.

"I've a notion," Ned continued, "that I'll go to town and look in at number seven. Luck's with me to-night. May do something there. Who goes with me?"

The others professed the intention of going to bed.

"You know, don't you," Ned threw out as an inducement, "that some man back in the nineties paid his way through college on number seven? Made an average of three thousand a year." [251]

"What's that story?" Charlie asked. "I haven't heard it."

Ned enlightened him. "It's nothing much," he said carelessly, "only that some man—it may have been Jones or Smith—in the class of ninety-something, used to go in to number seven regularly, two or three times a week all through his four years here, and he made an average of three thousand a year. Broke the bank twice."

Charlie was wide-eyed with amazement. "Why," he began, "if he could do that, I don't see why —"

Ned laughed. "They have," he said. "Don't you run away with the idea that number seven hasn't made a profit out of Davis or Jones or whatever his name was. They advertise it all right. That story has brought them in a great deal more than three thousand a year. But this man had a system; a very simple one, and a very good one."

"What was it?" Charlie asked. "Can you tell me?"

"Certainly I can," Ned answered, smiling. "He had a cool head and he knew when to stop. And there isn't one in three thousand that knows when to stop, if they've got the bug."

"I don't see," Charlie remarked loftily, "why anybody wouldn't know when to stop."

"Well, they don't, kid," Ned replied sharply.

Charlie was silent for a while, digesting the information he had acquired. Ned got up to go.

"Will—will you take me, Ned?" Charlie asked hesitatingly.

Ned looked him over scornfully. The idea did not appeal to him. "You don't want to go, Ladue," he said pityingly. At the bottom of his heart he did not wish to be responsible in the remotest degree for Charlie's career. It did not need a seer to guess at Charlie's weakness. "Number seven is no place for you and I'd advise you to keep out of it. It's a regular game, there; a man's game. They'd skin you alive without a quiver. They won't take any of your pieces of paper and they [252] won't give you back any ten dollars, either. I wouldn't advise you to go there, kid."

That "kid" settled it, if there was anything needed to settle what may have been ordained from his birth. At any rate, it was ordained that he should not overcome the inclination to that particular sin of his father without a struggle, and if there was one special thing which Charlie was not fitted to do it was to struggle in such a cause. He flushed.

"Only to look on," he pleaded. "It was just to look on that I wanted to go. I didn't mean to play, of course."

"No, of course not. They never do," Ned retorted cynically. Then he considered briefly, looking at Charlie the while with a certain disgust. Having given him advice which was certainly good, he had no further responsibility in the matter. "All right," he said. "If you're bound to go, I can get you by the nigger at the door, although he'd probably let you in anyway. You're a very promising subject."

So it happened that Patty waited in vain for Charlie. For a day she thought only that he must have been delayed—he was—and that, perhaps, he was staying in Cambridge to finish something in connection with his studies. She did not get so far as to try to imagine what it was, but she wondered and felt some resentment against the college authorities for keeping such a good boy as Charlie. On the second day she began to wonder if he could have gone to Mrs. Stump's to see his mother. She gave that question mature consideration and decided that he had. On the third day she was anxious about him and would have liked to go to Mrs. Ladue or to Sally and find out, but she did not like to do that. And on the morning of the next day Sally saved her the trouble by coming to ask about him.

Patty was too much frightened to remember her grievance against Sally. "Why, Sally," she said in a voice that trembled and with her hand on her heart, which had seemed to stop its beating for a moment, "I thought he was with you."

Sally shook her head. "We thought he must be here." [253]

"He hasn't been here," wailed poor Patty. "What can be keeping him? Oh, do you suppose anything has happened to him?"

Sally's lip curled almost imperceptibly and the look in her eyes was hard.

"I don't know, Patty, any more than you do."

"But I don't know anything," Patty cried. Sally gave a little laugh in spite of herself. "What shall we do? Oh, what shall we do, Sally?"

Sally thought for an instant, and then she turned to Patty. "I will take the noon train up."

"Oh, Sally!" It was a cry of relief. "Couldn't you telegraph first? And couldn't you ask Doctor Beatty to go, instead, or Doctor Sanderson?"

"I could ask Doctor Beatty to go, but I don't intend to," she said finally, "and Fox is not here. His hospital isn't ready yet, you know. They couldn't get him any more easily than I can. And as to telegraphing, I don't think that would help."

"Well," said Patty doubtfully, "I don't—do you think you ought to go alone?"

Sally turned and looked at her. "Why not?"

Before the gray eyes Patty's eyes fell. "I—I don't know, exactly. But it hardly seems quite—quite proper for a girl to go alone to—to a college room."

Sally chuckled. "I must risk it," she said. "I think I can. And if Charlie is in any trouble I'll do my best to get him out of it."

"Oh, Sally!" It was not a cry of relief.

Sally paid no attention to that cry of Patty's. "I must go back to get ready," she said. "I haven't any too much time."

But Sally did not take the noon train up. Just as she was leaving Mrs. Stump's, she met Charlie coming in. He looked rather seedy and quite forlorn.

CHAPTER XI

ToC

When Charlie went back, he was feeling rather elated, for he had two hundred and fifty dollars in his pocket. That was all the cash Patty could raise without making an appeal to Dick Torrington or making some other arrangement which would have betrayed her, and that would not have done. It would not have done at all. Sally might have heard of it, and Patty, to tell the truth, was afraid of Sally. Sally was so—so decided, you know, and so downright, and she could be so hard about anything that concerned Charlie. Sally was not fair to Charlie—the dear boy! What if he was a little extravagant? All young men must have their fling. So Patty, with but the vaguest ideas of what the fling was,—she could think only of fireworks and yelling, although three hundred dollars will buy a great deal of fireworks and yelling is cheap,—Patty, I say, feeling very low in pocket and in spirits, bade Charlie an affectionate farewell and returned to Miss Miller's. She spent the afternoon in casting up her accounts and in biting the end of her pencil; occupations from which she derived but little satisfaction. She could not seem to make the accounts come out right and the end of a pencil, even the best, becomes a little cloying to the taste in time.

Charlie's parting injunction had been really unnecessary. "Don't tell Sally, will you, Patty?" he had said in a voice from which he tried in vain to keep the note of exultation. There was little danger of that. Patty was as anxious as Charlie was to keep all knowledge of the transaction from Sally. And Patty sighed and cast up her accounts all over again. There was no escape from it. She must look the matter in the face. The absence of that two hundred and fifty would make a great difference to her; it would leave her absolutely without ready money for more than a month, or— [255]
or, perhaps,—and she stared out of the window with unseeing eyes—she could manage to borrow —or ask Miss Miller to trust her—or somebody—But that would not make up half and everybody would know about it; and she sighed again and put down the remains of the pencil with its chewed end and put the paper into her waste-basket. She had given it up. She would trust to luck. She never was any good at arithmetic anyway.

What specious arguments Charlie had used to persuade her I do not know. It does not matter and she probably did not give them much attention. Charlie wanted the money. That was the point with her as it was the point with him. What were arguments and explanations? Mere words. But she noted that his watch was gone. Patty, herself, had given it to him only the year before. She could not help asking about that, in a somewhat hesitating and apologetic way.

Charlie set her doubts at rest at once. "Oh, that?" he said carelessly. "It needed cleaning and I left it." He gave the same answer to Sally when she asked about it.

"Huh!" was Sally's only answer, as she turned away.

Charlie had not said anything in reply, although that monosyllable of Sally's, which expressed much, had made him angry enough to say almost anything, if only he knew what to say. He didn't; and the very fact that he didn't made him angrier than ever. He stammered and stuttered and finished by clearing his throat, at which performance Sally smiled heartlessly.

Charlie had been badly shaken and had not had time to recover. But neither Sally nor Patty had an idea of what Charlie had been through. It was just as well that they had not; just as well for Charlie's comfort and for Patty's. Sally had more imagination than Patty had and she had had more experience. She could picture to herself any number of scrapes that Charlie might have got himself into and they did not consist solely of fireworks and yelling. They were much nearer the [256]
truth than that vague image of Patty's, and if Sally did not hit upon the exact situation it is to be remembered that she did not know about the money which Charlie had succeeded in extracting from Patty.

But Sally's imaginings were bad enough. They were sufficient to account for her heavy heart, although they were not necessary to account for it. Sally usually had a heavy heart now, which was a great pity and not necessary either. What had come over her? It troubled her mother to see her so depressed. She may have attributed it to the wrong cause or she may not. Mothers are very apt to be right about such matters. Her anxious eyes followed Sally about. Finally she could not refrain from speaking.

"Sally, dear," she asked, "what is the matter?"

Sally smiled a pitiful little smile. "Why, I don't know, mother. Is anything the matter?"

"Something must be. A girl like you doesn't get so low-spirited for nothing. It has been going on for nearly a year now. What is it, Sally? Can't you tell me, dear?"

"I wish I could, mother. I wish I knew. If I knew, I would tell you. I don't. I only know that nothing seems to be worth while and that I can't care about anything. A pity, isn't it?" And Sally smiled again.

"Sally, don't! If you smile like that again you will make me cry."

"I won't make you cry, mother. It is no trouble for me to keep from smiling."

"Are you—aren't you well, Sally?"

Sally stretched her arms above her head. She was getting to be rather a magnificent woman. "I can't raise a single symptom," she said. "I'm absolutely well, I think. You might get Doctor Beatty

to prod me and see if he can find anything wrong."

"I would rather have Fox."

Sally flushed very faintly. "Not Fox, mother. I didn't mean it, really. I'm sure there is nothing the matter with my health. I could give you a catalogue: appetite good—fairly good, I sleep well, I [257]
—I can't think of anything else."

"Mind?" her mother asked, smiling.

"A blank," said Sally promptly, with a hint of her old brightness. "My mind is an absolute blank. So there you are where you started."

"Is it your teaching, dear? Are you too tired?"

"Do I look as if I ought to be tired?" Sally returned scornfully. She did not look so, certainly. She was taller than her mother and long-limbed and lean, and she looked fit to run races or climb trees or to do anything else that required suppleness and quickness and to do it exceedingly well. "I ought to be ashamed of myself and I am, but I feel as if I could murder those children and do it cheerfully; without a single pang. It makes me wonder whether I am fitted to teach, after all."

"Oh, Sally!"

Sally made no reply, but sat down on the bed and gazed out of the window at nothing in particular. To be sure, she could not have seen anything worth while: only the side of the next house, not fifty feet away, and the window of a bedroom. She could have seen into the room, if she had been at all curious, and have seen the chambermaid moving about there.

Mrs. Ladue looked at her daughter sitting there so apathetically. She looked long and her eyes grew more anxious than ever. Sally did not seem to be aware of the scrutiny.

"Sally," she began hesitatingly.

Sally turned her head. "Well?"

"I have heard some rumors, Sally," Mrs. Ladue went on, hesitating more than ever, "about—about Everett. I didn't believe there was any truth in them and I have said so. I was right, wasn't I? There isn't anything, is there?"

"What sort of thing?" Sally did not seem to care. "What were the rumors, mother?"

"Why," said her mother, with a little laugh of embarrassment, "they were most absurd; that Everett was paying you marked attention and that you were encouraging him." [258]

"No, that is not so. I have not encouraged him."

Her answer seemed to excite Mrs. Ladue. "Well, is it true that he is—that he has been paying you attention for a long time?"

"I have seen him more or less, but it is nothing that I have been trying to conceal from you. What does it matter?"

"It matters very much, dear; oh, very much." Mrs. Ladue was silent for a moment. "Then I gather," she resumed in a low voice, "that you have not discouraged his attentions?"

"No," Sally replied listlessly, "I have not discouraged them. Assuming that they are anything more than accident, I—what do I care? It makes no difference to me."

"Oh, Sally!" Tears came into Mrs. Ladue's eyes. "You must know better than any one else whether he means anything or not; what his intentions are."

"He may not have any intentions," Sally answered. "I don't know what he means—but that is not true; not strictly. I know what he says, but not what he thinks. I don't believe there is anybody who knows what Everett thinks." And she gave a little laugh which was almost worse than one of her smiles. "His intentions, assuming that he has any, are well enough."

The situation seemed to be worse than Mrs. Ladue had imagined in her most doubtful moments. "But, Sally," she said anxiously, "is there—oh, I hate to ask you, but I must. Is there any kind of an understanding between you and Everett?"

"Not on my part, mother," Sally replied rather wearily. "Now let's talk about something else."

"Be patient with my questions just a little longer," said her mother gently. "I can't drop the subject there. Has—do you think Everett has any right to understand anything that you don't? Have you let him understand anything?"

Sally did not answer for what seemed to her mother a long time. "I don't know," she answered [259]
at last, "what he thinks. To be perfectly plain, Everett has not asked me to marry him, but he may feel sure what my answer would be if he did decide to. I don't know. He is a very sure kind of a person, and he has reason to be. That is the extent of the understanding, as you call it."

"But, surely, you know what your answer would be," remonstrated Mrs. Ladue in a low voice. "It isn't right, Sally, to let him think one thing when you mean to do the opposite. I hope," she added, struck by a fresh doubt—a most uncomfortable doubt, "that you do mean to do the opposite. There can be no question about that, can there?"

"I don't know," Sally replied slowly, "what I should do. I've thought about it and I don't know."

Mrs. Ladue's hand went up to her heart involuntarily, and she made no reply for some time. "Drifting?" she asked at last.

Sally looked toward her mother and smiled. "Drifting, I suppose. It's much the easiest."

Mrs. Ladue's hand was still at her heart, which was beating somewhat tumultuously.

"Don't, Sally! Don't, I beg of you. Your whole life's happiness depends upon it. Remember your father. Everett's principles are no better than his, I feel sure. You have been so—so sturdy, Sally. Don't spoil your life now. You will find your happiness." She was on the verge of telling her, but she checked herself in time. That was Fox's business. He might be right, after all. "This mood of yours will pass, and then you would wear your life out in regrets. Say that you won't do anything rash, Sally."

"Don't worry, mother. It really doesn't matter, but I won't do anything rash. There!" She laughed and kissed her mother. "I hope that satisfies you. You were getting quite excited."

Mrs. Ladue had been rather excited, as Sally said. Now she was crying softly.

"You don't know what this means to me, Sally, and I can't tell you. I wish—oh, I wish that I had [260]
your chance! You may be sure that I wouldn't throw it away. You may be sure I wouldn't." She wiped her eyes and smiled up at Sally. "There! Now I am all right and very much ashamed of myself. Run along out, dear girl. You don't get enough of out-of-doors, Sally."

So Sally went out. She meant to make the most of what was left of the short winter afternoon. She hesitated for a moment at the foot of the steps. "It's Fisherman's Cove," she said then quite cheerfully. "And I don't care when it gets dark or anything."

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[261]

CHAPTER XII

ToC

Fisherman's Cove was a long way from Mrs. Stump's boarding-house, but that fact gave Sally no concern. And Fisherman's Cove was much changed from the Cove that Uncle John used to tell her about, where he had been used to go to see the men haul the seines. Its waters had been fouled by the outpourings of a sewer, and the fish had deserted them years before; but that would not make the ice any the less attractive with a young moon shining upon it.

And the way to Fisherman's Cove was not the way that Uncle John had been in the habit of taking. His way, fifty years before, had led him out upon a quiet country road until he came to a little lane that led down, between high growths of bushes, to a little farmhouse. The farmhouse had overlooked the Cove. Sally could not go through the little lane to the little old farmhouse, because the farmhouse was not there now, and because there was a horrible fence of new boards right across the lane. They had been building mills on the shores of Fisherman's Cove for thirty years; and the ice ponds on which the boys and girls of thirty years before used to skate—Miss Patty had skated there, often—were no longer ice ponds, but thriving mill villages, with their long rows of brilliantly lighted windows and their neat tenements, the later ones of three stories, each story having its neat clothes-porch. If you don't know what a clothes-porch is, just go down there and see for yourself. And these neat tenements of three stories each sheltered I don't know how many families of Portuguese mill-workers, who may have been neat, but who probably were not. Thriving! Ugh! as Miss Patty invariably said, turning her head away. She did not have to go that way often, but when she did have to she preferred to shut her eyes until her horse had taken her [262]
past it all.

Besides, Mrs. Stump's was not on Apple Tree Street, but in a much less fashionable neighborhood; one which had been fashionable some seventy or eighty years before. As fashion left that street and moved upon the ridge, the fine old houses—for they were fine old houses, even there—gradually fell in their estate. The way from Mrs. Stump's to Fisherman's Cove did not lie by that thriving mill village which has been mentioned, but by other thriving mill villages, with their tenements which, being older, were presumably not so neat. There was little to choose between the ways. Either was disagreeable enough, especially at any time when the hands were in the street, and no girl would have chosen such a time to walk upon that road. Even Sally would have avoided it; but the mill-hands were now shut up in their mills and working merrily or otherwise, and she did not give the matter a thought.

As she started upon her road, a man who had been leaning negligently upon a post at the next corner, bestirred himself, unleaned, and came toward her. Sally glanced up at him and stopped. "Oh, dear!" she said, in a voice of comical dismay. "Oh, dear! And I promised mother that I wouldn't do anything rash."

The man continued to come toward her. He had a leisurely air of certainty which ordinarily would have antagonized Sally at once.

"Well, Sally?" he said questioningly, when he was near enough to be heard without raising his voice.

"Well, Everett," Sally returned, with some sharpness. "I should really like to know what you were doing on that corner."

"Doing?" he asked in surprise. "Why, nothing at all. I was only waiting for you."

"And why," she said, with more sharpness than before, "if you were waiting for me, didn't you come to the house and wait there?"

"I don't like to go to boarding-houses and wait," he replied, smiling. "I have a prejudice against [263] boarding-houses, although I have no doubt that Mrs. Stump's is an excellent house. And my going there might excite some comment."

"Is it your idea," Sally retorted quickly, "that your waiting on the next corner will not excite comment? There has been too much comment already."

"Well, Sally, what if there has been a certain amount of it? We don't care, do we?"

"I am not sure that we don't," she answered slowly, looking him in the face thoughtfully. "I am not sure. In fact, I think we do."

He flushed a little under her direct gaze. That subject was not to be pursued.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"I am going for a walk," she replied; "for a long walk. And I—"

"Then you'd better ride," he said quickly, interrupting her. "I can get Sawny in five minutes. Where will you be?"

"No," Sally spoke earnestly. "Don't. I'd rather not. I prefer to walk. And, Everett, I'd rather you wouldn't go with me. I want to take this walk alone."

Everett was surprised. It was rather a shock to find that he wasn't wanted.

"Oh," he said coldly. "Very well. I hope you will have a most pleasant walk to—wherever you are going."

Sally's heart was too tender. Everett seemed hurt, and she didn't like to feel that she had hurt him. "I am going to Fisherman's Cove," she said.

"Fisherman's Cove! But you know that will take you through the heart of milltown."

"Yes, but the mills aren't out. I'll come back early."

"It's not a way for a girl to choose."

Sally smiled. "I'll be all right, I think."

Everett shrugged his shoulders. "You'd much better let me drive you. We can go to the Cove as well as elsewhere."

Sally shook her head gently. [264]

"As you please," he said; and he shrugged again and turned away.

Sally looked after him for a moment. "Oh, dear," she sighed. "Now I've offended him—mortally, I suppose. But it doesn't matter. I was forgetting. Nothing really matters." It didn't matter. It might be better if she had offended him mortally if he would stay offended.

So Sally put aside all thoughts of Everett and resumed her walk. She had no great difficulty in putting aside thoughts of him. I do not know what her thoughts were, as she walked on towards the Cove, but it is safe to say that they were not of Everett. She must have been thinking pretty deeply of something, for she took her way unconsciously and without seeing where she was going; and she passed the few people that she met without seeing them or being conscious that they were there. Walking so, like one asleep, she came to the end of that street, where it runs into River Street.

River Street is a dirty street. Its best friends could not say more for it. The reason is not far to seek; and a part of that reason is that, for many years—say sixty years or even seventy—it has served for a residence street for the same class of people. Residence street is perhaps rather a high-sounding name for it. You may use any other words that you like better, for River Street, from the point where Sally entered it to within a half-dozen blocks of the centre of the town, was, for long years, the one place where certain people lived. It was so wholly given up to those people that it was known as Fayal; and Fayal had a reputation which was not altogether savory. The inhabitants of this local Fayal were, in the old days, sailors, and sailors of the roughest sort; with crimps and sharks and women of several kinds, and an occasional overlord. There were no mills to speak of, twenty-five years ago, at this end of the town. When the mills began to come, the inhabitants of Fayal—at least, some of them—sent for their friends from the islands, and the friends, in turn, sent for their families; the old sailor class, the rough men with gold hoops in [265] their ears, gradually died off and the reputation of River Street improved. Like the street itself, it is not yet altogether savory.

At River Street, Sally began to find herself among the tenements, for Fayal had lain in the other direction and the old River Street had faded out, right here, into the remains of a country road which ended at the beach, not half a mile beyond. There was no country road now, and the less said about this particular part of the beach the better.

Sally paused for an instant and looked about her. From this point on, River Street was a continuous row of tenements, very neat and tidy tenements, no doubt, at a distance. There was no gleam in that same distance which betokened the Cove, only the neat and tidy tenements,

horribly neat and tidy. Sally felt a sinking of the heart or somewhere about that region, although I believe it is not the heart that sinks.

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed, under her breath. "I had forgotten that it was so forlorn. I will hurry through it. I wish I could shut my eyes, as Patty does, but I suppose I shall need to see."

So she hurried along, past the rows of tenements, past the few women that she met and past the small children playing in the street. The women paid no attention to her, being intent upon their own business and having enough of it to keep them well occupied. She passed a mill, with its throbbing of looms and its clattering and clicking of spindles. The long rows of windows were just beginning to be lighted as she passed. She went on, past more tenements, less closely set, and past another mill. The windows of this second mill were already lighted, and the same throbbing and clattering came faintly to her ears. In front of this mill was a broad street, almost a square, and beyond the street an open lot,—I had almost said a field, but it lacked one essential to being a field,—evidently used by the population, old and young, as a playground. This lot was surrounded by the remains of an old stone wall, a relic of the better days, when it had been a [266] field. Now, there was no vestige of vegetation; no living thing. A pig would have died of starvation in that lot. Both street and lot were covered with frozen mud and dirty snow, and a film of repulsive dirt, that would not wash off, coated the old stones of the wall. The whole place filled Sally with disgust. If these mills had to be somewhere, why must they put them here? Why must they? Weren't there other places, without robbing—

Sally broke off. She had been almost talking aloud to herself in fierce rebellion. Mills! Mills! Nothing but mills! They had taken up every foot of the shore in Whitby except what was occupied by the wharves. What were the people thinking of, that they suffered it? They had seen foot after foot, mile after mile, of shore given to the mills, and not a single feeble voice had been raised to prevent. They had seen the mills stretch forth surreptitious, grasping hands and take unto themselves pieces of their beautiful old shore road, a quarter of a mile at a time. That road had been unequaled for beauty, thirty years before. Sally had heard Patty speak of it often, mourning its loss. She, herself, had seen great stretches of that shore taken by the mills within the past ten years, and she had not known enough to speak or even to care. The people were mill-mad—or sleeping. Well—and Sally sighed—a haughty spirit before destruction; just before it, she hoped. A thousand times rather the few hardened sailor-men in their place than that horde everywhere.

It is to be feared that Sally was getting excited; and it is to be feared that she was not truly democratic. Well, she was not and she never pretended to be. What of it? She never pretended to be what she was not. And as she thought these thoughts, she came out from behind the third mill and gave a little gasp of delight. There lay Fisherman's Cove, its frozen surface saffron and blue and crimson; and the clouds above golden and saffron and crimson, with lavender and purple in the shadows. The sun had just gone down behind another mill on the opposite shore. Sally stumbled on—she didn't dare take her eyes off that—but she stumbled on, as fast as she could, [267] past the few scattered tenements which lay between her and the open road, and she sat down on a great stone that was part of the old sea-wall. For at this point the road ran close to the waters of the Cove, and the beach, with its load of broken ice, was at her feet. And she sighed again and sat there, watching, and a great peace fell upon her spirit and she was content.

Sally gazed, first at the sky and then at the ice of the Cove; and the golden lights upon the clouds changed to saffron and the saffron to crimson and the purple deepened. In the ice, the green which had lingered in places changed to blue and the blue to indigo and the saffron and crimson darkened and were gone. Ah! This was worth while. Was anything else worth while? What did she care, sitting there, for schools or mills or anything, indeed, but sitting there and gazing? She half turned and looked out into the bay where sky and water meet. She could not tell which was water and which was sky, for both had become a dull slate-blue. She looked again at the Cove. The color had gone, but there was a faint silvery light from a young moon which hung above the mill on the opposite shore. And from the windows of the mill shone other lights. These mills were rather picturesque at night and at a distance; they were rather pretty—of a kind. Sally did not care for that kind. The greater the distance, the more picturesque they were. Sally laughed to herself at the thought. Her laugh was gay enough and it would have done her mother's heart good to hear it. She was content; so content that she took no heed of the time, but she sat there until the young moon had sunk, in its turn, almost to the mill, and she roused herself and found that she was cold, which was not strange. And it was too late for a girl to be going past the mills; which was not strange either. If she was going, she had better be about it. So she got up from the great stone, took a last long look at the fast-darkening sky, shivered and started back, at a good pace, along the road.

She passed the last mill and, as she came to the corner of the fence, she heard the roar of many [268] feet coming out. They burst through the doorway and she heard them pattering on the frozen mud behind her. But it was dark and she was well ahead.

At the second mill, the one of the broad square and the open lot, she saw the crowd of mill-hands pouring out of the gate as she approached. The crowd swelled and overflowed the sidewalk and then the street and poured over the wall into the lot, slowly, like some huge stream of molasses. As Sally continued on her way, she met this human stream coming toward her; but it divided before her and closed behind her, letting her through slowly. They are a peaceable, law-abiding set, for the most part, but the mill lays its heavy hand upon them. The older ones among them went stolidly to their kennels; but a few of the mill-girls looked after Sally and made quite audible remarks about her and giggled and laughed and nudged the men. And the men—the young men—looked back at her and thought—but I don't know what they thought. I only know that two of them, of mixed race, turned and followed on after her.

Sally was not aware that she was being followed, but many of the mill-girls were, and the giggling and the laughter grew, until Sally turned to see the cause. Having seen, she did not change her pace, but pursued her way steadily without again looking back or seeming to know of her two followers. The crowd ahead, going north, and the crowd behind her, going south, were well separated by this time, and there was a wide space between them. In this space were only Sally and the two men, now close behind her, and a few stragglers. In this way they went on for some distance, while the crowd ahead gradually melted away into the tenements on either side; and they were within a few blocks of the corner where Sally would turn off of River Street. The street was not well lighted and it was deserted.

The men came up, one on either side of Sally, and one of them said something to her, too vile to be recorded. Sally kept her eyes straight ahead and she thought rapidly. She was not exactly [269] frightened, but she was thinking what she had better do. It would do little good to scream. The outcome of such a course was doubtful and, besides, Sally was not the kind of a girl who screams easily or at all. She meditated fighting. She could have put up a good fight; but there were two of the men and they would have been pleased with a fight, two men against one girl. What else was there for her to do? She could run, and she could run well; so well that there was an even chance, perhaps, that she could run faster and last longer than those mill-trained men. Eight or ten years of the mill do not help a man's lungs much or his morals. The dust, you know,—it seems to get into their morals as well as into their lungs. If only she didn't have skirts to bother her; but her skirt was neither tight nor very long.

The man repeated his vile speech; and Sally darted away, gathering her skirts as she ran.

The men had been taken by surprise, but they put out after her as fast as they could, laughing. This was sport; and although laughter is not recommended for runners, they managed to gain a little at first. After that first burst, they ceased to gain, but they held their own, and the chase sped merrily along River Street, a scant five yards separating the hunters from their quarry. Sally reached her corner and turned off of River Street, passing under the light of a street lamp as she made the turn. Coming down that street was a man. Sally did not see very well, for he was not in the full light and, besides, her eyes were full of tears because of her running. But the man gave a start and an exclamation and he began to run and he ran into those men like a locomotive, and he swung at one of them and hit him and knocked him into the middle of the street, so that he landed on the back of his neck in the roadway and lay limp and still. The other would have run away, but the man caught him around the neck with his left hand and cast him as far as his fellow, rolling over and over.

"Damn you!" he cried low. "No, you don't. Damn you!" [270]

Doubtless he was forgiven that cry, even as Sally forgave it. She had stopped and was leaning against a fence. When she saw the men go into the street, one after the other, she gave a quick chuckle of delight. She may have been a little hysterical. It would not have been strange.

The second man who had been so summarily cast into the road was rising slowly, muttering and half sobbing. The first man continued to lie limp and still, and the man who had cast him there advanced slowly toward him; upon which that other ceased beating the dust from his clothes and edged away, muttering more loudly threats and vituperations. The man continued to advance, but he raised his head into the full light from the street lamp and he laughed shortly.

"You'd better be off," he said. "Get out, and hurry about it."

Sally saw his face well enough in the dim light and she knew the voice. She had not really needed to recognize either, for she knew well enough, in her heart, who it was that had come to her aid in the nick of time. She chuckled again with delight, then drew a shivering breath and gave a sob. There was no doubt about it, Sally was hysterical. She knew that she was and she stifled the sob in her throat. She despised hysterics. And she laughed a little because she couldn't help it, and she went to him.

He was kneeling in the road and he had the man's head upon one knee and was feeling him gently. He raised his head as she came near.

"I can't tell whether I have hurt him or not. It's awkward. We can't leave him lying here in the street, although he deserves no better treatment. I wish I had a horse here. You don't happen to know of one, do you, Sally?"

"N—no," she answered slowly, "not near here. I suppose I could get Sawny, if you would wait."

Fox laughed. "I don't want to ask Everett for Sawny."

"Neither do I." The sound of a horse's hoofs came to them faintly. "There's one now. I'll run to [271] the corner and stop him." And, before Fox could make any reply, she was off, running.

The sound of the horse's hoofs stopped and presently came on, down the street.

"Hello!" cried a voice. "Is that Doctor Sanderson? What can I do?"

"It's Eugene Spencer, Fox," remarked Sally, getting out. "Wasn't that luck?"

"Yes," said Jane, "wasn't it? Shall I take Sally home?"

Fox and Sally both preferred that he should take the man.

"I hate to ask you to take him out to my hospital," said Fox apologetically, "but I don't know of anything better. I'll telephone them before you can get there, and I'll be out within an hour. I don't think he's seriously hurt."

So they bundled the man in, and Jane drove off, rather crestfallen. For his part, he thought that he ought to take Sally home first, at least. The man still lurking in the shadows hurled vile epithets and obscenities and ran after Jane.

Fox laughed a little, nervously. "Hope he has a pleasant chase. He'll hardly catch Spencer." Eugene was already at the corner. "My first patient, Sally, although the Retreat is not open yet. This man is not the kind of patient I shall hope to have, but it seemed better to send him there and avoid publicity. We can take good care of him. Hello!"

There was some kind of an uproar just around the corner. It lasted only a moment and then Eugene came driving back, alone.

"That man of yours," he said, pulling up short, "recovered very suddenly, rolled out, and the pair of them ran down the street like scared rabbits. I didn't chase them, for I thought that you would probably be glad enough to get rid of him."

"I am," Fox replied, with evident relief. "He can't be much hurt. I'm much obliged to you, Spencer."

"Shan't I take Sally home? Or there's room for both of you, if you don't mind a little crowding."

"We will walk home, thank you, Jane," said Sally, with the finality he had come to expect. "I [272] haven't seen Fox for a long time and I have a lot to say to him."

So Eugene, muttering something under his breath, made a very short turn, in which process he very nearly tipped over, and gave his horse a cut with the whip. The animal, which was not expecting this and did not deserve it, gave a bound and they were gone.

Sally chuckled. "Display of temper on Mr. Spencer's part," Fox observed, "wholly uncalled for. Bad for the horse, too. I judge that he is not the equal of Everett as a horse trainer."

Sally's chuckling broke out afresh. "No, he's not, I'm afraid. Those displays of temper are not unusual. Now, Fox, come along."

Fox was a little surprised—just a little—to feel Sally's hand within his arm, but he did know better than to show his surprise, if there were some things that he didn't know. If he had only known, he—well—but Sally was speaking to him.

"Now, Fox," she was saying, "how in the world did you happen to turn up just at that moment? You were in the nick of time."

"Oh, I don't know about that. You would probably have left them. They were about all in, both of them. But I didn't happen to turn up. It wasn't any accident. I was looking for you."

Unconsciously, Sally tightened her hold upon his arm. "Oh," she murmured, "that was nice!"

"I only got here this afternoon," Fox continued, paying no obvious attention to her murmured remark, "and I went right to Mrs. Stump's. I found your mother a little upset and rather anxious, but I didn't succeed in finding out what it was about." He did not say—perhaps he did not know—how upset Mrs. Ladue had been. She had been torn by conflicting emotions, and she showed evidences of it. But there had been never a moment's hesitation about the course she would [273] pursue. Only she had raised troubled, tearful eyes to Fox, and had said—but what Mrs. Ladue had said forms no part of this chronicle. Whatever she said, she did not tell him clearly of the rumors connecting Everett's name with Sally's. He would hear those rumors soon enough, if there was anything in them; if there was not, for that matter.

Sally had been thinking. "I am afraid," she said softly, "that it was about me. I hoped she was all over it when I left."

Fox turned his head and looked at her, but he did not reply to her remark directly. "She said that you had gone for a walk, but she didn't know where. I waited a long time, thinking you might come in. Your mother and I had a long talk."

Sally would have given a good deal to know what the long talk was about. "It—it isn't true, Fox," she began slowly.

"What! It is true, too. We talked for an hour and forty minutes, while I was waiting. I know."

Sally laughed nervously. "I—I meant that anything you may hear about me isn't true."

"Clear as mud, Sally. Well, I'll remember. Anything that I hear about you isn't true. But I'm not likely to hear the voice of rumor especially if it's about you."

Sally made no reply to this, and Fox went on. "When it began to grow dark, I made some inquiries, and I found a certain person who had seen you go out; and you had met a man at the next corner—Who was the man, Sally?"

"Everett," Sally replied briefly; and she started to say more, but thought better of it—or worse, as you like—and shut her lips tight together.

"Oh, yes, she said she thought it was Everett. I thought that, perhaps, she was mistaken."

"No," said Sally, "she was not mistaken."

"Hum!" said Fox, smiling to himself; but Sally could not see that. "And this exceedingly well-informed person said that you and Everett evidently had a spat on the street corner, and that he [274] went off, mad."

"Yes," said Sally, nodding. She might have known that Fox couldn't see the nod.

"Too bad!" said Fox. "Exemplary young man—especially one who has seen the world and who has as perfect manners as Everett wishes it to be thought that he has—shouldn't go off mad. Very young. It reminds one of your young friend, Spencer. We should expect him to go off mad, shouldn't we, Sally?"

Sally chuckled again. "We should."

"Well," Fox resumed, "finding that you had been last seen hiking down the street without male escort, Everett having got mad and declined to play and gone home,—it is to be hoped that he had gone home,—I put out after you, lippety-clippety. All the male inhabitants of Whitby seem to think that is their chief end in life."

"Oh, Fox," said Sally faintly, "they don't."

"They do," Fox insisted; "all except Dick." He laughed. "Speaking of Dick reminds me that I have something to tell you if you don't let me forget it. Well, loping along that way, I came to the historic corner—of what street?"

"River Street. How did you happen to come that way?"

"Followed my nose. You had gone along this street. So did I. You came to the corner. So did I, and I nearly ran into you."

She shivered a little. Fox felt it, and held his arm closer to him.

"Are you cold, Sally?"

"No." She spoke low. "But I'm glad you came, Fox. I'm very glad."

"So am I, for several reasons not to be catalogued at present." They had almost reached Mrs. Stump's. "Oh, I was going to tell you something in connection with Dick. Henrietta's engaged. She wanted me to tell you. So, it is to be presumed, is Dick."

"I'm very glad, but I'm not surprised. I don't suppose Henrietta expected me to be."

"She didn't mention it, so you don't have to be." [275]

"I'll write to her to-night. So that accounts for Dick's mysterious disappearances."

"He's been visiting us at your old place, Sally. He was so much interested in seeing your favorite trees and in hearing about you, that Henrietta felt rather jealous."

Sally laughed derisively. They were standing at the foot of Mrs. Stump's fine granite steps. Fox was silent for a moment, looking at Sally.

"I know," he said at last thoughtfully, "I know where there are some gynesaurus trees near Whitby."

Sally's face lighted up. "Could a person climb them, Fox?"

"A person about twenty-two years old?" asked Fox. "I should think she might if she is able."

"She is able," she returned, nodding emphatically. "Will you tell me where they are?"

"Some day," Fox answered, not looking at her, "I will show them to you."

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[276]

CHAPTER XIII

ToC

Sally was in rather better spirits for some time after that walk to Fisherman's Cove, although there is some doubt whether the improvement was due to her brief sight of the Cove under a winter sun and moon or to realization of the fact that a great number of people were worse off than she or to her break with Everett or to seeing Fox again. But her break with Everett was of only a temporary nature, a fact which he made very evident to her, at least, and, incidentally, to Miss Miller and to Miss Lambkin and to Mrs. Upjohn and to many others; and, as for seeing Fox, she had been enjoying that privilege for twelve years, from time to time. To be sure, it had occasionally been a long while from time to time, but that had not seemed to trouble Sally. So, altogether, we are forced to abandon the inquiry as fruitless. Sally, if we had asked her, would have smiled and would have answered quite truly that she didn't know and she didn't care. It was the fact which was most important; the fact was, indeed, of the only importance, except to persons like Miss Letty Lambkin, who are never satisfied with the simple facts of life, but must dig down until they find certain diseased roots, which they fondly believe, without further tracing, to be the roots of those facts, but which, more often than not, do not belong to them at all, but to some other tree.

Fox's hospital had had an opening, to which the inhabitants of Whitby were invited. Whitby, in a way, was as exclusive as Philadelphia, and Fox's cards of invitation were addressed only to those fortunate persons living in a certain restricted area. That area was bounded, on the east, by

the Cow Path, although a few cards found their way down the hill as far as Mrs. Stump's and Miss Miller's. Consequently, Patty went and so did Mrs. Ladue and Sally. It might have been a [277] reception, for they found there nearly the whole of the élite of Whitby and no one else, and the whole of the hospital staff were engaged in showing small parties of the aforesaid élite over the hospital and the farm connected with it. The hospital staff had no other engagements, there being no patients yet. Patty was delighted with it—and with the staff—and expressed her intention of coming out to board as soon as the spring opened. And Fox, to whom this speech was addressed—it was delivered in rather a coquettish manner, all Miss Patty's own—smiled and bowed and made no reply. Perhaps no reply was expected. Fox had heard many such remarks. He would have his patients from among the makers of them.

As soon as he could, Fox took Mrs. Ladue and Sally out over the farm. Patty was deep in conversation with Doctor Beatty. So he missed her, to his great regret, he said. But, never mind. She'll have a chance to see it. And thereupon he smiled enigmatically, and proceeded to show them what had been done. He was proud of it. When he had shown them all of it, he waved his hand toward the old cream-colored square house.

"My residence," he said. "I am afraid that it will have to remain shut up as it is, for the present. Henrietta's change of plan—or, I shouldn't say that, perhaps—her engagement knocks my scheme of things in the head. She is to be married in June, you know."

"But, Fox," Mrs. Ladue exclaimed, "surely, you don't mean that you won't open the house at all!" She was sorry for him. Why did he have to miss the satisfaction of living in his own house? Such a house, too!

He nodded. "I don't see any prospect of it," he answered, rather gloomily for him; "at least," he added, with a short laugh, "until I am married. There is really no reason for it, you know. There is likely to be room enough at this end of the establishment for some time."

It was Margaret Savage he referred to, Sally supposed. At least, Henrietta, she remembered, [278] had said—had intimated it. Suddenly, she hated the old house.

"It's a shame," Mrs. Ladue said softly. "It's a perfect shame, Fox. If—if you want to live in it, there's no reason—"

Fox shook his head. "It wouldn't be best or wise, dear Mrs. Ladue," he said gently. "I can wait."

"Aren't you going to show it to us?" asked Mrs. Ladue then, with heightened color. "We should like to see the inside, shouldn't we, Sally?"

But Sally did not have a chance to reply. "Not to-day," said Fox. "Sometime, soon, I hope, but not to-day."

He said no more and Mrs. Ladue said nothing and Sally said nothing; and they went in again, by unanimous consent, and presently Mrs. Ladue and Sally and Patty drove away, although so early a departure was much against Patty's inclination. They would not have succeeded in getting her to go at all but that Fox took Doctor Beatty off to show him something, and Doctor Beatty thanked him, although he did not make it clear whether it was for wanting to show him the something or for taking him away. But Meriwether Beatty had shown a capacity for leaving Patty when he felt like it, so that I am forced to conclude that that had nothing to do with his thanks. When they got back to Mrs. Stump's they found a letter from Charlie waiting for them on the hall table. I may add that Patty found a letter from Charlie, also, but it was not like the one to his mother and Sally. It differed from theirs in several important particulars.

Charlie wrote a letter home every week, with unfailing regularity. It was a perfunctory letter, filled with the unimportant happenings at college. It never gave any information about himself except on those rare occasions when he had something favorable to report, and it did not need to be anything exceptionally favorable either.

He wrote to Patty irregularly, sometimes more often sometimes less, depending upon his needs. Once, when he had been having an unusually good run of luck, he let nearly three weeks [279] elapse between letters, and then his next letter was almost seven pages long and contained no reference to money. Patty had been awaiting a letter nervously and opened this one with fear and trembling. The combination, after such an interval, transported Patty with delight, and she ran over at once to show the letter to Mrs. Ladue. It was the only one that she did show to Mrs. Ladue, for all the others either were evidently dictated by a necessity more or less dire, or they referred to previous "loans" of which Mrs. Ladue and Sally knew nothing. Patty always managed to supply his needs, although sometimes with extreme difficulty and with a great casting up of accounts, in which process many perfectly good pencils were consumed in a manner for which they were not intended. If the makers of pencils had designed them for such use, they would have made them with lolly-pops or chewing-gum on one end.

Charlie's letters to Patty were triumphs of art, and would have made his scholastic fortune if they could have been presented as daily themes. If they were not always free from error, they were always readable and the matter was treated in a way which unfailingly would have been of interest to any one but Patty, and they showed evidence of a lively and well-nourished imagination which was not allowed to become atrophied. "William Henry's Letters to his Grandmother," although of a somewhat different nature, were not a patch upon them.

But Patty was too much concerned about the matter treated in these letters to be interested in their literary value; and, besides, she was not in a position to know the extent of the exercise to which Charlie's imagination was subjected in the course of composition. Her own imagination was not without exercise, for she had to finance his requests.

Patty's financing, that winter, would have done credit to a promoter. She had already succeeded in getting herself involved deeply with the builder who was repairing her house and with Dick, although Dick was as yet in blissful ignorance of the fact. The builder had been paid [280] but very little since Christmas; but he, being an elderly man who had known her father well, and who, accordingly, trusted any member of the family implicitly, had said nothing yet. Patty wondered, with some fear and trembling, how much longer he would go on without saying anything. And then she put the whole matter aside. She could not see her way out yet.

It was not that she considered the repairs upon her house, which amounted almost to rebuilding, as properly any business of Dick's. But, unaccountably and inscrutably to Patty, if not to her friends and acquaintances, her father had given Richard Torrington great discretion, under his will. The Richard aforesaid was even empowered to keep the management of all Patty's property and to give her no more than a stated allowance, if he saw good reason to do so. Mr. Hazen had made him virtually a trustee, perhaps actually; but, so far, he seemed to regard himself as no more than the channel through which Patty's money must necessarily flow and he honored all her requests, asking only that she tell him the general purpose to which the money was to be applied.

In consequence of this situation, there had been certain checks signed by Richard Torrington, Executor, designed to be applied to payments upon the house. Several of these checks had been hypothecated by Patty and diverted to other uses. Possibly Charlie Ladue could have given some information as to those uses. Certainly Patty could not. She knew nothing at all of the ultimate purposes to which her money was put. For that matter, Charlie's knowledge went only one step farther. He was nothing but a channel through which Patty's money necessarily flowed. A good, generous sewer-pipe would have served as well, for all the good that the money did him; and the process was rapidly undermining Patty's morals.

It was a great pity that Patty had chosen this method of supply. As long as she was bound to keep Charlie supplied with whatever he asked for, or as nearly as she could come to that, it would have been much better to ask Dick to double her allowance for her personal use. He might [281] have wondered at such a request, but he would have done it without question, and thereby Patty's self-respect would have been saved without producing any effect upon Charlie's in either way. One wonders whether Charlie had any shreds of self-respect left, anyway.

So it is difficult to say whether Patty looked forward with greater joy than dread to Charlie's coming home for the Easter recess. For some weeks he had kept her stirred up by his requests, but these requests were for relatively small sums, ten dollars or twenty-five, and once he asked for fifty. But for ten days before his vacation, he had asked her for nothing, and her fears were forgotten.

When, at last, the Easter recess began, Charlie appeared promptly on the afternoon when he should have appeared and he looked neither forlorn nor seedy. To a careful eye, a loving eye, watching him for some days, he might have seemed to be possessed of an anxiety which he took pains to conceal; but it was an elusive thing and, if he chose to deny its existence, how was one to prove it?

Sally thought that she detected something, she could not tell just what, and she asked her mother, casually, whether she had noticed anything.

Mrs. Ladue looked up quickly. "I can't tell, Sally," she replied. "I thought I did, and I spoke to Charlie about it, but he assured me that there was nothing wrong and that it must be all my imagination. I couldn't press the question. To tell the truth, I was afraid to. He seems to have no disposition to confide in me and to have a low opinion of my judgment, but I shouldn't like to have him say so. If—if you could speak to him—"

"Very well," said Sally, sighing wearily, "I will, although I have no hope of accomplishing anything by it—except arousing his suspicion," she added with a short laugh, "if there is anything which worries him and which he is unwilling to tell. We are not in Charlie's confidence."

"We have not been—*I* have not been in his confidence for eleven years—since I was taken sick." [282] Mrs. Ladue sighed in her turn. "He seems like a stranger. I haven't been able to get near him. But he seems to be rather afraid of your judgment, Sally."

"That's not a great help," Sally remarked with another short laugh, "in getting near him, is it? But I'll try."

Accordingly Sally asked him whether—she was careful to put the question in as natural a form as possible and she tried to make it seem casual, too—she asked him whether there was anything he would like to have them do for him. It is not likely that she succeeded thoroughly in either of these attempts, for Charlie only looked startled and answered that he didn't think there was anything. And he added that he was a little anxious about his reports. If they were not as good as they might be, he hoped that mother would not be too much disappointed. And Sally had shrugged a little and smiled a little and shown a little of the contempt which she always felt for lying. She did not know that Charlie was lying, but she felt that he was, and she could not have helped that little smile of contempt to save her life. But Charlie did not recognize her smile as one of contempt. He went off to see Patty, smiling and patting himself on the back for having thrown Sally off the scent so cleverly.

It is not to be supposed that either Mrs. Ladue or Sally was so lacking in natural affection that she let Charlie go on the way he was going without a struggle—without several struggles. Not that they knew just the way he was going, but they knew very well that they had lost all their control over him; the control which is due to a mutual love. It was Charlie who had shown a lack

of natural affection. His mother had struggled in vain against that lack and against the effect of Patty's indulgence. As for Sally, if the love and regard of ten or twelve years before, a love very like a mother's, had been changed insensibly into the tolerant contempt of the strong for the weak—not always perfectly tolerant, I am afraid—Charlie had only himself to blame. But, as for blaming himself—pfooh! Much he cared!

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[283]

CHAPTER XIV

ToC

Charlie stood by the mantel in Patty's room, in such an attitude as he imagined that Everett might take, under similar circumstances, and he was trying to look troubled. It was an imitation mantel by which he stood, being no more than a marble slab set upon iron brackets; for the real mantel, of wood, which had surrounded a real fireplace of generous proportions, had been removed when the fireplace had been bricked up and a register inserted. That register, of the regulation black, now stared at Miss Patty as she sat facing Charlie, and it emitted a thin column of faintly warm air. Altogether, it was a poor substitute for a fire and a gloomy thing to contemplate. Charlie's attitude, too, as has been intimated, was but an imitation. His trouble was no imitation, though, and his attempt to look troubled succeeded beyond his fondest hopes.

Patty had been looking at him for some time, growing more anxious every minute. Charlie had said nothing at all, but had kept his eyes fixed upon the distance; upon such distance as he could get through Patty's window. That was not so very much, the distance being limited by the house across the street, perhaps sixty feet away. At intervals he sighed heavily, the time between sighs apparently—to Patty, at least, his only hearer—apparently occupied by equally heavy thinking.

At last Patty could stand it no longer. "What is it, Charlie, dear?" she asked in a voice which trembled a little. "What is the matter, dear boy?"

Charlie forced a smile, his frown disappeared for an instant, and he brought his gaze back, with a great effort, a superhuman effort, to things near at hand: eventually to Patty herself.

"Oh, nothing," he said gently. "Nothing at all." And he resumed his gazing at the front of that [284] house, sixty feet away, and his frowning and his sighing and his heavy thinking.

Patty was silent for some minutes. "Won't you tell me?" she asked then. "I am sure there must be something which troubles you. You know you can count on my sympathy."

Charlie went through the same process as before. It took time. "What did you say?" he said absently, when his look had, at last, come down to Patty. "Sympathy? I'm afraid that won't do me much good." He smiled; a smile that was meant to be pitiful. "But, no. There's nothing the matter. Nothing at all, I assure you. It's all my own fault anyway; my misfortune, rather," he added, so low that Patty barely heard, and she thought that the words were not meant for her ears. That was exactly in accordance with Charlie's intention.

"Charlie!" she cried. "Charlie! You've got to tell me. I heard those last words which you didn't mean me to hear. Now, you've got to tell me." Her voice trembled more than ever.

Charlie could not seem to resist this plea. He looked at her pityingly, and he drew a long breath.

"Well, Pat," he said—Pat was his pet name for her, used only under stress—"well, Pat, if you must have it, then here goes. I'm only out, for this vacation, on bail. I've got to—"

"Wh-what?" asked Patty faintly. Her heart was playing mad pranks and she put up her hand to steady it. At least, that seemed to be her idea. "What was that you said, Charlie? Oh, Charlie, dear!"

"Bail" and "jail" sound very much alike. They conveyed about the same idea to poor Patty. Under certain circumstances, they convey about the same idea to the one most intimately concerned.

Charlie did not appear to be affected. "I've got to show up day after to-morrow or forfeit my bail," he continued unfeelingly. "Well," he said doggedly, "I will. I may have to go to jail, but what [285] of it?"

"Oh, Charlie, dear!" Patty cried, more faintly than before. "Oh, Charlie, dear! Whatever have you done that you should talk of going to—to—Charlie, I feel faint. My salts, dear," she said hurriedly. "They are on the top of my bureau, in that green bottle."

"Charlie dear" obediently got the little green bottle, stifling a smile which would curl the corners of his mouth, in spite of himself, while his back was turned to Patty. When he came back to her he looked properly concerned; but Patty's eyes were closed. He removed the stopper and held the bottle close under her nose, to revive her, which happy event occurred with a suddenness that was a surprise to Patty, at least. She gasped and gave a little choking cry.

"Oh, Charlie! Not so cl-close."

"All right now, Pat?" he asked with a cheerfulness that was evidently assumed. He removed the bottle and put in the stopper.

"I—I think so," she replied, still faintly. "Now—go—on, Charlie. Tell me. I think I can bear it. I'll try to."

"Why," said Charlie, "there's nothing to tell. I got bail so that I could come home for my Easter vacation. Time's up day after to-morrow, and I've got to show up or forfeit my bail."

"Who is the—the bailer?" Patty inquired as if it were her last breath.

"One of the other men," Charlie returned glibly. "He isn't really rich either, so he couldn't very well afford to have me jump it."

"Jump it?" Patty repeated. She was getting pretty well dazed.

"Yes," said Charlie impatiently. "Haven't you ever heard that expression? It's the legal expression for failing to show up and forfeiting your bail. If I should jump it, that other man would have to pay the amount of my bail."

"Ho-how much is it?" Patty asked in a trembling voice.

Charlie made a rapid mental calculation. "One thousand dollars," he said. [286]

"One thousand dollars!" repeated poor Patty slowly. "One thou—but, Charlie," for a gleam of light had come to her,—"but, Charlie, what is it for? What ha-have you done? Oh, it is too terrible!"

"I haven't done much of anything, really," Charlie protested; "nothing worth mentioning if we hadn't had an accident."

"An accident!" Patty murmured.

"Yes, an accident. You see there were four of us that thought it would be fun—and no harm, Pat, really, if things hadn't gone wrong—to take a little run in a motor—an automobile. Fostrow has a car of his own at home, and he was to drive. In fact, he did." Charlie chuckled, as though at the recollection. "He did until he had got us arrested twice for speeding. But that was a small matter, only twenty-five dollars a time. Fostrow paid that himself. He said it was worth double the money to see those country-men get out of the way. And we ran over a dog. It turned out to be a very valuable dog. All that is in the day's work, though. We—"

"Oh, Charlie," Patty interrupted, "I *knew* you would get into trouble if you went in those *horrible* machines, at any rate, without a *competent* and *reliable* driver. I have always thought that Edward would be the driver I should choose; so steady and—"

"Edward!" Charlie exclaimed. He had been about to add something further, in the way of comment, but he thought better of it. "No doubt, Edward would be very steady, but he is too old, to my way of thinking. Well, we had gone about fifty miles and began to think it was time to go back. So we filled up our gasoline tank, got something to eat, and started back. It was dark by that time. We were rather hurrying over the country roads, when something went wrong with the steering-gear and the next thing I knew I was lying on the other side of a stone wall—"

"O-oh!" shuddered Patty. [287]

"—And the machine was completely smashed—crumpled up—with a telephone pole on top of it. Then the gasoline caught fire and the whole thing burned up, pole and all. The other men were more or less hurt, but I hadn't a scratch, only some bruises. Fostrow's in a hospital out there, now, with two ribs broken. The owner of the machine got after us. It was a new machine and a beauty; cost five thousand, he said. So that explains the bail."

"Oh, Charlie!" breathed Patty. "What a mercy you escaped!"

Charlie smiled complacently. He had really done pretty well. That story, he thought, would be a credit to anybody.

"But, Charlie," Patty continued, after a short silence, "why don't you tell Sally the whole story. She'd find some way to get you out of it. She—she is really very good at managing affairs."

Charlie shivered involuntarily. Sally was very good at managing affairs. He could see her pitying smile as she listened in silence to his string of plausible lies and the look from the gray eyes would be boring straight down into his soul as he talked, and he would be afraid. And his speech would grow more halting, and he would finish in some confusion and Sally would turn away with a quiet "Humph!" or she would say nothing at all, which would be almost worse. And she would not tell him what she was going to do, but she would go and do it, and it—whatever it was—would be most effective, and that was exactly what Charlie did not want. He shivered again as he thought of it. Sally managed affairs too well; that was the trouble. No, distinctly no; he did not want Sally to have any hand in this affair. He thought that he could manage it very well himself. It was going beautifully, so far.

"No, Pat," he said gently. "I prefer not to tell Sally. I—to tell the truth, Sally and mother don't seem very glad to see me. I think they'd rather I stayed away."

"Oh, you poor boy!" Patty's eyes shone with pity. "You dear boy! *I'm* glad to see you, anyway, Charlie, dear. You have one friend who won't desert you." [288]

"Thank you, Pat. I thought I could depend on you."

"I'll undertake the management of this affair." Patty spoke with pride. A faint smile began to curl the corners of Charlie's mouth. He suppressed it. Patty was deep in thought; or she flattered herself that she was.

She might as well have undertaken to add a cubit to her stature by taking thought. She was silent for some minutes, looking more worried with every minute that passed. At last she looked up.

"Oh, dear!" she said, sighing, "I can't think of anything. It wouldn't do any good for you to go away, would it?"

Charlie shook his head and looked very solemn. "No. That would mean giving up my college course and jumping my bail. I should become a fugitive from justice." That sounded rather impressive and Charlie repeated it, as impressively as he could. "A fugitive from justice."

"Charlie, don't!" cried Patty wildly. "It sounds as if you were a criminal." Charlie made no reply. "What would you suggest?"

"Nothing," he answered with resignation. "There is nothing to be done but for me to surrender myself to my bondsmen—" That sounded impressive, too. "Surrender myself to my bondsmen," he repeated, "and to the justice of the court."

"Oh, Charlie!" Patty wailed faintly. "Oh, Charlie, dear, isn't there some other way?"

He shook his head again. "No other way that I can see. No other way that wouldn't call for more money than I can possibly raise. For I won't ask you for it, Pat. I simply *won't*."

Patty was lying back in her chair. She seemed to feel faint again, and Charlie hurried to her, the little green bottle once more in his hand. She waved it aside.

"H-how much," she asked, "must you have, Charlie?"

"Never mind that, Pat. That's settled. It's much more than I should be willing to ask you to lend [289] me, or to accept from you. I'll just surrender myself. It will soon be over." He spoke as cheerfully as though he were going to execution.

Patty looked at him. She thought that she had never seen any one so brave.

"Tell me. How much must you have?"

"I suppose that eight or nine hundred would settle it, since you insist." He swept it all aside with a wave of his hand. "But dismiss the matter from your mind. We'll consider it settled."

"We won't. It isn't settled." Poor Patty was having a last struggle with her conscience. It was really a hard struggle and it took some time. At last she drew a long shuddering breath. "Look in my top bureau drawer, Charlie," she said, raising haggard eyes to his, "in the front. There's a check there somewhere. It's for seven hundred and fifty dollars."

Charlie protested. Nevertheless, he moved with alacrity and rummaged until he found the check. It was signed by Richard Torrington, Executor. He presented it to Patty, folded, as he had found it.

"Is this it, Pat? It is folded, you see, so that it is impossible to know whether it is the one you wanted or not."

"And to think that you wouldn't look, Charlie! But I might have known it. I don't know what Richard would say," she murmured. "And I don't know what the carpenters will do—the builders. But never mind. It is my own money, anyway, and I'll do what I like with it. Charlie," she said louder, "you must take this. Perhaps I can raise fifty dollars more to-morrow morning. Do I have to write my name on the back?"

Charlie protested again, but his protests were fainter than they had been. He must not overdo it.

Patty had risen from her chair and had gone to her desk. "Perhaps," she said doubtfully, "it would be better—you would rather have me cash the check and give you the money." Charlie's protests were reduced to a mere murmur now. "Yes, that will be better."

Charlie looked perplexed. He frowned tremendously and was very solemn. He, too, seemed to [290] be having a terrible struggle with his conscience. It is, perhaps, unnecessary to say that he wasn't. Patty watched him fearfully, the check clasped to her bosom and her eyes pitiful. At last he heaved a long, shivering sigh, looked up and met her eyes fixed upon him. There was fear in them and a great love. He had the grace to flush faintly.

"Am I to understand, Pat," he asked slowly, "that you insist upon letting me have this—this money?"

"You must take it, Charlie. You *shall* take it," she cried fiercely. "Please do."

"We-ell," he replied, "to please you, I will, since you insist. But I am very unwilling to take it and I wouldn't, from anybody else. I only do it now on condition that you will regard it as a loan which I will repay very soon." How? Did Patty ask herself that question?

"My dear boy!" exclaimed Patty softly. "My dear boy! Think what it is saving you from! You won't have to go to j—— Oh, I can't say it. But you won't have to, now, will you, Charlie? Say you won't."

"No," said he, sighing heavily again, "I guess I won't. But, as far as I am concerned, that is of very little consequence. It is you that I am thinking of. Mother and Sally wouldn't care, except as

it would reflect on them, whether I was in jail or not. Of course," he added, with an apparent wish to be fair, "I may be doing them an injustice, but I don't think so. But it is different with you. Aside from the disgrace which I should be bringing down on your head, I think you would feel it, for my sake."

"Feel it!" she murmured. "Feel it! Oh, Charlie, dear! I believe I should die. I know it would kill me."

Charlie smiled sympathetically.

Tears stood in Patty's eyes. "You shall have eight hundred dollars to-morrow morning. I'll get it as soon as the bank is open. And you come here after it. Come early, Charlie. I want you all to myself for a little while."

"Thank you, Pat. I am very grateful." [291]

She looked longingly at him; a look which he seemed not to see.

"Charlie," she said softly.

"Yes, Pat?"

She hesitated for a moment. "K-kiss me, Charlie." Her voice was so low that he scarcely heard her. "Kiss me, won't you, dear?"

And so he did. That was the least he could do.

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[292]

CHAPTER XV

ToC

The blow had fallen. It had fallen upon Patty. The builder had happened to come upon Dick in the bank; and, being rather pressed for money, he had remarked, half in joke, upon the slowness of the payments from the Hazen estate. Whereat Dick, very much surprised but trying not to show it, had asked for particulars which the builder was very willing to supply; and the matter having been sifted to the bottom, so far as the builder was concerned, Dick had, then and there, given him a check for all that was owing him, which was greatly to the builder's gratification and as it should be.

If the matter was sifted to the bottom, so far as the builder was concerned, it was very far from that satisfactory condition so far as Patty was concerned. Dick went to see Patty and asked her, as delicately and gently as was at all consistent with getting the information that he wanted, what had become of the checks which he had sent her, from time to time? Where had the money gone which was intended for the builder? But Patty stood by her guns and would not tell. They might suspect, but they should not know—from her. She insisted that it was her money, that her father had meant it for her, and she would use it as she pleased without being accountable to anybody.

Dick, patient, pleasant, but insistent, was unable to get anything more out of her, try as he would, and he had been forced to go away again, baffled and no wiser than he was when he came, except that it was evident that the money had been applied to some purpose which Patty wished to conceal. He was satisfied that it had not been applied to her personal use. Indeed, it was incredible that she could have used so much without having anything to show for it, unless she had fallen into the hands of one of those sharpers who supply trusting women with the stocks [293] and bonds of mythological mines guaranteed to produce a return of three hundred per cent a year. Even in that case, Miss Patty might have shown him the beautiful examples of the engraver's art with which the aforesaid corporations reward their victims.

No, such a condition was not probable. It was much more likely that Charlie Ladue had got it. And because he was morally certain of the use to which the money had been put—as far as Patty was concerned—he was careful not to say anything of his suspicions to anybody. He did not wish them to get to Sally's ears; not until they were something more than suspicions, at least. Supposing that Charlie had received the money, what had he done with it?

So Dick said nothing, but he drew the lines tighter and made his authority felt. What else could he do? What was his clear duty? It was to be presumed that Mr. Hazen had had such a condition clearly in mind when he drew his will. So Patty found herself with no more, at her immediate command, than her allowance, which Dick intimated would be made any reasonable amount that she wished; but all of her bills must be sent to him for payment. He thought it the part of wisdom to write this.

The state of mind into which Patty was thrown by this letter may be imagined. "The insolent puppy!" she cried, sitting alone in her room. It was rather a strong epithet to apply to Dick Torrington, who never in his life had been anything but kind and protecting. But people seldom wish to be protected against themselves. "Upstart!" That, Dick certainly was not. "Why, that

means that I can't pay my own board. And Miss Miller will think—I don't know what she will think, but the whole town will know about it." Her face crimsoned with mortification. She thought deeply for some time. "I know what I'll do," she said to herself with determination when she had come to an end of her thinking, which, by the way, she seldom did; not to any logical end. "I know what I'll do. I will go right out to Doctor Sanderson's. He won't talk. It's a little early to go into [294] the country, but I need a change."

So Patty was quite cheerful, for the time being, while she arranged the change which she needed so badly. Miss Miller was less cheerful and allowed herself to remark that perhaps it was just as well, as Patty didn't seem to be able to pay her bills promptly; able or willing, she didn't know which and it didn't matter much which it was, as far as she could see. But she might have stayed her season out, now that Dick Torrington was willing to undertake the job of looking after her, and a thankless job it was, as she, Mary Miller, could bear witness. And thereupon Miss Mary Miller turned her back upon Miss Patty and flounced out of the room before Patty should make any suitable reply.

Miss Miller need not have hurried out of the room, for Patty was too much astonished to think of any fitting reply for some time. She sat with her mouth open—a sight which it is to be presumed Miss Miller would have been glad to see—with her mouth open, which was very unusual for Miss Patty, and with her cheerfulness quite gone, which was not at all unusual. After a few minutes she remembered to close her mouth, but she did not resume her cheerfulness. So Miss Miller knew, after all. Patty wondered, vaguely, how she had found out. She did not suspect Dick, for Dick had a talent for keeping his own counsel. She could not guess, although she had tried, goodness knew! And Patty heaved a long sigh and gave it up. Then, if Mary Miller knew, Letty Lambkin knew, and one could be sure that everybody in town, of her acquaintance who would listen to her, would know, too.

As a matter of fact, Letty Lambkin was bursting with information. She went to Mrs. Upjohn's early that year, ostensibly to make that lady some summer clothes, but really because Mrs. Upjohn let her talk freely; I wouldn't say that Mrs. Upjohn encouraged her to talk, for Letty did not need any actual encouragement. But she let her talk, freely, and that was equivalent to encouragement.

"Alicia," Letty began, almost as soon as she had got inside the door, "I s'pose you know about [295] poor Patty. It's the common talk." Mrs. Upjohn had no chance to reply. "Dick Torrington's taken it upon himself to manage her affairs, and all Patty has is her allowance. But of course you know that. It seems rather a high-handed thing for Dick to do, and he only a little tow-headed shaver when Patty was a grown woman. I suppose he has the right to do it, or else he wouldn't. I'm told that Patty was getting into a terrible mess with her property. She used the checks that were meant for the builder for another purpose, I hear. Poor Mr. Means! And Mary Miller had to wait, too."

Mrs. Upjohn laughed comfortably. "I guess Charlie Ladue could tell something about those checks."

"Like enough he could," said Miss Lambkin, preparing to go to work. "Where's your cloth, Alicia? Oh, in your room? Don't you stir. I'll get it." She came back immediately. "Well, as I was saying, it's really too bad that Patty's mind is giving way."

"Her mind giving way!" echoed Mrs. Upjohn, surprised out of her usual caution. "Oh, I guess not. Who told you that, Letty?"

"Yes, indeed," said Miss Lambkin with a toss of her head. "Didn't you know that she's been sent out to Doctor Sanderson's Home for Incurables? Dick sent her out there nearly a month ago. She's as comfortable there as could be expected. I have it on the best of authority—some one connected with the institution," she added with a nod and a knowing look.

Mrs. Upjohn laughed again. "I can't believe it, Letty. You must have been misinformed. In the first place, Doctor Sanderson's place isn't a home for incurables."

"I know he doesn't call it that. To tell the truth, I can't find out just what he does call it."

"Can't your best of authority tell you that, too?" asked Mrs. Upjohn slyly.

"Now, Alicia," said Miss Lambkin with asperity, "you needn't go to calling in question my [296] authority. It was one of the nurses, if you must know."

"Doctor Sanderson wouldn't thank her for talking so freely," remarked Mrs. Upjohn. "I should really like to know what he would say about Patty. I understood that she had simply gone there to board."

"I suppose she can call it that, but I don't believe that Doctor Sanderson is running a boarding-house or a hotel either. I always thought that she was bound for the asylum. And, another thing, I had it from the same authority that Meriwether Beatty goes to see her regularly once or twice a week, and he's real kind, too. I leave it to you whether that isn't a sign that he thinks her mind is growing feeble. He always used to say the most brutal things."

"I should say it was rather a sign that Doctor Beatty was losing his mind than that Patty was losing hers," rejoined Mrs. Upjohn.

"Well," said Letty with an air of finality, "you just wait and see if I'm not right."

"I will," said Mrs. Upjohn.

Miss Lambkin glanced at her smiling face and thought it best to change the subject.

"Dick Torrington," she observed, "is going to be married to that Henrietta girl. But I suppose you know."

"Yes," said Mrs. Upjohn.

"I understood," Miss Lambkin resumed, "that the wedding was to be the last of June."

"The twenty-eighth," said Mrs. Upjohn.

"Oh," rejoined Miss Lambkin, somewhat taken aback by Mrs. Upjohn's ready replies. "And I understood that Henrietta was coming on here to visit right away."

"She came last night," said Mrs. Upjohn.

"To visit with Sally, I suppose?" Letty was consumed with curiosity as to the source of Mrs. Upjohn's accurate information. She always liked to be the source herself.

"She is the guest of Mrs. Torrington," said Mrs. Upjohn, raising her eyes at last.

"Dear me, Alicia," Letty exclaimed impatiently, "how you do snap a person up! I suppose that [297]
was why Dick was grinning so like a monkey when I saw him yesterday afternoon."

"Because I snap a person up?"

"Because Henrietta was coming. He seemed to be on his way to the station."

"Possibly. He didn't tell me the reason. But Henrietta didn't come until nearly ten o'clock."

"Well!" The discomfited Letty devoted herself to her work for some minutes in silence. But she could not keep silent long. "So Dick gave you all that information, I suppose. I wondered how you got it all so pat."

"No," returned Mrs. Upjohn calmly. "I haven't seen Dick, to speak to, for a good while."

Miss Lambkin laid down her work. "Well, Alicia," she said slowly, "will you be good enough to tell me how you found out all that—right up to last night?"

"Better than that, Letty," Mrs. Upjohn replied. "I know what happened this morning, about half past seven."

"They ate their breakfast, I suppose," snapped Letty. "I could have told you that."

"They didn't have breakfast until eight," said Mrs. Upjohn.

"Oh, Lord!" cried Miss Lambkin in utter disgust. She had been tried beyond the bounds of reason.

Mrs. Upjohn laughed until the tears stood in her eyes. "As to my information, Letty," she said as soon as she could speak, "I pick it up here and there, and I use my eyes."

"As much as to say that you give a good guess. I thought I was pretty good at picking up information. But you have me beat, Alicia, I'm free to confess."

Mrs. Upjohn made no reply.

"It's rather a pity that Dick didn't choose nearer home," Miss Lambkin resumed, after pausing long enough for the reply which did not come. "There's Sally, now."

"They'd have made a good match," Mrs. Upjohn observed, sighing reminiscently, "but there's [298]
no accounting for tastes in such matters."

"Meaning Everett?" asked Letty, looking up sharply.

Mrs. Upjohn shook her head. "Not especially."

"I suppose you know," said Miss Lambkin pointedly, "with your sources of accurate information, that he's hanging around again. There was a time when it seemed to be all off for a few weeks."

Mrs. Upjohn nodded.

"There are some cases where you can't even give a good guess," Letty continued maliciously. "Aren't there, Alicia?"

Mrs. Upjohn nodded again; but she only rocked gently and said nothing.

Miss Lambkin seemed to be following out a train of thought, but in silence. That was not her custom. She usually pursued thought with a wild halloa.

Presently she gave a sort of a cackle, which with her did duty for a chuckle of amusement. "I'd give something to have seen Charlie Ladue when he first heard of Patty's fix. I'll warrant he didn't like it. I wonder whether Sally knows. It seems to me that she ought to be told."

"Told what, Letty? A pack of stories that are no more than guessing? And who's to tell her? When we know anything about Charlie it'll be time enough to be thinking about telling Sally."

"All the same," Letty pursued obstinately, "Sally ought to know."

"Humph!" said Mrs. Upjohn.

CHAPTER XVI

ToC

Henrietta sat on the edge of Sally's bed, swinging her little feet, which hardly touched the floor,—she had only to raise the tips and they swung clear,—and she was as smiling, as pretty, as dainty, as inconsequent, and as charming as ever. At least, Sally seemed to find her charming and so, it is to be presumed, did Dick. Sally, with a little smile upon her lips, leaned against the window casing and looked at her. She feasted her eyes; she looked so long and she stared so hard that Henrietta dammed, for a moment, the stream of talk that flowed from her lips and flushed a little, faintly.

"What's the matter, Sally? I know my hair's in a mess. Is there anything wrong with my dress? Have I got a dirty face? I washed it, but if there is a smudge on my nose I think it is the part of a friend to tell me and not let me go out looking like a fright."

Sally shook her head slowly. "There's nothing the matter, Henrietta. I was only thinking what a lucky man Dick is."

The flush on Henrietta's face deepened. "Oh, do you think so, Sally?" she asked softly. "Do you really think so? I was a little bit afraid you didn't approve. And how about me? Don't you think I'm a lucky girl?"

"Very," answered Sally, smiling still. "Dick is everything that's good. He's the one best man for you. But why did you think that I might not approve?"

"We—ll," said Henrietta with some hesitation, bending forward to look at her swinging feet, then looking up at Sally, "I—I went after him in such a barefaced manner, and you knew it." Sally shook her head again. "Oh, yes, you did. It's no use to shake your gory locks at me. You knew I did; the very night of your fire. I don't deny it. I did go after him with all my might and I got him." [300] She spoke triumphantly. "I'm glad I went after him, for—for I never should have got him at all if I had not. I'm proud of it, but I don't advertise it, generally. I confess it to you, but I should deny the fact to anybody else. Wild horses shouldn't drag it out of me. Not ever! And then, Sally, another reason why I was a little afraid you wouldn't approve—" Henrietta hesitated again, stopped, and once more regarded her feet.

"Well?" Sally asked, amused.

"Well." Henrietta looked up and smiled. "To tell the truth, I couldn't believe that you didn't want him yourself. There! It's out. Just a little, Sally."

Sally laughed. "Not even just a little, Henrietta. Dick is a dear friend—he has been that to me always, ever since his kite and Everett's broke my foot—and I hope he always will be; but the idea of falling in love with each other never entered either of our heads. So you may be quite easy in your mind. My heart isn't even bent."

"But you know," Henrietta insisted, "that you could have got him if you had tried as hard as I did."

"I guess not," Sally replied; "not after you appeared, anyway. You needn't distress yourself. I remember that I used to look upon Dick and Everett with adoration, as a little girl. They were my ideals. When they carried me home, after the kite accident, I was in the seventh heaven. But there was nothing, even then. No, Dick is all yours, as far as I am concerned."

Henrietta breathed a sigh. "Well, I'm glad to be sure of it. But, Sally," she continued, with a doubtful glance, as if she were a little afraid of Sally and of what she was about to ask, "how about Everett? Was there ever—?"

Sally laughed again suddenly. "No, there wasn't. Everett never looked at me."

"But, Sally," Henrietta persisted, "it isn't so now. Does he—you aren't engaged, are you, Sally?" she asked softly, glancing up timidly under her long lashes.

Sally seemed to be in haste to reply. "Oh, no," she said. "Oh, no. I am not likely to be. I suppose [301] you mean Everett."

"Yes, I did," returned Henrietta. She showed some surprise. "Why? Is there anybody else?"

"No, oh, no," Sally answered more hastily than before. "There isn't. As far as I can see, I am scheduled to teach for the rest of my life."

"Are you quite sure, Sally?" Henrietta urged. "Isn't there *anybody*? Not even somebody that you wish—"

Sally was getting rather red. "No, no, Henrietta," she said, interrupting. "Now that's enough about my affairs of the heart. It's a little embarrassing to be questioned so closely, dear."

"I'm sure I beg your pardon, Sally," cried Henrietta impulsively. "I didn't mean to be. Now, *I* am just dying to be questioned closely. Try me."

"I don't know what to ask," said Sally, smiling. "I would if I did."

Henrietta sighed. "You're very disappointing, Sally. If you were really interested you would know." She sighed again. "But, anyway, you'll be what I want you to be at my wedding, won't you?"

"Indeed, I will. I'll be anything you want me to be." She laughed a little. "But I warn you that I shall need coaching. What do I have to do?"

"Nothing much. You'll have all the coaching you need. You know it's going to be at Fox's house. He's going to open it for the occasion."

"Only for the occasion?" Sally spoke coldly; so coldly that her voice did not sound natural. "I rather gathered, from a remark that he made a while ago, that he contemplated matrimony, too."

"Fox get married?" Henrietta was genuinely surprised. "Well, it's news to me. Who's to be my sister-in-law? Did he say?"

Sally shook her head. "I supposed it was probably Margaret Savage."

"Oh!" cried Henrietta. "I hope not." Then she seemed to be ashamed of her outburst and sat, [302] swinging her feet and looking wistfully at Sally. "I had hoped," she observed at last, "that, when Fox's time came, it would be—" She stopped and considered. "I hoped that it would be—not Margaret Savage, Sally."

Sally made no reply.

"Margaret Savage is so—so *empty*, you see," Henrietta went on. "She would not be exhilarating. But I won't say any more about her."

"It isn't really necessary," Sally returned, laughing.

"And the less said the better," Henrietta concluded. "I don't know why, but it reminds me of your Cousin Patty. Dick hasn't told me much of anything," Henrietta lowered her voice. "Do you suppose it is true that she is losing her mind?"

"Did Dick tell you that?" asked Sally, startled.

Henrietta shook her head. "I heard it talked about."

"I have no reason to think so. She gets queerer and more cranky every year. She has changed a good deal since Uncle John died. Poor Patty! She has very little comfort in life—except Charlie." Sally laughed shortly. "I hope she finds him a comfort."

Henrietta did not know what to say. Consequently she said nothing, which was, no doubt, just the right thing.

"Charlie will be home to-morrow," Sally added; then she corrected herself. "I should have said that Charlie is due to-morrow. He may not come."

"Oh, Sally!" Henrietta cried. "What makes you speak so? It—it sounds horrible."

"It's the simple fact, Henrietta."

"Why don't you do something about it? I would."

Sally gave a little shrug. "What would you do? There is nothing to be done. Charlie's a headstrong boy and he seems to have slipped away altogether from mother's control. Patty indulges him and I don't see how I can do anything. If he had really done anything wrong and I knew it, it would be a different matter. I don't know that he has—but," she added in a low voice, [303] "I don't know that he hasn't."

Henrietta chanced to glance at the watch upon her wrist. "Oh, mercy me!" she cried, springing to her feet. "I didn't know it was so late. I've got to meet Dick in five minutes. Good bye, Sally."

Henrietta was gone, running down the stairs. She need not have hurried so, for Dick was late. He was so late that she had become hotly impatient and then angry with him. Indeed, she was just going away, hurt and angry, when Dick appeared, hurrying as if he were pursued by devils and smiling propitiatingly.

"I'm awfully sorry to be so late, Henrietta," he began. "I simply could not get away from those two bores. I came just as soon as I could without throwing them out of the office."

Henrietta's anger was dissolved like a morning mist. "Who was it, Dick?"

"The Carling twins. It took them a long time to say what they wanted to, for you know they still stutter."

"I've never seen them, although I've heard of them. What were they trying to say?"

"Oh, I don't know. To tell the truth, I was so afraid of being late that I didn't pay as much attention as I ought to have."

This confession would have been a great comfort to the Carlings, for they had taken especial pains and made this trip for the sole purpose of seeing Dick. What they had to say concerned Charlie Ladue. It is not to be supposed that they would be so concerned about the acts of Charlie Ladue, if he were the only one. But his acts would involve Sally, sooner or later, and, so long as that was inevitable, it had better be sooner. In fact, the sooner the better. And, each of the Carlings knowing a thing or two, as was to be expected of them, they had had a long deliberation on the subject, only the night before.

"S—s—ssomeb—b—body ought t—to kn—n—now ab—bout it," Harry observed. "I w—w— [304] wouldn't b—bother m—myself ab—b—out wh—wh—what t—that l—l—lemon of a k—kid d—did 'f —f it w—wasn't for S—S—Sally. D—d—don't l—like t—to b—be the one t—to t—tell on h—h—him, b—but wh—wh—who d—does? Wh—wh—who'll we t—tell? Th—that's the q—q—question."

"C—c—can't t—tell S—S—Sally," Horry remarked.

"C—c—course we c—c—can't," Harry replied scornfully. "An—ny f—f—fool'd kn—n—now th—that."

"N—n—nor P—P—Patty," Horry remarked further.

They both grinned. Harry did not think the observation worthy of a reply.

"M—m—might t—tell D—D—Doc—Doc—tor S—S—San—n—damn it. You kn—now."

Harry nodded. He did not care to try the name. They both knew. "N—no," he said.

"D—D—Dick?" The name came from Horry's lips with the force of an explosion.

"D—D—Dick's n—no g—good," Harry replied gloomily. "G—goin' t—to be m—m—married 'n a l—little m—more'n a w—w—week."

They both relapsed into silence.

After some minutes of silence, Horry heaved a sigh. "N—n—no use," he said. "It's D—D—Dick. C—c—can't th—think of an—nybody else. I'm g—g—goin' d—down to—m—m—morrow. C—c—come b—back s—same d—day; 'll—ll—ll y—you go?"

Harry nodded. "'R—r—right," he said. The Carlings were to graduate within a week, which explains their anxiety to get back.

Horry rose. Their deliberations were ended. "Th—that d—d—damned f—f—fool m—m—must ha—ha—have d—dropped m—m—more'n f—f—fif—f—teen hundred 'n n—numbers—s—seven th—th—this y—year. I w—wonder wh—wh—whose?"

Horry's information was surprisingly accurate.

"G—guess it's P—P—Patty's," Harry observed. [305]

Accordingly they went down to see Dick. Their story was shot off at him in little puffs, like a bunch of firecrackers. Dick, being diverted by the manner of telling and being much concerned about his engagement with Henrietta, did not take it all in, perhaps, and if he forgot all about it during the next ten days, he is to be excused.

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[306]

CHAPTER XVII

ToC

Henrietta's wedding was rather a quiet one, as weddings went in Whitby. That is, there were not many more people there than the old cream-colored house could accommodate comfortably, so that the overflow would not have more than half filled the yard; which was lucky, as the yard was already nearly half full of automobiles and carriages, tightly packed by the wall. There was a long string of them in the road, too. But as it was a lovely summer day, the first really warm day of the summer, and as the birds were singing madly in the orchard as though they knew it was a very special occasion and one to be celebrated accordingly, and as the orchard was a very inviting place with a gentle breeze rustling the leaves of the apple trees, and as the view over the little valley was more attractive than the most beautiful interior of old houses, and as—well, without continuing the catalogue of reasons, the people gradually drifted outside, two at a time. They formed a cluster around the well-sweep; a cluster whose composition was continually changing. Having given as much voice to their admiration of the well-sweep as they thought was expected of them, they wandered on and scattered and drew together into other groups and scattered again; and by a repetition of this process little clusters were formed, at last, that had no tendency to scatter.

There were two groups in particular whose composition was changing, even yet, and changing very rapidly. They were, for all the world, like swarms of ants, the component individuals continually coming and going like ants which were very busy and very intent on their business. These individuals would hurry up and join the group at its outer edge, and push and struggle to get to the centre, while others seemed equally eager to get out. So that there was a continual [307] movement and jostling. But if you could have looked into the centre of either of these groups, you would have seen—no, not the bride; you would have seen either a great bowl of punch or a table loaded with good things, or their remains—no more than the wrecks of things. As to the bride, she had slipped away.

There was another group which had formed after the manner of these stable groups already mentioned, and which had somewhat withdrawn itself to the very back edge of the orchard, away from the others. The members of this group were not concerning themselves with the punch or with the things to eat or with the ants coming and going so continuously, but they talked together in low voices as if they would escape observation. They were Sally and Fox and Mrs. Ladue; but they could not hope to escape for long. And Fox was somewhat serious, which is not to be wondered at, he having just lost a sister, if you care to look at it in that way. And Sally was rather

serious, too, which is not to be wondered at, for she had just lost a friend, however you prefer to look at it. Mrs. Ladue was the only one of that group who looked other than serious and solemn, and there was, even in her look, something lacking to a perfect joy, for a person who cared enough to find it might have discovered something wistful there. It was as if she wanted something very much and knew that she could not get it. I leave it to you whether any person can be in that state of mind and be perfectly joyful. What it was that she wanted I do not know nor why she could not get it; although, if the thing concerned those other two, the only reason that she could not get it was that they were both as blind as bats—blinder than bats.

Sally was silent, gazing away at the deep woods behind them. Her mother gazed wistfully at Sally and said nothing either. And Fox looked at them and was as silent as they. Some one came up and exchanged a few words with Fox and went away again; but neither Mrs. Ladue nor Sally said anything. Sally was still gazing off at the woods and seemed to be unaware of any new [308] presence.

"Sally," said Fox.

She turned and looked at him, but still she said nothing.

"Didn't you know who that was?"

She shook her head. "Who what was?"

"The man who spoke to me? But I suppose you didn't know that anybody spoke to me. It was Horry Carling."

"Oh, was it?" She did not seem interested.

"He seemed to want to speak to you."

"Well, why didn't he?"

"Probably because you didn't seem to see him. Is there anything the matter, Sally?"

Sally smiled very slightly and very soberly. "Nothing much. Nothing worth mentioning."

They relapsed into silence again, but after a while Sally spoke.

"Would you—would you be much disappointed, Fox," she asked, without looking at him, "if I gave up teaching? Would it seem as if I were throwing away all these years of preparation?"

"No," he answered, meeting her serious mood, "I don't see that it would. And I don't see that it matters to anybody but yourself just when you give it up. There is no reason, now, for your keeping on with it unless you want to. You will have to give it up soon anyway."

Sally looked up at him quickly. "Why, Fox? Why will I have to?"

Fox evaded this question for the time, at any rate. "Why have you thought of giving it up now, Sally? Do the poor kids prove too trying?"

Sally nodded. "I am ashamed of it. I'm not fitted for it. I haven't patience enough—with stupidity. But what did you mean by saying that I would have to give it up soon?"

"Why," Fox replied, casting an embarrassed glance in Mrs. Ladue's direction, "when you are [309] married, you know—"

"Oh," Sally cried with a quick and vivid blush—a rush of blood to the head, no less,—"oh, but I shan't. I never shall."

Mrs. Ladue appeared to think it a fitting time to slip away quietly.

"I didn't mean," Sally went on rapidly, "to be idle. I—well, to tell you a secret, Fox, one that I didn't mean to tell yet—I have an idea."

"Behold me suitably surprised! Sally has an idea!"

Sally chuckled, which represented the height of Fox's ambition for the moment. "Don't make fun of me, or I won't tell you what it is."

"I am most seriously inclined, Sally. And a bank safe—or a strong box—is not so secret as I am. You observe that I do not use the ancient simile of the grave. There are many things that keep a secret better than a grave. I am listening."

With that, he inclined his head toward her.

"I might box your ear instead of telling you," said Sally lightly, "but I won't. You know," she continued, hesitating a little, "that Uncle John's business has been—well, just kept alive, until they should decide what to do with it."

Fox nodded, wondering what she was coming at.

"And I was in Uncle John's office every day for years. I got much interested. And I—I believe that I could do something with it, Fox, after I had served my apprenticeship at it. I think I should like to try. The clerks and things—the machinery of the business—are there." Fox wondered what the clerks and things would have thought of it. "I wish I had spoken to Dick about it. He'll be away, now, for a month. But I could write to him, couldn't I? I will."

"There is a good deal in this idea of yours, Sally," was Fox's only comment. He was looking at her with a little smile of amusement. "Don't you want to vote?" he asked abruptly.

"No, I don't," she answered as abruptly. "But I thought that it would be a great pity to let an old [310] established business just vanish. And they all seem so proud of it. And perhaps Charlie could get

into it when he is through college. At least, if he was disposed to, it would—it might give us—mother and me—some control over him again. Don't you think so, Fox?"

Fox shook his head gravely. "I don't know, Sally. The idea strikes me as a good one; a good one for you. I think I should go rather slow about Charlie."

"Well—" Sally turned. "It is a secret, you know, Fox."

"Between you and me, Sally," Fox returned gently.

Sally returned to her contemplation of the woods. She seemed to note something.

"I believe," she said suddenly, "that those trees are good to climb."

"Why," said Fox, smiling, "I believe they are."

"Will you—" Sally began brightly; then she seemed to change her mind and she changed her question accordingly.

"Won't you keep this house open? It is a pity not to."

"Keep the house open?" Fox repeated, puzzled.

"Why, yes," she replied. "Don't you remember that you said—or intimated—that you were going to get married?"

Fox laughed. "I believe I did," he answered, "on a certain occasion. I believe I am, although I can't say exactly when it will be."

"I think, Fox," said Sally, turning to him and speaking with emphasis, "that we are old enough friends for you to—you might tell me who the girl is. I should like to congratulate her."

"You shall know, Sally, I promise you. I wouldn't even get engaged without your knowledge."

"Oh," said Sally then, brightening unconsciously, "then she hasn't given her answer yet?"

Fox had hard work to keep from laughing, but he did.

"Not yet," he said.

"It seems to me she takes her time about it," Sally observed.

"Should she give me her answer before she is asked?" [311]

"Oh!" Sally cried. "So you haven't even asked her! Well, I think you're a slow poke."

"Do you?" Fox said slowly. "Do you? Well, perhaps I am. Perhaps I am. It had not occurred to me. I'll think it over."

"And Margaret—" said Sally.

"Margaret!" Fox interrupted, mystified.

"Considering the imminence of the—the catastrophe," Sally went on, smiling a little, "it might be just as well to climb while I have the chance."

"Now?"

Sally looked around. The crowd was thinning, but it was still a crowd.

"Perhaps not now. But on the first opportunity."

"There'll be a good many opportunities. Even after—"

Sally shook her head. "I couldn't come here, you know, and climb trees. Only think what Margaret would say—and think!"

"Margaret!" Fox exclaimed again. "Why, I don't remember intimating anything about—"

"Oh, Doctor Sanderson," cried a high and quavering voice; the voice of Miss Patty Havering Hazen, "here you are at last! I have been looking everywhere."

Ah! Doctor Sanderson; you are saved again! Good for you, Patty! Good on your head! But is it possible that the doctor did not want to be saved? Did we hear aright?

"Damn!" observed Doctor Sanderson quietly. It was a heartfelt observation made for his own satisfaction, so far as a mere remark could accomplish that desirable end, and was intended, we may be sure, for no other ears than his own. But Sally heard it and chuckled.

Yes, good for you, Patty! There is no knowing what he might have been led into saying if he had not been interrupted at this point; what unwise course he might have pursued. You were just in time, Patty, to save him from his folly.

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CHAPTER XVIII

ToC

That old office from whose windows one could see the rows of oil casks and the fence of old ships' sheathing and the black dust of the road and the yards of vessels—that old office which had been sleeping for something more than a year—that old office which had been left behind when the business centre of Whitby began to move uptown, so many years ago—that old office, as I started to say at the beginning, was waking up again.

One hot morning in early August, Horry Carling stood at the window, his hands thrust deep into his pockets, and he gazed at a row of oil casks; gazed thoughtfully and for a long time. Then a smile began to curl the corners of his mouth. Presently he chuckled.

"I s—s—say, O—Ol—lie, c—c—come here; th—that is, if—f—f S—S—Sally c—can s—s—spare you."

Sally looked up from her papers. Her hair was in a pretty disorder; in a disorder that was very attractive, indeed, being somewhat rumpled in the front and running over with little ringlets, formed by the heat and the dampness, at her forehead and by the sides of her ears and down at her neck. She was busy, but she was interested and she was happy, for which I, for one, am thankful. She brushed the ringlets out of her eyes, impatiently, and smiled.

"Go ahead, Ollie," she said. "What is it, Horry?"

"O—only a r—r—row of b—b—bar—r—rels," he replied. Ollie Pilcher was standing at his elbow now, looking over his shoulder. "D—d—do y—y—you rem—em—mmb—ber th—that r—r—row?" Horry asked. "M—m—might b—b—be the th—the v—v—very s—same b—b—b—barrels."

Ollie burst out laughing. He did remember. "How long ago was that, Horry?"

"S—s—sev—ven years," he answered. "Ab—b—bout th—this t—t—time o' y—year, w—w—wasn't it?" [313]

Ollie nodded.

"Oh," Sally cried, "I remember that, too."

Horry turned. "Y—y—you d—do!" he spluttered in surprise. "Wh—wh—where w—w—were y—you?"

"Sitting at that very window," she returned. "Uncle John saw it, too,—some of it."

Horry chuckled again. "Y—y—your Un—n—cle"—here he winked and gave a peculiar twitch to his eyebrows, as though that last syllable hurt him—"J—J—John w—was a b—brick, S—S—Sally."

"He was, Horry. You don't know what a brick he was." She sighed lightly and then she laughed. "Whatever did you do with your jacket?"

"M—m—most s—set th—the h—house af—f—fire w—with it. I—it w—w—was a p—pretty n—n—new j—j—j—th—there!—c—coat, and m—m—moth—ther c—c—couldn't b—b—bear to th—throw it aw—w—way, s—so sh—sh—she k—k—kept it l—lying ar—r—round 'n—n—ntil w—w—winter. Th—then sh—she t—t—told m—me t—to p—p—put it in—n—to th—the f—f—furnace. M—m—most s—set th—the h—house af—f—f—fire. F—f—full o' o—o—oil, y' kn—n—now. H—h—hor—rid sm—sm—smoke."

Ollie and Sally were chuckling in little bursts.

Horry sighed. "Th—those t—t—times w—were f—f—fun, th—though," he said; "g—great—t—test f—f—fun th—that e—ever w—was. N—never c—c—come ag—g—gain, w—will th—they, Ol—Ollie?"

"Oh," Ollie replied lazily, grinning, "I don't know. I'd like to run 'em again, right now."

"You boys had better not," Sally remarked, with a shake of the head. "Those barrels belong to the firm, you know. You'd be the losers, as well as I—and the Hazen Estate."

"'T—t w—w—would b—be m—m—more f—f—fun th—than s—some th—things I kn—n—now ab—b—bout," Horry observed cryptically, "an' l—l—less ex—x—xpen—s—sive." [314]

Ollie looked at him and they both grinned and went back to their desks.

As may have been inferred, Horry Carling and Ollie Pilcher were, if not members of the firm of John Hazen, Inc., at least stockholders. Harry Carling would have liked to enter the Law School; but being debarred, for obvious reasons, from practising law, he had chosen engineering. Which, it may be remarked in passing, having been chosen rather from reasons of expedience than because he had any natural taste or aptitude in that direction, may not have been a wise choice. Horry, who had gone into what he liked the best and wanted the most, stood a much better chance of making a success of his life. Had not his grandfather been a great ship captain almost all the days of his life? And Ollie's grandfather, too? It was in their blood. If the salt is in a man's blood—or a boy's—it must come out, sooner or later, or engender a ferment which will trouble that man as long as he lives. And Horry and Ollie, having the natural taste for what they were doing and having had a pretty fair training for it all through their boyhood, fitted into the new firm of John Hazen, Inc., like new parts into a machine. It needed only a little polishing by wear for that machine to run as smoothly as it had been running for fifty years.

Sally worked hard at her new business. She had compounded with her conscience by not giving up her teaching yet—definitely. She would teach one more year, at least. Then, she said to herself, if she still felt as she did now, it would not be right for her to keep on with it. Meanwhile, she would have some time every afternoon, and, with Horry and Ollie,—really, it was going pretty

well, much better than she had sometimes feared. And at this point she would sigh and smile and fall to looking out of the window at the yards of the ships—*her* ships, she liked to think, although, of course, they were not all hers, but they belonged to the stockholders in John Hazen, Inc., [315] according to their holdings, and that list included Patty and Dick and Horry Carling and Ollie Pilcher and some others; but she liked to look out at the vessels and imagine that they were all hers. And she saw the rows of oil-barrels and the black dust of the road, which was kept pretty well stirred up by the feet of the horses which dragged the heavy trucks in an almost continuous procession. At any rate, she could call the dust hers,—if she wanted to,—for it would not have been stirred up if it had not been for her, but would have lain quietly there until it ceased to be dust at all and became no more than the surface of a street that was almost abandoned; baked hard by the sun and gullied by the rain and somewhat grass-grown. Then she would laugh and decide that she did not want the dust anyway; she had quite enough of that. As for her method of compounding with her conscience, it pleased her better than it pleased Mr. MacDalie, who did not share her misgivings.

Sally's efforts were not enough to induce Charlie to spend his vacation slaving in an office. Every one might not call the occupation of Horry and Ollie slaving. Sally mildly suggested that view of the matter.

"If I owned some stock in it, the matter would have a different aspect, no doubt," Charlie replied sarcastically. "As it is, I should be nothing but a clerk."

He was lucky to have the chance to start with that, Sally pointed out. It was possible that he was not fitted to be more than office boy.

With this shot, which may have been unduly hard upon Charlie, Sally turned away. Charlie, at any rate, thought it unduly hard, and felt much injured. Sally was always hard on him; unfair. What could she know against him? And, having procured a horse at a livery stable,—the liveliest young horse they had, with the most stylish rig, which, by the way, Sally would have the privilege of paying for,—Charlie took his way out to Doctor Sanderson's to see Patty and to be consoled and, incidentally, with the secret hope that Patty had a few dollars to spare for a deserving and [316] much misunderstood boy. For Patty managed to save up a few dollars for that purpose now and then, although Dick had greatly curtailed her sources of supply. No, they were *his* sources of supply which had been curtailed by Dick, Charlie said to himself. Damn Dick anyway! What right had he to do such a thing? Where should he, Charlie, get money in time of need? Where should he, indeed? Damn Dick! And Charlie gave the lively young horse a cut with the whip, as if the horse were responsible. The lively young horse resented cuts with the whip and proceeded to run; which gave Charlie so much occupation that he forgot, for the moment, about Dick.

Charlie was getting more and more into the habit of getting rigs at the livery stable, as the summer went on,—rigs which were invariably charged to Sally, she having made no objection to previous charges of a like nature—and of going out to see Patty. Doctor Sanderson's place was so indecently far out anyway that you had to have a horse or an automobile. He couldn't be expected to walk it, and, of course, he had to see Patty occasionally. You wouldn't have him so ungrateful as not to go to see her at all, would you? He supposed Sally would have to pay for the rigs, for *he* hadn't any of Uncle John's money, had he? The fact that this was not strictly true did not seem to occur to him; and the fact that Patty had put the stout horse at his disposal made no difference, so far as the livery stable was concerned. They—meaning Sally—might consider themselves lucky that he did not get an automobile to make the journey of two miles and a half. He couldn't be expected to drive a horse that was thirty years old and was only fit for the bone-yard, now, could he? You could make it in five minutes with an auto and he thought that they—meaning Sally again—might save money if he did get one. Of course he wasn't going to. He would defer to their absurd prejudice on that point. And more to the same effect.

It was no wonder that Sally turned away without speaking. She was afraid to answer; afraid of [317] what she might be led to say. And she would go down to the office and sit looking out of the window and wondering what was to become of Charlie and what she could do about it; wondering what it was that he did in college that it seemed to have such an unfortunate influence on him; wondering whether it would not be better for him, after all, to come out and be made to go to work. She almost decided that it would. Then she remembered that she had not the only word to say about that. There were others who would have something to say and the attempt would raise a storm. Sally was not afraid of storms, but—well—and she would look up to find Horry staring at her as if he wanted to tell her something.

"What is it, Horry?" she would ask, smiling.

Horry would be distinctly embarrassed. He always was: and he always made the same reply. "N—no—noth—th-thing, S—S—Sally," he would say, with a sigh. "I—i—it's n—n—noth—th—thing, o—only I h—h—hate t—to s—s—see you s—so b—b—both—thered ab—b—b—bout an—n—nyth—th—thing. Ch—er—n—n—nob—body's wo—worth it."

That was as much as she could get out of him, although, to tell the truth, she did not try very hard. She only asked her question for his sake, he seemed to want so much to tell something. It did not occur to her that what Horry wanted to say he wanted to say for her sake; and it was for her sake that he did not say it, although it trembled on the very tip of his tongue. Perhaps it trembled too much. Perhaps, if he had found speaking an easier matter, he would have told what he seemed to be on the point of telling.

Toward the last of August, Henrietta and Dick came back. Henrietta, of course, did not have much time, but she did manage to come and see Sally at the office, one afternoon, on which

occasion she completely upset the business of John Hazen, Inc., and all the members of the firm, both present and prospective, fluttered about her and gave her their undivided attention. [318] Naturally, this state of affairs pleased Henrietta, but it embarrassed her, too, for you can't—or a girl who has been recently married can't—speak out freely concerning the secrets which burden her bosom before two unmarried young fellows,—not that the fact of their being unmarried made any difference, of course,—but before two young fellows whom she had never seen before in her life. But Henrietta made an effort to see Sally alone, and on the occasion of that effort, which was successful, she talked a steady stream about Dick, to all of which Sally assented with a smile and with as much enthusiasm as even Henrietta could wish.

"And, you know, Sally," she said at the end of this eulogium—and otherwise, "you know, we are in a difficulty now. It is not a very great difficulty and yet it is, too. We don't know where to live."

"How terrible!" said Sally.

"There are so few houses that are—well, dignified enough; suited to Dick's position, you know."

"Why don't you build?"

"We might, of course, but that would take a long time, and—and, to tell the truth, I've set my—we have set our hearts on an old house; not too old, you know."

"I see," said Sally; "just old enough."

"Exactly," Henrietta agreed. "Just old enough. Now there's Miss Patty's house. It's restored and the work's done."

"Well?"

"And Miss Patty doesn't seem inclined to live in it. She doesn't like to leave Fox's. I saw her and spoke about it, and she said so."

"Well, then, where is the difficulty? Patty's house is a very pleasant, homelike house. I judge that it is just old enough. Can't you rent it?"

"No," said Henrietta in accents of despair. "Patty won't rent it. She says she may want to go back at any minute. She said she'd be glad to oblige me, as Doctor Sanderson's sister, but my [319] being Mr. Torrington's wife changes the aspect of the matter. She seems to have some grudge against Dick."

Sally laughed. "That isn't so strange. Knowing Patty, I should think you'd better give up the idea for the present."

"That's just it," Henrietta replied hastily. "For the present. That makes it unwise for us to build, when we may be able to get that house at any time almost. Of course, Dick must not seem to force Miss Patty in any way. He had to use his authority under the will, you know. Mr. Hazen would have expected him to and would have *wished* him to, or why should he have made his will that way? He *had* to—Dick, I mean, of course—Dick simply *had* to, don't you see, Sally, when he found that Patty had been using all that money and she wouldn't tell what she had used it for—wouldn't give a hint, you know. Dick only wanted a hint, so that he could keep his accounts straight, or something of that sort. It wasn't evident at all that Patty had used it for herself—Oh!" And Henrietta suddenly clapped her hand over her pretty mouth. "Have I been telling secrets, Sally? Have I?" She looked rather scared, as people were apt to be in any matter which concerned Sally, though I can't see why. Sally was as mild as a lamb in such cases.

She was mild now, but she was gazing at Henrietta with solemn and serious eyes, as if she had discovered a new country.

"I don't know, Henrietta," she replied, "whether you are telling secrets or not. What you were telling was news to me. If you are in any doubt about it, I should think you'd better not tell any more. But you can see why Patty is not inclined to do any favor for Dick."

"Well," returned Henrietta slowly—slowly for her, "I suppose I can, although *I* think that Dick is doing her the *greatest* favor. As far as her house is concerned, Dick might feel at liberty to rent to any one else, but not to himself. I'm sure I hope he won't rent to anybody else, whatever he does or Patty doesn't do. He ought not to do anything that could be considered dishonorable, of [320] course, but I can't quite see why this would be. But he simply won't."

"No," said Sally. "I should expect that of Dick."

"There doesn't seem to be anything to do about it," Henrietta continued, "unless—unless," she suggested with hesitation, "you would see Patty, Sally."

Sally smiled with amusement. "Of course I will if you want me to, Henrietta. But I'm not the one to make a successful emissary to Patty. I'm not in favor any more than Dick. You'd much better make up to Charlie if you want anything of Patty; much better."

"That seems to be a good idea," Henrietta murmured, gazing thoughtfully at Sally the while, "and easy too. I'll do it."

CHAPTER XIX

ToC

Henrietta had no great difficulty in doing it. She made a good beginning before Charlie went back to college, although she had only a little more than a fortnight, and she continued her attentions at frequent intervals thereafter. There was nothing crude about either Henrietta or her methods. She did not let him suspect her object or, indeed, that she had an object, and Charlie did not look for one. His own attractions were enough, goodness knows, to account for any attentions that might be lavished upon him, and he accepted those attentions almost as a matter of course. But as attentions and he had become, to a certain extent, strangers,—always excepting Patty's attentions, which did not count,—Charlie was very grateful in his inmost soul and he made the most of them. He came down to Whitby more often than he had been in the habit of doing and he invariably went to the Torringtons' at the first possible moment and spent as much time there as he could. He even developed a certain shyness which was very becoming. But he avoided Dick. He had a grudge against Dick and he was resolved not to forget it. Dick had done him an injury.

He did find himself forgetting that injury, in time. Who, in the face of Dick's leisurely cordiality and general good nature, could remember not to forget it? And in time—not so very long a time either—he perceived that Henrietta had a secret sorrow which gnawed like a worm at her heart. He set himself the task of pursuing this sorrow and plucking it out; and—marvel of marvels!—he succeeded in dragging from the unwilling Henrietta some information as to its nature. We can, perhaps, imagine the reluctance with which this information was given.

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Charlie, although he may have been secretly disappointed that Henrietta's sorrow was not more serious,—he may have thought that it was of no less import than that she had found, too late, that she loved another man better than she did her husband,—Charlie, I say, although he may have been disappointed, managed to conceal whatever of disappointment he felt.

"Oh," he said magnanimously and with sufficient indifference, "don't you worry about that. I can fix that. I'll just speak to Patty about it the very next time I go out there."

He did; and he reported to Henrietta that he had prevailed upon Patty to consent to any arrangement she liked. He had also prevailed upon Patty—not reported to Henrietta—to scrape together as many dollars as she could conveniently manage to scrape—conveniently or inconveniently, it was all one to Charlie—and to hand them over to him for some purpose. It really does not matter what the purpose was. Charlie was very fertile in invention, and if it was not one thing it was another. Any excuse was good enough. But the strain was telling upon Patty. Charlie should have been more careful.

Henrietta was so pleased with the report that she redoubled her attentions. This may not have been wise, but there seems to be no doubt that it was good for Charlie, on the whole. He went in to number seven but once before Christmas, and there might have been some ground for hope that, between Henrietta's attentions and his devotion to automobiles, he might be induced to give it up altogether. Harry Carling, who was keeping as close a watch upon Charlie as he could, hoped so, at all events.

For Charlie, in his sophomore year, ran to motor cars. Indulgence of a fine fancy for motors is apt to be expensive, as Patty was finding out, but it is not as expensive as Charlie's one other diversion is apt to be, on occasion. That his one experience of it, in his first term, was not more expensive must be set down solely to luck.

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Automobiles were bad enough, as a diversion, for a boy who could afford them no better than Charlie Ladue. Patty learned of them with horror. She had hoped, fondly, that Charlie had given them up after his experience with them only last Easter; oh, she *hoped* he had. She said it with tears in her eyes and with an agonized expression that would have melted a heart less hard than Charlie's. But Charlie merely smiled. That phantom car had done him no harm, although he did not call it a phantom car to Patty. Motor cars were not for the Hazens; not for people of the older régime. And Charlie smiled again and remarked that they might not have come to motors yet, but they would. Patty said, with some spirit, that they were vulgar and that they—they had a bad smell. For her part, she was satisfied to go no faster than nature intended. The horse, as Charlie might be aware, was the fastest animal that goes.

Having delivered this shot with evident pride, Patty sat back in her chair and waited to see if Charlie would be able to make any reply. She considered that last argument unanswerable. Charlie apparently did not. He observed that Pat's horse, rising thirty and rather fat, could hardly be called the fastest animal that goes. He never was very fast. But he contented himself with that, for Patty had just turned over to him all the ready money that she could raise and was feeling really impoverished in consequence. So Charlie, having got what he came for, took his leave, bidding Pat not to be anxious on his account, for he wasn't going to get smashed up again —he almost forgot to put in the "again"—and he wasn't going to spend much money on machines in the future. They always cost more at first, before you got used to them. With this comforting assurance, at which poor Patty sighed and said that she hoped he was right, Charlie went out cheerfully to sit behind one of the fastest animals that go, and to take the rig, for which Sally would have to pay, back to the livery stable.

Nothing in particular happened that winter, except that Dick and Henrietta moved into Miss Patty's house early in February. Patty was getting to be considered—and to consider herself—one

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of Doctor Sanderson's patients. And the Retreat was filling up and she did not want to give up her comfortable room, with the probable chance that she would be unable to get it again when she came back. In fact, it looked as if anybody had better hold on to what she had at Doctor Sanderson's.

So Sally saw but little of Fox that winter. They were both very busy, and Sally had her hands and her head full, with the office and her school, too. But she liked the office in spite of the work which, between you and me, was not very hard. There was a good deal of it, but it was interesting and Sally went home at night, tired and happy and with her head full of schemes. Sometimes Everett was waiting for her. She did not know whether she liked that or not, but there did not seem to be reason enough for sending him away. She did not quite know what her relations were with Everett; friendly, she hoped, no more. For there was a difference between Sally's state of mind now and her state of mind the year before. She was not indifferent now, she was happy and things mattered in a wholesome way. But Sally knew that Fox had not opened the cream-colored house again; not since Henrietta's wedding. He had not even made any preparations to open it. Sally was watching that house, out of the corner of her eye, and she knew. What an old slow poke he was, wasn't he? The winter was gone before she knew it and it was almost Easter. Then, one afternoon, Charlie made his appearance, suddenly and unexpectedly, and went up to see Henrietta almost immediately.

Sally was vaguely worried by this sudden appearance of Charlie, she could not tell why. She had felt, all along, a great relief that he had taken so readily to the Henrietta treatment and she had felt some surprise at it. Having worried about it for an hour, she put it aside. It would be time enough to worry when she knew there was something to worry about. When that time did come, she would not have time to worry, for she would probably be too busy doing something about it. [325] It was inaction that worried Sally, which is the case with most of us. At any rate, Charlie was all right for the present. He had only gone up to Henrietta's. Then Harry Carling came in: "J—j—just c—c—came d—d—down t—to s—s—see H—H—Ho—orry, y—y—you kn—n—now, S—S—Sally, f—f—for a m—m—min—n—nute." And Sally smiled and shook hands with Harry and hastened to say—to save Horry the painful experience of mentioning the matter—that he could go whenever he wanted to, so far as she knew. And they went out together.

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CHAPTER XX

ToC

John Upjohn Junior ran into the house just in time for supper. He was so excited and his entrance was so precipitate that he almost collided with his mother, who had just reached the foot of the stairs; and only by the exercise of almost superhuman agility he managed to avoid that catastrophe. It was just as well, for many reasons; the reason which influenced John Junior being that such an accident was likely to result, then and thereafter, in more damage to himself than to his mother.

He flung his cap down on the hall table with such violence that it slid off and fell upon the floor; but he could not pick it up at the moment because he was engaged in shedding his overcoat, which immediately slipped off of his arms upon a chair. He began to speak at once.

"M—m—m—moth—ther!" he exclaimed explosively. "I—I—'v—ve—darn it all!"

Mrs. Upjohn rebuked her offspring mildly. "John, what is the matter with you? Is your name Carling, that you can't speak without stuttering so? And I should think you would do well to moderate your language, at any rate when you speak to your mother. And you must learn to come into the house less like a tornado. Come in quietly, like a gentleman."

John Junior gave a contemptuous grunt. "J—just been h—hearing the Carlings talking. That's wh—why I can't talk 'n' wh—why I st—st—stut—t—ter so. Gosh darn it! I mean hang it!"

"Pick up your cap, John," Mrs. Upjohn commanded sternly. "And hang it, if you will." This pun of Mrs. Upjohn's somewhat softened her stern command. She could not help smiling.

John kicked his cap out from behind the table and, picking it up, threw it at the hat-rack, where [327] it happened to catch and stick. He began again.

"I—I—I'v—ve g—g—got s—s—s—"

"Suppose you go up and wash your face and hands," Mrs. Upjohn suggested, "and come down to supper. The bell rang before you came in. When you come down you may be able to talk intelligibly."

So John Junior rushed upstairs and, after an incredibly short period, during which we must suppose that he went through some sort of an operation which he regarded as sufficient, he appeared again, slid down the balusters like lightning, landed at the bottom with an appalling thump, and ran into the dining-room.

"Guess I can talk now," he announced, taking his chair by the back and sliding it under him. "I was hurrying home, so's not to be late to supper, when I came up behind the Carlings. They—Letty ain't here, is she?" he added, looking about doubtfully.

"No," Mrs. Upjohn replied. "You know that Letty won't come again for more than a month."

"Huh!" growled John Junior. "She will if she feels like it. Never can tell when she'll be here. She's always here."

Mrs. Upjohn was a little slow about taking anything in. She had been puzzling over John's former speech and had just the full import of it.

"Did you say the Carlings, John?" she asked. "I don't see how that can be, for Harry's in Cambridge."

"He ain't either," John replied amiably. "Don't you s'pose I'd know those freaks? I guess I would."

"Well," said Mrs. Upjohn doubtfully.

"And they were talking together," John continued, "or trying to talk. They didn't know I was behind 'em, and I kept still as I could so's I could hear what they said. They ought to have an interpreter. But I got most of it, and then I slid out for fear they'd see me. What d'you s'pose they were talking about?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Mrs. Upjohn curiously. [328]

"What?"

John kept his mother in suspense while he disposed of his mouthful. He swallowed twice, then took a drink of water. At last he was ready and he looked at his mother, suspending operations for that purpose.

"Charlie Ladue's a gambler," he announced abruptly.

"What!" Mrs. Upjohn exclaimed. But she was pleased in spite of herself. What would Letty say to that? "Are you sure you heard it right?"

"'Course I'm sure."

"Well, John, I'm grieved to hear it. You must be careful not to talk about it."

"'Course I won't talk about it. I'll stop now if you want me to."

"No," said Mrs. Upjohn judicially. "No, I think you ought to tell me all you heard. How long has it been going on and where does Charlie go?"

So John Junior retailed at some length all that he had heard, rather to the neglect of his supper. Certain important details were lacking and he had to fill them in from his imaginings, which were rather defective as to the points under discussion.

"Well," said Mrs. Upjohn, when the recital and the supper were both finished, "I think somebody ought to be told. I don't just like to tell Sally, but she ought to know."

"They didn't want to tell Sally either. Horry Carling's in her office and he could tell her easy enough if he wanted to."

"That's so," Mrs. Upjohn agreed. "I guess I'll tell Patty. I have a pretty good idea where Charlie's money came from. Patty won't thank me, but somebody ought to open her eyes. I'll go out there to-morrow. I wonder if I couldn't find somebody who's going out. You look around, early to-morrow, before school, and see if you can't find somebody that's going and send him up here. There's no need to hire a horse, for that."

Accordingly the grocer's delivery wagon stopped at the house the next forenoon, and the boy [329] asked for Mrs. Upjohn. That lady came to the door, looking a little puzzled. It seemed that John had—

Mrs. Upjohn laughed. "And he's gone to school," she said. "I didn't mean that he should ask you." She laughed again. "But I don't know why I shouldn't go in a grocery wagon. It's perfectly respectable."

"Yes, ma'am," the boy replied, grinning. "And it's a very nice wagon, almost new, and it's very comfortable."

Patty was sitting at her window when the grocer's wagon stopped at the door and Mrs. Upjohn got out.

"Mercy on us!" Patty exclaimed. "If there isn't Alicia Upjohn! She'll break her neck. Come in a grocer's wagon! Alicia was always queer, but there is a point beyond which—yes, there *is* a point beyond which she should not allow herself to go." And Miss Patty gasped faintly and leaned back, and in a few minutes she heard Mrs. Upjohn at her door.

That interview was painful to Patty, at least. Mrs. Upjohn was rather pressed for time, as the grocer's boy could not wait more than fifteen minutes. It is a little difficult to break unwelcome news gently in fifteen minutes. It might have been difficult to break this particular news, which was very unwelcome, even if there had been no time limit set by a grocer's boy. But within ten minutes Mrs. Upjohn had Patty in tears and protesting her belief in Charlie's innocence and exhibiting all her characteristic obstinacy in the face of proof. Had not Charlie been there that very morning to see her? He had just left, indeed, and he had been as loving as the most exacting of doting aunts could wish. Didn't Alicia suppose that she, Patty, would be able to detect any

signs of wrong-doing on his part? At which Alicia smiled and made a reply which made Patty almost frantic and within the five minutes which remained Patty had told Alicia that she would do well to mind her own business and she wished she would go and never come near her again. So, the fifteen minutes being almost up, Alicia went, with what dignity she could summon. She met [330] Doctor Beatty in the lower hall and told him that he had better see to Patty, who seemed beside herself. He went at once; and Mrs. Upjohn seized that opportunity to climb into her seat beside the grocer's boy.

Doctor Beatty was with Patty a long time and used every art he had—he hadn't many, but he used all he had with a degree of patience that was surprising—to quiet Patty, who needed quieting if ever anybody did. He was more alarmed by that disturbance of Patty's than he would have acknowledged; more than he had expected, he found, although he had been in daily expectation of something of the kind.

He found her muttering to herself and exclaiming brokenly. She looked at him with wild eyes. "Go away!" she cried as he entered. "He's not, I tell you. He never did!"

"No," Doctor Beatty agreed calmly. "Certainly not. But there! You don't want me to go away, Patty." He pulled up a chair and sat down.

"Not that chair!" she cried. "Not that chair! That's the chair she sat in—Alicia Upjohn. If you sit in it you'll say so, too. Take any other, but not that one."

"Oh, very well," he said. And he drew up another chair and sat down. "Now, tell me what's the matter."

At this Patty began to weep violently. Her sentences were broken, and now and then she gave a loud cry that seemed to be wrung from her heart.

"Alicia oughtn't to have said it. She might have known how—that I—how I would f-f—Oh!" She could not speak for a moment. "She just wanted me to think that that was where my money went. She's a spiteful thing. Oh, how could she? How could she? Cruel! Cruel!" Patty fell to weeping again. She seemed to lose all control over herself. She rocked to and fro and leaned so far over, in her new fit of crying, that Doctor Beatty put out his hand to save her from falling. He was glad to have her cry so.

She seized his hand and pressed it and looked up at him appealingly, her eyes raining tears. [331] "Oh, Meriwether," she sobbed, "you don't think he does, do you? Tell me that you don't."

He looked down into those faded eyes. "Certainly I don't, Patty," he answered gently. Out of the pity which he felt for her, he may have pressed her hand a little. He had but the faintest idea what she was talking about.

Patty flushed and relaxed her hold upon his hand. "You are a c-c-comfort, Meriwether," she said more calmly. "It is a great deal to know that I have one friend, at least, who understands me. I—I—have so few, Meriwether!" She began to sob again. "S-so f-f-few, and I used to have so so many!"

"Cry quietly as much as you like, Patty. It will do you good."

He made a slight movement, at which Patty cried out.

"Don't go! Don't go yet!" She put out her hand blindly, as if to stop him.

"I'll stay until you are yourself again. Never fear." He sighed faintly.

It was a new rôle for Doctor Beatty, but he played it better than would have been expected. Patty turned to the window and he heard the sound of sobbing steadily for some time. At last the sound ceased. She was sitting with her chin resting on her hand, which held her wet handkerchief crumpled up into a tight ball; and she was looking out through her tears, but seeing nothing, and she seemed to have difficulty in breathing.

"He's such a good boy—to me!" she said, without turning. "Such a good boy! I am so fond of him that it almost breaks my heart to have anybody say—say such things. How can they? How can they have the heart?" She gave a single sob.

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[332]

CHAPTER XXI

ToC

Sally sat by her window in the office of John Hazen, Inc., looking absently out of it. Doctor Beatty was talking to her earnestly, in low tones, and she was serious and sober, listening intently.

"Mrs. Upjohn," he was saying,—"thrifty soul!—came out to Sanderson's this morning with the grocer's boy"—Sally chuckled suddenly, in spite of her seriousness, but stopped as suddenly

—"and went up to see Patty. I'd like," he interrupted himself to say emphatically, "to see every visitor of suspicious character required to show cause for seeing the patients. Yes," he nodded in reply to a questioning look of Sally's, "Patty is a patient. There's no doubt about that, I'm afraid. And Mrs. Upjohn is a suspicious character. There is no doubt about that either. Oh, yes, well-meaning, perhaps; even probably. But she should not have been allowed to see Patty. I consider Patty's condition—er—ticklish. Distinctly ticklish."

Sally was surprised. "What do you mean? How is her condition ticklish?"

"Mentally," he replied.

Sally turned to Doctor Beatty with a start and looked him straight in the eyes. She wanted to see just what he meant. Then she shuddered.

"I hope not," she said.

"Well, we won't think of it. We are doing our best. But Mrs. Upjohn succeeded in upsetting her completely in a very few minutes. I was afraid, at first, that the mischief was done. Oh, it wasn't. She came back all right. I couldn't make her tell me what Mrs. Upjohn had said, but, picking up a thread here and there, I judged that Charlie had been misbehaving himself somehow. I couldn't find out just how. I am sorry to add another log to your load, Sally, but I thought that you would [333] be glad to be told of what seems to be common report. I know that I would."

"I am," she said. "I'm glad and sorry, too. But I'm greatly obliged to you." She was silent for some little time, looking out and thinking hard. "Do you know what kind of misbehavior it is?" she asked. "I'm pretty familiar with several kinds," she added, with a hard little laugh. "Don't be afraid to tell me the truth if you know it."

Doctor Beatty shook his head. "I don't know it. It seems to be connected with Patty's money."

"I have been afraid of it, but it has been impossible to get hold of anything definite," replied Sally gravely. "Even you aren't telling me anything definite, although I believe you would if you knew it."

He nodded. "You may be sure I would, Sally."

"It is really curious how hard it is for people to find out what concerns them most nearly," she continued. "Everybody is most considerate of one's feelings." She gave another hard little laugh. "I've not much doubt that almost everybody in town, excepting Charlie's relatives and near friends,—if he has any,—has known of this for a long time. It would have been the part of kindness to tell me."

"If it had been more than mere rumor," Doctor Beatty agreed, "it would have been. I understand," he went on with a quiet smile, "that that was Mrs. Upjohn's idea in telling Patty. She considered the rumor verified. Her motive seems to have been good, but the method adopted was bad; very bad. It's difficult, at best."

Sally was silent again for some time. "Poor Patty!" she murmured. "It's hard on her. If she has lost money in that way I must pay her back."

Doctor Beatty made no reply. Sally had not said it to him.

"I believe," she said, turning to him, "that I know how I can find out all about it—from a trustworthy source," she added, smiling gravely, "as Miss Lambkin would put it."

The doctor muttered impatiently under his breath. Letty Lambkin! But he had done his errand, [334] for which service Sally thanked him again.

Doctor Beatty had been gone but a few minutes when Horry Carling came in. He nodded pleasantly to Sally and was taking off his overcoat.

"Horry," said Sally suddenly, "what has Charlie been doing?"

Horry stopped, his coat hanging by the arms and his mouth open, and looked at her. He was very much startled.

"Wh—wh—what?" he asked at last.

"I asked you what Charlie has been doing. What mischief has he been up to? I am pretty sure he has been misbehaving himself since he has been in college. How? Has he been in bad company?"

"W—w—well, y—y—yes," Horry stammered, getting rather red, "I th—th—think h—he h—h—has."

"Do you mean women, Horry?"

Horry's face went furiously red at that question. "N—n—n—no,"—he was in such a hurry to say it that he was longer than usual about it,—"n—n—n—noth—th—thing of th—th—that k—k—kind, th—th—that I kn—n—now of. G—g—g—gam—m—"

"Gambling, Horry?" Sally asked the question calmly, as if she merely wanted to know. She did want to know, very much, but not merely. Knowing was the first step.

"Y—y—yes," Horry answered. He seemed very much relieved. "H—h—he has g—g—gam—m—mbled almost ev—v—ver s—s—since h—he's b—b—been th—th—there," he added. And he went on in as much haste as he could manage, which was not so very much. Neither he nor Harry had been in Charlie's confidence. Most of the fellows didn't care a rap, of course, and didn't pay attention; but—but Harry and he had cared and—and—they had—and Horry got very red again

and stopped in confusion.

Sally smiled upon him. "Thank you for caring, Horry," she said gently. "Was that what you seemed to have on your mind all last summer? I thought you wanted to tell me something." [335]

He nodded.

"I wonder why you didn't. I should have been grateful."

"C—c—couldn't b—bear to. We d—d—did t—tell D—D—Dick. C—c—came d—d—down on p—p—purpose. J—j—just b—bef—f—fore he g—g—got m—married. I s—s—s'pose he f—f—forg—got a—ab—b—bout it."

"He must have," sighed Sally. "It isn't like Dick. Now, if you will tell me all you know, I will promise not to forget about it."

Accordingly, Horry unburdened his soul of the whole story, so far as he knew it, and Sally listened in silence, only nodding now and then. What was there to be said? Horry was grateful for her listening and for her silence and he stuttered less as he went on.

"There!" he concluded. "N—now you kn—n—now all I d—do. I'm p—p—pumped dry, Sally, and I'm g—glad to g—g—get it off my m—mind."

"Thank you," said she; and she relapsed into silence and fell to looking out again.

Horry sat still, waiting for her to say something more; but she did not and he got up, at last.

"If y—you h—have n—noth—th—thing more t—to ask me, S—Sally—"

Sally turned toward him quickly. "Horry," she said, interrupting him, "do you know where Charlie goes—to gamble?" It was an effort for her to say it.

"Y—yes," he replied, blushing furiously again, but not avoiding her eyes. "I've b—b—been th—there."

"Oh, Horry! And aren't you ashamed?"

"N—n—not es—s—specially. O—only w—w—went once, t—to l—l—look on, you know. Th—thought I'd l—like to s—see the p—p—place once. I didn't p—play." Horry shook his head. "I h—haven't g—g—got the b—bug. Kn—n—new I w—was safe."

Sally seemed to be puzzled. "The bug? Do you mean—" [336]

"The f—f—fever, Sally," he answered, laughing at her bewilderment; "the sickness—disease of ga—ga—gambling. It's j—j—just as much a dis—s—ease as the small-pox. Or c—con—sumption. Th—that's b—b—better, bec—c—cause it lasts l—l—onger and it g—gets w—w—worse and w—worse."

Sally sighed. "I suppose it is like that. It must be." She looked at him thoughtfully for so long a time that Horry began to get red once more and to fidget on his chair. "There must be a cure for it if we could only find it," she murmured. "Horry," she said suddenly, "do you suppose Harry would be willing to keep track of Charlie's movements—without Charlie's knowing, I mean? For a while?"

"Kn—n—now he w—would."

"And would he telegraph me when Charlie goes into that place again—and just as soon as he can find out? I ought to know as early in the evening as possible—by six or seven o'clock."

"H—he w—will if he c—c—can f—f—find out in t—t—time. W—w—wouldn't always b—be s—so easy. I'll t—take c—care of that, Sally."

"Thank you. I shall be very grateful to you both."

Sally went out to Doctor Sanderson's the next afternoon. Fox saw her coming and went to meet her.

"How is Patty, Fox?" she asked. She jumped lightly out of the carriage and stood beside him.

He seemed distinctly disappointed at the question. "So that is what you came for," he replied. "I hoped it might have had something to do with me." He sighed. "Patty's all right, I think. Are you going up to see her?"

Sally shook her head. "I came to see you, Fox. I want to ask your advice."

"That changes the face of nature," he returned cheerfully. "Will you come into the office—or anywhere else that you like."

They went into Fox's office and he got her settled in a chair. "That's the most generally comfortable chair. It's my consultation chair. I want my patients to be as comfortable as possible before they begin." [337]

Sally laughed a little. "Now, you sit down and put on your professional expression."

"It is not difficult to look sympathetic with you, in advance, Sally."

"It is really a serious matter." She was silent for a moment. "Fox," she said then abruptly, "Charlie has been gambling."

"Yes."

"You aren't surprised?"

"No."

"And he has used Patty's money, I don't doubt."

"Yes."

"*Fox!*" she cried impatiently. "Did you know all this before? If you did, I think you might have told me."

"No," he replied gently, "I did not know it. I only suspected it. You had as much reason to suspect it as I had."

Sally shook her head. "I didn't know all the circumstances—about Patty's money, for instance. I'm afraid she gave it to him. I don't know how much."

"Neither do I."

"I must find out and pay her." She was silent again, leaning her chin on her hand and gazing at Fox. "How can I find out, Fox?"

"I hardly know, Sally." He was silent, in his turn. "It's no use to ask her, I suppose. You might ask Dick how much was—er—unaccounted for."

"I might." She nodded with satisfaction. "I will. I shall pay it back. And I must stop Charlie's gambling. I've got to. I've thought and thought—for a whole day." She laughed shortly. "I'm no nearer than I was in half an hour. Oh, Fox, tell me how."

He was looking at her with a great pity in his eyes. He should have known better. Sally did not like to be pitied. "It's a problem, Sally. I'm afraid you may not be able to stop it altogether—or [338] permanently."

"I thought it might do if—but, perhaps I'd better not tell anybody about it until it's done."

"I commend that idea, in general," Fox replied, smiling, "although a person should be perfectly frank with her lawyer and her physician. If I can be of any assistance to you, please remember that nothing would please me better. Those places are—wouldn't be easy for you to get into. And, Sally, I should hate to think of your trying it. Can't I do it?"

Sally smiled at him in a way that he liked very much. "I have no idea of trying to get in. And, Fox, how much do you know of those places, as you call them?"

"Not much, but I think I could probably get in."

"Thank you, Fox. There is one thing that you can do and that is to explain to me why Charlie does it. Or, I suppose I know why he does, but explain this if you can. Why haven't I the same desire? I am my father's daughter. Why shouldn't I want to gamble, too, instead of the very idea of it filling me with disgust?"

He sat for some time with a half smile on his lips, gazing at Sally and saying nothing. Sally looked up and caught his eye and looked away again.

"Please tell me, Fox," she said.

"A question of heredity, Sally! Heredity is a subject which I know very little about. Nobody really knows much about it, for that matter. A few experiments with peas and guinea-pigs, and, on the other hand, a great deal of theorizing—which means a man's ideas of what ought to happen, made to fit; or rather, the cases chosen to fit the ideas. And neither helps us much when we come to apply them to such a case as Charlie's. But do you really want me to tell you what I think? I'm no authority and the whole thing is a matter of guesswork. You might guess as well as I—or better."

She nodded. "I should like, very much, to know."

"Ah, so should I," he said. "If I only *knew*! I don't. But I will do my best. Well, then, your father [339] had rather a strong character—"

"Oh, Fox!" she protested.

"He did," he insisted. "Even you had to give in to him sometimes, and you are the only one in your family who ever stood up against him—who ever could have. He was lacking in the sense of right, and he had depraved tastes, perhaps, but his tastes grew by indulgence. Your mother—forgive me, Sally—has not as strong a character, in a way, but her sense of right is strong. Perhaps her traditions are as strong." There were some things which Fox did not know. If he had known all that had passed in Mrs. Ladue's heart he might not have spoken so confidently. "You have your mother's tastes,—irreproachable,—her sense of right and your father's strength; a very excellent combination." He laughed gently. "And both strengthened by your early experience. A fiery furnace," he murmured, "to consume the dross."

Sally got red and did not seem pleased. "Go on," she said.

"Charlie got your father's tastes and your mother's lack of strength. He seems to have no sense of right. He was most unfortunate. He didn't get a square deal. But his very weakness gives me hope. He will have to be watched, for he may break away at any time. There was no leading your father, even in the way he wanted to go. He had to be under strong compulsion—driven."

"Did you ever drive him, Fox?"

"Once," he answered briefly. "It was no fun."

"I remember the time." She sighed and rose slowly. "Well—"

Fox rose also. "Had enough of my preaching, Sally? I don't do it often and I don't wonder you

don't like it."

She smiled at him gravely and gave him her hand. "I'm greatly obliged to you, Fox. If you can help me I will ask you to. I promise you that."

He held her hand much longer than was at all necessary and he gazed down at her with a [340] longing which he could not hide. Not that he tried; but she was not looking at him.

"Promise me something else, Sally."

Sally glanced up at him in surprise at his voice. "Anything that I can do, of course," she said.

The look in his eyes was very tender—and pitying, Sally thought. "Marry me, Sally. Promise me that."

It was sudden and unexpected, to be sure, but was there any reason why the quick tears should have rushed to Sally's eyes and why she should have looked so reproachfully at him? Ah, Doctor Sanderson, you have made a mess of it now! Sally withdrew her hand quickly.

"Oh, Fox!" she cried low, her eyes brimming. "How could you? How could you?"

He had hurt her somehow. God knew that he had not meant to. "Why, Sally," he began, "I only wanted—"

"That's just it," she said quickly; and she could say no more and she bit her lip and turned and hurried out, leaving Fox utterly bewildered and gazing after her as if he were paralyzed.

Sally almost ran down the walk and, as she ran, she gave one sob. "He was only sorry for me," she said to herself; "he only pitied me, and I won't be pitied. He only wanted—to help me bear my burdens. Dear Fox!" she thought, with a revulsion of feeling. "He is always so—wanting to help me bear my burdens. Dear Fox! But he *shall* be true—to her," she added fiercely. "Does he think I will help him to be untrue? Oh, Fox, dear!"

And, biting her lip again, cruelly, she got into the waiting carriage.

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[341]

CHAPTER XXII

ToC

Mr. Gilfeather's saloon was not on Avenue C, in spite of the fact that the Licensing Board tried to confine all institutions of the kind to that historic boulevard. Mr. Gilfeather's saloon, to use his own words, was a "high-toned and classy place." In consequence of that fact and perhaps on the condition implied in the term, Mr. Gilfeather was permitted to conduct his high-toned and classy place on a street where he would have no competition. It was a little side street, hardly more than a court, and there was no church within several hundred feet and no school within several thousand. The little street was called Gilfeather's Court, and not by its own name, which I have forgotten; the narrow sidewalk from Main Street to Mr. Gilfeather's door was well trodden; and that door was marked by day by a pair of scraggy and ill-conditioned bay trees and by night by a modest light, in addition.

Mr. Gilfeather may have been grieved by the condition of the bay trees, which were real trees, if trees which have their roots in shallow tubs can be called real. At all events, he had resolved to add to the classy appearance of his place, and to that end he had concluded arrangements with the Everlasting Decorating Company for certain palms and ferns, duly set in tubs of earth,—the earth was not important except as it helped in the illusion,—which ferns and palms were warranted not to be affected by heat, dryness, or the fumes of alcohol, and to require no care except an occasional dusting. The men of the Everlasting Decorating Company had just finished the artistic disposal of these palms and ferns—as ordered—about the little mahogany tables, giving to each table a spurious air of seclusion, and had gone away, smiling and happy, having been treated by Mr. Gilfeather, very properly, to whatever they liked. Mr. Gilfeather wandered [342] now among his new possessions, changing this palm by a few inches and that fern by the least fraction of an inch and, altogether, lost in admiring contemplation.

What if the glossy green leaves were nothing but varnished green paper? What if the stems were nothing but fibre with a covering of the varnished paper here and there? What else were the real stems made of anyway? And the light in the interior of Mr. Gilfeather's was rather dim, having to filter in through his small front windows after passing the tall blank wall of the building opposite, and—well—his admiration was not undeserved, on the whole. He came back and leaned against the bar. The bar was by no means the feature of the room. It was small and modest, but of solid San Domingo mahogany. Mr. Gilfeather did not want his customers to drink at the bar. He preferred that they should sit at the tables.

"How is it, Joe?" he asked, turning to the white-coated barkeeper. "Pretty good, eh?"

The silent barkeeper nodded.

"Switch on the lights over in that corner," Mr. Gilfeather ordered, "and let's see how she looks." Joe stopped wiping his glasses long enough to turn to a row of buttons. "That's good. Put 'em all on." Joe put 'em all on. "That's better. Now," turning to wave his hand upward over the bar, "light her up."

At his command there appeared on the wall over the bar, a large painting of a lady clad chiefly in a leopard skin and luxuriant golden hair and a charming smile. The lady was made visible by electric lights, screened and carefully disposed, and seemed to diffuse her presence impartially over the room. Unfortunately, there was nobody to admire but Mr. Gilfeather and Joe, the barkeeper, and there is some doubt about Joe's admiration; but she did not seem to mind and she continued to smile. As they looked, the outer door opened silently and closed again. Mr. Gilfeather and Joe, warned by the sudden draught, turned.

"Hello, Ev," said Mr. Gilfeather. "What do you think of it?" He waved his hand inclusively. "Just got 'em." [343]

Everett inspected the palms and ferns solemnly. "Very pretty. Very good. It seems to be good, strong paper and well varnished. I don't see any imitation rubber plants. Where are your rubber plants?"

"Eh?" asked Mr. Gilfeather, puzzled. "Don't you like it? They could have furnished rubber plants, I s'pose. Think I ought to have 'em?"

"Nothing of the kind is complete without rubber plants," Everett replied seriously.

Mr. Gilfeather looked at him doubtfully. "Don't you like 'em, Ev?" he asked. It was almost a challenge. Mr. Gilfeather was nettled and inclined to be hostile. If Everett was making fun of him—well, he had better look out.

"It's hardly up to your standard, Tom," he answered. He indicated the lady in the leopard skin—and in her own—who still smiled sweetly down at them. "After I have gone to the trouble of selecting paintings for you, it—er—would be natural to expect that you would consult me before adding a lot of cheap paper flowers to your decorations. I should have been happy to advise you."

"Nothing cheap about 'em," growled Mr. Gilfeather. "Had to have something in here."

"What's the matter with real palms and ferns?"

"What would they cost, I should like to know? And how would I keep 'em looking decent? Look at them bay trees out there."

"Those bay trees do look a little dejected," Everett agreed, smiling. "I should employ a good gardener to care for them and for your real palms and ferns. Our gardener, I am sure, could—"

"I don't s'pose your gardener'd do it for me now, would he?"

Everett smiled again. "Hardly. But he's not the only one in town. It might cost more, Tom, but it would pay, believe me. Your bar, now, is the real thing and in good taste. You ought to have things in keeping." [344]

Mr. Gilfeather emitted a growl and looked almost as dejected as his bay trees. Everett laughed and moved toward a door beside the bar.

"Anybody up there yet, Tom?" he asked.

Mr. Gilfeather shook his head. "I'll send 'em up." Everett opened the door and they heard his steps going up the stairs. "Hell!" said Mr. Gilfeather.

Joe smiled sympathetically, but said nothing.

It was getting towards noon and customers began to straggle in singly or by twos and threes. Certain of these customers were warned by Mr. Gilfeather's thumb, pointing directly upward, and vanished. The others had chosen their favorite tables and had been waited upon by two white-aproned and silent youths, who had appeared mysteriously from nowhere. The room gradually filled and gradually emptied again, but there was no sign of Everett and his friends. Mr. Gilfeather went to his dinner and came back a little after two o'clock. The high-toned and classy place showed few customers present. It was a slack time. Two men, at a table behind a mammoth paper fern, were drinking whiskey and water and talking earnestly; another, hidden by a friendly palm, was consuming, in a leisurely manner, a hot Tom and Jerry; another, tilting his chair back in the far corner, read the early afternoon paper and sipped his ale; and one of our white-aproned friends vanished through the door beside the bar with a tray containing five different mixtures of the most modern varieties, of which I do not know the names. Mr. Gilfeather looked about on his despised decorations and sighed; and the outer door opened again and admitted Miss Sally Ladue.

Mr. Gilfeather half turned, in response to a smothered exclamation from Joe, turned again, and cast a startled glance up at the smiling lady over the bar.

"Switch 'em off, Joe, quick!" and Joe switched 'em off, leaving the lady with her leopard skin in murky darkness, which, under the circumstances, was the best place for her. But he had not been quick enough. [345]

Sally's color was rather high as she stood just inside the door. Nothing but palms and ferns—very lifelike—met her eyes; nothing, that is, except a very chaste bar of San Domingo mahogany and the persons of Joe and Mr. Gilfeather. The lady in the leopard skin no longer met her eyes, for that lady had been plunged in gloom, as we are aware. Sally, too, was aware of it. Mr. Gilfeather had a guilty consciousness of it as he advanced.

"Good afternoon, Miss Ladue," he said, somewhat apprehensively. "I hope nothing is going wrong with my daughter?"

"No, Mr. Gilfeather," replied Sally, hastening to reassure him. "She is doing very well, and I expect that she will graduate well up in her class."

Mr. Gilfeather was evidently relieved to hear it.

"I came to consult you," continued Sally; "to ask your advice." She looked about her. The room was very quiet, much quieter than her own room at school, for the two men drinking whiskey and water had stopped their talking, upon Sally's entrance. It had been no more than a low hum of voices, at most, and the man with his Tom and Jerry made no more noise than did the man sipping his ale and reading his paper. Sally thought that she would like to have Patty glance in there for a minute.

"Well," said Mr. Gilfeather slowly, "perhaps I can find a place where we can talk without interruption. Will you—"

"Why can't we sit down behind some of these lovely palms?" asked Sally hastily.

Mr. Gilfeather looked at her quickly. He was sensitive on the subject of palms and ferns—everlasting ones, furnished by the Everlasting Decorating Company. But Sally seemed unconscious. His suspicions were unfounded. He nodded and led the way, and Sally followed, penetrating the seclusion of three of the customers, to a table in another corner. Sally sat down and Mr. Gilfeather sat opposite.

He hesitated. "I suppose you wouldn't do me the honor to take something with me, now?" he [346] asked. Sally smiled and shook her head. "A glass of lemonade or a cup of tea? I can have tea in a minute—good tea, too, Miss Ladue."

"Why, thank you, Mr. Gilfeather. I can't see any reason why I shouldn't take a cup of tea with you. I should like it very much."

He leaned back, crooked his finger at a white-aproned youth, and gave his order. One would not imagine, from any sign that the youth gave, that it was not quite the usual order. As Mr. Gilfeather had promised, in less than a minute it was on the table: tea and sugar and sliced lemon and cream.

"We have a good many orders for tea," remarked Mr. Gilfeather, in answer to Sally's look of surprise. "I try to have the best of every kind."

Sally helped herself to a lump of sugar and a slice of lemon. "I must confess that I didn't suppose you ever had an order for tea."

"Yes," he replied thoughtfully. "But we don't often have customers like you, Miss Ladue. It is an honor which I appreciate."

"But," Sally interposed, "you don't know, yet, what my errand is."

"It don't make no difference what your errand is," said Mr. Gilfeather; "your visit honors me. Whatever you ask my advice about, I'll give you my best and thank you for coming to me."

Sally looked at him with a smile in her eyes. "What I wanted to see you about, Mr. Gilfeather, was gambling. Do—"

"What?" asked the astonished Mr. Gilfeather, with a penetrating look at Sally. "You ain't going to—"

Sally laughed outright, attracting to herself the attention of the two whiskey-and-waters. Tom and Jerry was consumed and had just gone out.

"No," she said merrily, "I'm not going to. I only meant that I wanted to see—to know whether [347] you knew about it."

"Whether I knew about it!" exclaimed Mr. Gilfeather, more puzzled than ever. He glanced up fearfully as a slight noise came down to them from above. "I never play, if you mean that. Of course, I know something about it. Any man in my business can't help knowing something about it."

"Well," Sally resumed, "I wonder whether it would be possible for—for me, for instance, to get in; to see the inside of a place where it is going on. I don't know anything about it and I didn't know anybody to ask but you."

Mr. Gilfeather cast another apprehensive glance at the ceiling. Then he looked down again and gazed thoughtfully at Sally out of half-shut eyes.

"I should think," he observed slowly, "that it would be difficult; very difficult, indeed. I should say that it might be impossible. What particular place did you have in mind? That is, if it's a proper question."

"That's just the trouble," Sally replied, frowning. "I don't know, although I can find out. I didn't think of that. It's a place where college boys go, sometimes," she added, flushing slowly.

"In Boston, eh?" Mr. Gilfeather's brow cleared and his eyes opened again. The color in Sally's face had not escaped him. "It's my advice, Miss Ladue, that you give it up. I don't know anything about them Boston places—I would say those places—or I'd offer to go for you. Perhaps I can guess—"

"It's my brother," said Sally simply.

Mr. Gilfeather nodded. "I'd heard it or I shouldn't have spoken of it," he said gently. "I'm very sorry, Miss Ladue. Nobody else shall hear of it from me."

"I'm afraid that will make very little difference," she remarked, "but I thank you."

Mr. Gilfeather was silent for some moments while Sally sipped her tea.

"Haven't you got any gentleman friend," he asked at last, "who would do your errand for you?" [348]

"I don't know who would be the most likely to—to know the way about," she returned. "I can't very well ask for bids." She smiled quickly. "If I knew the best person to ask I would ask him."

"That you would," Mr. Gilfeather murmured admiringly. "You ain't afraid. Do you want me to suggest?" he asked.

"I hoped you would be willing to."

"Well, how would Everett Morton do? I guess he knows his way about. I always understood that he did." Mr. Gilfeather smiled furtively. The matter of the palms rankled.

Sally looked reflective. "If he is the best man to do it I'll ask him." She sighed. She felt a strange repugnance to asking him—for that service. She had finished her tea and Mr. Gilfeather had finished his. "Well," she said, rising slowly, "I thank you for your advice, Mr. Gilfeather,—and for your tea," she added, "which I have enjoyed."

"The honor is mine," returned Mr. Gilfeather gallantly.

Sally smiled and bowed and was on her way to the door. "Miss Ladue," called Mr. Gilfeather. She stopped and turned. "I wish you would be kind enough to favor me with a bit of advice, too."

"Gladly," said Sally. "What about?"

Mr. Gilfeather came close and spoke low. "It's these palms and ferns. I got 'em this morning. Might I ask your opinion of 'em?"

"Surely, they're very nice and attractive," said Sally doubtfully.

He remarked the doubt. "You don't really think that. Now, do you? Wouldn't real ones be more —more high-toned, as you might say? I was advised that—paper flowers, he called 'em—weren't in keeping. Would you advise me to take 'em out and put in real ones?"

"Oh," Sally answered quickly, "I can't advise you about that. Real ones would be more expensive to keep in order, but they would be better. Don't you think so yourself?" [349]

Mr. Gilfeather sighed. "These'll have to come out," he said sadly. "They'll have to come out, I guess. It's hard luck that I didn't think of asking before I got 'em. But I'm much obliged to you, Miss Ladue."

Sally nodded again and went out. The door had hardly shut behind her when the man who had been sipping his ale and reading his paper emerged from his corner hastily and put out after her. It was Eugene Spencer.

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[350]

CHAPTER XXIII

ToC

It was almost time for the theatres to be out. Indeed, the first few men were coming out of one, hurriedly putting on their coats as they came. As the doors swung open the beginnings of the subdued roar of a slowly moving crowd came out. A man and a girl who were walking briskly past heard it.

"Hurry, Jane!" exclaimed the girl anxiously. "I didn't know it was so late."

Jane muttered something about crowds, but it was nothing very articulate. To tell the truth, Jane was nervous and he did not know just what he was saying. Neither did Sally. She did not listen, for that matter, for she was wholly occupied with her errand. They quickened their pace until they were almost running, and the noise was gradually left behind. Neither of them spoke; and when they had turned the first corner they both sighed and the pace slackened to that brisk walk again.

Sally had not had to overcome her repugnance to asking Everett, and Mr. Gilfeather's feeling of triumph was a little premature. When Jane had overtaken her, a few steps from Mr. Gilfeather's door and had asked whether he could not help her, she had yielded to her impulse and had answered that he probably could if he would. And Jane had confessed, getting a little red,—who would not have got a little red, having to make such a confession to the girl he was in love with, even yet?—he had confessed that he was qualified sufficiently for the expedition, for he had been in number seven on two occasions, on the first of which he had played. But, he added, he had not lost much—fortunately for him, perhaps, he had not won—and he had had no desire to play again,

although he had felt some curiosity to see others do it. It was worth while, for once, to see that [351]
side of human nature. Sally began to tell him why she wanted to go, but he stopped her.

"I know, Sally," he said gently. "You don't have to tell me. I am glad to be of any assistance at all." And Sally had thanked him and had liked him better at that moment than she ever had before. It was a pity that Jane could not know that.

Two days later Harry Carling had telegraphed; and here they were, just turning the last corner and finding themselves in the Street. I don't give the name of the street for reasons which must be obvious enough, but, irrespective of the name, Sally's heart beat a little faster when they turned into it. Jane's heart would have beat faster if it had not already accelerated its beat quite as much as it could with safety. He was finding it in his mouth most of the time and had to swallow frequently and hard to keep it down where it belonged. As for speaking calmly and naturally, that was out of the question. That was enough to account for his prolonged silence. When he did make the attempt his voice was high and shrill and he hesitated and could not say what he wanted to.

It was a quiet street, entirely deserted at that end, and it was lined with dignified old houses which echoed the sound of their footfalls until their coming seemed the invasion of an army.

"Mercy!" Sally cried nervously, under her breath. "What a racket we're making!" And the sound of her voice reverberated from side to side. The army had begun to talk. That would never do. "Silence in the ranks!" thought Sally; and was surprised that her thought was not echoed, too. Jane began to laugh excitedly, but stopped at once.

The street was very respectable, anybody would have said; eminently respectable. It even seemed dignified. There is no doubt that there had been a time when it had been both respectable and dignified and had not contented itself with seeming so. The houses had been built at that time and presented their rather severe brick fronts to the street, giving an effect that [352]
was almost austere. They were absolutely without ornament, excepting, perhaps, in their inconspicuous but generous entrances. Altogether, Sally thought the effect was distinctly pleasing. She would have been glad to live in one of these houses; for example, in that one with the wide recessed doorway with the fan over it. It was dark now; dark as a pocket. Not a light showed at any of the windows, although a dim one—a very dim one—burned over the door. The people must be all in bed at this seasonable hour, like good custom-abiding people. There might have been a special curfew at nine o'clock for this special street.

"That is the house," whispered Jane, pointing with a hand which was not very steady to the very house that Sally had been contemplating with admiration. It was not light enough for Sally to note the shaking of his hand.

The announcement was a shock to Sally. "What?" she asked incredulously. "You don't mean the house with the dim light over the door—the one with the fan!" Jane nodded assent. "Why," Sally continued, "there isn't a light in the house, so far as I can see."

Jane laughed. His laugh echoed strangely and he stopped suddenly. "There are plenty of lights, just the same. What did you expect? A general illumination—with a band?"

"Something more than a dark house," she replied, smiling a little. "It looks as if they had all gone to bed."

He shook his head. "They haven't gone to bed." Their pace had slackened and had become no more than an aimless saunter. Now they stopped entirely, almost opposite the house.

"Well," said Sally inquiringly, "what now?"

Jane breathed a long sigh. "I—I suppose i—it's up to me," he replied hesitatingly, "to go in." He spoke with very evident regret; then he laughed shortly.

"Don't you want to?" asked Sally curiously.

"No, I don't, Sally," he rejoined decidedly. "I certainly don't. But I want to help you, and [353]
therefore I do. It would be hard to make you understand, perhaps, and—"

"I think I understand, Eugene," she interrupted gently, "and you needn't think that I'm not grateful."

"I don't feel as confident as I ought," he said apologetically, "that I shall be successful. What if Charlie won't come?"

"You can tell him," she replied firmly, "that I shall wait here until he does come. It isn't likely that I shall be put off the street."

Spencer did not feel so sure of that as he would have liked to feel, but he did not say so to Sally. "That brings up another question," he said. "Where shall you wait? And what will you do—in case I am longer than you expect? I confess that I am uneasy about you—waiting around the streets—alone."

"You needn't be," she returned. "Of course," she admitted, "it won't be pleasant. I don't expect it to be. But I shall be all right, I'm sure."

He sighed once more and looked at her. "I wish I felt as sure of it as you do. But I'll go in—or try to." He looked the street up and down. "You'd better get in the shadow, somewhere; well in the shadow. Their doorman has sharp eyes. That's what he's there for," he added in response to her questioning look. "Perhaps you'd better not be within view when I go in. We'll walk back a bit and I'll leave you there."

She assented and they walked back until they were out of sight from the door with the dim light burning over it. Then Spencer left her and walked rapidly toward the house. He looked back two or three times. She was standing just where he had left her: close beside a woebegone tree with an iron tree-guard around it. It was a forgotten relic of other days. Her motionless figure could hardly be distinguished from the tree as she leaned against the guard. He opened the outer door of the vestibule. A second dim light was burning here, just enabling him to see the push-button. With a heart palpitating somewhat and with that horrible, gone feeling in the region of his [354] diaphragm, he rang the bell. The outer door closed noiselessly behind him and two electric lights flashed out brilliantly before him. The inner door, which gave entrance to the house, was a massive thing, studded with iron bolts, like the gate of a castle; and at the level of his face was a little grated window or door of solid wood within the larger, iron-studded door. In response to his ring the inner door did not open, but the little grated window did, framing, behind iron bars, the impassive face of a gigantic negro, who scrutinized Spencer with the eye of experience and, having completed his inspection, nodded solemnly. The little grated window closed and the electric lights went out suddenly; and the door opened before him and closed again behind him, leaving everything in readiness for the next comer; and leaving Sally standing alone beside that woebegone tree without.

There was nothing unusual about the appearance of the house if we except the iron-studded door and its guardian. The negro, who was very large and very black, had resumed his seat upon a stool by the door. He glanced at Eugene without interest and immediately looked away again and seemed to resume his thoughts about nothing at all. Eugene glanced hastily about. The house might have served as a type of the modest dwellings of the older school. The doors from the lower hall were all shut and the rooms to which they led were empty, so far as he knew, or were used as storerooms, perhaps. Everything was very quiet and he and the gigantic negro might have been the only occupants of the house. Before him was the staircase and he roused himself and mounted to the floor above, walked a few steps along a hall exactly similar to the first, parted the heavy double hangings over a doorway, and entered.

He found himself in the front room of two which were connected by folding doors, which were now rolled back. The room in the rear was but dimly lighted, as no one seemed to be interested in the roulette table which stood there, although several men stood about the sideboard or were [355] coming or going. The top of that sideboard held a large variety of bottles and anybody present was at liberty to help himself to whatever he preferred; but, although there was a good deal of drinking, there was no drunkenness. Drinking to excess was not conducive to success in play; and the men, most of them, seemed to be regular patrons of the place. Eugene's gaze wandered back toward the front of the house.

To his right, as he entered, was the centre of interest. Indeed, it seemed to be the only point of interest. The windows had heavy double hangings before them, which accounted for Sally's impression of the house. Directly before these windows and taking up almost the whole width of the room stood a large table. About this table were seated a dozen men or more, old, middle-aged, and young, every one of them so intent on the play that they noticed nothing else. About the seated men, in turn, were other men, two or three deep, equally intent, standing and carefully noting upon large cards which they held every card that the dealer exposed from the box before him. I regret that I am unable to explain more fully the mysteries of this system of scoring. In some way, which I do not understand, this method of keeping score was supposed to give some clue to the way in which the cards were running on that particular night and to aid each scorer in the development of his "system," which, as the merest tyro knows, will inevitably break the bank sooner or later;—usually later. The house supplied the score cards. They found the method a very satisfactory one.

By this time Eugene's heart had almost ceased its palpitation and he could look about with some approach to calmness at the group around the table. Curiously, he scanned the faces of the players. At the turn of the table, to the right of the dealer, sat an elderly man, perhaps nearing sixty, with a singularly peaceful countenance. He won or lost with the same indifference, only putting up a hand, now and then, to stroke his white mustache and glancing, sympathetically, Spencer thought, at the only really young men playing. There were two of them who were hardly [356] more than boys, and this man seemed to be more interested in their play than in his own. At the dealer's left sat a man who might be anywhere from thirty-five to fifty, with a clean-shaven and handsome clean cut face. He looked as distinguished in his way as the elderly man of the white mustache and the peaceful countenance did in his. He smiled as quietly when he lost as when he won. Both men were very attractive and not the type of man you would expect to find in such a place. The other men there were not attractive. They were of no particular age and of no distinction whatever; the type of man that you pass on the street a hundred times a day without a second glance—if you have given the first. There was a perennial frown upon their foreheads and their lips were tightly closed and they were intent on nothing but their play. Altogether, the less said about those men, the better.

The first of the two young men mentioned was sitting at the turn of the table diagonally opposite the elderly man and nearest Eugene, so that his face was not visible. But his shoulders were expressive and he was beginning to fidget in his chair; and when, once or twice, he half turned his head Eugene could see the growing expression of disgust upon his face. As the young fellow looked more and more disgusted, the elderly man smiled the more and stroked his white mustache and gazed at him, to the neglect of his cards, and once in a while he glanced at the other young fellow.

That other young fellow, as we know, was Charlie Ladue. He sat directly opposite the dealer.

His face was flushed with the excitement of play, to which he was giving all his attention. Eugene could not see his eyes, which never wandered from the straight line in front of him, from his cards to the dealer; but he could imagine the feverish brightness that shone from them. He wondered how the dealer liked the constant contemplation of that sight; how it pleased him that he could not look up without encountering those eyes of Charlie Ladue fixed upon him.

The dealer seemed to like it well enough; he seemed to like it uncommonly well. Spencer [357]
transferred his gaze from Charlie to the dealer. There was nothing interesting about Charlie—to him, at least; nothing sad in his present situation except as it concerned Sally. The dealer was different, and Eugene found himself fascinated in watching him.

It was impossible to guess his age. He might have been anywhere from forty to sixty and must have been a handsome man when he was young—whenever that was. He was a good-looking man yet, but there was something sinister about him. His face was deeply lined, but not with the lines of age or pain or of contentment or good nature. The lines in a man's face will tell their story of his life to him who can read them. Insensibly, they tell their story to him who cannot read them. Eugene could not; but he felt the story and was at once fascinated and repelled. He could not take his eyes off that dealer's face; and the longer he looked the more strongly he was impressed with a vague recollection. It might be only of a dream, or of a dim resemblance to some one that he knew. He had the curious sense, which comes to all of us on occasion, of having lived that very moment in some previous incarnation, perhaps of knowing exactly what was going to happen next. Not that anything in particular did happen. I would not willingly raise expectations which must be disappointed.

The dealer had always seemed to look at Charlie Ladue with interest; with as much interest as he ever showed in anything—much more, indeed, than he showed in anything or in anybody else. Charlie himself had noted that, and although he never spoke,—at least, Charlie had never heard him utter a word beyond what were absolutely necessary to his duties,—there was something compelling in his eye which always met Charlie's look as it was raised slowly from his cards, as if there were some mysterious bond of fellowship between them. Rarely he had smiled. But that was a mistake. It always made Charlie wish that he hadn't. Charlie had not noticed, perhaps, that
it was always on the rare occasions when he won that the dealer had ventured upon that faint [358]
smile which was so disagreeable. When he lost, which happened more frequently,—very much more frequently,—the dealer expressed no emotion whatever, unless a slight compression of his thin lips could be called an expression of emotion.

There was a stir among the persons about the table; among those sitting and among those standing. The disgusted young fellow got up quickly and one of the scorers as quickly took the chair he had left. The boy breathed a deep sigh of relief as he passed close to Eugene.

"Hell!" he exclaimed under his breath. It was more to himself than to anybody else, although, catching Eugene's eye, he smiled. "They call that sport!"

The elderly man with the white mustache smiled peacefully and got up, too, and joined the boy.

"Had enough, Harry?"

Harry turned a face filled with disgust. "Enough!" he said. "I should think I had. It will last me all my life." He repressed his feelings with an effort. "Did you win, Uncle Don?"

"I'm sure I don't know," Uncle Don replied quietly. "I didn't keep track. Did you?"

"No, thank God!" he answered fervently. "I lost. And I feel as though I had nearly lost my self-respect, too. I want a Turkish bath."

"All right," returned his uncle quickly. "So do I. And I've no doubt that Frank does." He turned and beckoned to the man who had been sitting at the dealer's left. He had already risen and was standing behind his chair, idly watching the readjustment, and he came at once. "We're going to Ben's, Frank. Harry wants a bath."

"Good!" said Frank with his ready smile. "Something that will get right into your soul, eh, Harry? Come on, Don."

Uncle Don had turned for a last look at the players. "It was a somewhat dangerous
experiment," he remarked, "and one that I should never dare to try with that other boy there. He [359]
ought to be hauled out of the game by the collar and spanked and sent to bed without his dinner —to say nothing of baths. Well, we can't meddle. Come on." And Uncle Don took one of Harry's arms and Frank took the other and they went out.

Eugene was reminded of his duty. If he was to haul Charlie out of the game by the collar he must be quick about it. He wormed his way among the scorers and touched Charlie on the shoulder. Charlie started and looked up somewhat fearfully.

Spencer bent over him. "Come, Charlie," he said.

If either of them had noticed, they would have seen a faint flicker of interest in the eyes of the dealer. But they were not looking at the dealer. Charlie was relieved to see who it was. He had been afraid that it was some one else—the police, perhaps.

"Let me alone, Spencer," he replied disdainfully. "If you think that I'm coming now, you're greatly mistaken. In a couple of hours, perhaps."

Eugene bent farther over. "Sally's waiting for you outside." He spoke very low; it was scarcely more than a whisper. But the dealer must have heard, for the interest in his eyes was more than a flicker now.

In Charlie's eyes there was a momentary fear. It was but momentary.

He laughed nervously. "I hope she won't get tired of waiting." He shook his head. "I won't come now."

Eugene bent lower yet. "She told me to tell you that she should wait until you did."

The dealer was waiting for them. There was a flash of irritation in Charlie's eyes and he turned to the table. "Go to the devil!" he said.

There was a snicker from some of those seated about the table. Eugene reddened and drew back and the game went on.

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[360]

CHAPTER XXIV

ToC

It was a very lonely time that Sally had, standing there, leaning against the tree-guard and looking up and down the deserted street. The houses seemed to be all asleep or deserted as well as the street. She wondered idly what they were used for; then she thought that it was as well that she did not know, judging from the one of them that she did know about. What would the builders of those houses think if they could come back and see the uses to which their dignified old homes had been put?

She glanced up and down the street again. Yes, it seemed to be entirely deserted. She did not see the figure which lurked in the shadows on the other side. She had said that she would be all right; that she was not afraid. Well, she was not afraid, but she was getting just a bit nervous. She wished that Eugene would hurry with Charlie. She could not stand by that tree any longer anyway. She began to walk slowly up and down, watching the door out of which she expected Jane and Charlie to appear at any moment, and she wondered what she should say to Charlie. She had no set speech prepared. What was there to say that could possibly do any good? Probably she would say nothing at all and they would set off in silence, all three, to their hotel. She had other thoughts, too, but they need not concern us now. We are not thinking of Fox Sanderson and his silly speeches nor of Henrietta and her contentment; for she ought to be contented if ever a girl was. Sally's eyes filled with tears and her thoughts insensibly drifted away from Charlie and Jane as she paced slowly to and fro. And that lurking figure across the street was never very far away.

The sound of a door shutting reverberated after the manner of all sounds in that street and there were voices. Sally had turned at the sound of the door. Somebody was coming out of the [361] house and she hurried forward and stopped short. The figure on the other side of the street started forward and stopped short also. There were three men coming out, and the joyous voices were not Jane's and Charlie's. Their voices would not be joyous—if they spoke at all. The three men passed her, arm in arm, and they looked at her curiously as they passed and the hand of the oldest instinctively went to his hat. Sally saw that he was an elderly man with a pleasant face and that his mustache was snow-white. They had got but a few steps beyond when their pace slackened and this man seemed to hesitate. He looked back at her doubtfully. Then he sighed and the three resumed their brisk walk.

"No use," he said. "Can't meddle. I wish I could. No good comes of it."

Once more Sally took up her slow walk to and fro. She was glad that the three men had gone, but she was sorry, too. That elderly man had seemed kind and sympathetic and a gentleman; and he had come from that house. But that, Sally, was no recommendation. She knew that he had done the wise thing; or that he had not done the unwise thing, and probably he was right and no good came of meddling. And the sound of their steps died away as they turned a corner. Again Sally had the street to herself; Sally and the man lurking in the shadows. She found herself growing more and more oppressed with the sense of loneliness. If only somebody were there to wait with her! A quiet, out-of-the-way street, poorly lighted, is not the most exhilarating place for a girl at half-past eleven at night. If only Fox—

Somebody else had turned the corner and was coming toward her with a step that was neither brisk nor loitering; that seemed as if it knew just where it was going, but was in no unseemly haste to get there. Sally stopped and looked about for some place in which she might conceal herself. None offered better than her tree. As the step drew near she seemed to know it, and she shrank as nearly out of sight as she could. She had no invisible cap; she wished she had. [362]

The step which she knew stopped beside her. "Sally!" said a voice in unmistakable surprise. "Sally! What in the world are you doing here?"

Sally smiled as bravely as she could. "Nothing, Everett," she replied quietly. "Just waiting."

"Waiting?" he exclaimed. "For whom, may I ask?"

"For Charlie," she answered as quietly as before. "Jane has gone in to get him."

"Oh," said Everett coldly, "so Spencer has gone in to get him. To judge by appearances, he doesn't seem to make a success of it."

Sally shook her head. There did not seem to be anything else to say. Spencer didn't seem to be making much of a success of it.

"How long have you been waiting?"

"Two or three years," answered Sally, with a nervous laugh.

"You poor girl!" Everett exclaimed. "I was just going in to see if I couldn't get Charlie. It is curious how things happen." Sally smiled a little smile of amusement in spite of her nervousness. It *was* curious how things happened, when you came to think of it. "There isn't any use in your waiting any longer. It can't do any good, and it may be very unpleasant for you. Better let me take you to your hotel. Then I will come back. I may have as much success as Spencer, perhaps." And Everett began a little smile of his own; but, thinking that Sally might see it, he stopped before the smile was well born.

Sally shook her head again. "I told Eugene to tell Charlie that I should wait here until he came out. It isn't pleasant, but I shall wait."

"But, Sally," Everett remonstrated, "you don't understand. You—"

"I do understand," Sally interrupted. "I will take care of myself." She may not have realized how this would sound and how it would exasperate Everett. But perhaps she did realize. [363]

Everett only shrugged his shoulders and turned away. Sally was an obstinate piece.

"If you want to do me a kindness," she continued, "you will help to get Charlie out as soon as you can."

"As you like," he returned. "I will certainly do what I can to get Charlie out. That's what I am here for." Again Sally smiled her peculiar little smile. She couldn't help it. That Everett should think she would believe that! "But you had much better let me take you to your hotel first," he added, persuasively. "I will explain to Spencer."

"I will wait."

Everett was irritated and quite out of patience with her. He shrugged his shoulders again and started on.

"You are very good, Everett," Sally called softly. "Thank you, and good night."

He made no reply unless a perfunctory touch of his hat and an impatient mutter could be called a reply; and he was swallowed up by the doorway and admitted by the doorman with a familiar nod and a grin which it was as well, he thought, that Sally did not see. She would not have been surprised if she had seen.

Everett had hardly disappeared when the lurking figure left its post in the shadows and advanced toward Sally. She saw it and braced herself for the encounter. In the matter of encounters that lonely street was doing pretty well. For an instant she meditated flight, but instantly decided against it. The man must have known, from her attitude, what was passing in her mind, for he spoke when he was but halfway across.

"Sally," he said gently, "you needn't be frightened. It—"

Whereupon Sally behaved in a most peculiar and reprehensible manner. At the sound of the voice she had stiffened; but now she cast herself at the man and seized his arm with both her hands.

"Fox, Fox," she said, with a quiver in her voice, for she was very near to crying. "I'm glad. You [364]
are an old comfort. You don't know how lonely it was, waiting by myself. I thought I could stand it, but I don't know whether I could have held out much longer. The street was getting on my nerves."

"I know, Sally," he replied. "I was afraid it would. And now what is the prospect? Is Charlie likely to come soon? And shall we go to your hotel or wait?"

"I must wait. But—but, Fox, it would provoke Jane and Charlie, too, to find you here."

Fox laughed. "Then I will vanish at the first sign of them. But I should really like to know how your enterprise comes out. Do you mind telling me, Sally? And how shall we manage it without telling your mother? I suppose she doesn't know the purpose of your coming."

"Not from me, although she may guess. I'll come out, in a day or two, to call on you, sir. Shall you feel honored?"

"You know I shall, Sally. But how will you account for your call?"

"I shall come to collect the rent," returned Sally promptly, "if any excuse is necessary. Be sure that you have it ready. And I shall give you a faithful account of all that has transpired." She had Fox's arm and she gave it a little squeeze. It was a very little squeeze and very brief, but it made his heart jump. "It was lucky for me that you—" And then she stopped short, realizing that Fox would not have happened to be in that street, leading to nowhere, at that time.

"Don't you know," he asked simply, with a laugh of content, "that I always keep track of you? Did you think that you could come to such a place as this without my being somewhere about?"

Sally changed the subject quickly. It was an unspeakable comfort to her to know—but Fox must not pursue that subject now. Fox had no intention of pursuing that subject; and they walked slowly to and fro over what had been Sally's beat, talking of anything or of nothing. Sally was content; and again she forgot Charlie and Jane and her errand, and she became almost gay. [365] Those sombre old houses echoed quiet laughter, of a kind that they had not heard for goodness knows how many years, and low voices. Some more men came, singly, or in groups of two or three, and looked at them with curiosity. Sally hardly saw them. And the last group passed into the house and up the stairs and into the room where the table stood before the front windows and they stopped short at the sound of angry voices.

The game had stopped, for the moment, and the dealer was leaning back with his hand upon the pack, waiting. There was a look upon his face of languid interest under the mask of indifference, as he gazed at the young fellow opposite, his face flushed now with impotent rage, and at the man leaning over him. The face above was flushed with anger, too, but it was not impotent. If Sally had seen it she would have been reminded of her father. The sight seemed to remind the dealer of something, but it was impossible to guess whether that something was pleasant or otherwise. Many things had happened to him which were not pleasant to think of. Indeed, the pleasant things were very few. He did not think of his past when he could help it. It was a thing to be avoided.

"Come, Charlie," said Everett again, sharply. "You're to get up and go. We're all waiting."

Charlie seemed to be divided between his long admiration of Everett—of what he said and did and was—and his helpless anger. He wavered.

"You mean that I have got to leave the game?" he sputtered at last. "Why have I?" He hesitated a moment, looking from the cards to the dealer who still had that little look of languid interest upon his face. In fact, it was almost compelling a smile on the thin lips. Charlie could not have stood that. He looked away again quickly, but he did not look at Everett. He could not have stood that, either. "No," he said, with a sudden accession of courage, "I won't do it. The game can go on."

The dealer did not move a muscle. Everett smiled. "You see," he answered, "that it will not go [366] on with you in it. I'm right, Charlie?" he added, glancing up at the dealer; but it was less a question than a command.

The dealer nodded. Still Charlie Ladue did not move.

"Come, Ladue," Everett ordered impatiently. "Don't make them put you out. Cash in and go along. You know very well why. I promised to start you and I'm going to. And, let me tell you, I can do it."

There was nothing else to do. Charlie muttered something and rose slowly and pushed his chair back violently in a fit of childish anger. Instantly the chair was taken and the game was going on almost before he had his back turned. Everett kept close beside him until he had his coat and hat, and he even went down to the door with him. Eugene was waiting there, but he said nothing. He was much mortified at his complete failure and at Everett's complete success. The grinning black opened the door.

"Good night, Spencer," said Everett. "And good night, Charlie. If you take my advice, you'll give it up."

The door shut behind the two and Everett went upstairs again. He paid no attention to the game, but walked into the dimly lighted back room and to the sideboard. He felt out of sorts with himself and with everybody and everything else. He must be thirsty; and he poured himself out a glass and stood sipping it and looking absently at the heavily curtained windows at the rear. There did not happen to be anybody else at the sideboard.

He was still sipping with his back toward the front room and the game when he felt a touch upon his arm. He turned quickly. There stood the dealer.

"Hello, Charlie!" he said in some surprise. "Your recess? Do you want me to apologize for taking that young cub out and making all that row?"

The dealer shook his head. "That was right enough. I've been thinking about him for some—" He stopped short and swallowed—something; possibly a lump or something of the kind. But it is [367] not conceivable that such a man can have the more usual emotions of pity and charity. For they are the usual emotions, whatever you may say against it. If Everett had only known it, that was the very trouble with him. He had not been thirsty, primarily. His thirst was but a physical symptom of his mental state.

But I interrupted the dealer. He was speaking again. "I should like to ask you a question, Mr. Morton," he said.

"What is it, Charlie?" Everett felt but a passing interest in his question.

"I noticed that you called the young man Ladue."

"Did I? That was very thoughtless of me. I apologize."

The dealer did not smile, but went on, apparently pursuing his object, whatever that was. "And the other man spoke of Sally."

"Indeed! That was even more thoughtless."

"Charlie Ladue," the dealer continued in an even voice, "and Sally. It sounds as if Sally should

be his sister. Is she?"

Everett hesitated for a moment. After all, what harm? "Well, yes, she is his sister. Much disturbed at hearing of his doings. You and I, Charlie," he said lightly, "know better."

The dealer smiled faintly. For a wonder his faint smile was not unpleasant.

"Can you tell me," he pursued, "where Miss Sally Ladue is to be found—say, in the morning?"

Everett hesitated again and glanced at the man suspiciously. This was a more serious matter.

"Why do you ask? And, assuming that I know, why should I tell you, Charlie?" If it had not been that he still smarted under Sally's treatment of him, he would not have gone as far as that.

The old dealer with the lined face smiled slowly and with a certain cunning.

"Possibly I can answer both questions at once. Conceivably, I can satisfy you. I am her father."

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CHAPTER XXV

ToC

Sally and Eugene and Charlie had almost finished breakfast. It was a silent group; Eugene was quiet, for he had not got over the mortification at his miserable failure of the night before, and, besides, the very fact that he was eating breakfast with Sally was enough to make him quiet. Charlie was sulky and morose and penitent. There had been very little said, but that little had been to the point, and Charlie had pleaded *nolo contendere*, which, in this case, was equivalent to a plea of guilty; guilty of the offense as charged and guilty of obtaining money from Patty under false pretenses, although Sally could not find out how much. He would only say that it was not so very much; he could not remember exactly how much. And Sally had promised to give him a reasonable allowance if he would honestly try to keep within it and would give up his bad habits, which would be his unfailing ruin if he kept on. It might be necessary to take him out of college. He was to go home with them and the council of war would decide about that. Charlie seemed somewhat anxious about the composition of that council, although he did not seem to care very much whether he left college or not. As Sally had not decided upon that point, she did not gratify his curiosity. And Charlie had given the required promises. He had even promised more than was required of him, for he agreed to reform permanently. Sally had her doubts about its being permanent. She had seen too much of the effects of the "bug," as Horry Carling had called it. But she could not ask more, and she sighed and expressed herself as satisfied and they went in to breakfast. That incident was closed.

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Now she was leaning back in her chair, watching the others putting the finishing touches on a rather substantial breakfast. A call-boy was speaking to the head waiter; and that august official came with stately step to Sally's table.

"A gen'leman to see Miss Ladue," he announced privately in Sally's ear.

Sally looked up in surprise. "To see me?" she asked. "Are you sure? Who is it? Do you know?"

"He asked was Miss Ladue staying here, but he didn't give no card and he wouldn't give no name. I could say that you've gone or that we can't find you," the man suggested, "if you don't care to see him."

"Oh, no," said Sally, with a quick smile. "I'll see him. He may have come to tell me of a long-lost fortune. But," she added with a puzzled wonder, "I can't imagine who it can be."

Eugene got up, pushing aside his coffee. "Let me go, Sally."

Sally was already up. "Oh, no," she said again. "Thank you, Eugene, but you and Charlie may as well finish your breakfast in comfort. There's plenty of time before our train goes and I will join you in a few minutes. I'm only wondering who in the world it is and what he wants. Perhaps it's Everett."

A look of annoyance came into Spencer's eyes at the mention of Everett. Why couldn't he let them alone? But Sally was rapidly vanishing in the wake of the head waiter, who delivered her safely to the call-boy. At the door of a small reception room the boy paused, parted the hangings, and bowed Sally in.

As she entered, a man rose from a chair near the window and stood waiting. Although Sally could not see his face because of the light behind him, there was something vaguely familiar in his manner of rising from the chair and in his attitude. It troubled her.

"You wished to see me?" she asked, wondering why he did not come forward to meet her.

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"Miss Sallie Ladue?" he asked in return. Sally's hand went to her heart involuntarily; her mother's trick, exactly. The man seemed to be smiling, although Sally could not see that, either. "I want to make sure. It is sometime since—"

"Turn around to the light, so that I can see your face," Sally commanded. Her voice was hard and cold. It may have penetrated his armor. He turned obediently, giving a short laugh as he did so.

"My face may be a trifle the worse for wear since you have seen me," he remarked airily. "A trifle the worse for wear; which yours is not. Has anybody ever told you, Sally, that you have become a lovely woman? Or wouldn't you care for that tribute?"

"We will not discuss my appearance, if you please." Sally's voice was still hard and cold; like steel. She came around in front of him and scrutinized his face closely. There could be no possible doubt. "Well, father?"

"You don't seem glad to see me, Sally. After an absence of—er—a hundred years or so, one would think that you might be. But, I repeat, you don't seem glad to see me."

"No," said Sally quietly. "I'm not."

He laughed. His laugh was unpleasant. "Truthful as ever, I see. Wouldn't it be better to mask the truth a little, when it must be as disagreeable as it is now? To draw even a thin veil over it, so that it can be perceived dimly—dimly if unmistakably?"

Sally shook her head and she did not smile. "I see no object in it. What is your purpose in seeing me now? I do not doubt that you have a purpose. What is it?"

He seemed to find a certain pleasure in tantalizing her. "Aren't you curious to know how I found out your whereabouts?"

"I am not interested in that. Tell me your purpose."

"What other purpose could I have than to see my daughter after so many years? Is it permitted, my dear Sally, to ask after the health of your mother?"

"She is well; as well as can be expected. It is not your fault that she did not die years ago. She was four years getting over that trouble of hers. You laughed at her headaches, you remember. [371]
She was four years in Doctor Galen's sanitarium."

He waved his hand lightly, as of old. "A little misunderstanding, Sally, which I greatly regret. But four years of Doctor Galen! How did you manage to pay him?"

"That," replied Sally, "cannot possibly be any concern of yours."

"Ah, true. It is not any concern of mine. But is it not possible to see your mother? She is still my wife, I presume, and you are still my daughter."

"She is still your wife and I am your daughter. But you shall not see her if I can prevent it."

"And—I gather from the tenor of your remarks that you would resist any attempt at—er—reuniting a family long separated by circumstances."

Sally smiled disdainfully. "I am of age. As to my mother, I should resist. No court would compel it."

"Ah," he said, smiling, "how well you meet my points! You are of age, and no doubt you are right about the courts. There is no law that will prohibit my trying, I think. And Charlie is not of age, if my recollection serves me."

Before Sally could frame an answer, there was a slight noise in the hall and Charlie burst in. "I beg your pardon," he said hastily. The two were standing, and he had not recognized Sally. But an instant's gaze was enough. "Sally!" he exclaimed. He looked at the man. A wave of red rushed into his face. "Charlie!" he cried involuntarily. Then he recovered. "What are you doing here? What do you mean by coming to see my sister?"

Sally was inexpressibly distressed. She started to speak. She would have said something—told him the truth, of course—to save them both; but a quiet movement of her father's hand stopped her. He seemed to be waiting patiently for the next stone.

"Do you know, Sally," Charlie continued, "who this man is? He is the dealer in number seven. He has no right—no business to try to see you. I insist on his leaving at once." [372]

Sally spoke with surprising gentleness, considering her mode of speech to her father only a few minutes before. "We have some business, Charlie," she said. "He will go as soon as that is done. Now, leave us, please, to finish it, for we have not a great deal of time. It is all right."

And Charlie withdrew slowly, with many a glance from one to the other and many a misgiving as to the business which seemed to be of so private a nature. They heard his steps retreating down the hall.

Sally turned her shocked face to her father, "Won't you sit down?" she asked gently. "I am very sorry; sorrier than I can tell you—for—everything, but especially for that speech of Charlie's. But Charlie did not know."

"And I prefer that he shouldn't," her father replied. He had seated himself with his face half turned away from the light. "I have many hard things to bear, Sally, and, strange as it may seem to you, I try to bear them with patience. I have to, so why make a virtue of necessity? That speech of Charlie's—made in ignorance—was less hard for me than your own."

"I am sorry," Sally said again, "but I meant what I said, most emphatically. You are not to suppose that I didn't. But I am sorry for my manner—if it hurt you."

He smiled faintly. "It was not intended to soothe or to amuse, I take it," he remarked. And he

lapsed into silence, fingering his hat nervously and turning it around in his hands.

Sally sat gazing at the lined old face before her a long time without speaking. As she looked, her eyes softened even more and grew tender—and those eyes could be wonderfully tender. He bore her gaze as well as he could, but he was ill at ease. If the truth must be told, his mood had softened, too, and the very fact embarrassed him. Perhaps he remembered the days of the little lizard and the coal-trees and the occasions when the gynesaurus had climbed to the topmost [373] branch and gazed forth upon a wide prospect of tree-tops and swamps. It could not have been pleasant to recollect those days. For him, they were no more and could be never again. He was roused by Sally's low voice.

"Oh, father," she said impulsively, "why do you do it? Why can't you give it up? I could get your lizard for you. Why not return to your old life? You might do something yet. At least, it would be a comfort to be respectable."

He laughed at that. "No doubt it would," he observed, "be a great comfort to be respectable. And no doubt it would be a great comfort to you to have a respectable father; reformed; dragged from the depths." The tears came to Sally's eyes. "Does your programme," he asked then, nonchalantly, "include—er—reuniting a family long separated by circumstances? You may remember that I mentioned the matter once before."

She shook her head slowly and regretfully. "I'm afraid not. I couldn't consent to exposing mother to the—" She hesitated and stopped.

"The dangers incident to such an arrangement?" he suggested. "Pardon me for supplying what you were considerate enough to omit. Perhaps you are wise. And Charlie?"

"And Charlie." She nodded. "You see, yourself, that such a thing could not be—at any rate, until you have proved that you could do it."

"I couldn't," he answered promptly. "Don't think that I haven't tried. I have tried, repeatedly. I hate the life, but I can't give it up. But," he added, "you need not have been afraid for Charlie."

"I am very much afraid for Charlie," said Sally simply, "in any case. He is sick of it now. How long the present mood will last, I do not know. Could you manage that he is not allowed to play at —at your—"

He bowed gravely. "That can be arranged, I think."

"Thank you, father."

Once more there was silence between them. Finally he made a movement as if to go. "I was—I wanted—was curious to see how you had come out, Sally. That was the main reason for my [374] troubling you. If there were other reasons, they no longer exist. I—"

"Don't go yet, father," Sally interrupted. "I have more to say."

He sat down again and waited. She was considering—trying to consider the problem before her in every aspect. But she could not get the point of view of her father and Charlie, and she wanted to.

"Father," she resumed, "what *is* the attraction? I have been trying hard to get a sympathetic view of it and I can't. I can't see anything except what is sordid and repulsive. The life is—is not desirable—"

"Not very desirable," he broke in, with a horrible, dry laugh.

"And it can hardly be simply covetousness. If it is, you miss your mark. What I—"

"It is not covetousness. I may as well say that it is not a sin of covetousness," he corrected, "in deference to the generally received opinion. I have no desire to gloss over and to try to excuse by a form of words, although I, personally, am not convinced that it is a sin according to natural law. However, we need not discuss that aspect of it."

He waved that view aside with a familiar motion of his hand. How familiar they were—those little tricks of the hand and of the voice! They made Sally's eyes fill and a lump come in her throat. She raised her hand to her forehead and leaned upon it. It half concealed her eyes. She said nothing. The professor went on in his old lecture-room manner; a judicial manner.

"No, it is not a sin of covetousness, but simply a passion to which any man who is subject to it can't help giving way. It is a passion as old as humanity—perhaps older. There are no more inveterate gamblers than the savages. Possibly," he added, smiling, "my little lizard had it; possibly it goes back to those ancient days that you know about, Sally. It may be that the saurians had their own games of chance and their own stakes—and, I may add, their own methods of [375] enforcing payment. Indeed, their life was one great gamble. For that matter, life is no more than that now."

Sally made an inarticulate protest.

"As for getting the other man's money," the professor continued, unheeding, "that is merely incidental. We feel better, it's true, when we win, but that is for another reason. It has nothing to do with the game—keeping his money. The other man can keep his money—or, as far as the game is concerned, I would give it back to him—for all the happiness it brings him or would bring me. The distinction which I mean to draw is a little subtle, but I flatter myself that you can appreciate it."

He looked at her and she nodded. The tears still stood in her eyes.

"Happiness, Sally," he resumed, absently gazing at the wall, "is—but you probably do not care for my views on the subject of happiness," he said, interrupting himself and glancing at her with a smile. The smile was rather pleasant to contemplate; a thing sufficiently remarkable—for him. "Probably you think I am better qualified to tell you what it is not than what it is; how to avoid it than how to get it. I can give advice, but I cannot follow it."

Sally smiled quickly. "Your views are interesting," she said. She stirred a little. She did not know how he would take what she was about to say. "You would—would you feel hurt, father, if I should offer you an allowance?"

A quarter of an hour before, he would not have felt hurt or embarrassed in the least. In fact, that was the very thing he had come there for. At the moment, it was different. A flush crept into his face slowly.

"Why should I feel hurt?" His voice had changed. It had lost that intimate quality which it had had during the last few minutes, when he had been on the point of telling Sally about happiness. "It is Uncle John's money, I suppose? Why should I feel any compunctions about taking it? And— [376]
er—there are conditions incident to the acceptance of this—er—this gift, I suppose?"

"I'm afraid there are," she replied; "at least, tacitly understood."

He considered for a few moments. "I think," he said then, "that it will conduce to happiness, on the whole, if we are not too tacit about those conditions. What are they?"

"I hoped," she answered gently, "that you would not insist on my repeating them. You must understand, from what I have said, what they are."

"I prefer that they should be stated as conditions."

"Very well." Sally's voice was harder and colder. "As you like. You are not to take any steps whatever, even to reveal your existence to my mother and Charlie. Charlie is not to be allowed to play at your house—not to be allowed to enter it."

"But, Sally, I may be unable to prevent that," he protested. "The house is not mine. I am only—only an employé and an underling. I will do what I can, but there is no use in promising what I can't perform."

Sally smiled a little. It was something new for him to stick at promising.

"Those are the conditions which I must make in self-defense," she said.

"May I venture to ask what is offered on the other side?"

She made a rapid calculation. "The most that I can offer you is seven hundred a year. I'd like to make it a thousand; but I have mother and Charlie to take care of, and I must pay Patty what she had let him have—without my knowledge," she added apologetically. "I agree to send you sixty dollars a month on those conditions."

He was leaning back in his chair and spoke in his old manner, lightly.

"And if the conditions are violated?"

"The allowance stops," Sally replied promptly.

"And further?"

There was a suspicion of moisture again in Sally's eyes. "You make it unnecessarily hard, [377]
father," she said gently. "I shall act further if you compel me to." She was reminded of the time when she had asked his permission to go to dancing-school. Her feelings, she found, were much the same as they had been on that occasion. "I am ready to put it in writing if you wish."

"Oh, no," said the professor airily. "It is not necessary, Sally. Your word would be all that anybody could require; anybody who knew you."

"Thank you," she murmured. It was very low and he gave no sign of having heard it.

Again he was silent; then he turned to her. A smile of amusement curled his lip. "There is, at least, no question of sentiment in all this, is there, Sally?"

"Oh, I don't know," she murmured more gently than ever. She was not looking at him, but down at the arm of her chair. "There may be, but I must not let it interfere with my judgment—in this matter. There is mother to think of."

"Ah! I infer that your mother would not welcome an occasion for reuniting that family which I mentioned."

It was not a question and Sally said nothing. After a pause, the professor sighed and spoke again.

"I accept your munificent offer, Sally. There is nothing else to do."

It was his way—it had always been his way to put the giver in the wrong, by a simple turn of words; to make her feel as if it were he who was conferring the favor. Sally felt somehow guilty and apologetic.

"Will you give me your address?" she asked, diffidently—"the address to which you would like your money sent?"

He wrote on a slip of paper with an old stub of a pencil which he pulled from his pocket and handed her the paper. She read it and looked up at him quickly.

"Am I to make them out in this name?" she asked. "It is not—"

"It is not Ladue," he interrupted deliberately, but showing more emotion than he had shown hitherto. "Professor Charles Ladue, I would have you know, Sally, died about ten years ago, in extreme poverty and distress—of mind as well as of body." [378]

Sally's tears overflowed and dropped, unheeded. She put out her hand impulsively, and laid it upon his.

"Oh, father!" she whispered. "I am sorry."

"I believe you are," he said. He rose. "Now I will go back to obscurity. Don't be too sorry for me," he added quickly. "I cultivate it."

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CHAPTER XXVI

ToC

Mrs. Ladue asked no troublesome questions. Perhaps she thought that she had no need to; that she knew, as well as if she had been told, what Charlie had been doing. Sally had been to see about it, of course, and now it was all right, equally of course. Sally always remedied wrongs as well as anybody could and made them right again. It was a great comfort. And Mrs. Ladue sighed happily and smiled.

Sally thought the smile somewhat ill-timed, but she was glad enough that her mother felt like smiling. That smile exasperated her a little. She had just come back and the past twenty-four hours had been rather crowded. But her mother did not know that. And she was glad enough that her mother had not asked questions, for, if she had been asked, she would have lied, if necessary, for the first time in her life. Her mother did make a remark which, as Sally thought, showed that she knew. Sally had her hand on the door and was on the point of going out.

She turned. "Why, mother!" she exclaimed. "So you knew, all the time, what the trouble was!" She laughed in derision; at herself, chiefly. "And I took such pains to keep the truth from you!"

"I didn't know, Sally. I only guessed. It's what I have been afraid of for years—the first thing I should have looked for. What else could you expect, with his—"

She did not go on. Sally, fresh from that interview with her father,—it had happened only that morning,—was almost overcome by the memory of it.

"Why, Sally, dear!" cried her mother. "I didn't suppose you felt so. Don't, dear. It's nothing that we can help—the wanting to, I mean. And I'm sure you have done more than anybody else could."

Sally regained her self-control with an effort. "I don't feel so bad about Charlie. I've done all that I can—now. But it's rather taken it out of me," she added, with a nervous little laugh. [380]

"Of course, dear. I wish I were good for anything. I know," she said, laughing nervously, in her turn, "that I ought to feel troubled. But I can't, Sally, dear. As long as—" she hesitated and flushed. "I am rather ashamed to say it, but as long as—as your father hasn't turned up, I can't be anything but contented and happy. I find that I've had an absurd feeling—utterly absurd, dear, I know—that he was about to. It's only since you were on the way that that dread has left me and I've felt contented—so happy and contented. The change came with curious suddenness, about the time your train must have left."

Sally had turned away sharply. "I'm very glad, mother," she replied in a stifled little voice. "I'm glad you can feel so happy. There's no need to feel that dread any more, I think. I'm going out now. Don't be worried if I am late."

"Going to walk, Sally?" Mrs. Ladue asked diffidently. "You had better tell me what direction you will take—in case Fox comes in, you know. He always wants to know your direction if you are at all late."

"I'm going out to see him," Sally returned. "I promised to tell him about it."

If Sally had stopped to think of it at all she might have wondered why her mother seemed so glad that she was going to Fox's. But her mind was taken up with thoughts of her father, to the exclusion of everything and everybody else—but one, and Sally was not aware of the exception. Fox was the only person she was free to tell about her father and she was looking forward to it. When she had shared her knowledge—with somebody—it would be less of a burden. It never occurred to her that he might not be glad to know. Wasn't he always glad to know of anything which concerned her—anything at all? And as Sally thought these thoughts a vivid blush spread over her face and her throat. It was a pity that there was nobody to see it. [381]

Fox met her at the door. There was a questioning smile on his face as he took her hand. He led the way into his office and Sally sank into an armchair that stood by the table. Fox drew another chair near and sat down. Then he took a little slip of paper from his pocket and laid it by her

elbow.

"The rent," he said.

Sally laughed, but she let it lie there.

"Well?" Fox asked.

"Well!" She found that she had very little to say and that little did not come readily. "It is nice to get into a chair that is comfortable without swallowing you whole—as if it would never give you up." She patted an arm of the chair nervously. "I like these low arms."

"Yes," said Fox, "so do I. And—there is no hurry, Sally. Would you like to rest there—just sit and be comfortable for a while? You can have had very little real rest for some time and you must have had much to tire you. Just exactly as you please. I am entirely at your service—as I am always," he added, in a low voice. "I can be attending to my work, and you could begin whenever you were ready, or I will give my undivided attention now."

"Have you got work," Sally began hastily, "that—"

"Oh, there's no hurry about it." And Fox smiled quietly. "But there's enough to do. Routine, mostly."

"Could you do it with me here? Wouldn't you—"

"Couldn't I!" Fox smiled again. "It adds a great deal to my peace of mind to have you in the same room with me, even when you aren't saying anything. And peace of mind, Sally, is—"

"Yes, I know," said Sally, interrupting. "Well, let's try it. You go to your desk and work and I'll sit here and rest. And when the spirit moves me I'll speak."

So Fox went to his desk and Sally watched him as he became more and more absorbed; and, as she watched, there came a light into her eyes which had not been there before. Still she said [382] nothing; only leaned her head back against the chair and watched. Once he looked back at her and smiled. He almost caught that light—that look in her eyes, but Sally managed to quench it in time.

"Resting, Sally?" he asked.

She nodded and he turned back to his desk. The work did not seem difficult. Sally wondered, and in her wonder she forgot, for the moment.

"Couldn't I do that, Fox?"

"To be sure you could," he answered quickly, "if you only would. It isn't half as difficult as what you do at your office."

He had not looked around. Sally was glad of that, for she was blushing—at her own temerity, she told herself. Again there was silence in the room, except for the rustling of papers.

"Fox," said Sally, after five minutes of this, "what would you do with Charlie now? Would you send him back to college?"

He put his papers down and turned. "Does the spirit move you to talk now?"

Again she nodded. "I think so. The little rest has done me good. And I should like to have your advice."

He came to the chair near hers. "What happened after I left you last night?"

"Nothing in particular," she answered. "I don't remember that we said anything of consequence. I had a talk with Charlie, early this morning." She gave him the substance of it; if it could be said to have any substance. "This is the council of war," she added, smiling somewhat wearily, "that is to settle his fate."

Fox sat contemplating the wall. "It seems rather hard to say 'no' to your question," he said at last, slowly, "but I should be inclined to advise it. Have you any assurance—besides Charlie's promise, that is—that he will not return to his bad habits?"

"No, none of consequence. I am afraid he would. If—if he went into the office with me now, I [383] could keep an eye on him. That is," she amended rather hopelessly, "I could try to. Charlie would probably have no trouble in deceiving me if he tried to. I thought that Henrietta might be willing to help about him. She might be able to do more with him than I could."

"Of course she would be willing."

"She seems to have influence with Charlie and I should think she would be willing to use it for his good. I haven't any influence," she continued, "except through his fear of being found out. I don't know how it happened—that doesn't matter especially—but he doesn't trust me. I'm sorry, but that's the way it is." She sighed and looked away.

Fox did not like to have her look away. He much preferred to have those gray eyes look trustingly into his.

"You may be sure that it's through no fault of yours, Sally."

"Perhaps," Sally returned, looking back at him. "Perhaps, but I'm not so sure. Very likely it is my fault. At any rate, it can't be helped. That's the way it's gone." She stopped and seemed to be considering; wondering, perhaps, how she should have done. She could not have done differently, being herself. There was always, at the bottom of her heart, an utter contempt for—well, she would not complete that thought. And she sighed again and resumed. Fox had said nothing.

"If we kept him in college, there would be relapses,—inevitably, I think,—and I should only have to do this over again. Not that I should mind," she interrupted herself hastily, "if it would do any good. But every relapse would make it harder. There seems to be no escape. I think he'll have to come out. That, I understand, is the sense of the meeting?" She looked at Fox again, smiling whimsically.

"That is my advice," said he, "if I am privileged to give advice on the subject. I'm sorry to be seeming to take away his opportunities. His regret will grow as he grows older."

Sally shook her head. "He doesn't seem to have any regret." [384]

"He will have."

"He may. I should think he would. But it's his own fault and that's all there is to say about Charlie. I've done the best I could and I don't mean to worry about it any more. I'll have him come into the office to-morrow and I think he'll be glad to. It's a change, you know."

Sally looked at Fox and smiled again; but if there was anything humorous in her smile there was much more that was scornful.

"And now, Fox," Sally continued, very low—he could hardly hear the words—and looking away again, "I have something else to tell you. It is rather terrible, I think." Her voice was not steady and she stopped, trying to control it. She did not want to cry; she did not mean to. "I saw—" She choked, but went on bravely. "I saw my father this morning."

"What!" He cried in a voice as low as her own. The effect of her words was as great as she could have expected, if she thought of the effect at all. He put out his hand instinctively; but Sally withdrew hers. "Where, Sally?"

"He came to the hotel to see me." She spoke in a monotonous voice. She found that her only hope lay in using that voice. She might begin to cry at any moment. If she should—she was almost worn out and she was afraid. In that same monotonous voice she gave every detail of the interview. She did not omit anything. It was all burned into her memory. Fox did not speak. When she came to an end of her account she found that even her monotonous voice could not save her. She was perilously near to tears and her chin would quiver in spite of all that she could do.

"Sally! Sally!" said Fox tenderly. He saw her condition. "Don't tell me any more now if it distresses you."

"I may as well," she replied as well as she could. She smiled up at him, but her chin quivered more and more. "I may as well—now as well as another time. For—for I've got to tell you, Fox." [385] She looked at him imploringly. "I've got to tell somebody, and the somebody is always you." She smiled again tearfully, and looked away again. Fox could not stand many such smiles. He would—would do something, he did not know just what; but he sat gazing at her with infinite tenderness and pity, saying nothing.

"My father is employed in—in the house that we went to," she resumed at last; "the house where Charlie has been playing. He deals the cards—or something. He must have known!" Two tears fell into her lap. "To think that my father has fallen to that!—has fallen so low! And when Charlie said that to him," she cried desperately, "it almost b—broke my heart."

Her voice shook and suddenly she bowed her head upon her arms, which were resting on the table, and broke into a passion of tears; wild weeping, such as Fox had never known—had never supposed could come from her. She had always seemed so beautifully poised, so steady and so sturdy; like a rock, on which others built their foundations. But the rod had smitten her and the springs were unbound. He had a wild desire to take her in his arms.

But he didn't—then. He only murmured something meant to be comforting. God knew he wanted to comfort her; wanted to as he had never wanted anything in his life before. He would, if he only knew how. But the wild weeping had given way to a subdued sobbing.

"And—it—it alm—most b—broke my heart," she sobbed, "to re—refuse what he asked. B—but I had to do it. I h—had to do it, Fox. I c—couldn't do anything else." She caught her breath. She could not go on for a minute.

Only an inarticulate murmur came from Fox.

"Father was such a pathetic figure!" Sally went on a soon as she could speak. "Of course I know that he is not always so—that he is seldom so. There were mother and Charlie to think of. But it seemed so terrible! And he was so patient under Charlie's—treatment—his own father! I can't get him out of my—"

Her wild weeping, restrained for a moment, broke out again. [386]

"Sally!" Fox murmured, leaning forward and laying a hand upon her knee. "Sally, dear!"

There was a great distress and a great longing in his look, but Sally had her head down and she did not see it. But it was in his voice and she may have heard it. He rose impulsively from his chair and went to her quickly—it was only a step—and he sat on the arm of her chair and put his arm around her.

"Sally, dear!" he implored. "Don't cry so! Please don't."

She did not repulse him, as he had feared she would, gently, of course, but firmly; but she did not yield either. It was as if, for the moment, he was nothing to her—nothing more than a brother; not *her* brother, thank heaven! She only sobbed, there, for some minutes—in his arms. That was enough.

She became more quiet in time. She still had her head down upon one arm, but she was feeling up her sleeve and under her belt, searching for something.

"Forgive me, F—Fox," she said, "I didn't mean to do it, but I'm t—tired out and—and I can't find my handkerchief." She laughed a little hysterically. "Have you got one to l—lend me, Fox? I c—can't lift my head be—because I'm crying and I've cried all over your table and into your chair—"

"Drat the table! What do you suppose I care about it, Sally?"

"You—you ought to. I—it's a very pretty table."

"I value it only because it holds your tears." Fox was unfolding a handkerchief. It was a very large handkerchief. He put it into her seeking hand. "I remember another occasion when you had to borrow a handkerchief," he said. "Do you remember it, Sally?"

She nodded and began to mop her eyes. "Mercy! I—I didn't want a sheet, Fox," she said.

Fox smiled. "I didn't know. You might." His voice was not steady as he went on. "Sally," he [387]
whispered, "I—I want you. I want you!"

She gave another hysterical laugh. "Well," she cried, "anybody w—would th—think that y—you had me."

"Have I, Sally dear?" he asked, still in that low whisper. "Have I?" He bent over her neck. That was the only part of her that he could reach—that neck with its little tendrils of waving hair.

"Oh, don't!" she cried hastily. "Don't, Fox. You haven't got me—yet," she added in a whisper which was barely audible. But Fox heard it. "It—it isn't because—because you are sorry for me?" she asked in a very small voice.

"No," Fox was smiling again; but, as Sally had her eyes hidden, of course she did not see it. "I am sorry for you as I can be, but that isn't the reason. Guess again."

"Are you *sure*, Fox? *Very* sure?" she asked. "Say that you are, Fox," she whispered. "Can't you please say that you are?"

"I am sure."

"And it isn't be—because m—my father," the small voice asked again, "because my father is a —"

"No. That isn't the reason either. I'm quite sure, Sally."

Sally's head was still down on the table and she was wiping away her tears.

"But, Fox," she protested, "you ought not to, you know."

"I ought," he replied indignantly. "I ought to have done it long ago. Why not?"

Sally smiled at the table. "M—my father," she returned, not at all dismally, "would disgrace you —very likely. He's a d—"

He interrupted her. "I don't care what he is, Sally," he said softly. "I don't care about anything —but this."

"And my brother is a gambler," she went on, in a disgracefully happy voice, considering what she was saying,—"with not much hope that he will be anything else. I don't deceive myself."

"Only the greater reason," he said, more softly yet. "I want you, Sally." [388]

"Do you? After that?"

"You may believe it—dearest."

She gave a sudden, happy little cry. "Oh, I believe it. I want to believe it. I have wanted to for more than two years—ever—since the night of the fire." She lifted her head, the tears shining in her eyes; something else shining there. "Then I don't care for—for Margaret—or—or anybody else; or any—any—thing"—her voice sank to a whisper once more—"but you."

Sally raised her eyes slowly to his. They were shy eyes, and very tender. And Fox looked into their depths and saw—but what he saw concerns only him and Sally. He seemed satisfied with what he saw. He held her closer. Sally's eyes filled slowly and overflowed at last, and she shut them.

"I'm crying because I'm so happy," she whispered.

Fox bent and kissed her. "I don't care for Margaret or for anybody else but you," he murmured, "and I never have cared for anybody else. I don't know what you mean. Who is Margaret?"

Sally opened her eyes. "You don't know?" she asked in surprise.

"I don't know. You have spoken of her before—as if I ought to know all about her. Who is she and why must I know about her?"

She did not answer at once. Her eyes were deep and shining and, her eyes searching his, she put up her arms—slowly—slowly—about his neck. "Oh, Fox, dear!" she cried softly. "Oh, Fox, dear! And you don't know!"

She laughed low and happily. Then she drew his head down—it came readily enough—

When Sally emerged, a minute or two later, she was blushing. She seemed burning up. She hid her burning cheeks in Fox's shoulder.

"Fox," she murmured from her hiding place, "don't you remember Margaret Savage?"

"Oh, yes," he answered quite cheerfully. "She is very pretty now—very attractive to the young men—but she's as much of a fool as ever." [389]

Sally laughed again. "And Henrietta told me," she said, "that you might succumb. So you see that, when you spoke of getting married—"

"Why, I meant you, all the time."

"Ye—es, but I didn't know that—and—and I thought that you meant Margaret and—and Henrietta's remarks set me to thinking and then—then, pretty soon, I knew that—that I loved you, Fox, and I was very unhappy. Oh, Fox, I *was* unhappy!"

"I'm sorry, darling. I'm very sorry. Sally!"

She looked up at him and, as she looked, the red once more mounted slowly, flooding her throat and then her cheeks. Again she put her arms up and drew his head down.

The crimson flood had left her face and there was in it only a lovely color as she lay back in his arms. "Don't you love me, Fox?"

He laughed. "Love you! Love you! I should think it was—"

"Then," she asked, "why don't you say so, sir? You haven't said so yet—not once." His arms tightened about her. "Close, Fox, dear!" she whispered. "Hold me closer. I don't want to get away, ever."

It was getting late when they finally stood at a window from which they could see the little cream-colored house—they had got as far as that—and the grove behind it.

"I want to open that house," Fox was saying. "I want to live in it."

"*I* want to live in it," Sally said.

"But," he returned quickly, "you know what must happen first. How soon, Sally?"

"Just as soon as ever I can manage it, dear. You may depend upon that. And now I must go. I'm disgracefully late, even now."

She hastily rearranged her hair, which, strangely enough, was much disordered, and she put on her hat. Then she stood before him. [390]

"Now, don't you be troubled about your father, Sally, or about Charlie, or anything. We will take care of those troubles together."

"As if you hadn't always tried to take those troubles off my shoulders!" She raised her radiant eyes to his. "If this is what you meant by 'paying in kind,' you shall be paid, Fox. Oh, you *shall* be paid. And, dear, nothing troubles me now. Do you understand? *Nothing*. Now I must run. Don't come with me. People couldn't help noticing something. Good night."

Once more she kissed him, and she was gone, walking buoyantly and turning more than once to wave to him. Fox's eyes were wet as he watched her.

"Bless you, Sally! God go with you!"

God go with you, Sally!

THE END

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Typographical errors corrected in text:

Page 209: minature replaced with miniature
Page 361: "and and" replaced with "and"
Page 361: "in which the might conceal herself" replaced with "in which she might conceal herself"
Page 363: persusasively replaced with persuasively
Page 372: embarassed replaced with embarrassed

Page 379: enought replaced with enough
Page 383: "You may sure" replaced with "You may be sure"

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