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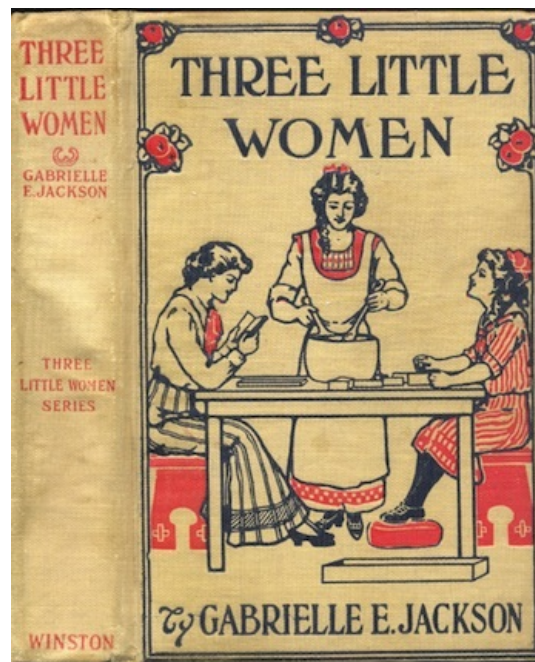
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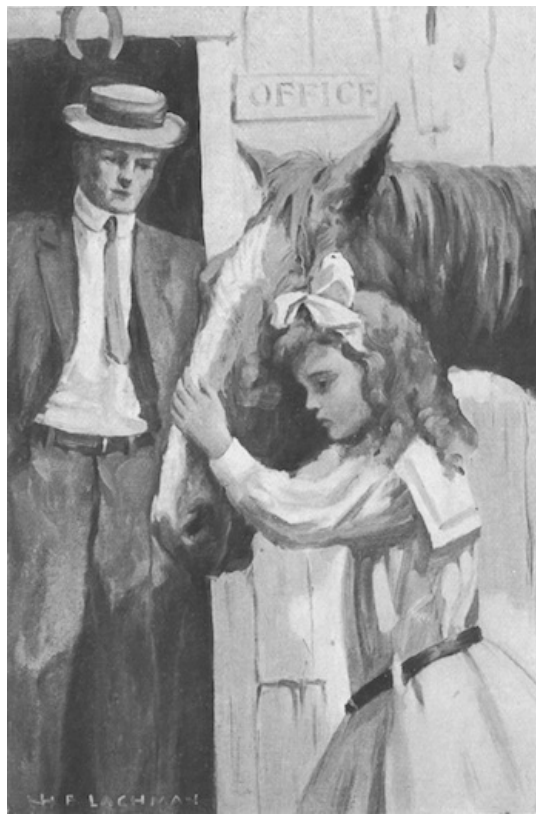
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"Good-bye, Baltie, dear"

Three Little Women, A Story for Girls

Gabrielle E. Jackson

1913

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[CHAPTER I—The Carruths](#)

The afternoon was a wild one. All day driving sheets of rain had swept along the streets of Riveredge, hurled against windowpanes by fierce gusts of wind, or dashed in miniature rivers across piazzas. At noon it seemed as though the wind meant to change to the westward and the clouds break, but the promise of better weather had failed, and although the rain now fell only fitfully in drenching showers, and one could "run between the drops" the wind still blustered and fumed, tossing the wayfarers about, and tearing from the trees what foliage the rain had spared, to hurl it to the ground in sodden masses. It was more like a late November than a late September day, and had a depressing effect upon everybody.

"I want to go out; I want to go out; I want to go out, *out*, *OUT!*" cried little Jean Carruth, pressing her face against the window-pane until from the outside her nose appeared like a bit of white paper stuck fast to the glass.

"If you do you'll get wet, *wet*, *WET*, as sop, *sop*, *SOP*, and then mother'll ask what *we* were about to let you," said a laughing voice from the farther side of the room, where Constance, her sister, nearly five years her senior, was busily engaged in trimming a hat, holding it from her to get the effect of a fascinating bow she had just pinned upon one side.

"But I haven't a single thing to do. All my lessons for Monday are finished; I'm tired of stories; I'm tired of fancy work, and I'm tired of—*everything* and I want to go *out*," ended the woe-begone voice in rapid crescendo.

"Do you think it would hurt her to go, Eleanor?" asked Constance, turning toward a girl who sat at a pretty desk, her elbows resting upon it and her hands propping her chin as she pored over a copy of the French Revolution, but who failed to take the least notice of the question.

Constance made a funny face and repeated it. She might as well have kept silent for all the impression it made, and with a resigned nod toward Jean she resumed her millinery work.

But too much depended upon the reply for Jean Carruth to accept the situation so mildly. Murmuring softly, "You wait a minute," she slipped noiselessly across the room and out into the broad hall beyond. Upon a deep window-seat stood a papier-mâché megaphone. Placing it to her lips, her eyes dancing with mischief above its rim, she bellowed:

"Eleanor Maxwell Carruth, do you think it would hurt me to go out now?"

The effect was electrical. Bounding from her chair with sufficient alacrity to send the French Revolution crashing upon the floor, Eleanor Carruth clapped both hands over her ears, as she cried:

"Jean, you little imp of mischief!"

"Well, I wanted to make you hear me," answered that young lady complacently. "Constance had spoken to you twice but you'd gone to France and couldn't hear her, so I thought maybe the megaphone would reach across the Atlantic Ocean, and it *did*. Now can I go out?"

"*Can* you or may you? which do you mean," asked the eldest sister somewhat sententiously.

Constance laughed softly in her corner.

"O, fiddlesticks on your old English! I get enough of it five days in a week without having to take a dose of it Saturday afternoon too. I know well enough that I *can* go out, but whether you'll say yes is another question, and I want to," and Jean puckered up her small pug-nose at her sister.

"What a spunky little body it is," said the latter, laughing in spite of herself, for Jean, the ten-year-old baby of the family was already proving that she was likely to be a very lively offspring of the Carruth stock.

"And where are you minded to stroll on this charming afternoon when everybody else is glad to sit in a snug room and take a Saturday rest?"

"Mother isn't taking hers," was the prompt retort. "She's down helping pack the boxes that are to go to that girls' college out in Iowa. She went in all the rain right after luncheon, and I guess if *she* can go out while it poured 'cats and dogs,' I can when—when—when—well it doesn't even pour *cats*. It's almost stopped raining."

"Where *do* you get hold of those awful expressions, Jean? Whoever heard of 'cats and dogs' pouring down? What *am* I to do with you? I declare I feel responsible for your development and —"

"Then let me go *out*. I need some fresh air to develop in: my lungs don't pump worth a cent in this stuffy place. It's hot enough to roast a pig with those logs blazing in the fire-place. I don't see how you stand it."

"Go get your rubber boots and rain coat," said Eleanor resignedly. "You're half duck, I firmly believe, and never so happy as when you're splashing through puddles. Thank goodness your skirts are still short, and you can't very well get *them* sloppy; and your boots will keep your legs dry unless you try wading up to your hips. But where are you going?"

"I'm going down to Amy Fletcher's to see how Bunny is. He got hurt yesterday and it's made him dreadfully sick," answered Jean, as she struggled with her rubber boots, growing red in the face as she tugged at them. In five minutes she was equipped to do battle with almost any storm, and with a "Good bye! I'll be back pretty soon, and then I'll have enough fresh air to keep me in fine shape for the night," out she flew, banging the front door behind her.

Eleanor watched the lively little figure as it went skipping down the street, a street which was always called a beautiful one, although now wet and sodden with the rain, for Mr. Carruth had built his home in a most attractive part of the delightful town of Riveredge. Maybe you won't find it on the map by that name, but it's *there* just the same, and quite as attractive to-day as it was several years ago.

Bernard Carruth had been a man of refined taste and possessed a keen appreciation of all that was beautiful, so it was not surprising that he should have chosen Riveredge when deciding upon a place for his home. Situated as it was on the banks of the splendid stream which had suggested its name, the town boasted unusual attractions, and drew to it an element which soon assured its development in the most satisfactory manner. It became noted for its beautiful homes, its cultured people and its delightful social life.

Among the prettiest of its homes was Bernard Carruth's. It stood but a short way from the river's bank, was built almost entirely of cobble-stones, oiled shingles being used where the stones were not practicable.

It was made up of quaint turns and unexpected corners, although not a single inch of space, or the shape of a room was sacrificed to the oddity of the architecture. It was not a very large house nor yet a very small one, but as Mr. Carruth said when all was completed, the house sensibly and artistically furnished, and his family comfortably installed therein:

"It is big enough for the big girl, our three little girls and their old daddy, and so what more can be asked? Only that the good Lord will spare us to each other to enjoy it."

This was when Jean was but a little more than two years of age, and for five years they *did* enjoy it as only a closely united family can enjoy a charming home. Then one of Mr. Carruth's college chums got into serious financial difficulties and Bernard Carruth indorsed heavily for him.

The sequel was the same wretched old story repeated: Ruin overtook the friend, and Bernard Carruth's substance was swept into the maelstrom which swallowed up everything. He never recovered from the blow, or false representations which led to it, learning unhappily, when the mischief was done, how sorely he had been betrayed, and within eighteen months from the date of indorsing his friend's paper he was laid away in pretty Brookside Cemetery, leaving his wife and three daughters to face the world upon a very limited income. This was a little more than two years before the opening of this story. Little Jean was now ten and a half, Constance fifteen and Eleanor, the eldest, nearly seventeen, although many judged her to be older, owing to her quiet, reserved manner and studious habits, for Eleanor was, undoubtedly, "the brainy member of the family," as Constance put it.

She was a pupil in the Riveredge Seminary, and would graduate the following June; a privilege made possible by an aunt's generosity, since Mrs. Carruth had been left with little more than her home, which Mr. Carruth had given her as soon as it was completed, and the interest upon his life insurance which amounted to less than fifteen hundred a year; a small sum upon which to keep up the home, provide for and educate three daughters.

Constance was now a pupil at the Riveredge High School and Jean at the grammar school. Both had been seminary pupils prior to Mr. Carruth's death, but expenses had to be curtailed at once.

Constance was the domestic body of the household; prettiest of the three, sunshiny, happy, resourceful, she faced the family's altered position bravely, giving up the advantages and delights of the seminary without a murmur and contributing to her mother's peace of mind to a degree she little guessed by taking the most optimistic view of the situation and meeting altered conditions with a laugh and a song, and the assurance that "*some* day she was going to make her fortune and set 'em all up in fine shape once more." She got her sanguine disposition from her mother who never looked upon the dull side of the clouds, although it was often a hard matter to win around to their shiny side.

Eleanor was quite unlike her; indeed, Eleanor did not resemble either her father or mother, for Mr. Carruth had been a most genial, warm-hearted man, and unselfish to the last degree. Eleanor was very reserved, inclined to keep her affairs to herself, and extremely matured for her years, finding her relaxation and recreation in a manner which the average girl of her age would have considered tasks.

Jean was a bunch of nervous impulses, and no one ever knew where the madcap would bounce up next. She was a beautiful child with a mop of wavy reddish-brown hair falling in the softest curls about face and shoulders; eyes that shone lustrous and lambent as twin stars beneath their delicately arched brows, and regarded you with a steadfast interest as though they meant to look straight through you, and separate truth from falsehood. A mouth that was a whimsical combination of fun and resolution. A nose that could pucker disdainfully on provocation, and it

never needed a greater than its owner's doubt of the sincerity of the person addressing her.

This is the small person skipping along the pretty Riveredge street toward the more sparsely settled northern end of the town, hopping *not from* dry spot to dry spot *between* the puddles, but *into* and *into* the deepest to be found. Amy Fletcher's home was one of the largest in the outskirts of Riveredge and its grounds the most beautiful. Between it and Riveredge stood an old stone house owned and occupied by a family named Raulsbury; a family noted for its parsimony and narrow outlook upon life in general. Broad open fields lay between this house and the Fletcher place which was some distance beyond. In many places the fences were broken; at one point the field was a good deal higher than the road it bordered and a deep gully lay between it and the sidewalk.

When Jean reached that point of her moist, breezy walk she stopped short. In the mud of the gully, drenched, cold and shivering lay an old, blind bay horse. He had stumbled into it, and was too feeble to get out.

CHAPTER II—"Baltie"

"When he's forsaken
Withered and shaken
What can an old *horse*
Do but die?"

(With apologies to Tom Hood.)

For one moment Jean stood petrified, too overcome by the sight to stir or speak, then with a low, pitying cry of:

"Oh, Baltie, Baltie! How came you there?" the child tossed her umbrella aside and scrambled down into the ditch, the water which stood in it splashing and flying all over her, as she hastened toward the prone horse.

At the sound of her voice the poor creature raised his head which had been drooping forward upon his bent-up knees, turned his sightless eyes toward her and tried to nicker, but succeeded only in making a quavering, shivering sound.

"Oh, Baltie, dear, dear Baltie, how did you get out of your stable and come way off here?" cried the girl taking the pathetic old head into her arms, and drawing it to her breast regardless of the mud with which it was thickly plastered. "You got out of the field through that broken place in the fence up there didn't you dear? And you must have tumbled right straight down the bank into this ditch, 'cause you're all splashed over with mud, poor, poor Baltie. And your legs are all cut and bleeding too. Oh, how long have you been here? You couldn't see where you were going, could you? You poor, dear thing. Oh, what shall I do for you? What shall I? If I could only help you up," and the dauntless little body tugged with all her might and main to raise the fallen animal. She might as well have striven to raise Gibraltar, for, even though the horse strove to get upon his feet, he was far too weak and exhausted to do so, and again dropped heavily to the ground, nearly over-setting his intrepid little friend as he sank down.

Jean was in despair. What *should* she do? To go on to her friend Amy's and leave the old horse to the chance of someone else's tender mercies never entered her head, and had any one been near at hand to suggest that solution of the problem he would have promptly found himself in the midst of a small tornado of righteous wrath. No, here lay misery incarnate right before her eyes and, of course, she must instantly set about relieving it. But how?

"Baltie," or Old Baltimore, as the horse was called, belonged to the Raulsbury's. Everybody within a radius of twenty miles knew him; knew also that the family had brought him to the place when they came there from the suburbs of Baltimore more than twenty years ago. Brought him a high-stepping, fiery, thoroughbred colt which was the admiration and envy of all Riveredge. John Raulsbury, the grandfather, was his owner then, and drove him until his death, when "Baltimore" was seventeen years old; even that was an advanced age for a horse. From the moment of Grandfather Raulsbury's death Baltimore began to fail and lose his high spirits. Some people insisted that he was grieving for the friend of his colt-hood and the heyday of life, but Jabe Raulsbury, the son, said "the horse was gettin' played out. What could ye expect when he was more'n seventeen years old?"

So Baltimore became "Old Baltie," and his fate the plow, the dirt cart, the farm wagon. His box-stall, fine grooming, and fine harness were things of the past. "The barn shed's good 'nough fer such an old skate's he's gettin' ter be," said Jabe, and Jabe's son, a shiftless nonentity, agreed with him.

So that was blue-blooded Baltie's fate, but even such misfortune failed to break his spirit, and now and again, while plodding hopelessly along the road, dragging the heavy farm wagon, he would raise his head, prick up his ears, and plunge ahead, forgetful of his twenty years, when he heard a speedy step behind him. But, alas! his sudden sprint always came to a most humiliating

end, for his strength had failed rapidly during the past few years, and the eyes, once so alert and full of fire, were sadly clouded, making steps very uncertain. An ugly stumble usually ended in a cruel jerk upon the still sensitive mouth and poor old Baltie was reduced to the humiliating plod once more.

Yet, through it all he retained his sweet, high-bred disposition, accepting his altered circumstances like the gentleman he was, and never retaliating upon those who so misused him. During his twenty-third year he became totally blind, and when rheumatism, the outcome of the lack of proper stabling and care, added to his miseries, poor Baltie was almost turned adrift; the shed was there, to be sure, and when he had time to think about it, Jabe dumped some feed into the manger and threw a bundle of straw upon the floor. But for the greater part of the time Baltie had to shift for himself as best he could.

During the past summer he had been the talk of an indignant town, and more than one threatening word had been spoken regarding the man's treatment of the poor old horse.

For a moment the little girl stood in deep, perplexing thought, then suddenly her face lighted up and her expressive eyes sparkled with the thoughts which lay behind them.

"I know what I'll do, Baltie: I'll go straight up to Jabe Raulsbury's and *make* him come down and take care of you. Good-bye, dear; I won't be any time at all 'cause I'll go right across the fields," and giving the horse a final encouraging stroke, she caught up her umbrella which had meantime been resting handle uppermost up in a mud-puddle, and scrambling up the bank which had been poor Baltie's undoing, disappeared beneath the tumble-down fence and was off across the pasture heedless of all obstacles.

Jabe Raulsbury's farm had once been part of Riveredge, but one by one his broad acres had been sold so that now only a small section of the original farmstead remained to him, and this was a constant eyesore to his neighbors, owing to its neglected condition, for beautiful homes had been erected all about it upon the acres he had sold at such a large profit. Several good offers had been made him for his property by those who would gladly have bought the land simply to have improved their own places and thus add to the attraction of that section of Riveredge. But no; not another foot of his farm would Jabe Raulsbury sell, and if ever dog-in-the-manger was fully demonstrated it was by this parsimonious irascible man whom no one respected and many heartily despised.

This wild, wet afternoon he was seated upon a stool just within the shelter of his barn sorting over a pile of turnips which lay upon the floor near him. He was not an attractive figure, to say the least, as he bent over the work. Cadaverous, simply because he was too parsimonious to provide sufficient nourishing food to meet the demands of such a huge body. Unkempt, grizzled auburn hair and grizzled auburn beard, the latter sparse enough to disclose the sinister mouth. Eyes about the color of green gooseberries and with about as much expression.

As he sat there tossing into the baskets before him the sorted-out turnips, he became aware of rapidly approaching footsteps, and raised his head just as a small figure came hurrying around the corner of the barn, for the scramble up the steep bank, and rapid walk across the wet pastures, had set Jean's heart a-beating, and that, coupled with her indignation, caused her to pant. She had gone first to the house, but had there learned from Mrs. Raulsbury, a timid, nervous, woefully-dominated individual, who looked and acted as though she scarcely dared call her soul her own, that "Jabe was down yonder in the far-barn sortin' turnips." So down to the "far-barn" went Jean.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Raulsbury," she began, her heart, it must be confessed, adding, rather than lessening its number of beats, at confronting the forbidding expression of the individual with whom she was passing the time of day.

"Huh!" grunted Jabe Raulsbury, giving her one searching look from between his narrowing eyelids, and then resuming his work. Most children would have been discouraged and dropped the conversation then and there. Jean's lips took on a firmer curve.

"I guess after all it *isn't* a good afternoon, is it? It is a pretty wet, horrid one, and not a very nice one to be out in, is it?"

"Wul, why don't ye go home then?" was the gruff retort.

"Because I have an important matter to 'tend to. I was on my way to visit Amy Fletcher; her cat is sick! he was hurt dreadfully yesterday; she thinks somebody must have tried to shoot him and missed him, for his shoulder is all torn. If anybody *did* do such a thing to Bunny they'd ought to be ashamed of it, for he's a dear. If I knew who had done it I'd—I'd—."

"Wal, what *would* ye do to 'em, heh?" and a wicked, tantalizing grin overspread Jabe Raulsbury's face.

"Do? Do? I believe I'd scratch his eyes out; I'd hate him so, for being so cruel!" was the fiery, unexpected reply.

"Do tell! Would ye now, really? Mebbe it's jist as well fer him that ye don't know the feller that

did it then," remarked Raulsbury, although he gave a slight hitch to the stool upon which he was sitting as he said it, thus widening the space between them.

"Well I believe I *would*, for I *despise* a coward, and only a coward could do such a thing."

"Huh," was the response to this statement. Then silence for a moment was broken by the man who asked:

"Wal, why don't ye go along an' see if the cat's kilt. It aint *here*."

"No, I know *that*, but I have found something more important to 'tend to, and that's why I came up here, and it's something you ought to know about too: Old Baltie has tumbled down the bank at the place in the pasture where the fence is broken, and is in the ditch. I don't know how long he's been there, but he's all wet, and muddy and shivery and he can't get up. I came up to tell you, so's you could get a man to help you and go right down and get him out. I tried, but I wasn't strong enough, but he'll die if you don't go quick."

Jean's eyes shone and her cheeks were flushed from excitement as she described Baltie's plight, and paused only because breath failed her.

"Wal, 'spose he does; what then? What good is he to anybody? He's most twenty-five year old an' clear played-out. He'd better die; it's the best thing could happen."

The shifty eyes had not rested upon the child while the man was speaking, but some powerful magnetism drew and held them to her deep blazing ones as the last word fell from his lips. He tried to withdraw them, ejected a mouthful of tobacco juice at one particular spot which from appearances had been so favored many times before, drew his hand across his mouth and then gave a self-conscious, snickering laugh.

"I don't believe you understood what I said, did you?" asked Jean quietly. "I'm sure you didn't."

"Oh yis I did. Ye said old Baltie was down in the ditch yonder and like ter die if I didn't git him out. Wal, that's jist 'zactly what I want him *to* do, an' jist 'zactly what I turned him out inter that field fer him ter do, an' jist 'zactly what I hope he *will* do 'fore morning. He's got the last ounce o' fodder I'm ever a'goin' ter give him, an' I aint never a'goin' ter let him inter my barns agin. Now put *that* in yer pipe an' smoke it, an' then git out durned quick."

Jabe Raulsbury had partially risen from his stool as he concluded this creditable tirade, and one hand was raised threateningly toward the little figure standing with her dripping umbrella just within the threshold of the barn door.

That the burly figure did not rise entirely, and that his hand remained suspended without the threatened blow falling can perhaps best be explained by the fact that the child before him never flinched, and that the scorn upon her face was so intense that it could be felt.

CHAPTER III—The Spirit of Mad Anthony

Jean Carruth stood thus for about one minute absolutely rigid, her face the color of chalk and her eyes blazing. Then several things happened with extreme expedition. The position of the closed umbrella in her hands reversed with lightning-like rapidity; one quick step *forward*, *not* backward, was made, thus giving the intrepid little body a firmer foothold, and then crash! down came the gun-metal handle across Jabe Raulsbury's ample-sized nasal appendage.

The blow, with such small arms to launch it, was not of necessity a very powerful one, but it was the suddenness of the onslaught which rendered it effective, for not one sound had issued from the child's set lips as she delivered it, and Jabe's position placed him at a decided disadvantage.

He resumed his seat with considerable emphasis, and clapping his hand to his injured feature, bellowed in the voice of an injured bull:

"You—you—you little devil! You—you, let me get hold of you!"

But Jean did not obey the command or pause to learn the result of her deed. With a storm of the wildest sobs she turned and fled from the barnyard, down the driveway leading to the road, and back to the spot where she had left Baltie in his misery, her tears nearly blinding her, and her indignation almost strangling her; back to the poor old horse, so sorely in need of human pity and aid.

This, all unknown to his little champion, had already reached him, for hardly had Jean disappeared beneath the tumble-down fence, than a vehicle came bowling along the highway driven by no less a personage than Hadyn Stuyvesant, lately elected president of the local branch of the S. P. C. A. Poor old Baltie's days of misery had come to an end, for here was the authority either to compel his care or to mercifully release him from his sufferings.

Perhaps not more than twenty minutes had elapsed from the time Jean started across the fields,

to the moment of her return to the old horse, but in those twenty minutes Mr. Stuyvesant had secured aid from Mr. Fletcher's place, and when Jean came hurrying upon the scene, her sobs still rendering breathing difficult, and her troubled little face bathed in tears, she found three men standing near Baltie.

"Oh, Baltie, Baltie, Baltie, I'm so glad! So glad! So glad!" sobbed the overwrought little girl, as she flew to the old horse's head.

Mr. Stuyvesant and the men stared at her in astonishment.

"Why little girl," cried the former. "Where in this world have *you* sprung from? And what is the matter? Is this your horse?"

"Oh, no—no; he isn't mine. It's old Baltie; don't you know him? I went to tell Jabe Raulsbury about him and he—he—" and Jean paused embarrassed.

"Yes? Well? Is this his horse? Is he coming to get him? Did you find him?"

"Yes, sir, I *found* him," answered Jean, trembling from excitement and her exertions.

"And is he coming right down?" persisted Mr. Stuyvesant, looking keenly, although not unkindly, at the child.

"He—he—, oh, *please* don't make me tell tales on anybody—it's so mean—but he—"

"You might as well tell it right out an' done with it, little gal," broke in one of the men. "It ain't no state secret; everybody knows that that old skinflint has been abusing this horse shameful, for months past, an' I'll bet my month's wages he said he wouldn't come down, an' he hoped the horse 'd die in the ditch. Come now, out with it—*didn't* he?"

Jean would not answer, but there was no need for words; her eyes told the truth.

Just then the other man came up to her; he was one of Mr. Fletcher's grooms.

"Aren't you Mrs. Carruth's little girl?" he asked.

But before Jean had time to answer Jabe Raulsbury came running along the road, one hand holding a handkerchief to his nose, the other waving wildly as he shouted:

"Just you wait 'till I lay my hands on you—you little wild cat!" He was too blinded by his rage to realize the situation into which he was hurrying.

Again Anthony Wayne's spirit leaped into Jean's eyes, as the dauntless little creature whirled about to meet the enemy descending upon her. With head erect, and nostrils quivering she stood as though rooted to the ground.

"Great guns! How's *that* for a little thoroughbred?" murmured the groom, laughing softly.

Reaching out a protecting hand, Mr. Stuyvesant gently pushed the little girl toward the man who stood behind him, and taking her place let Jabe Raulsbury come head-on to his fate. Had the man been less enraged he would have taken in the situation at once, but his nose still pained severely from the well-aimed blow, and had also bled pretty freely, so it is not surprising that he lost his presence of mind.

"Go slow! Go slow! You are exactly the man I want to see," said Mr. Stuyvesant, laying a detaining hand upon Jabe's arm.

"Who 'n thunder air you?" demanded the half-blinded man.

"Someone you would probably rather not meet at this moment, but since you have appeared upon the scene so opportunely I think we might as well come to an understanding at once, and settle some scores."

"I ain't got no scores to settle with you, but I have with *that* little demon, an' by gosh she'll know it, when I've done with her! Why that young 'un has just smashed me over the head with her umbril, I tell ye. *There* it is, if ye don't believe what I'm a tellin' ye. I'm goin' ter have the *law* on her and on her Ma, I tell ye, an' I call you three men ter witness the state I'm in. I'll bring suit agin' her fer big damages—that's what I'll do. Look at my *nose!*"

As he ceased his tirade Jabe removed his handkerchief from the injured member. At the sight of it one of the men broke into a loud guffaw. Certainly, for a "weaker vessel" Jean had compassed considerable. That nose was about the size of two ordinary noses. Mr. Stuyvesant regarded it for a moment, his face perfectly sober, then asked with apparent concern:

"And this little girl hit you such a blow as that?"

Poor little Jean began to tremble in her boots. Were the tables about to turn upon her? Even Anthony Wayne's spirit, when harbored in such a tiny body could hardly brave *that*. The

Fletcher's groom who stood just behind her watched her closely. Now and again he gave a nod indicative of his approval.

"Yes she did. She drew off and struck me slam in the face with her umbril.," averred Jabe.

"Had *you* struck her? Did she strike in self-defense?" Mr. Stuyvesant gave a significant look over Jabe's head straight into the groom's eyes when he asked this question. The response was the slightest nod of comprehension.

"Strike her? *No*," roared Jabe. "I hadn't teched her. I was a-sittin' there sortin' out my turnips 's peaceful 's any man in this town, when that little rip comes 'long and tells me I must go get an old horse out 'en a ditch: *that* old skate there that's boun' ter die *any* how, an' ought ter a-died long ago. I told her ter clear out an' mind her own business that I hoped the horse *would* die, an' that's what I'd turned him out *to* do. Then she drew off an' whacked me."

"Just because you stated in just so many words that you meant to get rid of the old horse and had turned him out to die on the roadside. Is *that* why she struck you?"

Had Jabe been a little calmer he might have been aware of a change in Hadyn Stuyvesant's expression and his tone of voice, but men wild with rage are rarely close observers.

"Yis! Yis!" he snapped, sure now of his triumph.

"Well I'm only sorry the blow was such a light one. I wish it had been struck by a man's arm and sufficiently powerful to have half killed you! Even *that* would have been *too* good for you, you merciless brute! I've had you under my eye for your treatment of that poor horse for some time, and now I have you under my *hand*, and convicted by your own words in the presence of two witnesses, of absolute cruelty. I arrest you in the name of the S. P. C. A."

For one brief moment Jabe stood petrified with astonishment. Then the brute in him broke loose and he started to lay about him right and left. His aggressiveness was brought to a speedy termination, for at a slight motion from Mr. Stuyvesant the two men sprang upon him, his arms were held and the next second there was a slight click and Jabe Raulsbury's wrists were in handcuffs. That snap was the signal for his blustering to take flight for he was an arrant coward at heart.

"Now step into my wagon and sit there until I am ready to settle your case, my man, and that will be when I have looked to this little girl and the animal which, but for her pluck and courage, might have died in this ditch," ordered Mr. Stuyvesant.

No whipped cur could have slunk toward the wagon more cowed.

"Now, little lassie, tell me your name and where you live," said Mr. Stuyvesant lifting Jean bodily into his arms despite her mortification at being "handled just like a baby," as she afterwards expressed it.

"I am Jean Carruth. I live on Linden Avenue. I'm—I'm terribly ashamed to be here, and to have struck him," and she nodded toward the humbled figure in the wagon.

"You need not be. You did not give him one-half he deserves," was the somewhat comforting assurance.

"O, but what *will* mother say? She'll be *so* mortified when I tell her about it all. It seems as if I just *couldn't*," was the distressed reply.

"Must you tell her?" asked Mr. Stuyvesant, an odd expression overspreading his kind, strong face as he looked into the little girl's eyes.

Jean regarded him with undisguised amazement as she answered simply:

"Why of *course!* That would be deceit if I *didn't*. I'll have to be punished, but I guess I *ought* to be," was the naïve conclusion.

The fine face before her was transfigured as Hadyn Stuyvesant answered:

"Good! *Your* principles are all right. Stick to them and I'll want to know you when you are a woman. Now I must get you home for I've a word to say to your mother, to whom I mean to introduce myself under the circumstances," and carrying her to his two-seated depot wagon, he placed her upon the front seat. Jabe glowered at him from the rear one. His horse turned his head with an inquiring nicker.

"Yes, Comet, I'll be ready pretty soon," he replied, pausing a second to give a stroke to the satiny neck. Then turning to the men he said:

"Now, my men, let's on with this job which has been delayed too long already."

He did not spare himself, and presently old Baltie was out of the ditch and upon his feet—a sufficiently pathetic object to touch any heart.

"Shall I have the men lead him up to your barn?" asked Hadyn Stuyvesant, giving the surly object in his wagon a last chance to redeem himself.

"No! I'm done with him; do your worst," was the gruff answer.

"Very well," the words were ominously quiet, "then *I* shall take him in charge."

"Oh, *where* are you going to take him, please?" asked Jean, her concern for the horse overcoming her embarrassment at her novel situation.

"I'm afraid he will have to be sent to the pound, little one, for no one will claim him."

"Is that the place where they *kill* them? *Must* Baltie be killed?" Her voice was full of tears.

"Unless someone can be found who will care for him for the rest of his numbered days. I'm afraid it is the best and most merciful fate for him," was the gentle answer.

"How long may he stay there without being killed? Until maybe somebody can be found to take him."

"He may stay there one week. But now we must move along. Fasten the horse's halter to the back of my wagon, men, and I'll see to it that he is comfortable to-night anyway."

The halter rope was tied, and the strange procession started slowly back toward Riveredge.

CHAPTER IV—Baltie is Rescued

"How old are you, little lassie?" asked Hadyn Stuyvesant, looking down upon the little figure beside him, his fine eyes alive with interest and the smile which none could resist lighting his face, and displaying his white even teeth.

"I'm just a little over ten," answered Jean, looking up and answering his smile with one equally frank and trustful, for little Jean Carruth did not understand the meaning of embarrassment.

"Are you Mrs. Bernard Carruth's little daughter? I knew her nephew well when at college, although I've been away from Riveredge so long that I've lost track of her and her family."

"Yes, she is my mother. Mr. Bernard Carruth was my father," and a little choke came into Jean's voice, for, although not yet eight years of age when her father passed out of her life, Jean's memory of him was a very tender one, and she sorely missed the kind, cheery, sympathetic companionship he had given his children. Hadyn Stuyvesant was quick to note the catch in the little girl's voice, and the tears which welled up to her eyes, and a strong arm was placed about her waist to draw her a little closer to his side, as, changing the subject, he said very tenderly:

"You have had an exciting hour, little one. Sit close beside me and don't try to talk; just rest, and let *me* do the talking. We must go slowly on Baltie's account; the poor old horse is badly knocked about and stiffened up. Suppose we go right to Mr. Pringle's livery stable and ask him to take care of him a few days any way. Don't you think that would be a good plan?"

"But who will *pay* for him? Don't you have to pay board for horses just like people pay their board?" broke in Jean anxiously.

Hadyn Stuyvesant smiled at the practical little being his arm still so comfortingly encircled.

"I guess the Society can stand the expense," he answered.

"Has it got *lots* of money to do such things with?" asked Jean, bound to get at the full facts.

"I'm afraid it hasn't got 'lots of money'—I wish it had,—but I think it can pay a week's board for old Baltie in consideration of what you have done for him. It will make you happier to know he will be comfortable for a little while any way, won't it?"

"Oh, yes! yes! And, and—perhaps *I* could pay the next week's if we didn't find somebody the first week. I've got 'most five dollars in my Christmas bank. I've been saving ever since last January; I always begin to put in something on New Year's day, if it's only five cents, and then I never, never take any out 'till it's time to buy our next Christmas presents. And I really *have* got 'most five dollars, and would *that* be enough for another week?" and the bonny little face was raised eagerly to her companion's. Hadyn Stuyvesant then and there lost his heart to the little creature at his side. It is given to very few "grown-ups" to slip out of their own adult years and by some magical power pick up the years of their childhood once more, with all the experiences and viewpoints of that childhood, but Hadyn Stuyvesant was one of those few. He felt all the eagerness of Jean's words and his answer held all the confidence and enthusiasm of *her* ten years rather than his own twenty-three.

"Fully enough. But we will hope that a home may be found for Baltie before the first week has come to an end. And here we are at Mr. Pringle's. Raulsbury I shall have to ask you to get out

here," added Mr. Stuyvesant, as he, himself, sprang from the depot wagon to the sidewalk.

Raulsbury made no reply but stepped to the sidewalk, where, at a slight signal from Hadyn Stuyvesant, an officer of the Society who had his office in the livery stable came forward and motioned to Raulsbury to follow him. As they disappeared within the stable, Mr. Stuyvesant said to the proprietor:

"Pringle, I've got a boarder for you. Don't know just how long he will stay, but remember, nothing is too good for him while he does, for he is this little girl's protégé, and I hold myself responsible for him."

"All right, Mr. Stuyvesant. All right, sir. He shall have the best the stable affords. Come on, old stager; you look as if you wanted a curry-comb and a feed pretty bad," said Pringle, as he untied Baltie's halter. With all the gentleness of the blue-blooded old fellow he was, Baltie raised his mud-splashed head, sniffed at Mr. Pringle's coat and nickered softly, as though acknowledging his proffered hospitality. The man stroked the muddy neck encouragingly, as he said:

"He don't look much as he did eighteen years ago, does he, Mr. Stuyvesant?"

"I'm afraid I don't remember how he looked eighteen years ago, Pringle; there wasn't much of me to remember *with* about that time. But I remember how he looked *eight* years ago, before I went to Europe, and the contrast is enough to stir me up considerable. It's about time such conditions were made impossible, and I'm going to see what I can do to start a move in that direction," concluded Mr. Stuyvesant, with an ominous nod toward the stable door, through which Raulsbury had disappeared.

"I'm glad to hear it, sir. We have had too much of this sort of thing in Riveredge for the past few years. I've been saying the Society needed a *live* president and I'm glad it's got one at last."

"Well, look out for old Baltie, and now I must take my little fellow-worker home," said Mr. Stuyvesant.

"Oh, may I give him just *one* pat before we go?" begged Jean, looking from Baltie to Mr. Stuyvesant.

"Lead him up beside us, Pringle," ordered Mr. Stuyvesant smiling his consent to Jean.

"Good-bye Baltie, dear. Good-bye. I won't forget you for a single minute; no, not for one," said the little girl earnestly, hugging the muddy old head and implanting a kiss upon the ear nearest her.

"Baltie you are to be envied, old fellow," said Hadyn Stuyvesant, laughing softly, and nodding significantly to Pringle. "She was his first friend in his misery. I'll tell you about it later, but I must be off now or her family will have me up for a kidnapper. I'll be back in about an hour."

Ten minutes' swift bowling along behind Hadyn Stuyvesant's beautiful "Comet" brought them to the Carruth home. Dusk was already beginning to fall as the short autumn day drew to its end, and Mrs. Carruth,—mother above all other things—stood at the window watching for this youngest daughter, regarding whom she never felt quite at ease when that young lady was out of her sight. When she saw a carriage turning in at her driveway and that same daughter perched upon the front seat beside a total stranger she began to believe that there had been some foundation for the misgivings which had made her so restless for the past hour. Opening the door she stepped out upon the piazza to meet the runaway, and was greeted with:

"Oh mother, mother, I've had such an exciting experience! I started to see Amy Fletcher, but before I got there I found him in the ditch and lame and muddy and dirty, and I went up to tell Jabe he *must* go get him out and then I got awful angry and banged him with my umbrella, and then I cried and *he* found me," with a nod toward her companion, "and he got him out of the ditch and gave Jabe *such* a scolding and took him to Mr. Pringle's and he's going to curry-comb him and get the mud all off of him and take care of him a week any way, and two weeks if I've got enough money in my bank and—and—"

"Mercy! mercy! mercy!" cried Mrs. Carruth, breaking into a laugh and raising both hands as though to shield her head from the avalanche of words descending upon it. Hadyn Stuyvesant strove manfully to keep his countenance lest he wound the feelings of his little companion, but the situation was too much for him and his genial laugh echoed Mrs. Carruth's as he sprang from the depot wagon and raising his arms toward the surprised child said:

"Let me lift you out little maid, and then I think perhaps you can give your mother a clearer idea as to whether it is Jabe Raulsbury, or old Baltie which is covered with mud and about to be curry-combed. Mrs. Carruth, let me introduce myself as Hadyn Stuyvesant. I knew your nephew when I was at college, and on the strength of my friendship for him, must beg you to pardon this intrusion. I came upon your little daughter not long since playing the part of the Good Samaritan to Raulsbury's poor old horse. She had tackled a job just a little too big for her, so I volunteered to lend a hand, and together we made it go."

As he spoke Hadyn Stuyvesant removed his hat and ascended the piazza steps with hand outstretched to the sweet-faced woman who stood at the top. She took the extended hand, her

face lighting with the winning smile which carried sunshine to all who knew her, and in the present instance fell with wonderful warmth upon the man before her, for barely a year had passed since his mother had been laid away in a beautiful cemetery in Switzerland, and the tie between that mother and son had been a singularly tender one.

"I have often heard my nephew speak of you, Mr. Stuyvesant, and can not think of you as a stranger. I regret that we have not met before, but I understand you have lived abroad for several years. I am indebted to you for bringing Jean safely home, but quite at a loss to understand what has happened. Please come in and tell me. Will your horse stand?"

"He will stand as long as I wish him to. But I fear I shall intrude upon you?" and a questioning tone came into his voice.

"How could it be an intrusion under the circumstances? Come."

"In a moment, then. I must throw the blanket over Comet," and running down the steps he took the blanket from the seat and quickly buckled it upon the horse which meanwhile nosed him and nickered.

"Yes; it's all right, old man. Just you *stand* till I want you," said his master, giving the pretty head an affectionate pat which the horse acknowledged by shaking it up and down two or three times. Hadyn Stuyvesant then mounted the steps once more and followed Mrs. Carruth and Jean into the house, across the broad hall into the cheerful living-room where logs blazed upon the andirons in the fire-place, and Constance was just lighting a large reading lamp which stood upon a table in the center of the room.

"Constance, dear, this is Mr. Stuyvesant whom your cousin knew at Princeton. My daughter, Constance, Mr. Stuyvesant. And this is my eldest daughter, Eleanor," she added as Eleanor entered the room. Constance set the lamp shade upon its rest and advanced toward their guest with hand extended and a smile which was the perfect reflection of her mother's. Eleanor's greeting although graceful and dignified lacked her sister's cordiality.

"Now," added Mrs. Carruth, "let us be seated and learn more definitely of Jean's escapade."

"But it *wasn't* an escapade *this* time, mother. It was just an unhelpable experience, *wasn't* it, Mr. Stuyvesant?" broke in Jean, walking over to Hadyn Stuyvesant's side and placing her hand confidently upon his shoulder, as she peered into his kind eyes for his corroboration of this assertion.

"*Entirely* 'unhelpable,'" was the positive assurance as he put his arm about her and drew her upon his knee. "Suppose you let me explain it, and then your mother and sisters will understand the situation fully," and in as few words as possible he gave an account of the happenings of the past two hours, Jean now and again prompting him when he went a trifle astray regarding the incidents which occurred prior to his appearance upon the scene, and making a clean breast of her attack upon Jabe Raulsbury. When *that* point in the narration was reached Mrs. Carruth let her hands drop resignedly into her lap; Constance laughed outright, and Eleanor cried: "Oh, Mr. Stuyvesant, what *must* you think of Jean's training?"

Jean's eyes were fixed upon his as though in his reply rested the verdict, and her fingers were clasped and unclasped nervously. It had been more than two years since a man had set judgment upon her. Hadyn Stuyvesant looked keenly into the big eyes looking so bravely and frankly into his own, drew the little girl close to him, rested his lips for a moment upon the silky curls and said:

"Sometimes we can hardly be held accountable for what we do; especially when our sense of justice is sorely taxed. I believe I should have done the same. But since you love horses so dearly, won't you run and give Comet a lump of sugar? He has not had one to-day and will feel slighted unless he gets it. Hold it upon the palm of your hand and he will take it as gently as a kitten. Tell him I am coming right away," and placing Jean upon the floor, he gave an encouraging pat upon the brown curls.

"I'll give it to him right away, quick," she cried delightedly as she ran from the room.

"Good!" Then rising he extended his hand, saying, as he clasped Mrs. Carruth's:

"She is a little trump, Mrs. Carruth. Jove! if you could have been there and seen her championship of that old horse, and her dauntless courage when that old rascal, Jabe, bore down upon her, you would be so set up that this house would have to expand to hold you. Please don't reprove her. I ask it as favor, although I have no right to do so. She has a fine spirit and a finer sense of duty, Mrs. Carruth, for she gave me a rare call-down when I tested it by hinting that she'd best keep mum on the subject if she was likely to come in for a wiggling. She is a great little lassie and I am going to ask you to let me know her better."

"Jean is about right, *I* think, Mr. Stuyvesant," said Constance, as she shook hands good-bye. "She is peppery and impulsive, I know, but it would be a hard matter to make her tell an untruth, or go against what she considered her duty."

"I'm *sure* of it, Miss Constance," was the hearty answer. "And now good-bye. You will let me come again, Mrs. Carruth?"

"We will be very pleased to welcome you," was the cordial reply.

"Good! I'll come."

CHAPTER V—A New Member of the Family

"Has you-all done 'cided to do wid out yo' suppers dis yer night? 'Cause if you *is* I 'spec's I kin clar away," was the autocratic inquiry of Mammy Melviny as she stood in the doorway of the living-room, her ample proportions very nearly filling it.

Hadyn Stuyvesant's call had been of longer duration than Mammy approved, for her hot corn cakes were being rapidly ruined by the delayed meal, and this was an outrage upon her skill in cooking. Mammy had been Mrs. Carruth's nurse "down souf" and still regarded that dignified lady as her "chile," and subject to her dictation. She was the only servant which Mrs. Carruth now kept, the others having been what Mammy stigmatized as "po' northern no 'count niggers" who gave the minimum of work for the maximum of pay, and were prompt to take their departure when adversity overtook their employer.

Not so Mammy. When the crisis came Mrs. Carruth stated the case to her and advised her to seek another situation where she would receive the wages her ability commanded, and which Mrs. Carruth, in her reduced circumstances, could no longer afford to pay her. The storm which the suggestion produced was both alarming and amusing. Placing her arms upon her hips, and raising her head like a war-horse scenting battle, Mammy stamped her foot and cried:

"Step down an' out? Get out 'en de fambly? Go wo'k fer some o' dese hyer strange folks what aint keer a cent fo' me, an' aint know who I *is*? *Me*? a Blairsdale! Huh! What sort o' fool talk is *dat*, Baby? Yo' cyant *git* me out. Yo' need 'n ter try, kase 'taint gwine be no good ter. I's hyer and hyer I's gwine *stay*, no matter *what* come. 'Taint no use fer ter talk ter *me* 'bout money and wages an' sich truck. What I kerrin' fer dem? I'se got 'nough, an' ter spare. What yo' t'ink I'se been doin' all dese years o' freedom? Flingin' my earnin's 'way? Huh! You *know* I aint done no sich foolishness. I'se got a pile—yis, an' a *good* pile too,—put 'way. I need n't ter ever do a stroke mo' work long 's I live if I don't wantter. I'se *rich*, I is. But I *gwine* ter work jist 's long's I'se mind ter. Ain't I free? Who gwine ter say I cyant wo'k? Now go long an' tend ter yo' business and lemme lone ter tend ter mine, and dat's right down wid de pots and de kettles, and de stew pans, an' de wash biler and de wash tubs, an' I reckon I kin do more 'n six o' dese yer Norf niggers put togedder when I set out ter good an' hard if I *is* most sixty years old. Hush yo' talk chile, an' don't let me ketch you a interferin' wid *my* doin's agin. You heah *me*?" And at the end of this tirade, Mammy turned sharply about and marched off like a grenadier. Mrs. Carruth was deeply touched by the old woman's loyalty, but knowing the antebellum negro as she did, she realized how wounded Mammy had been by the suggestion that she seek a more lucrative situation among strangers. Mammy had been born and raised a slave on Mrs. Carruth's father's plantation in North Carolina, and would always consider herself a member of Mrs. Carruth's family. Alas for the days of such ties and such devotion!

So Mammy was now the autocrat of the household and ruled with an iron hand, although woe to anyone who dared to overstep the bounds *she* had established as her "Miss Jinny's" rights, or the "chillen's" privileges as "old marster's gran'-chillern." "Old Marster" was Mammy's ideal of what a gentleman should be, and "de days befo' de gre't turmoil" were the only days "fitten for *folks* (always to be written in italics) to live in."

She was an interesting figure as she stood in the doorway, and snapped out her question, although her old face, surmounted by its gay bandanna turban was the personification of kindness, and her keen eyes held only love for her "white folks."

She was decidedly corpulent and her light print gown and beautifully ironed white apron stood out from her figure until they completely filled the doorway.

Mrs. Carruth turned toward her and asked with a quizzical smile;

"What is spoiling, Mammy?"

"Huh! Ain't nuffin spilin's I knows on, but dat Miss Nornie done say she ain't had no co'n cakes 'n 'bout 'n age an' if she *want* 'em so turrible she'd better come and *eat* 'em,"—and with a decisive nod Mammy stalked off toward the dining-room.

"Come, girls, unless you want to evoke the displeasure of the presiding genius of the household," said Mrs. Carruth smiling, as she led the way in Mammy's wake.

It was a pleasant meal, for Mammy would not countenance the least lapse from the customs of earlier days, and the same pains were taken for the simple meals now served as had been taken with the more elaborate ones during Mr. Carruth's lifetime. The linen must be ironed with the same care; the silver must shine as brightly, and the glass sparkle as it had always done. Miss

Jinny must not miss any of the luxuries to which she had been born if Mammy could help it.

"Isn't he splendid, mother?" asked Jean, as she buttered her third corn cake. "He was *so* good to Baltie and to me."

"I am very glad to know him, dear, for Lyman was much attached to him."

"Where has he been all these years, mother, that we have never met him in Riveredge?" asked Eleanor.

"He has lived abroad when not at college. He took his degree last spring. His mother died there a little more than a year ago, I understand. She never recovered from the blow of his father's death when Hadyn was about fifteen years of age. She went abroad soon after for her health and never came back. He came over for his college course at Princeton, but always rejoined her during his holidays."

"How old a man is he, mother? He seems both young and old," said Constance.

"I am not sure, but think he must be about Lyman's age—nearly twenty-four. But the Society seems to have made a wise choice in electing him its president; he has certainly taken energetic measures in this case and I am glad that he has, for it is disgraceful to have such a thing occur in Riveredge. Poor old horse! It would have been more merciful to shoot him. How could Jabe Raulsbury have been so utterly heartless?"

"But, mother, suppose no one will take old Baltie and give him a home?" persisted Jean, "will he *have* to be shot then?"

"Would it not be kinder to end such a hapless existence than to leave it to an uncertain fate, dear?" asked Mrs. Carruth gently.

"Well, maybe, but *I* don't want him killed. He *loves* me," was Jean's answer and the little upraising of the head at the conclusion of the remark conveyed more to Constance than to the others. Constance understood Jean better than any other member of the family, and during the summer just passed Jean had many times gone to the field in which Baltie was pastured to carry some dainty to the poor old horse and her love for him and compassion for his wretchedness were deep.

No more was said just then, but Constance knew that the subject had not passed from Jean's thoughts and one afternoon, exactly two weeks from that evening, this was verified.

Mrs. Carruth had gone to sit with a sick friend. Eleanor was in her room lost to everything but a knotty problem for Monday's recitation, and Mammy was busily occupied with some dainty dish against her Miss Jinny's home-coming. Constance was laying the tea-table when the crunch-crunch, crunch-crunch, upon the gravel of the driveway caused her to look up, there to behold Jean with old Baltie in tow.

"Merciful powers, what *has* the child done now?" she exclaimed as she let fall with a clatter the knife and fork she was about to place upon the table and flew to the front door, crying as she hastily opened it: "Jean Carruth what in this world *have* you been doing?"

"I've brought him home. I *had* to. I went down to ask Mr. Pringle if anybody had come to take him, but he wasn't there. There wasn't any body there but old deaf Mike who cleans the stable and I couldn't make *him* understand a single thing I said. He just mumbled and wagged his head for all the world like that China mandarin in the library, and didn't do a thing though I yelled at him as hard as I could."

"But *how* did you get Baltie and, greater marvel, *how* did you bring him all this way home?" persisted Constance, bound to get to the bottom of facts.

"I went into the box-stall—it's close to the door you know—and got him and led him here."

"But where was Mike, and what was he doing all that time to *let* you do such a thing?"

"O, he went poking off down the stable and didn't pay any attention to me. It wouldn't have made any difference if he *had*; I had gone there to rescue Baltie and save him from being shot, and I didn't mean to come away without doing it. The two weeks were up to-day and he was *there*. If any one had been found to take him he *wouldn't* have been there yet, would he? So *that* settled it, and I wasn't going to take any chances. If I'd let him stay one day longer they might have shot him. If I could have found Mr. Pringle I'd have told him, but I couldn't, and I didn't dare to wait. I left my bank money, almost five dollars, to pay for this week's board—Mr. Stuyvesant said it would be enough—and a little note to tell him it was for Baltie; I wrote it on a piece of paper in his office, and then I came home as fast as Baltie could walk, and here we are."

Jean had talked very rapidly and Constance was too dumfounded for the time being, to interrupt the flow of words. Presently however, she recovered her speech and, resting one hand on Baltie's withers and the other on Jean's shoulder, asked resignedly:

"And now that you've got him, may I ask what in this world you propose to *do* with him?"

"Take him out to the stable of course and take care of him as long as he lives," was the uncontrovertible reply.

"Mother will *never* let you do such a thing, Jean, and he must be taken back to Pringle's at once," said Constance, with more emphasis than usually entered her speech toward this mad-cap little sister.

"I won't! I won't! I *won't* let him go back!" broke out Jean, a storm of sobs ending the protest and bringing Mammy upon the scene hot-foot, for Mammy's ears were keen for notes of woe from her baby.

"What's de matter, honey? What done happen ter yo'?" she cried as she came hurrying across the little porch upon which the dining-room opened. "Bress Gawd what yo' got dere, chile? Huccum dat old horse here?"

"Oh Mammy, Mammy, its Baltie, and she says I can't keep him, and they are going to *kill* him, 'cause he's old and blind and hasn't anyone to take care of him. And Mammy, Mammy, *please* don't let 'em 'cause I *love* him. I do, I do, Mammy," cried Jean as she cast Baltie's leader from her and rushed to Mammy, to fling herself into those protecting arms and sob out her woes.

"Wha', wha', wha', yo' say, Baby?" stammered Mammy, whose tongue sometimes became unruly under great excitement. "Somebody gwine tek away dat old horse dat yo' love, an' breck yo' heart? Huh! Who gwine do dat when Mammy stan' by? I like 'er *see* 'em do it! *Co'se* I knows Baltie. Ain' I seen him dese many years? An' yo' gwine pertec' him an' keer fer him in his discrepancy? Well, ef yo' wantter yo' *shall*, an' dat's all 'bout it."

"But Mammy, Mammy, she can't; she mustn't; what will mother say?" remonstrated Constance smiling in spite of herself at the ridiculous situation for Mammy had promptly put on her war-paint, and was a formidable champion to overcome.

"An' what yo' *ma* gotter say 'bout it if *I* sets out ter tak' care of an' old horse? 'Taint *her* horse. *She* aint got nothin' 'tall ter *do wid* him. He's been a lookin', an' a waitin'; and de Lawd knows but he's been *a-prayin'* fer a pertecter—how *we-all* gwine know he aint *prayed* ter de Lawd fer ter raise one up fer him in his mis'ry? An' now he's *got* one an' it's *me* an' dis chile. Go 'long an' set yo' table an' let us 'lone. Come on honey; we'll take old Baltie out yonder ter de stable an' bed him *down* an' feed him *up* twell he so sot up he like 'nough bus' wid pride, an' I just like ter see who gwine *stop* us. Hi yah-yah, yah," and Mammy's wrath ended in a melodious laugh as she caught hold of the leader and stalked off with this extraordinary addition to her already manifold duties, Jean holding her free hand and nodding exultingly over her shoulder at Constance who had collapsed upon the lower step.

CHAPTER VI—Blue Monday

October, with its wealth of color, its mellow days, and soft haze was passing quickly and November was not far off: November with its "melancholy days" of "wailing winds and wintry woods."

Baltie had now been a member of the Carruth family for nearly a month and had improved wonderfully under Mammy Melviny's care. How the old woman found time to care for him and the means to provide for him was a source of wonder not only to Mrs. Carruth, but to the entire neighborhood who regarded the whole thing as a huge joke, and enjoyed many a hearty laugh over it, for Mammy was considered a character by the neighbors, and nobody felt much surprised at any new departure in which she might elect to indulge. Two or three friends had begged Mrs. Carruth to let them relieve her of the care of the old horse, assuring her that they would gladly keep him in their stables as long as he needed a home, and ended in a hearty laugh at the thought of Mammy turning groom. But when Mrs. Carruth broached the subject to Mammy she was met with flat opposition:

"Send dat ole horse off ter folks what was jist gwine tek keer of him fer cha'ity? *No* I aint gwine do no sich t'ing. De Lawd sartin sent him ter me ter tek keer of an' I'se gwin ter *do* it. Aint he mine? Didn't Jabe Raulsbury say dat anybody what would tek keer of him could *have* him? Well I'se tekin' keer of him so *co'se* he's *mine*. I aint never is own no live stock befo' an now I *got* some. Go 'long, Miss Jinny; you'se got plenty ter tend ter 'thout studyin' 'bout my *horse*. Bimeby like 'nough I have him so fed up and spry I can sell him fer heap er cash—dough I don' believe anybody's got nigh 'nough fer ter buy him whilst Baby loves him."

And so the discussion ended and Baltie lived upon the fat of the land and was sheltered in Mrs. Carruth's unused stable. Dry leaves which fell in red and yellow clouds from the maple, birch and oak trees made a far softer bed than the old horse had known in many a day. A bag of bran was delivered at Mrs. Carruth's house for "Mammy Melviny," with Hadyn Stuyvesant's compliments. Mammy herself, invested in a sack of oats and a bale of cut hay, to say nothing of saving all bits of bread and parings from her kitchen, and Baltic waxed sleek and fat thereon. Jean was his devoted slave and daily led him about the grounds for a constitutional. Up and down the driveway paced the little girl, the old horse plodding gently beside her, his ears pricked toward her for her

faintest word, his head held in the pathetic, listening attitude of a blind horse. He knew her step afar off, and his soft nicker never failed to welcome her as she drew near. To no one else did he show such little affectionate ways, or manifest such gentleness. He seemed to understand that to this little child, which one stroke of his great hoofs could have crushed, he owed his rescue and present comforts.

And so the weeks had slipped away. The money which Jean had left for Mr. Pringle had been promptly refunded with a note to explain that the Society had borne all the expenses for Baltie's board.

Mrs. Carruth sat in her library wrinkling her usually serene brow over a business letter this chilly Monday morning, and hurrying to get it completed before the arrival of the letter carrier who always took any letters to be mailed. Her face wore a perplexed expression, and her eyes had tired lines about them, for the past year had been harder for her than anyone suspected. Her income, at best, was much too limited to conduct her home as it had always been conducted, and the general expenses of living in Riveredge were steadily increasing. True, Mammy was frugality itself in the matter of providing, and Mrs. Carruth often marveled at the small amounts of her weekly bills. But the demands in other directions were heavy, and the expenses of the place itself were large. More than once had she questioned the wisdom of striving to keep the home, believing that the tax upon her resources, and her anxiety, would be less if she gave it up and removed to town where she could live for far less than in Riveredge. Then arose the memory of the building of the home, the hopes, the plans, and the joys so inseparable from it, the children's well-being and their love for the house their father had built; their education, and the environment of a home in such a town as Riveredge.

Now, however, new difficulties were confronting her, for some of her investments were not making the returns she had expected and her income was seriously affected. In spite of the utmost frugality and care the outlook was not encouraging, and just now she had to meet the demand of the fire insurance upon the home and its contents, and just how to do so was the question which was causing her brows to wrinkle. She had let the matter stand until the last moment, but dared to do so no longer for upon that point Mr. Carruth had always been most emphatic; the insurance upon his property must never lapse. He had always carried one, and since his death his wife had been careful to continue it. But *now* how to meet the sum, and meet it at once, was the problem.

She had completed her letter when Mammy came to the door.

"Is yo' here, Miss Jinny? Is yo' busy? I wants to ax you sumpin'," she said as she gave a quick glance at Mrs. Carruth from her keen eyes.

"Come in, Mammy. What is it?"

The voice had a tired, anxious note in it which Mammy was quick to catch.

"Wha' de matter, honey? Wha's plaguin' you dis mawnin'?" she asked as she hurried across the room to rest her hand on her mistress' shoulder.

Like a weary child Mrs. Carruth let her head fall upon Mammy's bosom—a resting place that as long as she could remember had never failed her—as she said:

"Mammy, your baby is very weary, and sorely disheartened this morning, and very, very lonely."

The words ended in a sob.

Instantly all Mammy's sympathies were aroused. Gathering the weary head in her arms she stroked back the hair with her work-hardened hand, as she said in the same tender tones she had used to soothe her baby more than forty years ago:

"Dere, dere, honey, don' yo' fret; don' yo' fret. Tell Mammy jist what's pesterin' yo' an' she'll mak' it all right fer her baby. Hush! Hush. Mammy can tek keer of anythin'."

"Oh, Mammy dear, dear old Mammy, you take care of so much as it is. What *would* we do without you?"

"Hush yo' talk chile! What I gwine do widout yo' all? Dat talk all foolishness. Don't I b'long ter de fambly? Now yo' mind yo' Mammy an' tell her right off what's a frettin' yo' dis day. Yo' heah *me*?"

Mammy's voice was full of forty-five years of authority, but her eyes were full of sympathetic tears, for her love for her "Miss Jinny" was beyond the expression of words.

"O Mammy, I am so foolish, and I fear so pitifully weak when it comes to conducting my business affairs wisely. You can't understand these vexatious business matters which I must attend to, but I sorely miss Mr. Carruth when they arise and *must* be met."

"Huccum I cyan't understand 'em? What Massa Bernard done tackle in his business dat I cyan't ef yo' kin? Tell me dis minute just what you' gotter do, an' I bate yo' ten dollars I c'n *do* it."

"I know there isn't anything you would not try to do, Mammy, from taking care of an old horse, to

moving the contents of the entire house if it became necessary," replied Mrs. Carruth, smiling in spite of herself, as she wiped her eyes, little realizing how near the truth was her concluding remark regarding Mammy's prowess.

"I reckon I c'd move de hull house if I had *time* enough, an' as fer de horse—huh! ain't he stanin' dere a livin' tes'imony of what a bran-smash an' elbow-grease kin do? 'Pears lak his hairs rise right up an' call me bres-sed, dey's tekin' ter shinin' so sense I done rub my hans ober 'em," and Mammy, true to her racial characteristics, broke into a hearty laugh; so close together lies the capacity for joy or sorrow in this child race. The next instant, however, Mammy was all seriousness as she demanded:

"Now I want yo' ter tell me all 'bout dis business flummy-diddle what's frettin' yo'. Come now; out wid it, quick."

Was it the old habit of obedience to Mammy's dictates, or the woman's longing for someone to confide in during these trying days of loneliness, that impelled Mrs. Carruth to explain in as simple language as possible the difficulties encompassing her?

The burden of meeting even the ordinary every-day expenses upon the very limited income derived from Mr. Carruth's life insurance, which left no margin whatsoever for emergencies. Of the imperative necessity of continuing the fire insurance he had always carried upon the home and its contents, lest a few hours wipe out what it had required years to gather together, and his wife and children be left homeless. How, under their altered circumstances this seemed more than ever imperative, since in the event of losing the house and its contents there would be no possible way of replacing either unless they kept the insurance upon them paid up.

Mammy listened intently, now and again nodding her old head and uttering a Um-uh! Um-uh! of comprehension.

When Mrs. Carruth ceased speaking she asked:

"An' how much has yo' gotter plank right out dis minit fer ter keep dis hyer as'sur'nce f'om collaps'in', honey?"

"Nearly thirty dollars, Mammy, and that seems a very large sum to me now-a-days."

"Hum-uh! Yas'm. So it do. Um. An' yo' aint got it?"

"I have not got it to-day, Mammy. I shall have it next week, but the time expires day after tomorrow and I do not know whether the company will be willing to wait, or whether I should forfeit my claim by the delay. I have written to ask."

"Huh! Wha' sort o' compiny is it dat wouldn't trus' a *Blairsdale*, I like ter know?" demanded Mammy indignantly.

Mrs. Carruth smiled sadly as she answered:

"These are not the old days, Mammy, and you know 'corporations have no souls.'"

"No so'les? Huh, *I'se* seen many a corpo'ration dat hatter have good thick *leather* soles fer ter tote 'em round. Well, well, times is sho' 'nough changed an' dese hyer Norf ways don't set well on my bile; dey rises it, fer sure. So dey ain't gwine *trus'* you, Baby? Where dey live at who has de sesso 'bout it all?"

"The main office is in the city, Mammy, but they have, of course, a local agent here."

"Wha' yo' mean by a locum agen', honey?"

"A clerk who has an office at 60 State street, and who attends to any business the firm may have in Riveredge."

"Is yo' writ yo' letter ter him? Who *is* he?"

"No, I have written to the New York office, because Mr. Carruth always transacted his business there. I thought it wiser to, for this Mr. Sniffins is a very young man, and would probably not be prepared to answer my question."

"Wha' yo' call him? Yo' don' mean dat little swimbly, red-headed, white-eyed sumpin' nu'er what sets down in dat basemen' office wid his foots cocked up on de rail-fence in front ob him, an' a segyar mos' as big as his laig stuck in he's mouf all de time? I sees *him* eve'y time I goes ter market, an' he lak' ter mek me sick. Is *he* de agen'?"

"Yes, Mammy, and I dare say he is capable enough, although I do not care to come in contact with him if I can avoid it."

"If I ketches yo' in dat 'tater sprout's office I gwine smack yo' sure's yo' bo'n. Yo' heah *me*? Why *his* ma keeps the *sody*-fountain on Main street. Wha-fo you gotter do wid such folks, Baby?"

"But, Mammy, they are worthy, respectable people,"—protested Mrs. Carruth.

"Hush yo' talk, chile. *I* reckon I knows de diff'rence twixt quality an' de *yether* kind. Dat's no place fer yo' to go at," cried Mammy, all her instincts rebelling against the experiences her baby was forced to meet in her altered circumstances. "Gimme dat letter. I'se gwine straight off ter markit dis minit and I'll see dat it get sont off ter de right pusson 'for I'se done anudder ting."

"But what did you wish to ask me, Mammy?"

"Nuffin'. 'Taint no 'count 'tall. I'll ax it when I comes back. Go 'long up-stairs and mek yo' bed if yo pinin' for occerpation," and away Mammy flounced from the room, leaving Mrs. Carruth more or less bewildered. She would have been completely so could she have followed the old woman.

CHAPTER VII—Mammy Generalissimo

Half an hour later a short, stout colored woman in neat, print gown, immaculate white apron, gorgeous headkerchief and gray plaid shawl, entered the office of the Red Star Fire Insurance Company, at No. 60 State street, and walking up to the little railing which divided from the vulgar herd the sacred precincts of Mr. Elijah Sniffins, representative, rested her hand upon the small swinging gate as she nodded her head slightly and asked:

"Is yo' Mister Sniffins, de locum agen' fer de Fire Insur'nce Comp'ny?"

"I am," replied that gentleman,—without removing from between his teeth the huge cigar upon which he was puffing until he resembled a small-sized locomotive, or changing his position—"Mr. Elijah Sniffins, representative of the Red Star Insurance Company. Are you thinkin' of taking out a policy?" concluded that gentleman with a supercilious smirk.

Mammy's eyes narrowed slightly and her lips were compressed for a moment.

"No, sir, I don' reckon I is studyin' 'bout takin' out no pol'cy. I jist done come hyer on a little private bisness wid yo'."

Mammy paused, somewhat at a loss how to proceed, for business affairs seemed very complicated to her. Mr. Elijah Sniffins was greatly amused and continued to eye her and smile. He was a dapper youth of probably twenty summers, with scant blond hair, pale blue, shifty eyes, a weak mouth surmounted by a cherished mustache of numerable hairs and a chin which stamped him the toy of stronger wills. Mammy knew the type and loathed it. His smirk enraged her, and rage restored her self-possession. Raising her head with a little sidewise jerk as befitted the assurance of a Blairsdale, she cried:

"Yas—sir, I done come to ax yo' a question 'bout de 'surance on a place in Riveredge. I hears de time fer settlin' up gwine come day atter to-morrer an' if 'taint settled up de 'surance boun' ter collapse. Is dat so?"

"Unless the policy is renewed it certainly *will* 'collapse,'" replied Mr. Sniffins breaking into an amused laugh.

"Huh! 'Pears like yo' find it mighty 'musin'," was Mammy's next remark and had Mr. Elijah Sniffins been a little better acquainted with his patron he would have been wise enough to take warning from her tone.

"Well, you see I am not often favored with visits from ladies of your color who carry fire insurance policies. A good many carry *life* insurance, but as a rule they don't insure their estates against *fire*, an' the situation was so novel that it amused me a little. No offense meant."

"An' none teken—from *your* sort," retorted Mammy. "But how 'bout dis hyer pol'cy? What I gotter do fer ter keep it f'om collapsin' ef it aint paid by day atter to-morrer?"

"Pay it *to-day*, or to-morrow," was the suave reply accompanied by a wave of the hand to indicate the ultimatum.

"'Spose dey ain't got de money fer ter pay right plank down, but kin pay de week atter? Could'n' de collapse be hild up twell den?"

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Mr. Elijah. "I'm 'fraid not; I've heard of those 'next week' settlements before, and experience tells me that 'next week' aint never arrived yet. Ha! Ha!"

"Den yo' won't trus' de Ca— de fambly?" Mammy had very nearly betrayed herself.

"Well, if it was the Rogers, or the Wellmans, or the Stuyvesants, or some of them big bugs up yonder on the hill, that everybody knows has got piles of money, and that everybody knows might let the policy lapse just because it had slipped their memory—why, that 'd be a different matter. We'd know down in this office that it was just an oversight, yer see; not a busted bank account. So, of course, we'd make concessions; just jog 'em up a little and a check 'd come 'long all O.K. and no fuss. But these small policies—why—well, I've got ter be more careful of the

company's interests; I hold a responsible position here."

"De good Lawd, yo' don' sesso!" exclaimed Mammy, turning around and around to scrutinize every corner of the tiny office, and then letting her eyes rest upon the being whose sense of responsibility was apparently crushing him down upon his chair, if one could judge from his semi-recumbent position. "Dat's shore 'nough a pity. Look lak it mought be mos' too much fer yo'. Don' seem right fer a comp'ny ter put sich a boy as yo' is in sich a 'sponsible 'sition, do it now?"

Mammy's expression was solicitude personified. Mr. Elijah Sniffins' face became a delicate rose color, and his feet landed upon the floor with emphasis as he straightened in his chair, and dragged nervously at the infinitesimal mustache, meanwhile eying Mammy with some misgivings.

Mammy continued to smile upon him benignly, and her smile proved as disconcerting as she meant it should. She resolved to have her innings with the smug youth who had begun by slighting her race and ended by doing far worse; failing to class the Carruths among those whom everyone trusted as a matter of course. The former slight might have been disregarded; the latter? *Never*. Consequently Mammy had instantly decided "ter mak' dat little no'count sumpin 'er ner'er squirm jist fer ter te'ch him what's due de quality," and the process had begun.

Poor Mammy! She would never learn that in the northern world where her lot was now cast the almighty dollar was king, queen and court combined. That its possession could carry into high places bad manners, low birth, aye actual rascality and hold them up to the shallow as enviable things when veneered with golden luster. That "de quality" without that dazzling reflector were very liable to be cast aside as of no value, as the nugget of virgin gold might be tramped upon and its worth never suspected by the unenlightened in their eagerness to reach a shining bit of polished brass farther along the path.

But Mammy's traditions were deeply rooted.

"I think I can take care of the position. What can I do for you? My time is valuable," snapped Mr. Elijah Sniffins, rising from his chair and coming close to the dividing railing, as a hint to Mammy to conclude her business.

"De Lawd er massy! Is dat so? Now I ain't never is 'spitioned dat f'om de looks ob t'ings. 'Pears lak yo' got a sight o' time on han'. Wal I 'clar fo' it I do'n un'nerstan' dese hyer bisness places no how. Well! Well! So yo' want me fer ter state mine an' cl'ar long out, does yo' Mr. 'Lijah? 'Lijah; 'Lijah. Was yo' ma a studyin' 'bout yo' doin's when she done giv' yo' dat name? Sort o' fits yo' pine blank, don' it now? Like 'nuf de cha'iot 'll come kitin' 'long one o' dese hyer days an' hike yo' inter de high places. Yah! Yah!" and Mammy's mellow laugh filled the office.

"See here, old woman, if you've got some little picayune payment to make, *make* it and clear out. I ain't got time ter stand here talkin' ter niggers," cried the agent, his temper taking final flight.

Mammy eyed him steadily as she said:

"Wall *dis yere* time yo's gwine deal wid a nigger, an' yo's gwine do lak *she say*. Dis yere comp'ny 'sures de Carruth house an' eve'y last t'ing what's inside it, an' de policy yo' say 's gotter be settled up when it's gotter be, or de hul t'ing 'll collapse? Now Miss Jinny ain't never *is* had no dealin's wid *yo'*, case I don' *let* her have dealin's wid no white trash—I handles *dat* sort when it has ter be handled—an' I keeps jist as far f'om it as ever I kin *while* I handles it. But I'se gotter settle up dis policy fer de fambly so what is it? How much is I gotter pay yo'?"

The varying expressions passing over Mr. Sniffins' countenance during Mammy's speech would have delighted an artist.

"What er? What er? What er you telling me?" he stammered.

"De ain't no 'watter' 'bout it; it's *fire*, an' I done come ter settle up," asserted Mammy.

"Have you brought the necessary papers with you? Have we a record in this office?"

"Don' know nuffin' 'tall 'bout no papers nor no records. Jist knows dat Miss Jinny's insured fer \$15,000," said Mammy, causing the youth confronting her to open his eyes. "Dis hyer letter what she done wrote dis mawn'in tells all 'bout it I 'spec'. She tol' me pos' it ter de comp'ny an' I reckons *yo'll* do fer de comp'ny *dis* time when de time's pressin' an' der ain't nuffin' *better* ter han'."

The contempt in Mammy's tone was tangible, as she held the letter as far from her as possible. Mr. Sniffins took it, noted the address and broke the seal. When he had read the letter he said with no little triumph in his voice:

"But in this letter Mrs. Carruth says distinctly that she is not prepared to pay the sum which falls due day after to-morrow, and asks for an extension of time. I am not prepared to make this extension. *That's* up to the company," and he held the letter toward Mammy as though he washed his hands of the whole affair.

Mammy did not take it. Instead she said very much as she would have spoken to a refractory

child who was not quite sure of what he could or could *not* do: "La Honey, don' yo' 'spose I sensed *dat* long go? Co'se I knows *yo'* cyant do nuffin' much; yo's only a lil' boy, an' der cyant no boy do a man's wo'k. Yo's hyer fer ter tek in de *cash*, an' so *dat's* what I done come ter pay. Miss Jinny she done mek up her mine dat she better pay dat policy dan use de money fer frolic'in'. I reckons yo' can tek cyer of it an' sen' it long down yonder whar de big comp'ny 's at. Dat's all I want *yo'* ter do, so now go 'long an' git busy an' *do* it. *Dere's* thirty dollars; count it so's yo's suah. Den write it all out crost de back ob Miss Jinny's letter so's I have sumpin fer ter show dat it's done paid."

"But I'll give you a regular receipt for the amount," said the clerk, now eager to serve a customer whose premium represented so large a policy.

"Yo' kin give me dat too if yo' wantter, but I wants de sign on de letter too, an' yo' full name, Mr. Elijah Sniffins, ter boot, you knows what yo' jist done said 'bout trus'in' folks, an' yo' don' berlong ter de Rogersers, ner de Wellmans, ner de Stuyvesants, but *I* berlongs ter de *Blairsdales!*"

Mammy grew nearly three inches taller as she made this statement, while her hearer seemed to grow visibly shorter. The receipt was duly filled out, likewise an acknowledgment written upon the blank side of Mrs. Carruth's letter and Elijah Sniffins' name signed thereto. Mammy took them scrutinized both with great care (she could not read one word) nodded and said:

"Huh, Um. Yas, sir. I reckon *dat* all squar'. If de house burn down ter night *we* all gwine git de 'surance sure 'nough. Yas—yas."

"You certainly could collect whatever was comin' to you," Mr. Sniffins assured her, his late supercilious smile replaced by a most obsequious one for this representative of the possessors of the dollars he worshiped. Mr. Sniffins meant to have a good many dollars himself some day and the luxuries which dollars stand for.

Mammy nodded, and placing the receipt and letter in her bag gave a slight nod and turned to leave the office. Mr. Sniffins hurried to open the door for her. As she was about to cross the threshold she paused, eyed him keenly from the crown of his smoothly brushed head to his patent-leather-shod feet and then asked:

"Huccum yo' opens de do' fer niggers? Ef yo' b'longed ter de quality yo'd let de niggers open de do's fer *yo*. Yo' better run 'long an' ten' yo' ma's sody foun'in 'twell yo' learns de quality manners."

An hour later Mammy was busy in her kitchen, the receipts safely pinned within her bodice and no one the wiser for the morning's business transaction.

CHAPTER VIII—Chemical Experiments

"Eleanor! Eleanor! where are you?" cried Constance at the foot of the third-story stairs the following day after luncheon.

Blue Monday had passed with its dull gray clouds and chill winds to give place to one of those rare, warm days which sometimes come to us late in October, as though the glorious autumn were loath to depart and had turned back for a last smile upon the land it loved.

The great river lay like shimmering liquid gold, the air was filled with the warm, pungent odors of the late autumn woods, and a soft haze rested upon the opposite hills.

"Here in my room," answered Eleanor. "What is it? What do you want? I can't come just this minute. Come up if it's important." The voice was somewhat muffled as though the speaker's head were covered.

Constance bounded up the stairs, hurried across the hall and entered the large third-story front room which Eleanor occupied. There was no sign of its occupant.

"More experiments I dare say," she murmured as she entered, crossed the room and pushed open the door leading into a small adjoining room whereupon her nostrils were assailed by odors *not* of Araby—the blessed.

"Phew! Ugh! What an awful smell! What under the sun are you doing? If you don't blow yourself to glory some day I shall be thankful," she ended as she pinched her nostrils together.

"Shut the door quick and don't let the smell get through the house or mother will go crazy when she gets home. Yes, it *is* pretty bad, but tie your handkerchief over your nose and then you won't mind it so much. As for blowing myself to glory, perhaps that will be my only way of ever coming by any, so I ought to be willing to take that route. But what do you want?" concluded Eleanor, pouring one smelly chemical into a small glass which contained another, whereupon it instantly became a most exquisite shade of crimson.

Constance watched her closely without speaking. Presently she said:

"Well I dare say it is 'everyone to her fancy,' as the old lady said when she kissed her cow (Jean could appreciate that, couldn't she? She kisses Baltie often enough) but *I'd* rather be excused when chemical experiments are in order. Don't for the life of me understand how you endure the smells and the mess. What is *that* horrid looking thing over there?" and Constance pointed to a grewsome-looking object stretched upon a small glass table at the farther side of the room.

"My rabbit. I got it at the school laboratory and I've been examining its respiratory organs. They're perfectly wonderful, Constance. Want to see them? I'll be done with this in just a minute."

"*No I don't!*" was the empathic negative. "I dare say it's all very wonderful and interesting and I ought to know all about breathing apparatus—*es*, or *apparatti*, or whatever the plural of our wind-pump machine *is*, but if I've got to learn by hashing up animals I'll never, *never* know, and that's all there is about it. I'll take my knowledge on theory or supposition or whatever you call it. But I've nearly forgotten to tell you the news. I've had a letter from Mrs. Hadyn, Mr. Stuyvesant's aunt, the one he is named for you know, asking me to help at the candy counter at the Memorial Hospital Fair, week after next, and, incidentally, contribute some of my 'delicious pralines and nut fudge'—that's in quotes remember,—and remain for the dance which will follow after thirty on the closing evening. She will see that I reach home safely. How is *that* for a frolic? I've been wild for a dance the past month."

"Is mother willing? What will you wear?" was the essentially feminine inquiry which proved that Eleanor, even though absorbed in her sciences and isms, was a woman at heart.

"What is the use of asking that? You know I've got to wear whatever is on hand to be utilized into gay and festive attire. I can't indulge in new frocks now-a-days when the finances are at such a low ebb. Need all we've got for necessities without thinking of spending money for notions. But I'll blossom out gloriously; see if I don't. That was one reason I came up to talk to you. Can you tear yourself away from your messes long enough to come up to the attic with me? I've been wanting to rummage for days, but haven't been able to get around to it. So tidy up, and come along. You've absorbed enough knowledge to last you for one while."

Eleanor wavered a moment and then began to put aside her materials, and a few moments later the two girls were up in the attic.

"Do you know what I believe I'll do?" said Constance, after a half hour's rummaging among several trunks had brought forth a perplexing array of old finery, winter garments and outgrown apparel. "I believe I'll just cart down every solitary dud we've got here and have them all aired. I heard mother say last week that they ought to be, and she would have it done the first clear, dry day, and this one is simply heavenly. Come on; take an armful and get busy. They smell almost as abominably from tar camphor as your laboratory smells of chemicals."

"Think I'd rather have the chemicals if my choice were consulted," laughed Eleanor as obedient to instructions, she gathered up an armful of clothing and prepared to descend the stairs.

"Thanks, I'll take the tar. Go on; I'll follow."

Little was to be seen of either girl as she moved slowly down the stairs. At the foot stood Mammy.

"Fo' de Lawd sake wha' yo' chillen at *now*?" she demanded as she stood barring their progress.

"Bringing out our winter wardrobes, Mammy. Good deal of it as to quantity; what it will turn out as to quality remains to be seen," cried Constance cheerily.

"Lak' 'nough mos' anyt'ing if yo' had de handlin' ob it. Yo' sartin' *is* de banginest chile wid yo' han's," was Mammy's flattering reply.

"Perhaps if I could 'bang' as well with my brains as with my hands I might amount to something, Mammy. But Nornie has all the brains of the family. *She'll* make our fame and fortune some day; see if she doesn't."

"Guess I'll have to do something clever then if I am to become famous in *this* day and age," said Eleanor, as she made her way past Mammy. "Thus far I haven't given very noble promise."

"Who sesso?" demanded Mammy. "Ain' yo' de fust and fo'most up dere whar de school's at? What fur ole Miss sendin' yo' dar fer den? Huh, I reckon *she* know whar ter spen' her money, an' Gawd knows she ain' spendin' none what ain' gwine ter pintedly make up fer all she gin out. *She* no fool, I tell yo'."

The girls broke into peals of laughter, for Mammy's estimation of "ol' Miss," as she called Mr. Carruth's aunt by marriage, was a pretty accurate one, "Aunt Eleanor" being a lady who had very pronounced ideas and no hesitation whatever in giving expression to them, as well as a very strong will to back them up. She also had a pretty liberally supplied purse, the supply being drawn from a large estate which she had inherited from her father, a Central New York farmer, who had made a fortune in fruit-growing and ended his days in affluence, although he had begun them in poverty. She had no children, her only son having died when a child, and her husband soon afterward. Bernard Carruth had always been a favorite with her, although she never forgave

him for what she pronounced his "utter and imbecilic folly." It was Aunt Eleanor who made the seminary possible for the niece who had been named for her; a compliment which flattered the old lady more than she chose to let others suspect, for the niece was manifesting a fine mind, and the aunt had secretly resolved to do not a little toward its development although she took pains to guard the fact.

"Go along up-stairs and get an armful of things, Mammy. That will keep you from flattering me and making me conceited," cried Eleanor, when the laugh ended.

"Huh! Mek a Blairsdale 'ceited?" retorted Mammy, as she started up to the attic. "Dey's got too much what dey *knows* is de right stuff fer ter pester dey haid's studyin' 'bout it; it's right dar all de endurin' time; dey ain' gotter chase atter it lessen dey loses it."

"Was there ever such a philosopher as Mammy?" laughed Constance as they got beyond hearing.

"Wish there were a few more with as much sound sense—black or white—" answered Eleanor as she shook out one of Jean's frocks and hung it across the clothes-line.

A moment later Mammy joined them with more garments which cried aloud for the glorious fresh air and sunshine. She hung piece after piece upon the line, giving a shake here, a pat there, or almost a caress upon another, for each one recalled to her loving old heart the memory of more prosperous days, and each held its story for her. When all were swinging in the sunshine she stepped back and surveyed the array, her mouth pursed up quizzically, but her eyes full of kindness.

"What are you thinking of Mammy?" asked Constance, slipping her fingers into Mammy's work-hardened hand very much as she had done when a little child.

"Hum; Um: What's I t'inkin' of? I'se t'inkin' dat ar lot ob clo'se supin lak we-all here: De'y good stuff in um, an' I reckon dey c'n stan' 'spection, on'y dey sartin *do* stan' in need ob jist a *leetle* spondulix fer ter put em in shape. Dar's *too much* ob em spread all *ober*. What dey needs is ter rip off some o' dem *ruffles* and jis hang ter de plain frocks ter tek keer ob. We spen's a heap ob time breshin' ruffles dat we better spen' tekin' keer ob de frocks in," concluded Mammy with a sage nod as she turned and walked into the house.

"Upon my word I believe Mammy's pretty near right Eleanor. We *have* got a good many *ruffles* to take care of on this big place and I sometimes feel that mother is wearing herself out caring for them. Perhaps we would be wiser to give them up."

"Perhaps we would," agreed Eleanor, "but where will we go if we give up the home? We have hardly known any other, for we were both too little to think much about homes or anything else when we came into this one. For my part, I am ready to do whatever is best and wisest, although I love every stick and stone here. Mother has looked terribly worried lately although she hasn't said one word to me. Has she to you?"

"No, nothing at all. But I know what you mean; her eyes look so tired. I wonder if anything new has arisen to make her anxious. She says so little at any time. I mean to have a talk with her this evening if I can get a chance. Do you get Jean out of the way. She is such an everlasting chatterbox that there is no hope of a quiet half hour while she is around. Now let's take an inventory of this array and plan my frivolity frock," and Constance drew Eleanor down upon a rustic seat at one side of the lawn to discuss the absorbing question of the new gown to be evolved from some of the old ones which were swaying in the wind.

Perhaps a half hour passed, the girls were giving little heed to time, for the drowsy dreamy influence of the afternoon was impressing itself upon them. Constance had planned the gown to the minutest detail, Eleanor agreeing and secretly marveling at her ability to do so, when both became aware of a strong odor of smoke.

"What is burning, I wonder?" said Constance, glancing in the direction of a patch of woodland not far off.

"Leaves, most likely. The Henrys' gardener has burned piles and piles of them ever since they began falling. I shouldn't think there would be any left for him to burn," answered Eleanor, looking in the same direction.

"It doesn't smell like leaves, it smells like wood, and—oh! Eleanor, Eleanor, look! look at your window! The smoke is just pouring from it! The house is a-fire! Run! Run! Quick! Quick!"

CHAPTER IX—Spontaneous Combustion

Had the ground opened and disgorged the town, men, women and children could hardly have appeared upon the scene with more startling promptitude than they appeared within five minutes after Constance's discovery of the smoke. How they got there only those who manage to get to every fire before the alarm ceases to sound can explain, and, as usual, there arrived with them the over-officious, and the over-zealous.

As Constance and Eleanor rushed into the house, the multitude rushed across the grounds and followed them hotfoot, while one, more level-headed than his fellows, hastened to the nearest fire-box to turn in an alarm.

Meanwhile Mammy had also smelt the smoke, and as the girls ran through the front hall she came through the back one crying:

"Fo' de Lawd's sake wha' done happen? De house gwine burn down on top our haids?"

"Quick, Mammy. It's Eleanor's room," cried Constance as she flew up the stairs.

Mammy needed no urging. In one second she had grasped the situation and was up in Mrs. Carruth's room dragging forth such articles and treasures as she knew to be most valued and piling them into a blanket. There was little time to waste for the flames had made considerable headway when discovered and were roaring wildly through the upper floor when the fire apparatus arrived. Mrs. Carruth was out driving with a friend and Jean was off with her beloved Amy Fletcher.

Only those who have witnessed such a scene can form any adequate idea of the confusion which followed that outburst of smoke from Eleanor's windows. Men ran hither and thither carrying from the burning house whatever articles they could lay their hands upon, to drop them from the windows to those waiting below to catch them. Firemen darted in and out, apparently impervious to either flames or smoke, directing their hose where the streams would prove most effectual and sending gallons of water upon the darting flames. The fact that the fire had started in the third-story saved many articles from destruction by the flames, although the deluge of water which flooded the house and poured down the stairways like miniature Niagaras speedily ruined what the flames spared.

Eleanor rushed toward her room but was quickly driven back by a burst of flames and smoke that nearly suffocated her, while Constance flew to Jean's and her own room, meanwhile calling directions to Mammy. Five minutes, however, from the time they entered the house they were forced to beat a retreat, encountering as they ran Miss Jerusha Pike, a neighbor who never missed any form of excitement or interesting occurrence in her neighborhood.

"What can I do? Have you saved your ma's clothes? Did you get out that mirror that belonged to your great-grandmother?" she cried, as she laid a detaining hand upon Constance's arm.

"I don't know, Miss Pike. Come out quick. It isn't safe to stay here another second. We must let the men save what they can. Come."

"No! No! I *must* save your grandmother's mirror. I know just where it hangs. You get out quick. I won't be a second. Go!"

"Never mind the mirror, there are other things more valuable than that," cried Eleanor as she tugged at the determined old lady's arm. But Miss Pike was not to be deterred and rushed away to the second story in spite of them.

"She'll be burned to death! I *know* she will," wailed Constance, as a man ran across the hall calling:

"Miss Carruth, Miss Constance, where are you? You must get out of here instantly!"

"Oh, Mr. Stuyvesant, Miss Pike has gone up to mother's room and I must go after her."

"You must do nothing of the sort. Come out at once both of you. I'll see to her when I've got you to a place of safety," and without more ado Hadyn Stuyvesant hurried them both from the house to the lawn, where a motley crowd was gathered, and their household goods and chattels were lying about in the utmost confusion, while other articles, escorted by various neighbors, were being borne along the street to places of safety. One extremely proper and precise maiden lady was struggling along under an armful of Mr. Carruth's dress-shirts and pajamas brought forth from nobody knew where. A portly matron, with the tread of a general, followed her with a flatiron in one hand and a tiny doll in the other, while behind her a small boy of eight staggered beneath the weight of a wash boiler.

"Where is Mammy? O *where* is Mammy?" cried Eleanor, clasping her hands and looking toward the burning building.

"Here me! Here me!" answered Mammy's voice as she hurried toward them with a great bundle of rescued articles. "I done drug dese yer t'ings f'om de burer in yo' ma's room an' do you keep tight fas' 'em 'twell I come back. Mind now what I'se telling' yo' kase dere's t'ings in dar dat she breck her heart ter lose. I'se gwine back fer sumpin' else."

"O Mammy! Mammy, *don't go*. You'll be burned to death," cried Constance, laying her hand upon Mammy's arm to restrain her.

"You mustn't Mammy! You mustn't," echoed Eleanor.

"Stay here with the girls, Mammy, and let me get whatever it is you are bent upon saving," broke

in Hadyn Stuyvesant.

"Aint no time for argufying," cried Mammy, her temper rising at the opposition. "You chillun stan' *dar* an' tek kere ob *dat* bundle, lak I tell yo' an' yo', Massa Stuyv'sant, come 'long back wid me," was the ultimatum, and, laughing in spite of the gravity of the situation, Hadyn Stuyvesant followed Mammy whom he ever afterward called the General.

As they hurried back to the kitchen entrance the one farthest removed from the burning portion of the building, Mammy's eyes were seemingly awake to every thing, and her tongue loosed of all bounds. As they neared the dining-room someone was dropping pieces of silver out of the window to someone else who stood just below it with skirts outspread to catch the articles.

"Ain' dat de very las' bit an' grain o' nonsense?" panted Mammy. "Dey's a-heavin' de silver plate outen de winder, an' bangin' it all ter smash stidder totin' it froo' de back do', and fo' Gawd's sake look dar, Massa Stuyv'sant! Dar go de' lasses!" cried Mammy, her hands raised above her head as her words ended in a howl of derision, for, overcome with excitement the person who was dropping the pieces of silver had deliberately turned the syrup-jug bottom-side up and deluged the person below with the contents. Had he felt sure that it would have been his last Hadyn Stuyvesant could not have helped breaking into peals of laughter, nor was the situation rendered less absurd by the sudden reappearance of Miss Pike clasping the treasured mirror to her breast and crying:

"Thank heaven! Thank heaven I'm alive and have *saved* it. *Where*, where are those dear girls that I may deliver this priceless treasure into their hands?"

"Out yonder near the hedge, Miss Pike. I'm thankful you escaped. They are much concerned about you. Better get along to them quick; I'm under Mammy's orders," answered Hadyn when he could speak.

Off hurried the zealous female while Hadyn Stuyvesant followed Mammy who was fairly snorting with indignation.

"Dat 'oman certain'y *do* mak' me mad. Dat lookin' glass! Huh! I reckons when Miss Jinny git back an' find what happen she aint goin' ter study 'bout no lookin' glasses. No suh! She be studyin' 'bout whar we all gwine put our *haid*s dis yere night. An' dat's what *I* done plan fer," concluded Mammy laying vigorous hold of a great roll of bedding which she had carried to a place of safety just outside the kitchen porch. "Please, suh, tek' holt here an' holp me get it out yander ter de stable, I'se done got a sight o' stuff out dere a-reddy," and sure enough Mammy, unaided, had carried enough furniture, bedding and such articles as were absolutely indispensable for living, out to the stable to enable the family to "camp out" for several days, and with these were piled the garments hastily snatched from the clothes-lines, Baltie mounting guard over all. Mrs. Carruth had not been so very far wrong when she told Mammy she believed she could move the house if necessity arose.

Meanwhile Miss Pike and her rescued mirror had reached the hedge, the girls breathing a sigh of relief when they saw her bearing triumphantly down upon them.

"There! There! If I never do another deed as long as I live I shall feel that I have *not* lived in vain! What *would* your poor mother have said had she returned to find this priceless heirloom destroyed," she cried, as she rested the mirror against a tree trunk and clasped her hands in rapture at sight of it.

"Perhaps mother *might* ask first whether *we* had been rescued," whispered Constance, but added quickly, "*there* is mother now. O I wonder who told her," for just then a carriage was driven rapidly to the front gate and as the girls ran toward it Mrs. Carruth stepped quickly from it. She was very white and asked almost breathlessly, "Girls, girls, is anyone hurt? Are you *all* safe? Where's Mammy?"

"We are all safe mother, Mammy is here. Don't be frightened. We have done everything possible and the fire is practically out now," said Constance, passing her arm about her mother who was trembling violently.

"Don't be alarmed, mother. It isn't really so dreadful as it might have been; it truly isn't," said Eleanor soothingly. "Loads of things have been saved."

"Yes, Mammy has outgeneraled us all, Mrs. Carruth," cried Hadyn Stuyvesant, who now came hurrying upon the scene. "I guess she has shown more sense than all the rest of us put together, for she's kept her head."

"And oh, my dear! My dear, if all else were lost there is one invaluable treasure spared to you! Come with me. I saved it for you with my own hands. Come!" cried Miss Pike, as she slipped her arm through Mrs. Carruth's and hurried her willy-nilly across the lawn.

There was the little round mirror in its quaint old-fashioned frame leaning against the tree and reflecting all the weird scene in its shining surface, and there, too, directly in front of it, strutted a lordly game cock which belonged to the Carruths' next door neighbor. How he happened to be there, in the midst of so much excitement and confusion no one paused to consider, but as Miss

Pike hurried poor Mrs. Carruth toward the spot, Sir Chanticleer's burnished ruff began to rise and the next instant there was a defiant squawk, a frantic dash of brilliantly iridescent feathers, and the cherished heirloom lay shattered beneath the triumphant game-cock's feet as he voiced a long and very jubilant crow.

It was the stroke needed, for in spite of the calamity which had overtaken her this was too much for Mrs. Carruth's sense of humor and she collapsed upon the piano stool which stood conveniently at hand, while Miss Pike bewailed Chanticleer's deed until one might have believed it had been her own revered ancestor's mirror which had been shattered by him.

Just then Mammy came hurrying upon the scene and was quick enough to grasp the situation at a glance.

"Bress de Lawd, Honey, ain' I allers tol' ye' chickens got secon' sight? Dat roos'er see double suah. He see himself in dat lookin' glass an' bus' it wide open, an' he see we-all need ter laf stidder cry, an' so he set out ter mek us."

At sight of her Mrs. Carruth stretched forth both hands like an unhappy child and was gathered into her faithful old arms as she cried:

"But oh, Mammy; Mammy, the insurance; the insurance. If I had *only* been able to pay it yesterday."

"Huh! Don't you fret ober de 'surance. Jis clap yo' eyes on *dat*," and Mammy thrust into her Miss Jinny's hands a paper which she hastily drew from the bosom of her frock.

CHAPTER X—Readjustment

It was all over. The excitement had subsided and all that remained to tell the story of the previous afternoon's commotion was a fire-scorched, water-soaked dwelling with a miscellaneous collection of articles decorating its lawn. When the early morning sunshine looked down upon the home which for eight years had sheltered the Carruths, it beheld desolation complete. Alas for Eleanor's chemicals! Her experiments had cost the family dear.

The only living being in sight was a policeman mounting guard over the ruins. A staid and stolid son of the Vatterland who had spent the wee sma' hours upon the premises and now stood upon the piazza upright and rigid as the inanimate objects all about him. Beside him was a small, toy horse "saddled and bridled and ready to ride," and anything more absurd than the picture cut by this guardian of the law and his miniature charger it would be hard to imagine.

Meanwhile the family was housed among friends who had been quick to offer them shelter, Mr. Stuyvesant insisting that Mrs. Carruth and Constance accept his aunt's hospitality through him, while the next door neighbor, Mr. Henry, harbored Eleanor, Jean and Mammy, who refused point blank to go beyond sight of the premises and her charge—Baltie.

Mammy was the heroine of the hour; for what the old woman had not thought of when everyone else's wits were scattered was hardly worth thinking of. In the blanket which she had charged the girls to guard were all of Mrs. Carruth's greatest treasures, among them a beautiful miniature of Mr. Carruth of which no one but Mammy had thought. Jewelry which had belonged to her mother was there, valuable papers hastily snatched from her desk, and many of the girl's belongings which would never have been saved but for Mammy's forethought. At seven o'clock, when all was over, the crowd dispersed and the family gathered together in Mr. Henry's living-room to collect their wits and draw a long breath, Mrs. Carruth drew Mammy to one side to ask:

"Mammy, what is the meaning of this receipt? I cannot understand it. Who has paid this sum and where was it paid?"

"Baby, dere comes times when 'taint a mite er use ter tell what we gwine *do*. Dat 'surance hatter be squar'd up an' dat settled it. So *I* squar'd it—."

"Oh, Mammy! Mammy!" broke in Mrs. Carruth, almost in tears.

"Hush, chile! Pay 'tention ter *me*. What would a come of we-all if I hadn't paid dat bill den an' dar? Bress de Lawd I had de cash an' don' pester me wid questions. Ain' I tole yo' I'se *rich*? Well den, dat settles it. When *yo* is, yo' kin settle wid *me*. *Dat* don' need no argufyin' do it? Now go long wid Miss Constance an' Massa Stuyvesant lak dey say an' git yo' sef ca'med down. Yo' all a shakin' an' a shiverin' lak yo' got de ager, an' dat won' never do in de roun' worl'. Yo'll be down sick on my han's."

And that was all the old woman would ever hear about it. When the thirty dollars were returned to her in the course of a few days she took it with a chuckle saying:

"Huh! Reckons *I* knows wha' ter investigate *my* money. Done git my intrus so quick it like ter scar me."

After the first excitement was over came the question of where the family was to live, and it was Hadyn Stuyvesant who settled it forthwith by offering the home which had been his mother's; a pretty little dwelling in the heart of Riveredge which had been closed since his mother's death and his own residence with his aunt. So in the course of the next week the Carruths were installed therein and began to adjust themselves to the new conditions. The first question to be answered was the one concerning their home. Should it be rebuilt with the money to be paid by the insurance company, or should it be sold? It was hard to decide, for sentiment was strongly in favor of returning to the home they all loved, while sound sense dictated selling the land and thus lessening expenses. Sound sense carried the day, and the little house on Hillside street became home, and in the course of a few weeks the machinery ran along with its accustomed smoothness, although it was some time before the family recovered from the shock of realizing how close they had come to losing all they possessed, and also keenly alive to the fact that what *had* been saved must be carefully guarded. Fifteen thousand was not an alarming sum to fall back upon and the rent for the new home although modest, compared with what their own would have commanded, had to be considered.

Meanwhile the girls had returned to their school duties, the older ones working harder than ever, especially Eleanor, whose conscience troubled her not a little at thought of her carelessness which had caused all the trouble, for well she realized that her failure to care properly for the powerful acids with which she had been experimenting when Constance appeared upon the scene had started the fire.

Constance had immediately set to work to evolve from the apparel rescued a winter wardrobe for the family, and displayed such ingenuity in bringing about new gowns and headgear from the old ones that the family flourished like green bay trees. Still Constance was not satisfied, and one afternoon said to Eleanor, who now shared her room, but who had *not* laid in a new supply of chemicals:

"Nornie, put down that book and listen to me, for I'm simmering with words o' wisdom and if I don't find a vent I'll boil over presently."

Eleanor laid aside the book she was poring over, laughing as she asked:

"What is it—some new scheme for making a two-pound steak feed five hungry mouths, or a preparation to apply to the soles of shoes to keep them from wearing out?"

"It has more to do with the stomach than the feet, but I'm not joking. I want to take account of stock and find out just where we are *at* and just what we *can* do. Mother has her hands and head more than full just now, and I think I ought to give a pull at the wheel too."

"And what shall I be about while you are doing the pulling? It seems to me a span can usually pull harder than a single horse. By-the-way, apropos of horses, what *has* Mammy done to poor old Baltie? Do you realize that she has not yet had him two months, but no one would ever recognize the old horse for the decrepit creature Jean led home that afternoon."

"I know it! Isn't she a marvel? I believe she is half witch. Why, blind and twenty-five years old as he is, old Baltie to-day would bring Jabe Raulsbury enough money to make the covetous old sinner smile, I believe; if anything on earth could make him smile. I thought I should have screamed when she started off with her steed the other day. That old phaeton and harness she found in the barn here were especially sent by Providence, I believe. I never expect to see a funnier sight if I live to be a hundred years old than Mammy driving off down the road with that great basket of apples by her side and Jean perched behind in the rumble. Mammy was simply superb and proud as the African princess she insists she is," and Constance laughed heartily at the picture she made.

"What did she do with her apples? I wish I could have seen her," cried Eleanor.

"She had them stored away in our cellar. She had gathered them herself from mother's pet tree and packed them carefully in a couple of barrels. How on earth she finds time to do all the things she manages to I can't understand. She took that basket out to Mrs. Fletcher. You remember Mrs. Fletcher once said there were no apples like ours and Mammy remembered it. Still, I am afraid Mrs. Fletcher would never have seen that basket of apples if her home had not adjoined the Raulsbury place. You know Jabe had to pay a large fine before he could get free. Such an hour of triumph rarely comes to two human beings as came to Mammy and Jean when they drove that old horse past Jabe's gateway and kind fate drew him to that very spot at the moment. Mammy is still chuckling over it, and Jean isn't to be lived with. But enough of Mammy and her charger, let's get to stock-taking."

"Yes, do," said Eleanor.

"I've been putting things down in black and white and here it is," said practical Constance, opening a little memorandum book and seating herself beside her sister. "You see mother has barely fifteen hundred dollars a year from father's life insurance and even *that* is somewhat lessened by the slump in those old stocks. Now comes the fire insurance settlement and the interest on that won't be over seven hundred at the outside, will it?"

"I'm afraid not," said Eleanor with a doubtful shake of her head. "But suppose we are able to sell

the old place?"

"Yes, 'suppose.' If we *do*, well and good, but supposes aren't much account for immediate needs, and those are the things we've got to think about now."

"Then let me think too," broke in Eleanor.

"You may *think* all you've a mind to; that's exactly what your brains are for, and some day you'll astonish us all. Meanwhile *I'll* work."

"Now, Constance, what are you planning? You know perfectly well that if you leave school and take up something that *I* shall too. I *won't* take all the advantages."

"Who said I had any notion of leaving school? Not a bit of it. My plan won't affect my school work. But of that later. Now to our capital. Mother will have at the outside nineteen hundred a year, and out of that she will have to pay five hundred rent for this house. That leaves fourteen hundred wherewith to feed and clothe five people, doesn't it? Now, she can't possibly *feed*, let alone clothe, us for less than twenty dollars a week, can she? And out of that must come fuel which is no small matter now-a-days. That leaves only three hundred and sixty dollars for all the other expenses of the year, and, Nornie, it isn't enough. We *could* live on less in town I dare say, but town is no place for Jean while she's so little. She'd give up the ghost without a place to romp in. Then, too, mother loves every stone in Riveredge, and she is going to *stay* here if I can manage it. So listen: You know what a fuss everybody at the fair made over my nut-fudge and pralines. Well, I'm going to make candy to sell—."

"Oh, Constance, you can't! You mustn't!" interrupted Eleanor whose instincts shrank from any member of her family launching upon a business enterprise.

"I can and I *must*," contradicted Constance positively. "And what is more, I shall. So don't have a conniption fit right off, because I've thought it all out and I know just exactly what I can do."

"Mother will *never consent*," said Eleanor firmly, and added, "and I hope she won't."

"Now Nornie, see here," cried Constance with decided emphasis. "What *is* the use of being so ridiculously high and mighty? We aren't the first people, by a long chalk, that have met with financial reverses and been forced to do something to earn a livelihood. The woods are full of them and they are none the less respected either. For my part, I'd rather hustle round and earn my own duddies than settle down and wish for them, and wail because I can't have them while mother strives and struggles to make both ends meet. I haven't *brains* to do big things in the world, but I've got what Mammy calls 'de bangenest han's' and we'll see what they'll bang out!" concluded Constance resolutely.

"Mammy will never let you," cried Eleanor, playing what she felt to be her trump card.

"On the contrary, Mammy is going to *help* me," announced Constance triumphantly.

"*What*, Mammy consent to a Blairsdale going into trade?" cried Eleanor, feeling very much as though the foundations of the house were sinking.

"Even so, Lady," answered Constance, laughing at her sister's look of dismay. "Old Baltie was not rescued for naught. His days of usefulness were not ended as you shall see. But don't look so horrified, and, above all else, don't say one word to mother. There is no use to worry her, and remember she *is* a Blairsdale and it won't be so easy to bring her to my way of thinking as it has been to bring *you*; you're only half one, like myself, and remember we've got Carruth blood to give us mercantile instincts."

"As though the Carruths were not every bit as good as the Blairsdales," brindled Eleanor indignantly.

"Cock-a-doodle! See its feathers ruffle. You are as spunky as the Henry's game cock," cried Constance laughing and gathering Eleanor's head into her arms to maul it until her hair came down.

"Well," retorted Eleanor, struggling to free herself from the tempestuous embrace, "so they are."

"Yes, my beloved sister. I'll admit all that, but bear in mind that *their* ancestors were born in Pennsylvania *not* in 'ole Caroliny, and that's the difference 'twixt tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee. I don't believe Mad Anthony stopped to consider whether he was a patrician or a plebeian when he was storming old Stony Point, or getting fodder for Valley Forge, so I don't believe *I* will, when I set out to hustle for frocks and footgear for his descendants. So put your pride in your pocket, Nornie, and watch me grow rich and the family blossom out in luxuries undreamed of. I'm going to *do* it: you'll see," ended Constance in a tone so full of hope and courage that Eleanor then and there resolved not to argue the point further or discourage her.

"When are you going to begin this enterprise?" she asked.

"This very day. I'm only waiting for Mammy to come back from market with some things I need, and there she is now. Good-bye. Go look after the little Mumsie, or Jean; you'd find your hands

full with the last undertaking, no doubt," and with a merry laugh Constance ran down-stairs to greet Mammy who was just entering the back door.

CHAPTER XI—First Ventures

"Did you get all the things, Mammy?" cried Constance, as she flew into the kitchen where Mammy stood puffing and panting like a grampus, for the new home was at the top of a rather steep ascent and the climb took the old woman's breath.

"Co'se Ise got 'em," panted Mammy, as she untied the strings of her bright purple worsted hood. "Dar dey is, all ob 'em, eve'y one, an yo' kin git busy jes' as fas' as yo's a mind ter. But, la, honey, don' yo' let yo' *ma* know nothin' 'tall 'bout it, 'cause she lak 'nough frail me out fer lettin' yo' do hit. But sumpin' 's gotter be done in dis yere fambly. What wid de rint fer *dis* place, an' de taxes for de yether, an' de prices dey's teken' ter chargin', fer t'ings ter *eat*, I 'clar' ter goodness dar ain't gwine be nuffin' 'tall lef' fer we-all ter fall back on ef we done teken sick, er bleegeed ter do sumpin' extra," ended Mammy as she bustled about putting away her things and untying the packages as Constance lifted them from the basket.

"Yes, you've got every single thing I need, Mammy, and now I'll begin right off. Which kettles and pans can you spare for my very own? I don't want to bother to ask every time and if I have my own set at the very beginning that saves bother in the end," cried Constance, as she slipped her arms through the shoulder straps of a big gingham apron and after many contortions succeeded in buttoning it back of her shoulders.

"Dar you is!" said Mammy, taking from their hooks, above her range two immaculate porcelain saucepans, and standing them upon the well-scrubbed kitchen table with enough emphasis to give the transfer significance. "Dey's yours fer keeps, but don' yo' let me ketch yo' burnin' de bottoms of 'em."

Mammy could not resist this authoritative warning. Then bustling across to her pantry she took out three shining pans and placed them beside the saucepans, asking:

"Now is yo' fixed wid all de impert'nances ob de bisness?"

"All but the fire, Mammy," laughed Constance, rolling up her sleeves to disclose two strong, well-rounded arms.

"Well yo' fire's gwine ter be gas *dis* time, chile'. Yo' kin do what yo's a-mind ter wid dat little gas refrig'rator, what yo' turns on an' off wid de spiggots; *I* aint got er mite er use fer hit. It lak ter scare me mos' ter deaf de fust mawnin' I done try ter cook de breckfus on it,—sputterin' an' roarin' lak it gwine blow de hull house up. No-siree, I ain' gwine be pestered wid no sich doin's 's *dat*. Stoves an' wood 's good 'nough fer *dis* 'oman," asserted Mammy with an empathic wag of her head, for she had never before seen a gas range, and was not in favor of innovations.

"Then I'm in luck," cried Constance, as she struck a match to light up her "gas refrigerator," Mammy meanwhile eying her with not a little misgiving, and standing as far as possible from the fearsome thing. "Tek keer, honey! Yo' don' know what dem new-fangled mak'-believe stoves lak ter do. Fust t'ing yo' know it bus' wide open mebbe."

"Don't be scared, Mammy. They are all right, and safe as can be if you know how to handle them, and lots less trouble than the stove."

"Dat may be too," was Mammy's skeptical reply. "But *I'll* tek de trouble stidder de chance of a busted haid."

Before long the odor of boiling sugar filled the little kitchen, the confectioner growing warm and rosy as she wielded a huge wooden spoon in the boiling contents of her saucepans, and whistled like a song thrush. Constance Carruth's whistle had always been a marvel to the members of her family, and the subject of much comment to the few outsiders who had been fortunate enough to hear it, occasionally, for it was well worth hearing. It had a wonderful flute-like quality, with the softest, tenderest, low notes. Moreover, she whistled without any apparent effort, or the ordinary distortion of the mouth which whistling generally involves. The position of her lips seemed scarcely altered while the soft sounds fell from them. But she was very shy about her "one accomplishment," as she laughingly called it, and could rarely be induced to whistle for others, though she seldom worked without filling the house with that birdlike melody. As she grew more and more absorbed with her candy-making the clear, sweet notes rose higher and higher, their rapid *crescendo* and increasing *tempo* indicating her successful progress toward a desired end.

While apparently engaged in preparing a panful of apples, Mammy was covertly watching her, for, next to her baby, Jean, Constance was Mammy's pet.

When the candy was done, Constance poured it into the pans.

"Now in just about two jiffies that will be ready to cut. Keep one eye on it, won't you Mammy, while I run up-stairs for my paraffin paper," she said, as she set the pans outside to cool and

whisked from the kitchen, Mammy saying under her breath as she vanished:

"If folks could once hear dat chile *whis'le* dey'd hanker fef ter hear it agin, an' dey'd keep on a hankerin' twell dey'd *done* hit. She beat der bu'ds, an' dat's a fac'."

"Now I guess I can cut it," cried Constance, as she came hurrying back.

The sudden chill of the keen November air had made the candy the exact consistency for cutting into little squares, and in the course of the next half hour they were all cut, carefully wrapped in bits of paraffin paper and neatly tied in small white paper packages with baby-ribbon of different colors. Four dozen as inviting parcels of delicious home-made candy as any one could desire, and all made and done up within an hour and a half.

"There, Mammy! What do you think of *that* for my initial venture?" asked Constance, looking with not a little satisfaction upon the packages as they lay in the large flat box into which she had carefully packed them.

"Bate yo' dey hits de markit spang on de haid," chuckled Mammy. "An' now *I'se* gwine tek holt. La, ain' I gwine cut a dash, dough! Yo' see *me*," and hastily donning her hood and shawl, and catching up an apple from her panful, off Mammy hurried to the little stable which stood in one corner of the small grounds, where Baltie had lived, and certainly flourished since the family came to dwell in this new home.

Mammy never entered that stable without some tidbit for her pet, for she had grown to love the blind old horse as well as Jean did, and was secretly consumed with pride at his transformation. As she entered the stable, Baltie greeted her with his soft nicker.

"Yas, honey, Mammy's comin'; comin' wid yo' lolly-pop, kase she want yo' ter step out spry. Yo's gwine enter a pa'tner-ship, yo' know *dat*, Baltie-hawse? Yo' sure *is*. Yo's de silen' pa'tner, yo' is, an' de bline one too. Jis as well ter hab one ob 'em bline mebbe," and Mammy chuckled delightedly at her own joke. "Now come 'long out an' be hitched up, kase we's gwine inter business, yo' an' me' an' we gotter do some hustlin'. Come 'long," and opening the door of the box-stall in which old Baltie now-a-days luxuriated, Mammy dragged him forth by his forelock and in less time than one could have believed it possible, had him harnessed to the old-fashioned basket phaeton which during Mrs. Stuyvesant's early married life had been a most up-to-date equipage, but which now looked as odd and antiquated as the old horse harnessed to it. But in Mammy's eyes they were tangible riches, for Hadyn Stuyvesant had presented her with both phaeton and harness.

Opening wide the stable doors, Mammy clambered into her chariot, and taking up the reins, guided her steed gently forward. Baltie ambled sedately up to the back door where Constance was waiting to hand Mammy the box.

"Mind de do' an' don' let my apples bake all ter cinders," warned Mammy.

"I will. I won't. Good luck," contradicted Constance, as she ran back into the house, and Mammy drove off toward South Riveredge; a section of the town as completely given over to commercial interests as Riveredge proper was to its homes. There a large carpet factory thrived and flourished giving employment to many hands. There, also, stood a large building called the Central Arcade in which many business men had their offices. It was about a mile from the heart of Riveredge proper and as Mammy jogged along toward her destination, she had ample time to think, and chuckle to herself at her astuteness in carrying out her own ideas of the fitness of things while apparently fully concurring with Constance's wishes. Mammy had no objections to Constance *making* all the candy she chose to make; that could be done within the privacy of her own home and shock *no* one's sensibilities. But when the girl had announced her intention of going among her friends to secure customers, Mammy had descended upon her with all her powers of opposition. The outcome had been the present compromise. Very few people in South Riveredge knew the Carruths or Mammy, and this was exactly what the old woman wished.

Driving her "gallumping" steed to the very heart of the busy town she drew up at the curbstone in front of the Arcade just a few moments before the five o'clock whistles blew. Stepping from her vehicle she placed a campstool upon the sidewalk beside it, and lifting her box of candy from the seat established herself upon her stool with the open box upon her lap. Within two minutes of the blowing of the whistles the streets were alive with people who came hurrying from the buildings on every side. Mammy was a novelty and like most novelties took at once, so presently she was doing a thriving business, her tongue going as fast as her packages of candy. People are not unlike sheep; where one leads, all the others follow.

"Home-made candy, sah! Fresh f'om de home-kitchen; jis done mek hit. Ain' hardly col'. Ten cents a package, sah. Yes *sah*, yo' better is bleeve hit's deleshus. Yo' ain' tas' no pralines lak dem in all yo' bo'n days," ran on Mammy handing out her packages of candy and dropping her dimes into the little bag at her side.

"Here, Aunty, give me four of those packages of fudge," cried a genial, gray-haired, portly old gentleman with a military bearing. "Porter, here, has just given me some of his and they're simply great! Did you make 'em? They touch the spot."

"La, suh, I ain' *got* four left: I ain', fer a fac'. Tek some of de pralines; deys mighty good, suh," bustled Mammy, offering her dainties.

"Take all you've got. Did *you* make 'em?" persisted her customer.

"My *pa'tner* done mak 'em," said Mammy with dignity, as she handed over her last package.

"Well you darkies *can* cook," cried the gentleman as he took the candy.

For a moment it seemed as though Mammy were about to fly at him, and her customer was not a little astounded at the transformation which came over her old face. Then he concluded that the term "darkie" had been the rock on which they had split, and smiled as he said:

"Better set up business right here in the Arcade. Buy you and your *partner* out every day. Good-bye, Auntie."

"Good-bye, suh! Good-bye," responded Mammy, her equanimity quite restored, for her good sense told her that no reflections had been cast upon her "pa'tner" in Riveredge, or her identity suspected. Moreover, her late customer had put a new idea into her wise old head which she turned over again and again as she drove back home.

Constance was waiting with the lantern, and hurried out to the stable as Mammy turned in at the gate.

"Oh, Mammy, did you *sell* some?" she asked eagerly.

"Sell some! What I done druv dar fer? Co'se I sell some; I sell eve'y las' bit an' grain. Tek dat bag an' go count yo' riches, honey. *Sell some!* Yah! Yah!" laughed Mammy as she descended from her chariot and began to unharness her steed, while Constance hugged the bag and hurried into the house.

"What are you hiding under your cape?" demanded Jean as her sister ran through the hall, and up the stairs. Jean's eyes did not often miss anything.

"My deed to future wealth and greatness," answered Constance merrily, as she slipped into her room and locked the door, where she dumped the contents of the bag, dimes, nickels, and pennies, into the middle of the bed.

"Merciful sakes! Who would have believed it?" she gasped. "Four dollars and eighty cents for one afternoon's work, and at least three-eighty of it clear profit, and Mammy has *got* to share some of it. Mumsie, dear, I think I can keep the family's feet covered at all events," she concluded in an ecstatic whisper.

CHAPTER XII—Another Shoulder is Added

Thanksgiving and Christmas had come and passed. Constance's "candy business" as she called it, throve and flourished spasmodically. Could she have carried out her wishes concerning it, the venture might have been more profitable, but Mammy, the autocrat, insisted that it should be kept a secret, and the habit of obedience to the old woman's dictates was deeply rooted in the Carruth family, even Mrs. Carruth yielding to it far more than she realized.

So Constance made her candy during her free hours after school and Mammy carried it into South Riveredge when opportunity offered. This was sometimes twice, but more often only once, a week, for the faithful old soul had manifold duties and was too conscientious to neglect one. Sometimes all the packages were sold off as quickly as they had been on that first red-letter day, but at other times a good many were left over. Could they again have been offered for sale upon the following day they might easily have been disposed of, but Mammy could not go to South Riveredge two days in succession and, consequently, the candy grew stale before another sale's day arrived, was a loss to its anxious manufacturer, and caused her profits to shrink very seriously. Things had been going on in this rather unsatisfactory manner for about six weeks when one Saturday morning little Miss Paulina Pry, as Constance sometimes called Jean, owing to her propensity to get to the bottom of things in spite of all efforts to circumvent her, came into her sister's room to ask in the most innocent manner imaginable:

"Connie, who does Mammy know in South Riveredge?"

"Nobody, that I know of," answered Constance unsuspectingly.

"I thought she had a cousin living there," was the next leader.

"A cousin, child! Why Mammy hasn't a relative this side of Raleigh and I don't believe she has two to her name down there. If she has, she hasn't seen them since mother brought her north before we were born."

"I knew it!" was the triumphant retort, "and *now* I'll get even with her for telling me fibs."

"Jean, what do you mean?" cried Constance now fully alive to the fact that she had fallen into a trap.

"I mean just this: I've been watching Mammy drive off to South Riveredge every solitary week since before Thanksgiving, and I've asked her ever so many times to take me with her; she lets me go everywhere else with her and Baltie. But she wouldn't take me there and when I asked her why not, she always said because she was going to visit with her cousins in-the-Lord, and 'twan't no fit place for white folks. I *knew* she was telling a fib, and *now* I'm going right down stairs to tell her so," and Jean whirled about to run from the room. Constance made a wild dive and caught her by her sleeve.

"Jean, stop! Listen to me. You are not to bother Mammy with questions. She has a perfect right to do or go as she chooses," said Constance with some warmth, and instantly realized that she had taken the wrong tack, for the little pepper-pot began to liven up. Jerking herself free she struck an attitude, saying:

"You are just as bad as Mammy! *You* know where she goes, and what she goes for, but you won't tell me. Keep your old secrets if you want to, but I'll find out, see if I don't. And I'll get even too. You and Mammy think I'm nothing but a baby, but you'll see. I'm most eleven years old, and if I can't be told the truth about things now, I'd like to know why," and with a final vigorous wrench Jean freed herself from her sister's grasp and fled down the stairs, Constance murmuring to herself as the little whirlwind disappeared: "I wonder if it wouldn't be wiser to let her into the secret after all? In the first place it is all nonsense to *keep* it a secret, and just one of Mammy's high-falutin ideas of what's right and proper for a Blairsdale. Fiddlesticks for the Blairsdales say I, when certain things should be done. I'm going to tell that child anyway. She is ten times easier to deal with when she knows the truth, and she can keep a secret far better than some older people I might mention. Jean; Jean; come back; I want to tell you something."

But Jean had gone beyond hearing. "Never mind; I'll tell her by-and-by," resolved Constance and soon forgot all about the matter while completing her English theme for Monday. Could she have followed her small sister her state of mind would have been less serene.

Jean's first reconnoiter was the dining-room. All serene; nothing doing; mother up in her room. Eleanor gone out. Mammy in the kitchen stirring quietly about. Jean slipped into the butler's pantry. There on a shelf stood a big white box marked "Lord & Taylor, Ladies' Suit Dept." Jean's nose rose a degree higher in the air as she drew near it and carefully raised the lid. "Ah-hah! Didn't I know it! I guess her cousins-in-the-Lord must like candy pretty well, for she has taken that box with her every single time she's gone to South Riveredge," whispered this astute young person.

Now it so happened that as Mammy had advanced in years, she had grown somewhat hard of hearing, and had also developed a habit quite common to her race; that of communing aloud with herself when alone.

Jean was quite alive to this and more than once had caused the old woman to regard her with considerable awe by casually mentioning facts of which Mammy believed her to be entirely in ignorance, and, indeed, preferred she *should* be, little guessing that her own monologues had given the child her cue.

Clambering softly upon the broad shelf which ran along one side of the pantry, Jean gently pushed back the sliding door made to pass the dishes to and from the kitchen, and watched Mammy's movements. The kitchen was immaculate and Mammy was just preparing to set forth for her Saturday morning's marketing, a task she would not permit any one else to undertake, declaring that "dese hyer Norf butcher-men stood ready fer ter beat folks outen dey eyesight ef dey git er chance."

As usual Mammy was indulging in a soliloquy.

"Dar now. Dat's all fix an' right, an' de minit I gits back I kin clap it inter de oven," she murmured as she set her panfuls of bread over the range for their second rising. "I gotter git all dis hyer wo'k off my han's befo' free 'clock terday ef I gwine get ter Souf Riveredge in time fer ter sell all dat mes o' candy."

Behind the window a small body's head gave a satisfied nod.

"'Taint lak week days. De sto'es tu'n out mighty early on Sattidays. Hopes I kin sell eve'y bit and grain *dis* time. I hates ter tote any home agin, an' dat chile tryin' so hard ter holp her ma."

Over little Paulina Pry's face fell a shadow, and for a moment the big eyes grew suspiciously bright. Then wounded pride caused them to flash as their owner whispered to herself, "She *might* have told me the truth."

Then the kitchen door was shut, locked from the outside, and Mammy departed.

Jean got down from her perch and stood for a few moments in the middle of the pantry floor in deep meditation. Then raising her head with a determined little nod she said under her breath, "I'll show 'em."

To hurry out to the hall closet where her everyday hat, coat and gloves were kept, took but a moment. In another she had put them on, and was on her way to the stable. To harness Baltie was somewhat of an undertaking, but by the aid of a box which raised her to the necessary height this was done, the old horse nickering softly and rubbing his head against her as she proceeded.

"Yes Baltie, dear. *You and I* have a secret now and *don't* you *tell* it. If *they* think they are so smart, *we'll* show them that *we* can do something too."

At length the harnessing was done, and slipping back to the house Jean went into the pantry, lifted up the box so plainly labeled "Ladies' Suits" and sped away to the stable where she placed it carefully upon the bottom of the phaeton, tucking the carriage rug around and about it in such a manner that even the liveliest suspicion would have nothing to feed upon.

Then opening the double doors she led Baltie through them, and out of the driveway to the side street on which it opened, and which could not be seen from the front of the house where the young lady knew her mother and sister to be at this critical moment. Only a second more was needed to run back and close the stable doors and the gates, and all tracks were covered.

In that immediate vicinity the queer turnout was well-known by this time, so no curiosity was aroused by its appearance.

As usual, Jean had not paused to mature her plans. Their inception was enough for the time being; details could follow later.

Plod, plod, fell Baltie's hoofs upon the macadamized street as Jean guided him slowly along. The day was cold, but clear and crisp, with just a hint of wind or snow from the mare's tails overhead in the blue.

Jean had no very clear idea of what her next step would be, and was rather trusting to fate to show her. Perhaps Baltie had a better one than his driver, or perhaps it was sense of direction and force of habit which was heading him toward South Riveredge; Baltie's intelligence did not appear to wane with his years. At all events, he was going his usual route when Jean spied Mammy far ahead and in a trice fate had stepped in to give things a twist. To pull Baltie around and guide him into a street which led to East instead of South Riveredge was the work of a second. Jean thought she could go back by another street which led diagonally into South Riveredge but when she reached it she found it closed for repairs. Turning around involved more or less danger and she had a thought for that which lay at her feet. So on she went, hoping to get into South Riveredge sooner or later.

Like many suburban towns, Riveredge had certain sections which were given over to the poorer element, and in such sections could always be found enough idle, mischievous youngsters to make things interesting for other people, particularly on Saturdays when they were released from the restraint of school.

Jean had proceeded well along upon her way when she was spied by two or three urchins upon whose hands time was hanging rather heavily, and to whom the novel sight of a handsome, neatly-clad child, perched in a phaeton which might have been designed for Noah, and driving a blind horse, was a vision of joy.

"Hi, Billy, get on ter de swell rig," bawled one worthy son of McKim's Hollow.

"Gee! Aint he a stunner! Say, where did yer git him?" yelled Billy, prompt to take up the ball, and give it a toss.

"Mebbe he's de ghost av yer granfather's trotter," was the next salute.

"Hi, what's his best time. Forty hours fer de mile?" asked a larger lad, hanging on to the back of the phaeton and winding his heels into the springs.

"Get down! Go away!" commanded Jean.

"Couldn't," politely replied her passenger.

"Say yer oughter have a white hawse wid all dat red hair," yelled a new addition to the number already swarming after her.

"Git a move on," was the next cry, as a youth armed with a long stick joined the crowd. Things were growing decidedly uncomfortable for Jean whose cheeks were blazing, and whose eyes were flashing ominously. Just then one urchin made a grab for the whip but she was too quick for him, and once having it in her hand was tempted to lay about vigorously. As though divining her thoughts, the smaller boys drew off but he of the stick scorned such an adversary, although discretion warned him not to lay it upon her. The old horse, however, was not so guarded by law and the stick descended upon his flanks with all the strength of the young rowdy's arms. He would better have struck Jean!

Never since coming to live in his present home had Baltie felt a blow, but during all those four months had been petted, loved and cared for in a manner to make him forget former trials, and in

spite of his age, renew his strength and spirits. True, he was never urged to do more than jog, jog, jog along, but under the spur of this indignity some of his old fire sprung up and with a wild snort of resentment he plunged forward. As he did so, down came the whip across his assailant's head, for Jean had forgotten all else in her wrath; she began to lay about her with vigor, and the battle was on in earnest.

Perhaps John Gilpin cut a wilder dash yet it is doubtful.

CHAPTER XIII—The Battle of Town and Gown

Jean had come about a mile from Riveredge before encountering her unwelcome escort, and a mile for old Baltie was considered a good distance by Mammy who always blanketed him carefully and gave him a long rest after such exertion. The sight of the old woman's care for her horse had won her more than one feminine customer in South Riveredge and not infrequently they entered into conversation with her regarding him. Mammy needed no greater encouragement to talk, and Baltie's history became known to many of her customers.

Could Mammy have witnessed Baltie's wild careerings as he pounded along to escape his tormentors, while Jean strove desperately to beat them off, she would probably have expired upon the spot.

But Baltie's strength was not equal to any long-sustained effort and his breath soon became labored. The shouting cavalcade had gone about half a mile at its wild pace and Jean had done her valiant best, but the numbers against her had been steadily augmented as she proceeded, and the situation was becoming really dangerous. She stood up in the phaeton, hat hanging by its elastic band, hair flying and eyes flashing as she strove to beat off her pursuers. Most of them, it must be admitted, were good-natured, and were simply following up their prank from a spirit of mischief. But two or three had received stinging lashes from the whip and the sting had aroused their ire.

Jean's strength as well as old Baltie's was giving out when from the opposite side of a high arbor-vitæ hedge arose a cry of:

"Gown to the rescue! Gown to the rescue!" and the next second the road seemed filled with lads who had apparently sprung from it, and a lively scrimmage was afoot. The boys who had so lately been making things interesting for Jean and Baltie, turned to flee precipitately, but were pretty badly hustled about before they could escape; he of the stick being captured red-handed as he launched a blow that came very near proving a serious one for Jean since it struck the whip from her hands and landed it in the road. The poor child collapsed upon the seat, and strove hard to suppress a sob, for she would have died sooner than cry before the boys of the "Irving Preparatory School."

Baltie needed no second hint to make him understand that the time had come to let his friends take up the battle, and bracing his trembling old legs he stood panting in the middle of the road.

"I say, what did this fellow do to you, little girl?" demanded a tall, fine-looking lad, whose dark gray eyes were flashing with indignation, and whose firm mouth gave his captive reason to know that he meant whatever he said. At any other time Jean would have resented the "little girl," but during the past fifteen minutes she had felt a very small girl indeed.

"He's a coward! A great, hulking coward!" she blazed at the hapless youth whom her champion held so firmly by his collar as he stood by the phaeton. The other lads who had now completely routed Jean's tormentors were gathering about her, some with looks of concern for her welfare, some with barely restrained smiles at her plight and her turnout.

"What'll I do to him? Punch his head?" demanded knight errant.

"No, shake it most off!" commanded Jean. "He nearly made mine shake off," she concluded, as she pushed her hair from her eyes and jerked her hat back into place. "My goodness just look at the state I'm in and look at Baltie; I don't know what Mammy will say. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, you great big bully, to torment a girl and a poor old blind horse. Oh, I *wish* I were a boy! If I wouldn't give you bally-whacks."

A smile broke over knight errant's face, but his victim trembled in his boots.

"All right then, here goes, since you won't let me punch it," and Jean's injunctions to shake her tormentor's head "most off" seemed in a fair way to be obeyed, for the next second its owner was being shaken very much as a rat is shaken by a terrier and the head was jerked about in a most startling manner.

"Now get out! Skiddoo! And if we catch you and your gang out this way again you'll have a pretty lively time of it, and don't you forget it either," said knight errant with a final shake, and Long Stick was hustled upon his way toward his friends who had not paused to learn his fate.

This boy who acted as spokesman, and who appeared to be a leader among his companions, then

said:

"I say, your old horse is pretty well knocked up, isn't she? How far have you come? Better drive into the school grounds and rest up a bit before you go back. Come on!" and going to Baltie's head the lad took hold of the rein to lead him through the gateway.

Baltie never forgot his manners, however great the stress under which he was laboring, so turning his sightless eyes toward his new friend, he nickered softly, and rubbed his muzzle against him. The lad laughed and raising his hand stroked the warm neck as he said:

"Found a friend at last, old boy? Well, come on then, for you needed one badly."

"Guess he *did!*" said Jean. "My gracious, I don't know what we would have done if you boys hadn't come out to help us. How did you happen to hear us?"

"We were out on the field with the ball. I guess it's lucky for you we were, too, for there's a tough gang up there near Riveredge. We're always on the lookout for some new outbreak, and we make it lively if they come up this way, you'd better believe. They don't try it very often, but you were too big a chance for 'em this time, and they sailed right in. But they sailed at the wrong time for we are never happier to exchange civilities with them than when we have on our togs," ended the lad, as he glanced at the foot-ball suits which he and a number of his chums were wearing.

"Oh, are you playing foot-ball? I wish I could see you," cried Jean eagerly, all thoughts of her late plans flying straight out of her head.

"Better come over to the field then," laughed her escort.

"I'd love to but I guess I can't to-day. I'm on important business. I'm going to South Riveredge," she said, suddenly recalling her errand.

"South Riveredge!" echoed a lad who walked at the other side of the phaeton. "Why it's nearly four miles from here. It's almost two to Riveredge itself. What brought you out this way if you were going to South Riveredge?"

But to explain just why she had turned off the direct road to South Riveredge would be a trifle embarrassing, so Jean decided to give another reason:

"I thought I knew my way but I guess I must have missed it, those boys tormented me so."

"I guess you did miss it, but I don't wonder. Well, rest here a little while, and then we'll start you safely back. Guess one of us better go along with her hadn't we, Ned?" he asked of the gray-eyed boy.

"If we want her to get back whole I guess we had," was the laughing answer, as Baltie's guide led him up to a carriage step and stopped. Baltie's coat was steaming. "Got a blanket? Better let me put it on your horse. He's pretty warm from his race and the day is snappy."

Jean bounded up from the seat and pulled the blanket from it. It was not a very heavy blanket and when the boy had put it carefully upon the old horse, it seemed hardly thick enough to protect him. "Let me have the rug too," he ordered, and without a second's thought jerked up the rug and gave it a toss. Up came the box of candy with it, to balance a second upon one end as daintily as a tight-rope dancer balances upon a rope, then keel gracefully over and land bottom-side-up, upon the tan-bark of the driveway, the packages of candy flying in twenty different directions.

Jean's cry of dismay was echoed by the boys' shouts as their eyes quickly grasped the significance of those dainty white parcels. A wild scramble to rescue her wares followed, as Jean was plied with questions.

"Are they yours? What are you going to do with them?" "Are they for sale?" "Can we buy some?" "How much are they?" "Lend me some cash, Bob?"

Never was an enterprising merchant so suddenly plunged into a rushing business. Jean's head whirled for a moment. How much were the packages of candy? She hadn't the vaguest idea, and circumstances had not made it convenient to ascertain before she set forth. However, her wits came to her rescue and she recalled the little packages which Constance had made for the fair, and which had sold for ten cents each. So ten cents *she* would charge, and presently was doling out her rescued packages of fudge and dropping dimes into her box to take the place of the packages which were so quickly disappearing from it. Given four dozen packages of exceptionally delicious home-made candy, and twenty or thirty boys, after an hour's foot-ball exercise, upon a crisp January morning, each more or less supplied with pocket money, and it is a combination pretty sure to work to the advantage of the candy-maker.

Jean's eyes danced, and her face was radiant. Her business was in its most flourishing stage when she became aware that another actor had appeared upon the scene, and was regarding her steadily through a pair of very large, very round, and very thick-lensed eye-glasses, and with the solemn expression of a meditative owl. How long he had been a silent observer of her financial operations Jean had no idea. His presence did not appear to embarrass the boys in any way;

indeed, when they became aware of it two or three of them promptly urged him to partake of their toothsome dainties. This he did in the same grave, absorbed manner.

"Great, aint they, Professor?" asked one lad.

"Quite unusual. Who is the juvenile vender?" he asked.

"We don't know. She was out yonder in the road with half McKim's Hollow after her when we fellows rallied to the rescue. She was as plucky as any thing, and was putting up a great standoff when we got in our licks."

"Ah! Indeed! And how came she to have such a feast along with her. I'll take another, thank you, Ned. They are really excellent," and instead of "another" the last three of "Ned's" package were calmly appropriated and eaten in the same abstracted manner that the other pieces had been. Ned looked somewhat blank and turning toward one of his companions, winked and smiled slyly, then said to the Professor:

"Better buy some quick. They are going like hot cakes."

CHAPTER XIV—The Candy Enterprise Grows

"I believe I shall," and drawing closer to the phaeton the Professor peered more closely at its occupant as he said:

"I say, little girl, I think I'll take all you have there. They are exceedingly palatable. And I would really like to know how it happens that a child apparently so respectable as yourself should be peddling sweets. You—why you might really be a gentleman's daughter," he drawled.

Now it had never for a moment occurred to Jean that appearances might prove misleading to those whose powers of observation were not of the keenest, or that a much disheveled child driving about the country in an antiquated phaeton, to which was harnessed a patriarchal horse, might seem to belong to a rather lower order in the social scale than her mother had a right to claim. So the near-sighted Professor's remark held anything but a pleasing suggestion. For a moment she hardly grasped its full significance, then drawing up her head like an insulted queen, she regarded the luckless man with blazing eyes as she answered:

"I am a Carruth, thank you, and the Carruths do as they *please*. You need not buy these candies if you don't wish to. I can get plenty of customers among my friends—the boys."

When did unconscious flattery prove sweeter? Those same "friends—the boys" would have then and there died for the small itinerant whose wares had so touched their palates, and who was openly choosing their patronage over and above that of an individual who had now and again caused more than one of them to pass an exceedingly bad quarter of an hour. A suppressed giggle sounded not far off, but the Professor's face retained its perfect solemnity as he bent his head toward Jean to get a closer view.

"Hum; ah; yes. I dare say you are quite right. I was probably over hasty in drawing conclusions," was the calm response.

"*Mammy* says a *gentleman* can always rec'o'nize a lady," flashed Jean, unconsciously falling into Mammy's vernacular.

"And who is Mammy, may I inquire?" asked the imperturbable voice, its owner absently eating lumps of fudge and pralines at a rate calculated to speedily reduce the supply he had on hand, the lads meanwhile regarding the vanishing "lumps of delight" with longing eyes.

"Why she's *Mammy*," replied Jean with considerable emphasis.

"Mammy *what*?" was the very unprofessional question which followed.

"Mammy Blairsdale, of course. *Our* Mammy."

There was no answer for a moment as the candy continued to melt from sight like dew before the morning sun. Then the Professor looked at her steadily as he slowly munched his sweets, causing Jean to think of the Henrys' cow when in a ruminative mood.

"Little girl, are you from the South?"

"Don't *call* me 'little girl' again!" flared Jean, bringing her foot down upon the bottom of the phaeton with a stamp. "I just naturally despise to be called 'little girl.' I'm Jean, and I want to be called Jean."

"Jean, Jean. Pretty name. Well *Miss* Jean, are you from the South?"

"My *mother* is. She was a *Blairsdale*," replied "Miss" Jean, much as she might have said she is the daughter of England's Queen, much mollified at having the cognomen added.

"Do you happen to know which part of the South you come from?"

"I don't come from the South at all. I was born right here in Riveredge. My mother came from Forestvale, North Carolina."

"I thought I knew the name. Yes, it is very familiar. Blairsdale. Yes. Quite so. Quite so. Rather curious, however. So many years. My grandmother was a Blairsdale too. Singular coincidence, *she* had red hair, I'm told, Yes, really. Think I must follow it up. Very good, indeed. Did *you* make them? I judge not. Who did? I must know where to get more when I have a fancy for some," and having eaten the last praline the Professor absent-mindedly put into his mouth the paper in which they had been wrapped, having unconsciously rolled it into a nice little wad while talking.

A funny twinkle came into his eyes when his mistake dawned upon him and turning to the grinning boys he said:

"I have heard of men putting the lighted end of a cigar into their mouths by mistake. This was less unpleasant at all events," and the wad was tossed to the driveway. The boys burst into shouts of laughter and the ice was broken. Crowding about the phaeton they asked:

"Who makes the candy? Do you always sell it? When can we get some more? Say, Professor, do you really know her folks? Who *is* she any how?"

"I told you my name, and I live in Riveredge. My sister makes the candy, but she doesn't know I'm selling it. Maybe she'll let me bring you some more, and maybe she won't. I don't know. And maybe I'll catch Hail-Columbia-Happy-Land when I get back home," concluded the young lady, her lips coming together with decision and her head wagging between doubt and defiance. "But I don't care one bit if I do. I've sold *all* the candy, and I've got just piles of money; so *that* proves that I *can* help as well as the big girls even if *I* am too little to be trusted with their old secrets. And now I've got to go straight back home or they'll all be scared half to death. Perhaps they won't want to scold so hard if they are good and scared."

"One of us will go with you till you get past McKim's Hollow," cried the boys. "Ned can, can't he, Professor?"

"I believe I'll go myself," was the unexpected reply. "I was about to walk over to Riveredge, but I think perhaps Miss Jean will allow me to ride with her," and without more ado Professor Forbes, B.A., B.C., B.M., and half a dozen other Bachelors, gravely removed the coverings from old Baltie, folding and carefully placing the blanket upon the seat and laying the rug over Jean's knees. After he had tucked her snugly in, he took his seat beside her.

"Now, Miss Jean, I think we are all ready to start."

If anything could have been added to complete Jean's secret delight at the attention shown her, it was the dignified manner in which the Professor raised his hat, the boys as one followed his example, as Baltie ambled forth. "That is the way I *like* to be treated. I *hate* to be snubbed because I'm only ten years old," thought she.

As they turned into the road the distant whistles of South Riveredge blew twelve o'clock. Jean started slightly and glanced quickly up at her companion.

"The air is very clear and still to-day," he remarked. "We hear the whistles a long distance."

"It's twelve o'clock. I wonder what Mammy is thinking," was Jean's irrelevant answer.

"Does Mammy think for the family?" asked the Professor, a funny smile lurking about the corners of his mouth.

Jean's eyes twinkled as she answered:

"She was *mother's* Mammy too."

"Ah! I think I understand. I lived South until I was fifteen."

"Did you? How old are you now?" was the second startling question.

"How old should you think?" was the essentially Yankee reply, which proved that the southern lad had learned a trick or two from his northern friends.

Jean regarded him steadily for a few moments.

"Well, when you raised your hat a few minutes ago your hair looked a little thin on *top*, so I guess you're going to be bald pretty soon. But your eyes, when you laugh, look just about like the boys'. Perhaps you aren't so very old though. Maybe you aren't much older than Mr. Stuyvesant. Do you know him?"

"Yes, I know him. He is younger than I am though." The Professor did not add "exactly six months."

"Yes, I thought you were lots older. He's the kind you *feel* is young and you're the kind you feel is old, you know."

"Oh, am I? Wherein lies the difference, may I inquire?" The voice sounded a trifle nettled.

"Why I should think anyone could understand *that*," was the surprised reply. "Mr. Stuyvesant is the kind of a man who knows what children are thinking right down inside themselves all the time. They don't have to explain things to *him* at all. Why the day I found Baltie he knew just as well how I felt about having him shot, and I knew just as well as anything that *he'd* take care of him and make it all right. We're great friends. I love him dearly."

"Whom? Baltie?"

"Now there! What did I tell you? *That's* why *you* are *years* and *years* older than Mr. Stuyvesant. He *would'nt* have had to say 'Whom? Baltie?' He'd just know such things without having to ask." The tone was not calculated to inspire self-esteem.

"Hum," answered the man who could easily have told anyone the distance of Mars from the earth and many another scientific fact. "I think I'm beginning to comprehend what constitutes age."

"Yes," resumed Jean as she flapped the reins upon Baltie who seemed to be lapsing into a dreamy frame of mind. "You can't always tell *how* old a person is by just looking at 'em. Maybe you aren't nearly as old as I think you are, though I guess you can't be far from forty, and that's pretty bad. But if you'd sort of get gay and jolly, and try to think how you felt when you were little, or maybe even as big as the boys back yonder, you wouldn't seem any older to me than Mr. Stuyvesant."

The big eyes were regarding him with the closest scrutiny as though their owner wished to avoid falling into any error concerning him.

"Think perhaps I'll try it. It may prove worth while," and the Professor fell into a brown study while old Baltie plodded on and Jean let her thoughts outstrip his slow progress. At the other end of her commercial venture lay a reckoning as well she knew, and like most reckonings it held an element of doubt as well as of hope. It was nearly one o'clock when they came to the outskirts of Riveredge. The pretty town was quite deserted for it was luncheon hour. When they reached the foot of Hillside street, Jean said:

"This is my street; I have to go up here," and drew up to the sidewalk for her passenger to descend. He seemed in no haste to take the hint, and Jean began to wonder if he would turn out a regular old man of the sea. Before she could frame a speech both positive and polite as a suggestion for his next move, her ears were assailed by:

"Bress Gawd, ef dar aint dat pesterin' chile dis very minit! What I gwine *do* wid yo'? Jis' tell me dat?" and Mammy came puffing and panting down the hill like a runaway steam-roller.

Professor Forbes roused himself from the reverie in which he had apparently been indulging for several moments, and stepping from the phaeton to the sidewalk, advanced a step or two toward the formidable object bearing down upon him, and raising his hat as though saluting a royal personage, said:

"I think I have the pleasure of addressing Mammy—*Blairsdale*."

CHAPTER XV—The Reckoning

The descending steam-roller slowed down and finally came to a standstill within a few feet of the Professor, too non-plussed even to snort or pant, while that imperturbable being stood hat in hand in the sharp January air, and smiled upon it. There was something in the smile that caused the steam-roller to reconsider its plan of action, rapidly formed while descending the hill, for great had been the consternation throughout the dwelling which housed it, and the cause of all that consternation was now within reach of justice.

"Mammy Blairsdale?" repeated the Professor suavely.

"Mammy Blairsdale," echoed that worthy being, although the words were not quite so blandly spoken.

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, Mammy. I have taken the liberty of escorting this young lady back home. She is very entertaining, and extremely practical, as well as enterprising. I am sure you will find her a successful coöperator. She has done a most flourishing business this morning."

"B'isness! B'isness! For de Lawd's sake wha' dat chile been at now, an' we all cl'ar 'stracted 'bout her? Whar yo' bin at? Tell me dis minute. An' yo' ma, and Miss Constance and me jist plumb crazy 'bout you and dat hawse."

The Professor attempted to put in a word of explanation, but a wave of Mammy's hand effectually

silenced him and motioned him aside, as she stepped closer to the phaeton. Baltie had instantly recognized her voice and as she drew nearer, nickered.

"Yas, Baltie hawse, what dat chile been doin' wid yo'?" she said softly as she laid her hand upon the old horse's neck. But the more resolute tone was resumed as she turned again to the phaeton, and demanded: "I wanter know wha' yo's been. You hear me? We's done chased de hull town ober fer yo' an' dat hawse, an' yo' ma done teken de trolley fer Souf Riveraige, kase someone done say dey seed yo' a gwine off dat-a-way. Now whar in de name o' man *is* yo' been ter?"

"I've been out to the Irving School selling your old *candy*, and your cousins-in-the-Lord, over in South Riveredge, can *wait* a while for some. You and Connie thought you could fool me with your old talk but you couldn't; I found out *all* about it. *She* makes it and *you* sell it, and now *I've* sold it—yes every single package—and there's your money; I don't want it, but *I've* proved that I *can* help mother, so there now!" and, figuratively speaking, Jean hurled at Mammy's feet the gauntlet, in the shape of her handkerchief, in which she had carefully tied the proceeds of her morning's sale, a no mean sum, by the way. Then, bounding out of the old phaeton, tore up the hill like a small whirlwind, leaving Mammy and the Professor to stare after her open-mouthed. The latter was the first to recover his speech.

"Well, really! Quite vehement! Good deal of force in a small body."

"Fo'ce! Well yo' ain' know dat chile ten years lak *I* is. She cl'ar break loose some times, an' dis hyre's one ob 'em. But I 'spicioned dat she's done teken dat box o' candy. Minit my back turned out she fly wid it. An' sell hit, too? What *yo'* know 'bout it, sar? Is yo' see her?"

"I certainly did, and I haven't seen such a sight in some time. She's a good bit of a metaphysician into the bargain," and in a few words Professor Forbes told of the morning's business venture, and the lively experiences of the young merchant, Mammy listening attentively, only now and again uttering an expressive "Um-m! Uh-h!" When he had finished she looked at him sharply and said:

"You know what dat chile' oughter be named? Wal, suh, Scape-many-dangers would fit her pine blank. De Lawd on'y knows what she gwine tu'n out, but hits boun' ter be one ting or turrer; she gwine be de banginest one ob de hull lot, or she gwine be jist nothin' but a little debbil. Now, suh, who is *yo'*?"

The concluding question was sprung upon the Professor so suddenly that he nearly jumped. He looked at the old woman a moment, the suggestion of a twinkle in the eyes behind the big glasses, then answered soberly:

"I might be termed a knight errant I presume; I've been guarding a young lady from the perils of the highway."

"Night errand? 'Tain't no night errand as *I* kin see. Can't be much broader day dan tis dis minute," retorted Mammy, looking up at the blazing luminary directly over her head by way of proving her assertion. "If you's on a errand dat's yo' b'isness; 'taint mine. But I'd lak ter know yo' name suh, so's I kin tell Miss Jinny."

"Is Miss Jinny the older sister who manufactures that delicious candy?" asked the Professor, as he drew his card case from his pocket and handed Mammy his card.

"No, suh, she's *my* Miss Jinny: Miss Jinny Blairsdale; I mean Carruth. My mistis. Dat chile's mother. Thank yo', suh. I'll han' her dis cyard. Is she know yo', suh?"

"No, I haven't the pleasure of Mrs. Carruth's acquaintance though I hope to before long. (Mammy made a slight sound through her half-closed lips.) My grandmother was a Blairsdale."

"Open sesame" was a trifling talisman compared with the name of Blairsdale.

"Wha', wha', wha', yo say, suh?" demanded Mammy, stammering in her excitement. "Yo's a Blairsdale?"

"No, I am Homer Forbes. My mother's mother was a Blairsdale. I cannot claim the honor."

"Yo' kin claim de *blood* dough, an' dat's all yo' hatter claim. Yo' don' need ter claim nuttin' else ef yo' got some ob *dat*. But I mustn't stan' here talkin' no longer. Yo' kin come an' see my Miss Jinny ef yo' wantter. If yo's kin ob de Blairsdales' she'll be pintedly glad fer ter know yo'," ended Mammy, courtesying to this branch of the blood royal, and turning to lead Baltie up the hill.

"Thank you. I think I'll accept the invitation before very long. I'd like to know Miss Jean a little better. Good-day Mammy *Blairsdale*."

"Good-day, suh! Good-day," answered Mammy, smiling benignly upon the favored being.

As she drew near the house a perplexed expression overspread her old face. She still held the handkerchief with its weight of change; earnest of the morning's good intentions. Yet what a morning it had been for her and the others!

"I clar ter goodness dat chile lak ter drive us all 'stracted. Fust she scare us nigh 'bout ter death, an' we ready fer ter frail her out fer her doin's. Den she come pa'radin' home wid a bagful ob cash kase she tryin' fer ter help we-all. *Den* what yo' gwine 'do wid her? Smack her kase she done plague yo', or praise her kase she doin' her bes' fer ter mek t'ings go a little mite easier fer her ma?" ended Mammy, bringing her tongue against her teeth in a sound of irritation.

Meanwhile the cause of all the commotion had gone tearing up the hill and into the house where she ran pell-mell into Eleanor who had just come home, and who knew nothing of the excitement of the past few hours. Constance had gone over to Amy Fletcher's to inquire for the runaway. Jean was on the border land between tears and anger, and Eleanor was greeted with:

"Now I suppose *you* are going to lecture me too, tell me I'd no business to go off. Well you just needn't do any such a thing, and I don't care if I *did* scare you. It was all your own fault 'cause you wouldn't let me into your old secret, and I'm *glad* I scared you. Yes I am!" the words ended in a storm of sobs.

For a moment Eleanor stood dumfounded. Then realizing that something more lay behind the volley of words than she understood, she said:

"Come up to my room with me, Jean. I don't know what you are talking about. If anything is wrong tell me about it, but don't bother mother. The little Mumsey has a lot to bother her as it is."

Jean instantly stopped crying and looked at this older sister who sometimes seemed very old indeed to her.

"*You* don't know what all the fuss is about, and why Mammy is waiting to give me Hail Columbia?" she asked incredulously.

"I have just this moment come in. I have been out at Aunt Eleanor's all the morning, as you know quite well if you will stop to think," answered Eleanor calmly.

"Then come up-stairs quick before Mammy gets in; I see her coming in the gate now. I did something that made her as mad as hops and scared mother. Come I'll tell you all about it," and Jean flew up the stairs ahead of Eleanor. Rushing into her sister's room she waited only for Eleanor to pass the threshold before slamming the door together and turning the key.

Eleanor dropped her things upon the bed and sitting down upon a low chair, said:

"Come here, Jean." Jean threw herself upon her sister's lap, and clasping her arms about her, nestled her head upon her shoulder. Eleanor held her a moment without speaking, feeling that it would be wiser to let her excitement subside a little. Then she said: "Now tell me the whole story, Jean."

Jean told it from beginning to end, and ended by demanding:

"Don't you really, truly, know anything about the candy Constance is making to sell?"

"I know that she is making candy, and that she contrives somehow to sell a good deal of it, but she and Mammy have kept the secret as to *how* it is sold. They did not tell me, and I wouldn't ask," said Eleanor looking straight into Jean's eyes.

"Oh!" said Jean.

"Mammy has rather high ideas of what we ought or ought not to do, you know, Jean," continued Eleanor, "and she was horrified at the idea of Constance making candy for money. And yet, Jean, both Constance and I *must* do something to help mother. You say we keep you out of our secrets. We don't keep you *out* of them, but we see no reason *why* you should be made to bear them. Constance and I are older, and it is right that we should share some of the burden which mother must bear, but you are only a little girl and ought to be quite care-free."

Jean's head dropped a trifle lower.

"But since you have discovered so much, let *me* tell you a secret which only mother and I know, and then you will understand why she is so troubled now-a-days. Even Connie knows nothing of it. Can I trust you?"

"I'd *die* before I'd tell," was the vehement protest.

"Very well then, listen: You know our house was insured for a good deal of money—fifteen thousand dollars. Well, mother felt quite safe and comfortable when she found that Mammy had paid the premium just before the house burned down, and we all thought we would soon have the amount settled up by the company and that the interest would be a big help—"

"What is the interest?" demanded Jean.

"I can't stop to explain it all now, but when people put money in a savings bank a certain sum is paid to them each year. The bank pays the people the smaller sum each year because it—the

bank, I mean—has the use of the larger amount for the time being. Do you understand?”

“Yes, it’s just as if I gave you my five dollars to use and you gave me ten cents each week for lending you the five dollars till I wanted it, isn’t it?”

“Yes, exactly. Well mother thought she would have about six hundred dollars each year, and everything seemed all right, and so we came to live here because it was less expensive. But, oh, Jean, my miserable experiments! My dreadful chemicals! When the insurance company began to look into the cause of the fire and learned that I had gasoline, and those powerful acids in my room, and the box of excelsior in which they had been sent out from the city was in the room where the fire started, they—they would not settle the insurance, and *all* the money we had paid out was lost, and we could hardly collect anything. And it was *all* my fault. *All* my fault. But I did not know it! I did not guess the harm I was doing. I only thought of what I could learn from my experiments. And *see* what mischief I have done,” and poor Eleanor’s story ended in a burst of sobs, as she buried her head against the little sister whom she had just been comforting.

Jean was speechless for a moment. Then all her sympathies were alert, and springing from Eleanor’s lap she flung her arms about her crying:

“Don’t cry, Nornie; don’t cry! You didn’t *mean* to. You didn’t know. You were trying to be good and learn a lot. You didn’t know about those hateful old companies.”

“But I *ought* to have known! I ought to have understood,” sobbed Eleanor.

“How *could* you? But don’t you cry. I’m glad now I *did* run away with the box, ’cause I’ve found a way to make some money every single Saturday and I’m going to *do it*, Mammy or no Mammy. Baltie is just as much my horse as hers, and if he can’t help us work I’d like to know why. Now don’t you cry any more, ’cause it isn’t your fault, and I’m going right straight down stairs to talk with mother, and tell her I’m sorry I frightened her but *I’m not* sorry I went,” and ending with a tempestuous hug and an echoing kiss upon her sister’s cheek, little Miss Determination whisked out of the room.

CHAPTER XVI—United We Stand, Divided We Fall

It need hardly be stated that Mrs. Carruth had passed anything but a tranquil morning. Indeed tranquillity of mind was almost unknown to her now-a-days, and her nights were filled with far from pleasant dreams.

From the hour her old home had burned, disasters had crowded upon her. Her first alarm lest the insurance upon her property had lapsed, owing to her inability to meet the premium punctually, had been allayed by Mammy’s prompt action and all seemed well. No one had given a thought to the conditions of the agreement, and, alas! no one had thought of Eleanor’s laboratory. Indeed, had she done so, Mrs. Carruth was not sufficiently well informed upon such matters to have attached any importance to it. But one little clause in the policy had expressly prohibited the presence of “gasoline, excelsior or chemicals of any description upon the premises,” and all three had been upon it when the house burned; and, fatal circumstance, had been the *cause* of the fire.

Such investigations move slowly, and weeks passed before these facts were brought to light and poor Mrs. Carruth learned the truth. She strove in every way to realize even a small proportion of the sum she could otherwise have claimed, and influential friends lent their aid to help her. But the terms of the contract had, unquestionably, been broken, even though done in ignorance—and the precautions taken for so many years ended in smoke.

Mrs. Carruth had not meant to let the girls learn of it until, if worse came to worst, all hope of recovering something had to be given up.

But, several days before, Eleanor had found her mother in a state of nervous collapse over the letter which brought the ultimatum, and had insisted upon knowing the truth. Mrs. Carruth confessed it only upon the condition of absolute secrecy on Eleanor’s part, for Constance was in the midst of mid-year examinations and her mother would not have an extra care laid upon her just then. Eleanor had kept the secret until this morning when Jean’s outbreak seemed to make it wiser to tell the truth, and, if the confession must be made, poor Eleanor could no longer conceal her remorse for the mischief her experiments had brought upon them all.

She had gone that morning to her Aunt Eleanor’s home to confess the situation to her, and to ask if she might leave school and seek some position. The interview had been a most unpleasant one, for Mrs. Eleanor Carruth, Senior, never hesitated to express her mind, and having exceptional business acumen herself, had little patience with those who had less.

“Your mother has no more head for business than a child of ten. Not as much as *some*, I believe. And, your father wasn’t much better. Good heavens and earth! the idea of a man in his sane senses agreeing to pay another man’s debts. I don’t believe he *was* in his senses,” stormed Mrs. Eleanor.

“Please, Aunt Eleanor, don’t say such things to me about father and mother,” said Eleanor, with a

little break in her voice. "Perhaps mother doesn't know as much about business matters as she ought, and father's heart got the better of his good sense, but they are father and mother and have always been devoted to us. I don't want to be rude to you, but I *can't* hear them unkindly spoken of," she ended with a little uprearing of the head, which suddenly recalled to the irate lady a similar mannerism of her late husband who had been a most forebearing man up to a certain point, but when that was reached his wife knew a halt had been called; the same sudden uplifting of the head now gave due warning.

However, Eleanor was only a child in her aunt's eyes, and, fond as she was of her, in her own peculiar way, she could not resist a final word:

"Well, I've no patience with such goin's on. And now here's a pretty kettle of fish and no mistake. You've taken Hadyn Stuyvesant's house for a year, and of course you've got to *keep* it, yet every cent you've got in this world to live on is twelve hundred dollars a year. That means less than twenty-five dollars a week to house, clothe and feed five people. I 'spose it can be done—plenty do it—but they're not Carruths, with a Carruth's ideas. And now *you* want to quit school and go to work? Well, I don't approve of it; no, not for a minute. You'll do ten times better to stay at school and then enter college next fall. *You've* got the ability to do it, and it's flyin' in the face of Providence *not* to."

Aunt Eleanor might just as well have added, "I representing Providence," since her tone implied as much.

"Now run along home and leave me to think out this snarl. I can think a sight better when I'm alone," and with that summary and rather unsatisfactory dismissal, Eleanor departed for her own home to be met by Jean with her trials and tribulations.

Meanwhile Mrs. Carruth had gone in quest of that young lady, for upon Mammy's return from market, Jean, Baltie and the box of candy had been missed, and the old woman had raised a hue and cry. At first they believed it to be some prank, but as the hours slipped away and Jean failed to reappear, Mrs. Carruth grew alarmed and all three set forth in different directions to search for her. Constance going to Amy Fletcher's home. Mammy to their old home, or at least all that was left of it, for Jean frequently went there on one pretext or another, and Mrs. Carruth down town, as the marketing section of Riveredge was termed. While there, one of the shopkeepers told her that Jean had driven by, headed for South Riveredge.

Upon the strength of this vague information Mrs. Carruth had 'phoned home that she was setting out for South Riveredge by the trolley and hoped to find the runaway.

But the search, naturally, was unavailing and she was forced to return in a most anxious state of mind. As she turned into Hillside street and began to mount the steep ascent, her limbs were trembling, partly from physical and partly from nervous exhaustion. Before she reached the top she saw the object of her quest bearing down upon her with arms outstretched and burnished hair flying all about her.

Jean had not paused for the hat or coat, which she had impatiently flung aside upon entering Eleanor's room. Her one impulse after learning of the calamity which had overtaken them was to offer consolation to her mother. The impact when she met that weary woman came very near landing them both in the gutter, and nothing but the little fly-away's agility saved them. Jean was wonderfully strong for her age, her outdoor life having developed her muscles to a most unusual degree.

"Oh, mother, mother. I'm *so* sorry I frightened you. I didn't mean to; truly I didn't. I only wanted to prove I *could* help, and now I *can*, 'cause I've got a *lot* of new customers and made most four dollars. I could have made more if some of the papers hadn't bursted and spilt the candy in the road. We got some of it up, but it was all dirty and I couldn't take any money for *that*, though the boys *ate* it after they'd washed it off at the hose faucet. It wasn't so very dirty, you know. And now I'm going out there every single Saturday morning, and Connie and I—"

"Jean; Jean; stop for mercy's sake. What *are* you talking about? Have you taken leave of your senses, child?" demanded poor Mrs. Carruth, wholly bewildered, for until this moment she had heard absolutely nothing of the candy-making, Mammy and Constance having guarded their secret well. It had never occurred to Jean that even her mother was in ignorance of the enterprise, and now she looked at her as though it had come her turn to question her mother's sanity. They had now reached the house and were ascending the steps, Jean assisting her mother by pushing vigorously upon her elbow.

"Come right into the living-room with me, Jean, and let me learn where you've been this morning. You have alarmed me terribly, and Mammy has been nearly beside herself. She was sure you and Baltie were both killed."

"Pooh! Fiddlesticks! She might have known better. She thinks Baltie is as fiery as Mr. Stuyvesant's Comet, and that nobody can drive him but herself. I've been to East Riveredge with the candy—"

"*What* candy, Jean? I do not know what you mean."

"*Constance's* candy!" emphasized Jean, and then and there told the whole story so far as she herself knew the facts regarding it. Mrs. Carruth sat quite speechless during the recitation, wondering what new development upon the part of her offspring the present order of things would bring to light.

"And Mumsey, darling," continued Jean, winding her arms about her mother's neck and slipping upon her lap, "I'm going to help *now*; I really am, 'cause Nornie has told me about that horried old insurance and I know we haven't much money and—"

"Nornie has told *you* of the insurance trouble, Jean? How came she to do such a thing?" asked Mrs. Carruth, at a loss to understand why Eleanor had disobeyed her in the matter.

"She told me 'cause I was so mad at her and Connie for having secrets, and treating me as if I hadn't the least little bit of sense, and couldn't be trusted. I am little, Mumsey, dear, but I can help. You see if I can't, and the boys were just splendid and want me to come every Saturday. Please, please say I may go," and Jean kissed her mother's forehead, cheeks and chin by way of persuasion.

It must be confessed that Mrs. Carruth responded to these endearments in a rather abstracted manner, for she had had much to think of within the past few hours.

"Please say yes," begged Jean.

"Childie, I can not say yes or no just this moment. I am too overwhelmed by what I have heard. I must know *all* now, and learn it from Mammy and Constance. I cannot realize that one of my children had actually entered upon such a venture. What *would* your father say?" ended Mrs. Carruth, as though all the traditions of the Carruths, to say nothing of the Blairsdales, had been shattered to bits and thrown broadcast.

"But you'll tell me before *next* Saturday, won't you? You know the boys will be on the lookout for their candy and will be *so* disappointed if I don't take it."

"I can not promise *anything* now. The first thing to do is to eat our luncheon; it is long past two o'clock. *Then* we will hold a family council and I hope I shall recover my senses; I declare I feel as though they were tottering."

Mrs. Carruth rose from her chair and with Jean dancing beside her entered the dining-room to partake of a very indifferent meal, for Mammy had been too exercised to give her usual care and thought to its preparation.

CHAPTER XVII—A Family Council

Luncheon was over and Mrs. Carruth, the girls and Mammy were seated in the library; Mammy's face being full of solicitude for her Miss Jinny. Mammy could no more have been left out of this family council than could Eleanor.

"An' you haint got dat 'surance money and cyant git hit, Baby?" she asked, when Mrs. Carruth had finished explaining the situation to them.

"No, Mammy; it is impossible. I have hoped until the last moment, but now I must give up all hope."

"But—but I done *paid* de prem'ym ter dat little Sniffin's man, an' *he* say we *git* de money all right an' straight," argued Mammy, loath to give up *her* hope.

"I know that, Mammy. He told you so in all good faith. It is not his fault in the least. It would have been settled at once, had we not—had we not—" Mrs. Carruth hesitated. She was reluctant to lay the blame upon Eleanor.

"Oh, it is *all* my fault! All. If I had not brought those hateful acids into the house we would *never* have had all this trouble. I shall never forgive myself, and I should think you'd all want to kill me," wailed the cause of the family's misfortune, springing to her feet to pace rapidly up and down the room, quite unconscious that a long feather boa which happened to have been upon the back of her chair, had caught upon her belt-pin and was trailing out behind in a manner to suggest Darwin's theory of the origin of man.

"My child you need not reproach yourself. You were working for our mutual benefit. You knew nothing of the conditions—"

"Knew nothing! Knew nothing!" broke in Eleanor. "That's just *it*. It was my business to know! And I tell you one thing, in future I *mean* to know, and not go blundering along in ignorance and wrecking everybody else as well as myself. I'm just no better than a fool with *all* my poring over books and experimenting. After this I'll find out where my *feet* are, even if my head *is* stuck in the clouds. And now, mother, listen: Since I *am* responsible for this mess it is certainly up to me to help you to pull out of it, and I'm going to *do* it, I've spoken to Mr. Hillard, and asked him about

coaching, and he says he can get me plenty of students who will be only too glad if I can give them the time. And I'm going to do it three afternoons a week. I shall have to do it between four and six, as those are my only free hours, and if I can't coach better than some I've known to undertake it, I'll quit altogether."

As Eleanor talked, Mammy's expression became more and more horrified. When she ceased speaking the old woman rose from the hassock upon which she sat, and crossing the room to Mrs. Carruth's side laid her hand upon her shoulder as she asked in an awed voice:

"Baby you won't *let* her do no sich t'ing as dat? Cou'se you won't. Wimmin folks now-a-days has powerful strange ways, dat I kin see myse'f, but we-all don' do sich lak. Miss Nornie wouldn't never in de roun' worl' do *dat*, would she, honey? She jist a projectin', ain't she?"

Mammy's old face was so troubled that Mrs. Carruth was much mystified.

"Why Mammy, I don't know of anything that Eleanor is better qualified to do than coach. And Mammy, dear, we *must* do something—every one of us, I fear. We can not all live on the small interest I now have, and I shall never touch the principal if I can possibly avoid doing so. Eleanor can materially help by entering upon this work, and Constance has already shown that she can aid also. Even Baby has helped," added Mrs. Carruth, laying her arm caressingly across Jean's shoulders, for Jean had stuck to her side like a burr.

"Then you *will* let me go to East Riveredge with the candy?" cried Jean, quick to place her entering wedge.

"We will see," replied Mrs. Carruth, but Jean knew from the smile that the day was won.

"I know all dat, honey," resumed Mammy, "but dis hyer coachin' bisness. I ain' got *dat* settle in my mind. Hit just pure scandal'zation 'cordin' ter my thinkin'. Gawd bress my soul what we-all comin' to when a Blairsdale taken ter drive a nomnibus fer a livin'? Tck! Tck!" and Mammy collapsed upon a chair to clasp her hands and groan.

Then light dawned upon the family.

"Oh, Mammy! I don't intend to become a stage-coach driver," cried Eleanor, dropping upon her knees beside the perturbed old soul, and laying her own hands upon the clasped ones as she strove hard not to laugh outright. "You don't understand at *all*, Mammy. A coach is someone who helps other students who can't get on well with their studies. Who gives an hour or two each day to such work. And it is very well paid work, too, Mammy."

Mammy looked at her incredulously as though she feared she was being made game of. Then she glanced at the others. Their faces puzzled her, as well they might, since the individuals were struggling to repress their mirth lest they wound the old woman's feelings, but still were anxious to reassure her.

"Miss Jinny, is dat de solemn prar-book truf?"

"It surely is Mammy. We are not quite so degenerate as you think us," answered Mrs. Carruth soberly, although her eyes twinkled in spite of her.

"Well! Well! Jes so; Jes so. I sutin'ly is behine de times. I speck I ain' unnerstan dese yer new-fangled wo'ds no mor'n I unnerstan de new-fangled stoves. If coachin' done tu'ned ter meanin' school marmin' I hatter give up. Now go on wid yo' talkin': I gwine tek a back seat an' listen twell I knows sumpin'," and, wagging her head doubtingly, Mammy went back to her hassock.

"Well *two* of us have settled upon our plan of action, now what are *you* going to do, Connie? You said you were determined to make your venture a paying one. What is your plan?" asked Eleanor, turning to Constance, who thus far had said very little.

"I can't tell you right now. I've had so many plans simmering since I began to make my candy, but Mammy has always set the kettle on the back part of the stove just as it began to boil nicely, haven't you Mammy?" asked Constance, smiling into Mammy's face.

"Specs I's 'sponsuble fer a heap o' unbiled kittles, dough hits kase I hates p'intedly ter see de Blairsdales fixin' ter bu'n dey han's," was the good soul's answer.

"Our hands can stand a few burns in a good cause, Mammy, so don't worry about it. We're healthy and they'll heal quickly," was Constance's cheerful reply.

"Mebbe so," said Mammy skeptically.

"Seriously, Constance, what have you thought of doing, dear?" asked Mrs. Carruth, a tender note coming into her voice for this daughter who had been the first to put her shoulder to the wheel for them all.

"Well, you let me answer that question day after to-morrow, Mumsey? Or, perhaps, it may take even a little longer. But I'll tell you all about my simmering ideas when I have had time to make a few inquiries. Don't grow alarmed, Mammy; I'm not going to apply for a position as motor-girl on

a trolley car," said Constance, as she laughingly nodded at Mammy.

"Aint nothin' ever gwine 'larm me no mo', I reckons. Speck some day I fin' dat chile stanin' down yonder on de cawner sellin' candy an' stuff. Mought mos' anyt'ing happen," answered Mammy, as she rose from her hassock. "Well, if *yo*-all gwine go inter bisness, I specs *I* gotter too, so don' be 'sprised ef yo' see me. Now I'se gwine ter get a supper dat's fitten fer ter *eat*; dat lunch weren't nothin' but a disgrace ter de hull fambly," and off she hurried to the kitchen to prepare a supper that many would have journeyed far to eat.

"Children," said Mrs. Carruth, as Mammy disappeared, "whatever comes we must try to keep together. We can meet almost any difficulty if we are not separated, but *that* would nearly break my heart, I believe; father so loved our home and the companionship of his family, that I shall do my utmost to keep it as he wished. We may be deprived of the major portion of our income, and find the path rather a stony one for a while, but we have each other, and the affection which began more than twenty years ago, when I came North to make my home has grown deeper as the years have passed. Each new little form in my arms made it stronger, and the fact that father is no longer here to share the joys or sorrows with us can never alter it. In one sense he is always with us. His love for us is manifested on every hand. We will face the situation bravely and try to remember that never mind what comes, we have each other, and his 'three little women,' as he used to love to call you, are worthy of that beautiful name. He was very proud of his girls and used to build beautiful 'castles in Spain' for them. If he could only have been spared to realize them." Mrs. Carruth could say no more. The day had been a trying one for her, and strength and voice failed together as she dropped upon a settee and the girls gathered about her. Jean with her head in her lap as she clasped her arms around her; Eleanor holding her hands, and Constance, who had slipped behind the settee, with the tired head clasped against her breast and her lips pressed upon the pretty hair with its streaks of gray.

For a few moments there was no sound in the room save Mrs. Carruth's rapidly drawn breaths as she strove to control her feelings. She rarely gave way in the presence of her children, but they knew how hard it was for her to maintain such self-control. It was very sweet to feel the strength of the young arms about her, and the presence of the vigorous young lives so ready to be up and doing for her sake.

"Come up-stairs and rest a while before supper," said Constance, softly. "Will you? Do, please. We'll be your handmaidens."

"Yes do, Mumsey, dear. I'll tuck you all up 'snug as a bug in a rug,'" urged Jean.

"And I'll go make you a cup of tea just as you love it," added Eleanor hurrying from the room. As Mrs. Carruth rose from the settee Constance slipped her strong arm about her to lead her up to her own room, Jean running on ahead to arrange the couch pillows comfortably. Presently Mrs. Carruth was settled in her nest with Jean upon a low hassock, at her feet, patting them to make her "go byelow," she said. In a few moments Eleanor came back with a dainty little tray and tea service, which she set upon the taborette Constance had placed for it, and proceeded to feed her mother as she would have fed an invalid.

"Do you want to quite spoil me?" asked Mrs. Carruth, from her nest of pillows.

"Not a bit of it! We only want to make you realize how precious you are, don't you understand?" said Eleanor, kissing her mother's forehead. "There! That is the last bite of cracker and the last drop of tea. Now take 'forty winks' and be as fresh as a daisy for supper. Come on, Jean, let Mumsey go to sleep."

"Oh, please let me stay here cuddling her feet. I'll be just as quiet as a mouse," begged Jean.

"Please *all* stay; and Connie, darling, whistle me to the land o' nod," said Mrs. Carruth, slipping one hand into Constance's and holding the other to Eleanor, who dropped down upon the floor and rested her cheek against it as she nestled close to the couch.

Only the flickering flames of the logs blazing upon the andirons, lighted the room as the birdlike notes began to issue from the girl's lips. She whistled an air from the Burgomeister, its pretty melody rippling through the room like a thrush's notes.

Presently Mrs. Carruth's eyelids drooped and, utterly wearied by the day's exciting events, she slipped into dreamland upon the sweet melody.

CHAPTER XVIII—"Save Me From My Friends"

"Miss Jinny! Miss Jinny! Wait a minit. Dar's a man yander at de back do' dat wants fer ter ax yo' sumpin' he say," called Mammy, as she hurried through the hall just as Mrs. Carruth was leaving the house upon the following Monday morning.

"What is it, Mammy?" asked Mrs. Carruth, pausing.

"He say he want ter see yo' pintedly."

Mrs. Carruth retraced her steps and upon reaching the back porch found Mr. Pringle waiting to see her.

"Hope I haven't delayed you, Mrs. Carruth, but I wanted to see you on a matter of business which might help both of us, you see. Ah, I thought—I thought mebbe you'd like to hear of it."

"I certainly should like to if it is to my advantage, Mr. Pringle," replied Mrs. Carruth, with a pleasant smile for the livery stable keeper, who stood self-consciously twirling his cap.

"Yes, ma'am. I thought so, ma'am. Well it's this: Your stable, ma'am, up at the old place, are you usin' it at all?"

"Not as a stable. It is more like a storehouse just now, for many things saved from the fire are stored there."

"Could you put them somewhere else and rent the stable to me, ma'am? I'm much put to it to find room for my boarding horses, and the carriages; my place is not big, and I thought could I rent your stable I'd keep most of my boarding horses up there; it's nearer to their owners you see, ma'am."

Mrs. Carruth thought a moment before replying.

"I shall have to think over your proposal, Mr. Pringle. There is a great deal of stuff stored in the stable and I am at a loss to know what we could do with it. However, I will let you know in a day or two if that will answer."

"Take your own time, ma'am. Take your own time. There's no hurry at all. I'll call round about Thursday and you can let me know. I'd be willing to pay twenty-five dollars a month for it, ma'am."

Pringle did not add that the step had been suggested to him by Hadyn Stuyvesant, or that he had also set the figure.

When they were all gathered in the pleasant living-room that evening, she spoke of the matter, ending with the question:

"But *where* can we put all that furniture? *This* house will not hold another stick I'm afraid; we are crowded enough as it is."

For a few moments no one had a suggestion to offer, then Constance cried:

"Mother couldn't we *sell* a good many of the things? People do that you know. The Boyntons did when they left Riveredge."

"Yes, they had a private sale and disposed of many things. They advertised for weeks. I am afraid that would delay things too much."

"Why not have an auction then? *That* moves quickly enough. The things go or they *don't* go, and that is the end of it."

"Oh, I should dislike to do that. So many of those things hold very tender associations for me," hesitated Mrs. Carruth.

"Yet I am sure there are many things there which can't possibly have, mother. That patent washing machine, for example, that is as big as a dining-room table, and Mammy 'pintedly scorns,'" laughed Eleanor.

"And Jean's baby carriage. And the old cider-press, and that Noah's ark of a sideboard that we never *can* use," added Constance.

"And my express-wagon. I'll never play with *that* again you know; I'm far too old," concluded Jean with much self-importance.

"I dare say there are a hundred things there we will never use again, and which would better be sold than kept. Come down to the place with us to-morrow afternoon, Mumsey, and we will have a grand rummage," said Eleanor. And so the confab ended.

The following afternoon was given over to the undertaking, and as is invariably the case, they wondered more than once why so many perfectly useless articles had been so long and so carefully cherished.

Among them, however, were many which held very dear memories for Mrs. Carruth, and with which she was reluctant to part. Among these was a small box of garden-tools, which had belonged to her husband, and with which he had spent many happy hours at work among his beloved flower beds. Also a reading lamp which they had bought when they were first married, and beneath whose rays many tender dreams had taken form and in many instances become realities. To be sure the lamp had not been used for more than ten years, as it had long since ceased to be regarded as either useful or ornamental, and neither it nor the garden tools were

worth a dollar.

But wives and mothers are strange creatures and recognize values which no one else can see. The girls appreciated their mother's love for every object which their father's hands had sanctified, and urged her to put aside the things she so valued, arguing that the proceeds could not possibly materially increase the sum they might receive for the general collection. But Mrs. Carruth insisted that if one thing was sold all should be, and that her personal feelings must not influence or enter into the matter. So in time all was definitely arranged; the auctioneer was engaged and the sale duly advertised for a certain Saturday morning. No sooner were the posters in evidence than Miss Jerusha Pike, likewise, became so. She swept in upon Mrs. Carruth one morning when the latter was endeavoring to complete a much-needed frock for Jean, as that young lady's elbows were as self-assertive as herself, and had a trick of appearing in public when it was most inconvenient to have them do so. Between letting down skirts and putting in new sleeves Mrs. Carruth's hands were usually kept well occupied.

"Morning, Mammy," piped Miss Pike's high-pitched voice, as Mammy answered her ring at the front door. "What's the meaning of these signs I see about town. You don't mean to tell me you are going to sell *out*? I couldn't believe my own eyes, so I came right straight here to find out. *Where* is that dear, dear woman?"

"She up in her room busy wid some sewin'," stated Mammy, with considerable emphasis upon the last word as a hint to the visitor.

"Well, tell her not to mind *me*; I'm an old friend, you know. I'll go right up to her room; I wouldn't have her come down for the world."

"Hum! Yas'm," replied Mammy, moving slowly toward the stairs. Too slowly thought Miss Pike, for, bouncing up from the reception-room chair, upon which she had promptly seated herself, she hurried after the retreating figure saying:

"Now don't you bother to go way up-stairs. I don't doubt you have a hundred things to do this morning, and I've never been up-stairs in this house, anyway. Go along out to your kitchen, Mammy, and I'll just announce myself." And brushing by the astonished old woman she rushed half way up the stairs before Mammy could recover herself. It was a master coup de main, for well Miss Pike knew that she would never be invited to ascend those stairs to the privacy of Mrs. Carruth's own room. Mammy knew this also, and the good soul's face was a study as she stared after her. Miss Pike disappeared around the curve of the stairs calling as she ascended:

"It's only *me*, dear. Don't mind me in the least. Go right on with your work. I'll be charmed to lend you a hand; I'm a master helper at sewing." Mammy muttered:

"Well ef yo' aint de banginest han' at pokin' dat snipe nose o' yours inter places whar 'taint no call ter be *I'd* lak ter know who *is*. I'se jist a good min' ter go slap bang atter yo' an' hustle yo' froo' dat front door; I is fer a fac'."

Meanwhile, aroused from her occupation by the high-pitched voice, Mrs. Carruth dropped her work and hurried into the hall. She could hardly believe that this busy-body of the town had actually forced herself upon her in this manner. She had often tried to do so, but as often been thwarted in her attempts.

"Oh, *why did* you get up to meet me? You shouldn't have done it, you dear thing. I know how valuable every moment of your time is now-a-days. Dear, dear, how times have changed, haven't they? Now go right back to your room and resume your sewing and let me help while I talk. I *felt* I *must* come. Those awful signs have haunted me ever since I first set my eyes upon them. *Don't* tell me you are going to sell anything! Surely you won't leave Riveredge? Why I said to Miss Doolittle on my way here, well, if the Carruths have met with *more* reverses and have got to sell out, *I'll* clear give up. You haven't, have you? But this house must be an awful expense, ain't it? How much does Hadyn Stuyvesant ask you for it anyway? I'll bet he isn't *giving* it away. His mother was rather near, you know, and I dare say he takes after her. *Do* you pay as much as fifty a month for it? I said to Miss Doolittle I bet anything you didn't get it a cent less. Now do you? It's all between ourselves; you know I wouldn't breathe it to a soul for worlds."

If you have ever suddenly had a great wave lift you from your feet, toss you thither and yonder for a moment, and then land you high and dry upon the beach when you have believed yourself to be enjoying a delightful little dip in an apparently calm ocean, you will have some idea of how Mrs. Carruth felt as this tornado of a woman caught her by her arm, hurried her back into her quiet, peaceful bedroom, forced her into her chair, and picking up her work laid it upon her lap, at the same time making a dive for an unfinished sleeve, as she continued the volley.

"Oh, I see just *exactly* what you're doing. I can be the greatest help to you. Go right on and don't give this a thought. I've been obliged to do so much piecing and patching for the family that I'm almost able to patch *shoes*. Now *what* did you say Haydn Stuyvesant charged you for this house?"

The sharp eyes were bent upon the sleeve.

"I don't think I said, Miss Pike. And, thank you, it is not necessary to put a patch upon the elbow of that sleeve as you are preparing to do; I have already made an entire new one. As to our

leaving Riveredge I am sorry you have given yourself so much concern about it. When we decide to do so I dare say *you* will be the first to learn of our intention. Yes, the auction is to take place at our stable as the announcement states. You learned all the particulars regarding it from the bills, I am sure. If you are interested you may find time to be present that morning. And now, since I am strongly averse to receiving even my most intimate friends in a littered-up room I will ask you to return to the reception room with me," and rising from her chair this quiet, unruffled being moved toward the door.

"But your work, my dear. Your work! You can't afford to let me interrupt it, I'm afraid. Your time must be so precious."

"It seems to have been interrupted already, does it not? Sometimes we would rather sacrifice our time than our temper, don't you think so?" and a quizzical smile crept over Mrs. Carruth's face.

"Well, now, I hate to have you make company of me. I really do. I thought I'd just run in for a little neighborly chat and I seem to have put a stop to everything. Dear me, I didn't think you'd mind *me* a mite. Are you going to sell this set of furniture? 'Taint so very much worn, is it? Only the edges are a little mite frayed. Some people mightn't notice it, but my eyesight's exceptional. Well, do tell me *what's goin'.*"

As though fate had taken upon herself the responsibility of answering that question, the door-bell rang at the instant and when it was answered by Mammy, Mrs. Eleanor Carruth stalked into the hall. Mrs. Carruth rose to greet her. *Miss Pike rose to go.* If there was one person in this world of whom Jerusha Pike stood in wholesome awe it was Mrs. Eleanor Carruth, for the latter lady had absolutely no use for the former, and let her understand it. Madam Carruth, as she was often called, shook her niece's hand, looked at her keenly for a moment and then said:

"My stars, Jenny, what ails you? You look as though you'd been blown about by a whirlwind. Oh, how do *you* do, Miss Pike. Just going? You're under too high pressure, Jenny. We must ease it up a little, I guess. Good-bye, Miss Pike. My niece has always been considered a most amiable woman, hasn't she? I think she hasn't backbone enough at times. That is the reason I happen along unexpectedly to lend her some. Fine day, isn't it?"

Two minutes later Miss Pike was in close confab with her friend Miss Doolittle.

Aunt Eleanor was up in her niece's room putting in the neglected sleeve and saying:

"If *I'd* been in that front hall I'll guarantee she would never have clomb those stairs. Now tell me all about this auction."

CHAPTER XIX—"An Auction Extraordinary"

"My! Just look at them perfec'ly good, new window screens. It *does* seem a shame to sell 'em, don't it now? They might come in real handy sometime," cried one eager inspector of the collection of articles displayed for sale in the Carruths' barn the following Saturday morning. That the house for which those screens had been made lay almost in ashes not a hundred feet from her, and that the chances of their ever fitting any other house, unless it should be expressly built for them, did not enter that lady's calculations.

"Yes, and just look at his ellegant sideboard. My! it must have cost a heap o' money. Say, don't you think them Carruths were just a little mite extravagant? Seems ter me they wouldn't a been so put to it after Carruth's death if they hadn't a spent money fer such things as them. But I wonder what it'll bring? 'Tis ellegant, aint it? I'm just goin' ter keep my eyes peeled, and maybe I c'n git it."

"Why what in this world would you do with it if you *did*? You haven't a room it would stand in," cried the friend, looking first at the huge, old-fashioned, walnut sideboard, that Constance had called a Noah's Ark, and then at its prospective purchaser as though she questioned her sanity.

"Yes, it *is* big, that's so," agreed that lady, "but it's *so* ellegant. Why it would give a real air to my dining-room, and I guess I could sell our table if both wouldn't stand in the room. We could eat in the kitchen fer a spell, you know, till maybe Jim's wagers were raised an' we could go into a bigger house. Anyway I'm goin' ter *bid* on it. It's too big a chanst ter let slip."

"Yes, it *is* pretty big," replied her friend, turning away to hide a slight sneer, for *she* was a woman of discretion.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," called the auctioneer at that moment, "may I claim your attention for this most unusual sale; a sale of articles upon which you would never have had an opportunity to bid but for the 'calamity at your heels'—to quote the immortal William."

The people massed in front of him, for Riveredge had turned out en masse, started and glanced quickly over their shoulders. "But for the tragedy of them ashes these elegant articles of furniture would never have been placed on sale; your opportunity would never have been. Alas! 'one man's meat is ever another man's poison.' Now what am I offered for this roll of fine

Japanese matting? Yards and yards of it as you see; all perfectly new; a rare opportunity to secure a most superior floor covering for a low figure. What am I bid, ladies and gentlemen?"

"One dollar," ventured a voice.

"*One dollar!* Did I hear right? Surely not. One dollar for at least fifteen yards of perfectly new Japanese matting? Never. Who will do better 'n that? Two? Two—two—"

"Two-fifty!"

"Good, that's better, but it's a wicked sacrifice Come now—two-fifty—two-fifty—"

"Three. Three-fifty. Four," ran up the bids in rapid competition until seven dollars were bid for the roll. It was bought by the discreet lady. At that moment Jean, who had been everywhere, appeared upon the scene.

"Oh, did you buy those pieces of matting?" she observed. "Mother told me to tell the auctioneer not to bother with them 'cause she didn't think there were two yards of any single pattern. I didn't get here in time though, I'm sorry, but I had to stop on my way."

"Not two yards of any one pattern? Why there's yards and yards in this roll. Do you mean to tell me 'taint all alike?"

"I guess not. It's pieces that were left from our house and all the rest was burned up."

Just then Jean spied Constance and flew toward her leaving the discreet lady to discover just what she *had* paid seven dollars for. On her way she ran into Jerusha Pike, who laid upon her a detaining hand. "Jean, you're exactly the child I want. Where is your sister Constance? I want to see her. Is your mother here?"

"No, Miss Pike, mother didn't come. Connie is right yonder. See her?"

Off hurried Miss Pike to the tree beneath which Constance stood watching the progress of the sale, which was now in full swing; the auctioneer feeling much elated at the returns of his initial venture, was warming up to his work. Eleanor, with her Aunt Eleanor, who was much in evidence this day, was seated behind the auctioneer's raised stand, and thus quite sheltered from observation.

"Constance Carruth, you are the very girl I must see. *You* can and will tell me what I wish to know, I am sure," cried Miss Pike, in a stage whisper.

"If I can I will, Miss Pike," answered Constance with a mental reservation for the "can."

"I want you to tell me what your poor dear mother most values among the things she has here. There *must* be some treasures among them which she cherishes for sweet associations' sake. Name them, I implore you. I have never forgiven myself for the accident which befell that priceless mirror. If I can bid in something here for her let me do it, I beg of you. There is no one else to do it, and *you* are far too young to be exposed to the idle gaze of these people."

"But Miss Pike, Eleanor and—"

"No! No! I cannot permit either of you to do this thing. Your dear mother would be shocked. *I'll* attend to it for you, if you will only tell me."

"But," began Constance, and was interrupted by the auctioneer's voice calling:

"*Now*, ladies and gentlemen, here is a *fine* set of garden tools in perfect order."

"Oh, they were daddy's. That is the set mother felt so bad about selling, isn't it, Connie?" broke in Jean, who had not been paying much attention to the conversation between her sister and Miss Pike.

"There! What did I say! I was confident of it! *Now* is my opportunity to make reparation. *Nothing* shall balk me."

"But Miss Pike; Miss Pike; you must not. Aunt Eleanor—"

But Miss Pike had rushed toward the auction stand.

Meanwhile Eleanor had been saying: "I wish we had not offered that garden set at all. It was father's and mother really felt dreadful about selling it. I fully intended to have it put aside without saying anything to mother, but there was so much to attend to that I forgot it, and now it is too late."

"Not in the least, *I'll* bid it in," and rising from her chair, Madam Carruth prepared to do her duty by her niece. Just then Miss Pike appeared from the opposite direction.

"How much am I bid for this garden set? All in perfect condition."

"Ten cents," replied a strident voice.

"Scandalous!" cried Miss Pike. "I'll bid one dollar. It is sanctified by the touch of a vanished hand."

"Indeed," murmured Madam Carruth, who could see Miss Pike, although that lady could not be seen by *her*. "Well, I guess *not*. One-fifty."

Miss Pike was too intent upon securing the object to give heed to the speaker's voice or recognize it.

"One-seventy-five! One-seventy-five! One-seventy-five! Going, going at one-seventy-five."

"Two-seventy-five!"

"Ah! That's better. It would be a shame to sacrifice this set for a song. It is no ordinary set of garden implements, but a most superior quality of steel. Two-seventy-five; two-seventy-five—"

"Three! I must have them." The last words were spoken to a bystander, but Madam Carruth's ears were sharp.

"Must you? Indeed! We'll see."

One or two others, who began to believe that a rare article was about to slip from their possible grasp, now started in to bid, and in a few moments the price had bounded up to five dollars. The original cost of the set had been three. Then it went gayly skyward by leaps and bounds until in a reckless instant Miss Pike capped the climax with ten.

"Well if she wants to be such a fool she may," exclaimed Madam Carruth. "I could buy four sets for that money and sometimes even sentiment comes too high. I'd save 'em for your mother if I could, but sound sense tells me she can make better use of a ten-dollar bill than of a half-dozen pieces of old ironmongery. That Pike woman always *was* a fool."

"Gone for ten dollars!" cried the auctioneer at that instant. Miss Pike's face was radiant. She was about to turn away when Jean made her way through the crowd to her side crying:

"Did you really get them, Miss Pike? mother'll be so glad. When we were talking about selling these things she almost cried when she spoke about the garden tools and the lamp—"

"*What* lamp, child? Oh these heartrending changes! Tell me what the lamp is like. If it can be saved I'll save it for her. I can't understand *why* your sisters permitted the objects, around which the tendrils of your mother's heart were so entwined, to be put up for sale. To me it seems a positive sacrilege."

"But mother made them do it. She wouldn't let—and, oh, there's the lamp now. That one with the bronze bird on it, see?"

"Oh, the tender memories that must cluster about it. I will hold them sacred for her. They shall not be desecrated. Stand beside me, child. I shall bid that in for your dear mother."

Again the lively contest for possession was on, although the sums named did not mount by such startling bounds as in the case of the garden tools. Still, more than four dollars had been offered before Miss Pike, in flattering imitation of a large New York department store, offered \$4.99, and became the triumphant owner of it. Miss Pike had a small income, but was by no means given to flinging her dollars to the winds. So it was not surprising that many who knew her marveled at the sums she was spending for her two purchases. Having paid her bill she promptly took possession of her lamp and her case of garden tools and stalked off through the throng of people in quest of Constance whom she found talking to a group of schoolmates near the ruins of the old home.

"Congratulate me! Congratulate me! I've saved the treasures from the vandals! I've rescued them from sacrilegious hands. Behold! Take them to your mother with my dearest love. I had a struggle to get them, for some woman was determined to secure that garden set But *I* came off victorious. I had to do battle royal, but I conquered. Now, my dear, when you go home take them with you. They *did* come rather high; I had to pay ten dollars for the garden set, but I got the lamp for less than five!—four ninety-nine. But you need not pay me until it is *perfectly* convenient. Don't let it worry you for a moment. I am repaid for the time being in the thought that I secured them for your mother. I knew she would rather pay twice the sum than see them fall into the hands of utter strangers. Good-bye, my dear, I must hurry home, for I have been absent too long already."

As Miss Pike departed, Constance dropped upon the carriage step, which, being of stone, had survived flame and flood. Upon the ground before her lay their own garden set, and stood their own lamp for which her mother would have to return to Jerusha Pike, fourteen dollars and ninety-nine cents owing to that lady's unbridled zeal. She looked at them a moment, then glancing up at her friends whose faces were studies, the absurdity of the situation overcame her and them also, and peals of laughter echoed upon the wintry air.

"Who was it that said 'Save me from my friends!' Connie?" asked a girl friend.

Constance looked unspeakable things. Then bounding to her feet she cried:

"Well, it's lucky we can return her own money to her, but that settles it. It might have been worse anyway. I've been on the fence for several days without knowing which way to jump. *Now* I do know, and Miss Pike has given the push. It's been a case of:

'Our doubts are traitors
And make us lose the good we oft might win
By fearing to attempt.'

"There, Belle, is a quotation to match yours, and bear in mind what I say: I'm going to live up to it. Now I'm going home. Come on, you people, and help me lug these treasures there," and off the laughing procession set, each girl or lad burdened with some article of the purchases, Constance leading the way with the lamp, and all singing:

'Doubt thou the stars are fire,
Doubt that the sun doth move;
Doubt truth to be a liar,
Doubt *not* Jerusha's love.'

"I don't think I ever shall, but perhaps she has helped in one way, since she has settled *my* doubts, and the next thing you people hear of me may make you open your eyes. No, I won't tell you a single thing. Just wait until next week, then you'll see."

CHAPTER XX—Constance B.'s Venture

Owing to the stirring events at home, Jean had not set forth that morning, but the first excitement, incident to the sale of their belongings over, she prepared to drive out to East Riveredge, with her box of candies. Mrs. Carruth entertained some misgivings regarding the wisdom of letting her again pass through McKim's Hollow, but a compromise was effected by Jean agreeing to take a different road. It made the trip a trifle longer, but was free from dangers, and Jean set forth in high feather and bursting with importance.

Having seen her off, Constance flew to her room, and within half an hour emerged therefrom dressed all in soft brown. Little brown toque, with a modest brown quill stuck through the folds of the cloth. Brown kilted skirt and box coat, brown furs and brown gloves. She looked almost as sedate as a little Quakeress, although her cheeks were rosy from excitement and her eyes shone.

"Mother, I have a little matter to attend to in South Riveredge. You won't feel anxious if I am not back before dark will you?" she asked as she paused at her mother's door, on her way down-stairs.

Mrs. Carruth looked at her a moment before replying and wondered if the girl had any idea how attractive she was. Then she asked:

"Am I to refrain from making inquiries?"

"Please don't ask a single question, for even if I wanted to answer them I couldn't," said Constance, as she kissed her mother good-bye.

Half an hour later she was at the Arcade in South Riveredge, asking the elevator man to direct her to the office of the superintendent of the building.

"Room 16, fourth floor," directed the man. So to the fourth floor went Constance. Opening the door of No. 16, she entered, but stood for a second upon the threshold rather at a loss how to proceed. Seated at a large rolltop desk was a man wearing a brisk, wide-awake air which instantly reminded her of her father. Gaining confidence from that fact, so often are we swayed by trifles, she advanced into the room, saying: "Good afternoon. Are you the superintendent of the building?"

"I am," answered the gentleman, smiling pleasantly, and rising from his chair. "What can I do for you, young lady?"

Now that she had actually come to the point of stating her errand, Constance hardly knew where to begin. The superintendent noticing her hesitancy said kindly: "Won't you be seated? It is always easier to talk business when seated, don't you think so?" and placing a chair near his desk, he motioned her toward it.

Mr. Porter did not often have calls from such youthful business women, and was somewhat at a loss to understand the meaning of this one. Constance was not aware that in placing the chair for her he had put it where the light from the window just back of him would fall full upon *her* face.

Taking the chair she looked at him smiling half-doubtfully, and half-confidently as she said:

"Maybe you will think I am very silly and inexperienced, and I know I *am*, but I'd like to know whether you have any offices to rent in this building, and how much you charge for them?"

The big eyes looked very childish as they were turned upon him, and Mr. Porter could not help showing some surprise at the question. He had a daughter about this girl's age, and wondered how he would feel if she were in her place.

"Yes, we have one unoccupied office on the eighth floor, in the rear of the building. It is divided into two fair-sized rooms and the rental is four hundred dollars a year."

Constance jumped. "Four hundred a year! Why that is almost as much as we pay for our *whole* house! My goodness, isn't that a lot? I had no idea they cost so much. Dear me, I'm afraid I can never, never do it," and her words ended with a doubtful shake of her head.

"Do you object to telling me just what you wish to do and why you need an office?" asked Mr. Porter kindly. "Perhaps I could offer some suggestions. Sometimes our tenants like to rent desk room, and if you needed no more than a desk—why—"

"But I couldn't use a desk for a counter, could I?" hesitated Constance.

"That depends upon what the counter had to hold. Suppose you tell me. Then we will see." The deep blue eyes behind the glasses regarded her very encouragingly.

Constance's eyebrows were raised doubtfully as she replied:

"I'm afraid you will think me very foolish and unsophisticated, and of course I am, but I just *know* I can succeed if I once get started right. Besides I *won't* give up unless I *have* to. Other girls do things and there is no reason I shouldn't. I know my candy is good, 'cause if it wasn't Mammy could not sell it so easily, and—"

"Candy? Are you planning to sell candy? If it's half as good as the candy an old colored woman sells around here you'll sell all you can make. I buy some of her every time she comes here, and my girls ask every day if she has been around with it. It's great candy."

As Mr. Porter talked Constance's cheeks grew rosier and rosier, and her eyes danced with fun. Of this he speedily became aware, and looking at her keenly he asked:

"Have you ever eaten any of the old Auntie's candy? Does she make it herself? I've asked her a dozen times, but I can't get her to commit herself! She always gets off a queer rigmarole about her 'pa'tner,'" ended Mr. Porter, smiling as he recalled Mammy's clever fencing with words.

"Yes, I've eaten it. No, she doesn't make it; she only sells it. *I* make it," confessed Constance, nervously toying with the ends of her fur collar.

"You don't say so! Why it's the best candy I've ever tasted. Well, really! And you think of opening a *stand*?" concluded Mr. Porter, a little incredulously, for the girl before him did not seem to be one who would venture upon such an enterprise.

"Well yes, and no. I want to have a place to sell it here in South Riveredge, but I can't exactly have a counter you see, because I am still in school the greater part of the day. So I thought up a plan and—and I want to try it. Would you mind if I told you about it?"

The sweet voice and questioning look with which the words were spoken would have won the ear of a less interested man than Robert Porter. More than an hour passed before this plan which had been simmering in the girl's active brain, was laid before the practical business man, and he was amazed at what he afterwards pronounced its "level-headedness."

When the conversation ended, Constance was wiser by many very sane suggestions made by her listener, and more than ever determined to carry her plan through.

"Now, young lady, by-the-way, do you mind letting me know your name? We can talk better business if I do. Mine's Porter."

"I am Constance Carruth," said Constance.

"Carruth? Not Bernard Carruth's daughter?"

"Yes."

"You don't say so! Why I knew your father well, little girl, and respected him more than any man I've ever known. He was a fine man. Bernard Carruth's daughter? Well I declare."

Constance's cheeks glowed more than ever. Praise of her father was sweet to her ears.

"Well, well, Bernard Carruth's daughter," repeated Mr. Porter, as though he could not quite make it true. "Well, come with me. I've an idea for this candy selling scheme and we'll see what we can do."

Rising from his chair he led the way to the elevator. Upon reaching the main floor he walked to the rear of the building where the stairway was situated.

In the alcove made by the box-stairs stood the public telephone switch board and two booths. At the right, close under the stairs, was an empty space too low for the booths, and yet of no use to the operator, since while she might be able to occupy it when sitting at a desk, she was very likely to encounter a cracked crown if she rose too quickly from her chair. All was enclosed with a little wooden railing and well lighted by the electric lights.

"Now I am wondering if we couldn't rig up a tempting little booth in this unoccupied space. Good afternoon, Miss Willing. How would you like to share your quarters with this enterprising young lady? She has a mighty clever idea in that logical head of hers and I'm going to do my best to help her make it a success. How about *you*?" he ended, making a mental contrast between the strikingly handsome, dark-haired, dark-eyed girl at the telephone booth, whose glances flashed back at him so boldly, and whose toilet would have been better suited to an afternoon function than a telephone booth, and the modest, well-gowned, young girl beside him.

"I guess I won't bother her, and I'm sure she won't bother *me*," was the reply which proved the speaker's fiber, and caused Constance to look at her and wonder that any one *could* be so lacking in refinement. Little Connie had many things to learn in the business world into which she was venturing. But the knowledge would do her no harm. She was well equipped to stand the test.

The girl saw the look of surprise and no rebuke could have been keener. With a little resentful toss of her head, for this girl who had so innocently made her aware of her shortcomings, she turned to answer a call upon the 'phone, and Constance to listen to Mr. Porter's words.

"Now, Miss Carruth, my idea is this: Suppose we have this little space fitted up with attractive cases, and the necessary shelves. It is not very large, but neither is the venture—yet. When it grows bigger we will find a bigger cubby for it. The thing to do now is to find the *right* one; one where you can make a good show, and be sure of catching your customers, and where the customers are likely to come to be *caught*. I don't know of any place where, in the long run, more are likely to come than to a 'phone booth. What do you think of it?"

"It's just *splendid!*" cried Constance. "I couldn't have found a better place no matter how long I tried. I'm *so* much obliged to you, Mr. Porter."

"Better wait until you see how it pans out—the booth, not the candy. I can speak for the panning of that," laughed Mr. Porter, then added: "Well, that is step No. 1 taken. Now for No. 2, and that is stocking up. Have you thought about that?"

"Yes, I've thought. My goodness! I've thought until my wits are fairly muddled with thinking, but that is the part that bothers me most. I can make the candy easily enough after school hours, and I can manage to send it here, but I'm dreadfully afraid I haven't as much capital on hand as I ought to have to get all the boxes I need. They are very expensive I find. I wrote to two firms who make them, but it seems to me they charged me dreadful prices. Perhaps they suspected from my letter that I wasn't much of a business woman," confessed Constance, looking frankly into the friendly eyes.

Mr. Porter laughed in spite of himself, then sobering down again asked:

"Have you time to come back to my office? I would like to make a proposition to you."

"Why yes, Mr. Porter, I have time enough," hesitated Constance. "But I am afraid I am taking a good deal more of yours than I ought to."

"Am I not working in the interests of the owner of this building? I'm trying to secure a new tenant for him. What more could I do?"

"I don't believe their income will be materially increased by *this* tenant," answered Constance much amused at the thought.

"Every one counts, you know. But now to business."

Entering his office with a brisk air, he again motioned Constance to the chair by his desk, and asked:

"Are you willing to discuss all the details with me? You know I do not ask from idle curiosity, I am sure. I am interested; very deeply interested. I want to see this thing succeed. You have outlined your plan and it is all right. All it needs now is a little capital to carry it through successfully. Now let us see if we can't *secure* that."

CHAPTER XXI—Constance B.'s Candies

"Now, Miss Carruth, tell me the prices quoted for the boxes, and how many you had thought of ordering," said Mr. Porter, in the voice so encouraging when used by older people to younger.

"Well, if I order *any* I suppose I ought to order a hundred," began Constance.

"One hundred!" echoed Mr. Porter. "Why, little girl, that would not be a flea-bite. You ought to order five hundred at least."

"*Five hundred!*" cried Constance, in dismay. "Why, Mr. Porter, I'm afraid I've hardly enough money to order one hundred at the rate they charge," and she named the sums asked by the firms to which she had written.

"Bosh! Nonsense! That's downright robbery. You let *me* write to a firm *I* know of and we'll see what we'll see. And now I'm going to take some stock in this company right off. I'm going to invest one hundred dollars in it to be used as a working capital—there—don't say a word of protest," as Constance voiced an exclamation. "I know what I'm up to, and—I love sweets. If you can't pay back in any other way you can keep me supplied for a year. Just now you've got to start out in good shape, and there is no use doing things half way. But you haven't asked me what I'm going to charge you for your booth?" concluded Mr. Porter, with a merry twinkle in his blue eyes.

"Why I forgot all about the price," said Constance in confusion. "Oh, dear, how stupid I am."

"Well, since it is a space we never thought to rent anyway, and couldn't use for anything else if we wished to, suppose we say five dollars a month? I think those are pretty good returns for a cubby. If I do as well in proportion with all the other offices I'll make the owners rich."

"I'm afraid it is *very* low. I think you are only letting me have it so cheap just because you liked father. Don't you think I ought really to pay more? I didn't think I could get *any* sort of a place for *less* than ten dollars a month," was Constance's most unbusinesslike speech.

Mr. Porter looked at the earnest face regarding him so frankly and confidingly, and a very suspicious moisture came into his eyes. Rising from his chair he laid his hand kindly upon her shoulder as she arose and stood before him, and said very gently:

"Don't worry yourself on *that* score, little girl, and—don't mind it if I *do* call you little girl; you seem that to me spite of your business aspirations. I am asking you a fair price because I know you would rather feel that you are *paying* a fair price for what you get, and would prefer beginning your business venture on such a basis. I am also advancing this sum of money because I am confident you will succeed. It is purely a business speculation. I would do it for your father's sake, but I know you would rather I did it upon strictly business principles. I can not lose my money in any case, because if I do not get the actual cash, I know I shall get my sweets—a whole hundred dollars' worth. It fairly makes my mouth water to think of them, and my girls will go wild when I tell them. Keep up a brave heart, and, above all, keep that pretty modesty you have, for it will carry you farther than any amount of audacity. It is your best armor. There is nothing a man respects more than a brave and modest woman, my dear. Nothing in this world. Now, little woman, go home and think up the style and sizes of the boxes you will need and let me know at once. 'Phone me early Monday morning. Design something yourself if you can; it will take quicker. Next week I'll have your stall put into shape and you can make your candies and stock up as soon as your boxes come. *Then* we will soon learn whether your faith in your fellow-beings is justified or misplaced. I believe you will find it justified; upon my soul I do; though I have never before seen such a scheme put to the test. Now good-bye; good-bye, and God bless you," ended Mr. Porter, warmly shaking the small gloved hand.

"Good-bye, Mr. Porter, and, oh, thank you *so* much for your kind interest. I feel so brave and encouraged to begin now," cried Constance, her eyes confirming her words, and her cheeks glowing.

Mr. Porter accompanied her to the elevator, and with another hearty farewell, sped her upon her way brimful of enthusiasm, and more than ever resolved to carry into effect the scheme which had entered her head many weeks before, and which was now taking definite form and shape.

The trolley car seemed fairly to crawl along, so did her desire to reach home and tell of the afternoon's undertaking outstrip its progress. It was quite dark when she alighted and climbed the hill at her home, thinking, as she ascended the steps, how sweet and cheerful the little home looked, for her mother, in spite of the warnings volunteered by some of her friends that some day she would be robbed as the outcome of letting all the world look in upon her, would never have the shades drawn. Mrs. Carruth always replied:

"For the sake of those to whom a glimpse of our cheery hearth gives pleasure, and there are more than you guess, as I have learned to my own surprise, I shall take my chances with the possible unscrupulous ones."

And so the window shades remained raised after the lamps were lighted, and many a passer-by was cheered along his way by a peep at the sweet, home-like picture of a gentle-faced woman, and three bright-faced girls, gathered around the blazing hearth, and reading or sewing in the soft lamp-light.

"Dear little Mumsey," said Constance, softly, as she paused a moment before crossing the piazza. "Your girlie is going to help you keep just such a sweet home forever and ever, and ever." Then giving the whistling bird-call by which the members of the family signaled to each other, she

went close to the window and looked smilingly in.

Up bounced Jean to fly to the door; Eleanor raised her head from the book over which she was, as usual, bent, and nodded; Mrs. Carruth waved her hand and wafted a kiss.

"Oh, come in quick, and tell us where you have been, and what you have done," cried Jean, opening the door with a whirl.

"Hello, baby! Give me a big hug first," cried Constance, and Jean bounded into her arms. Mrs. Carruth had crossed the room to welcome the tardy one, and as soon as she was released from Jean's tempestuous embrace, took the glowing face in both her hands gently to kiss the cheeks as she said:

"What a bonny, bonny glow the cheeks wear, sweetheart. Something very lovely must have happened."

"Oh, mother, I've had such a perfectly splendid afternoon and feel so brave and proud about it all. Let me get my things off and I'll tell you all about it. But is supper almost ready? I'm half-starved? Excitement sharpens one's appetite doesn't it? Heigh-ho. Nornie. What news of the ponies? If you're to be a coach-woman you've got to have some sort of an equine creature to hustle along, haven't you? Did you have time to go and see the prospective ones this afternoon? And oh, *how* did the auction turn out, mother? Gracious, what stirring people the Carruths are getting to be compared with the common-place, slow-going ones they were."

"Jean, dear, run out and tell Mammy that Constance is home, and we will have supper at once. You can tell us all the news at the table, dear."

Jean flew for Mammy's quarters, quite as eager as Constance to have the supper served.

"Mammy! Mammy! Connie's got back, and she's starved *dead!* Mother says have supper right off quick," burst out Jean, as she whisked through the butler's pantry.

"Jes so. Whar dat chile been? Go 'long back an' tell 'em de supper 'ready an' a waitin', as de hyme book say, an' I got sumpin' dat dat chile pintedly love."

"What is it, Mammy? What is it?" cried Jean, eagerly, as she ran over to inspect the dishes upon the range.

"Get out! Clear 'long! Yo' keep yo' little nose outen my dishes!" cried Mammy, with assumed wrath, as she pounced upon little Miss Inquisitive. "Yo' go right 'long an' tell her I'se got lay-over-catch-meddlers in hyer an' lessen yo' take keer you'll turn inter one."

"Fiddlestick!" retorted Jean, as she flew back.

A few moments later the family had gathered about the delightful supper table and Constance was relating the experiences of the afternoon, while first one and then another exclaimed over her venture, Mammy crying as she urged her to take another of the dainty waffles she had made especially for her. "Honey, what I tol' yo'? Ain' I perdic' dat yo' boun' ter hit de tack spang on de right en'? I say dat dem pralines and fudges de banginest candies I ever *is* see, an' de folks what done buy 'em—huh! My lan' dey fair brek dey necks fallin' ober one an'ner ter git *at* 'em de minit I sot myse'f on dat ar camp stool. An' now yo' gwine open a boof an' 'splay 'em fer sale? But yo' aint gwine stan' behin' de counter is yo'? Yo' better *not* set out ter do no sich t'ing as *dat*, chile, whilst *I'se yo'* Mammy. No-siree! I ain' gwine stan' fer no sich gwines-on as dat—in a Blairsdale. Yo' kin hab yo' cubby, as yo' calls hit, an' take yo' chances wedder yo' gits cheated or wedder yo' meets up with hones' folks, but yo' cyant go behin' no counter, an' dats flat. When yo' gwine begin makin' all dat mess o' candy?"

"Just as soon as I have some boxes to sell it in, Mammy, and those I must design. At least must suggest something pretty for the covers."

"Have a picture of Baltie on the cover, Connie. He was the first one to take your candies to South Riveredge," cried Jean, with thoughts ever for the faithful old silent partner.

"No, Baltie belongs to you and Mammy. By-the-way, how did you get on at the school to-day? You haven't told me yet."

"Just *splendiferous!* The boys bought every bit I took; I mean every bit that was *left* after Professor Forbes got all *he* wanted. He was at the gate when I drove up, and what do you think he did? Made me stop until he had bought six packages of fudge and six packages of pralines, and then made me promise always to save them for him. My goodness if that man doesn't have *one* stomachache," ended this sage young lady speaking from bitter experiences of her own.

"Jean!" cried Eleanor.

"Well, it's true. Twelve whole packages of candy all for *himself*, greedy old thing! And he asked me if I couldn't come *twice* a week. I told him I guessed not, and if he wanted it oftener than once a week he'd have to come after it. And he said that was precisely what he *would* do, and to ask my sister to please to have twelve packages for him on Wednesday afternoon. *That* man's teeth

will need a dentist just you see if they don't," ended Jean with an ominous wag of the head for the sweet-toothed professor, while the rest of the family shrieked with laughter.

"What do *you* suggest for my boxes, mother?" asked Constance, when the laugh had subsided.

"How about little white moire paper boxes with some pretty flower on the cover?"

"Pretty, but not very distinctive I'm afraid," said Constance, doubtfully.

"How about those pretty Japanese boxes they have at Bailey's?" ventured Eleanor.

"Still less distinctive. No; I must have some design that suggests *me*. Don't think me conceited, but I want people to know that the candy is made and sold by a school-girl, who cannot be there to look after her counter, and must trust to their honesty. I've got an idea about my *sign*, but, somehow, I don't seem to be able to get one that is worth a straw for the boxes, yet I've been thinking as hard as I could think."

"Wait a minit, Baby," said Mammy, and hurried from the room. She came back in about ten minutes holding a small box in her hand. Placing it upon the table before Constance, she said: "Now, Honey, mebbe dis yere idee ob mine ain' nothin' in de worl' but foolishness, but seems ter me ef yo' want distincshumness you's got hit *dar*. I ain' half lak ter let yo' *do* hit, but dey's *yo'* candies, so I spec' yo' might as well let folks unnerstan' hit."

The box was one which Jean had given Mammy the previous Christmas. It was made of white moire paper with a small medallion in gilt in the left-hand upper corner, the medallion being in the shape of a little gold frame formed of gold beads. Originally there had been a colored picture of Santa Claus's face within it, but over this Mammy had carefully pasted a small photo of Constance; one taken several years before. In the center of the box was written in gold script "Merry Christmas," and just beneath that the word "bonbons."

"Couldn't you have yo' name whar de Merry Christmas stan' at an' 'candies' whar de bong bongs is?" asked Mammy.

"Mammy, you old dear!" cried Constance, springing to her feet to throw her arms about the wise old creature. "You've hit it exactly. Why I couldn't have anything better if I thought for a whole year. I'll have some pictures taken right off and the boxes shall be just exactly like this. Hurrah for 'Constance B.'s Candies!' Come on Mammy, we've got to celebrate the brilliant idea!" and catching the astonished old woman by the arms, Constance whirled her off on a lively two-step, whistling the accompaniment, while Mammy cried:

"Gawd bress my soul, is yo' gone stark crazy, chile!" and at length broke away to vanish protesting within the privacy of her kitchen.

CHAPTER XXII—First Steps

During the ensuing week it would have been hard to find a busier household than the Carruths'. Instead of telephoning to Mr. Porter on Monday morning, as he had suggested, Constance wrote a long letter Saturday evening, giving accurate directions for the boxes, and enclosing a paper design to be sent to the manufacturers.

The letter reached him by the early mail, causing him to exclaim: "George, what a level little head she *has* got! She shall have those boxes before next Saturday, if I have to go after them myself. Why the idea is simply great!"

Going to his 'phone he called up Mrs. Carruth's home. Constance had already gone to school, but Mrs. Carruth answered the 'phone. She was quite as delighted as Constance would have been, and promised to deliver the message to her upon her return. When she heard it Constance's cheeks glowed.

"Isn't he a *dear*, mother, to take so much trouble for me? And now I must get *busy, busy, busy*. I've pounds and pounds of candy to make between this and Saturday, and I must make it afternoons."

"I can not bear to think of you doing this, dear," said Mrs. Carruth, laying her hand tenderly upon the soft brown hair.

"Why not, I'd like to know?" cried Constance.

"Because it takes the time you should spend in outdoor exercise. You work hard in school, and that has always seemed to me to be quite enough for any girl to undertake. Yet here you and Eleanor are about to give up your afternoons for this work and the coaching."

Mrs. Carruth sighed, for it was hard for her to adjust herself to the new order of things in her family. Raised upon a large plantation, where she, the only daughter, was her father's idol, for whom everything must be done, and whose every wish must be considered, she shrank from the

thought of her girls laboring for their daily bread, or stepping out into the world beyond their own thresholds. Her father would have felt that the world was about to cease revolving had *she* been obliged to take such a step. Indeed it would have quite broken his heart, for never had any woman of *his* household been forced to do aught toward her own maintenance. But times had changed since Reginald Blairsdale had been laid away in the little burial plot upon the plantation, where his wife had slept for so many years, and his daughter had lived to see many changes take place which would have outraged all his traditions.

"Now, mother, *please* listen to me," said Constance, earnestly, as she slipped her arm about her mother's waist. "I am *not* going to give up all my afternoons, and neither is Eleanor. As to the exercise, we each have a pretty long walk to and from school mornings and afternoons, and, in addition to that, Eleanor will go to her pupils' houses to do her coaching. That gives her a good bit of exercise three afternoons each week, and she has *all* her Saturdays free. I shall give little more than two hours a day to my candy making, and I know you and Jean will gladly help me do the packing and tying up. Just how I shall send it over, I haven't decided yet; that can be settled later when I send a ton or so each day," laughed Constance. "Meanwhile Mammy will take it over, or *I* can. Only *please* don't dampen my enthusiasm or worry because I am undertaking this step. I am perfectly well and strong, and I'll promise not to do anything to endanger that health and strength. So smile upon my venture, Mumsey, dear, and make up your mind that it *is* going to be a *great* success,—because it *is*," ended Constance, with a rapturous hug.

"You are my brave, sweet girl!" said Mrs. Carruth, very tenderly. "Yes, I'll put my Blairsdale pride in my pocket—or rather my hand-bag, since pockets are no longer in fashion, and try to be a full-fledged, twentieth-century woman. Now what is the first step?"

"The first step is to make my candies before I try to sell 'em. No, the first is to order the stuff sent home to make them of. I'll 'phone right down to Van Dorn's this minute. I've plenty on hand for this afternoon's candy, but I'll lay in a big supply ahead."

The 'phoning was soon done, and then Constance hurried to the kitchen where for the two ensuing hours she worked like a beaver. At the end of that time several pounds of tempting sweets were made and ready to be wrapped in paraffin paper. When this was done all was packed carefully into tin boxes to await the arrival of the paper ones.

Constance surveyed the candy with much satisfaction, as indeed she well might, for no daintier sweets could have been found. Turning to the others she cried:

"I feel as self-satisfied and self-righteous as though I'd just put a new skirt braid on my skirt, and I don't know of anything that makes one feel more so. If I can make five pounds a day for six days I'd have a pretty good supply on hand for Saturday, my 'opening day.' My, doesn't that sound business-like? Nornie, don't you wish *you'd* taken to a commercial rather than a professional life? Come on Jean, the others will die of envy when they see our candy booth spread and spread until it swallows up all the office space in the Arcade," and catching up the saucepan in which she had made her candy, Constance began to beat a lively tattoo upon the bottom of it, as an accompaniment to her whistling, as, still enveloped in her big apron, she pranced about the kitchen. Jean, also in gingham array, promptly joining in, for Jean's resentment had vanished since she had been taken into the girls' confidence and "entered the partnership" as she called it.

In a day or two another message came over the 'phone to Constance, asking her to call at the Arcade, the following afternoon.

Upon reaching there at three o'clock, she was met by Mr. Porter, who had been on the lookout for her.

"Glad you've come, little girl! Glad to see you," he said heartily. "Come and look at your cubby and tell me what you think of it. *I* think it great." While he talked Mr. Porter led the way to the rear of the Arcade. As they drew near the stairway, Miss Willing glanced up, gave an indifferent nod in answer to Constance's "How do you do, Miss Willing?" and turned to her 'phone. Miss Willing much preferred being the center of attraction beneath the stairs, and was not enthusiastic over the thought of sharing her corner with "one of them big-bugs, as they think themselves." Could she have known it, this girl, whom she was so stigmatizing, felt herself a very tiny bug indeed in the world in which Miss Willing dwelt, and secretly stood in considerable awe of the young lady who could look with so much self-assurance into the eyes of the patrons of her 'phone booth, and smile and joke with old and young men alike. There were always several around the booth. Constance wondered why they seemed to have to wait so long to have their calls answered. Her own 'phone calls at home were answered so promptly. However, while these sub-conscious thoughts passed through her brain, the more wide-awake portion of it was taking in the changed appearance of her cubby's corner.

Mr. Porter had lost no time and spared no trouble, and the Arcade's carpenter to whom he had given instructions to "do that job in shape and mighty quick," had followed those instructions to a dot. There was the cubby, the wood all carefully painted in white enamel, the portable shelves made of sheets of heavy glass. A high railing and gate shut off one end, giving ingress to the proprietor, and privacy if she wished at any time to stay at her counter for awhile. On the lower shelf of the counter stood a little cash box divided into two sections: One for bills the other for silver. Just above it was a small white sign upon which was plainly painted in dark blue letters:

“Constance B.’s Candies.”
Take what you wish.
Leave cost of goods taken.
Make your change from my cash box.
Respecting my patrons’ integrity,
Constance B. C.
Kindly close the door.

Constance clasped her hands and gave a little cry of delight. All her ideas were so perfectly carried out.

“Oh, Mr. Porter, it is perfectly fascinating! How good you are! How am I ever going to pay for it though? I had no idea you were going to so much trouble and expense.”

“But you don’t *have* to pay for it. Every office has to be fitted up for its tenant’s needs you know, or he wouldn’t rent it. So I had to have your cubby fitted up for yours. Now you can stock up as soon as you’re a mind to. And, by-the-way, those boxes will be along to-morrow morning. I told them they must hustle, and they have. Are your photos ready to paste on ‘em?”

“Yes, they came home last evening; at least six dozen of them did, and the rest will come next week. I’ll send them to the box manufacturers for the next lot and they can be put right on there. It will save our time.”

“Good! Twelve dozen boxes will be delivered this time, and the rest will be along pretty soon. Send your photos to them as quickly as you can. I’m glad you like your cubby.”

“Like it! Why I’d be the most ungrateful girl that ever lived if I didn’t like it. It’s just simply *splendid*! But a whole year’s rent won’t pay you back I’m afraid.”

“Don’t care whether it does or not. Mean to make you sign a *five* years’ lease next time. When will you stock up?”

“Mammy is coming over with me early Saturday morning. Just think we have already made over twenty-five pounds of candy. I want to have fifty on hand to start with. Do you think I’ll *ever* sell it?” and the pretty girlish face was raised to Mr. Porter’s with the most winning of smiles.

“Little flirt! I wonder if she knows he has daughters as old as *she* is,” muttered the girl at the ‘phone. Constance was quite unconscious of either look or comment.

“Of course you’ll sell it. Mark my word it will go like hot cakes,” was the encouraging answer.

“I hope so. And thank you again and again for *all* you have done. Good-bye. Please tell your daughters what a proud girl you have made me,” and the little gloved hand was held toward him. He shook it warmly and walked with her to the front door. As he turned to go back a man who occupied a cigar stand near the door nodded and said with a laugh:

“Got a new tenant, Mr. Porter? Goin’ to let us have another pretty girl to talk to?”

“I’ve got a new tenant, yes, Breckel, but, unless I am very much mistaken, you will not talk to her a great deal, and when you *do* you’ll take your hat off, and toss away your cigar. It’s a pity we can’t have a few more such girls in our business world. It would raise the standard considerably. Men would find a better occupation than making fool speeches to them then. Mark my word that little woman will succeed.”

“I’m sure I hope she will if she’s the right stuff,” answered Breckel, the laugh giving place to a more earnest expression and tone of voice, which proved that the man, like most of his stamp, had something good in him to be appealed to.

CHAPTER XXIII—Opening Day

At last the eventful morning arrived. Constance and Mammy were astir long before the clock struck six, and the candy kettles were bubbling merrily. Constance was pulling her big lump of molasses candy when Jean came bounding into the kitchen arrayed in her little night toga.

“Bress my soul!” cried Mammy. “Wha’ yo’ doin’ down hyer? Kite long back dis minit. Does yer want ter kitch yo’ deaf cold?”

“But Connie didn’t call me, and I said I’d help,” protested Jean.

“He’p! He’p! Yo’ look lak yo’ could he’p, don’t yo’? stannin’ dar dressed in nuffin in de worl’ but yo’ nightie an’ yo’ *skin*. Clar out dis minit befo’ I smack yo’ wid dis hyer gre’t spoon,” and Mammy made a dive for the culprit as she darted away.

A few hours later the candy boxes were in the bottom of the phaeton, Constance mounting guard over them while Mammy acted as Jehu.

When the Arcade was reached Mammy descended from the phaeton, blanketed Baltie, and then taking one of the large boxes in which the smaller ones were packed, said:

"Now honey, yo' tek anodder—*No, not two* of 'em—dey's too heavy fo' you; I'll come back fo' dose. Now walk 'long head ob me, kase I want dese hyer folks what's a-starin' at us lak dey aint neber *is* seen anybody befo', ter unnerstan' dat I'se *yo' sarvint*, an' here fer ter pertec' yo'. *An' I ain' gwine stan' no nonsense needer.*"

"You need not be afraid Mammy. Everybody is just as kind and lovely as possible."

"Huh! Dey'd *better* be," retorted Mammy, with a warning snort.

In a short time the little booth made a brave showing with its quarter-pound, half-pound, and pound boxes of candy, each tied with pretty ribbon, and each bearing upon its cover the smiling face of its young maker.

When Miss Willing found a chance to take a sly peep at them she turned her head and sneered as she murmured: "Well, of all the conceit. My! Ain't she just stuck on that face of hers though."

Scarcely was all arranged, when Mr. Porter appeared upon the scene.

"Just in time to be the first customer," he cried gayly. "How are you this morning? How-de-do, Auntie? Ah, you see I know your partner now. What all have you got here anyhow?" he continued as he peered into the cases. "Pralines, plain fudge, nut fudge, molasses candy, cream walnuts, caramels, butter-scotch. I say! You've been working, little girl, haven't you?"

"Lak ter wo'k her finges mos' off," asserted Mammy.

"They're none of them missing, though," laughed Constance, holding up the pretty tapering fingers to prove her words.

"Then give me my candies, quick! I can't wait another minute. You can almost see my mouth water like my old hunting dog's."

"Which kind will you have Mr. Porter?"

"*All* kinds of course!"

"Not really?"

"Yes, *really*. Do you think I'm going to miss any of the treat? Biggest boxes, please."

Constance lifted from the case a pound box of each variety.

"How much?" asked Mr. Porter.

"Why nothing to *you*? How *could* I?" she asked, coloring at the thought of accepting more from him.

"Now see here, young lady, that won't do. You can't begin *that* way. Your business has got to be spot cash. Don't forget that, or you'll get into difficulties," said her customer with a warning nod of his head.

"As near as I can make out Mr. Porter, it's just the other way about; I'm getting my cash in advance. Now please listen to me," said Constance very seriously, an appealing look in her expressive eyes. "You have done a great deal for me in arranging this booth so attractively, and encouraging me in every way. In addition to that you have 'taken stock,' as you call it, in the venture. Very well, *I* call it simply advancing capital. Now I shall never feel at ease until that sum is paid off, and one way for me to do it is to let you have all the candy you want. No—wait a minute; I haven't finished," as Mr. Porter raised his hand in protest. "If you will promise to come to the booth for all the candy you want, I will charge you just the same for it as I charge the others, but it must go toward canceling my obligation *so far as money* can cancel it. Now, *please*, say yes, and make my opening day a very happy one for me. Otherwise I shall have to refuse to let you have *any* candy until I have paid back the hundred dollars. Isn't that right and fair, Mammy?" she asked, turning to look into the kind old face beside her.

"Hits jist de fa'r an' squar' livin' truf. Hit suah is, Massa Potah. Ain' no gittin' roun' dat. We-all cyant tek no mo' 'vestments 'dout we gibs somepin fer ter mak hit right. Miss Constance, know what she a-sayin'."

The gay bandanna nodded vigorously to emphasize this statement.

Mr. Porter looked at them for a moment, and then broke into a hearty laugh.

"I give it up!" he cried. "Have it your own way, but if I eat sweets until I lose all my teeth, upon your heads be the blame. It isn't every man who has a hundred dollars worth to pick from as he chooses."

"You won't have very long, because I expect to pay back in more ways than just candies," cried Constance, merrily.

"But you surely don't want *all* that?" she added, laying her hands upon the seven boxes lying upon the counter.

"Yes, I do! My soul, if she isn't trying to do me out of my own purchases. Here, young lady, give me those boxes. I want them right in my own hands before you have some new protest to put forth," and hastily piling his seven pounds of candy upon his arm, Mr. Porter fled for the elevator, leaving Mammy and Constance to laugh at his speedy departure.

At length all was arranged, the booth with its array of dainty boxes making a brave display.

Constance and Mammy stood for a moment looking at it before taking their departure, well pleased with the result of their undertaking. Then with a pleasant good morning to Miss Willing, whose eyes and ears had been more than busy during the past hour, they departed, leaving the little candy booth, its cash box, and its very unusual announcement upon the sign which swung above it, to prove or disprove the faith which one young girl felt in her fellow beings.

CHAPTER XXIV—One Month Later

One month had passed since the eventful opening day. A month of hard, incessant work for Constance, Mammy and Jean, who insisted upon doing her share. It was nearly March, and the air already held a hint of spring. The pussy-willows were beginning to peep out upon the world, and in sheltered spots far away in the woodland the faint fragrance of arbutus could be detected.

From her opening day, Constance's venture had prospered, and the little candy booth's popularity became a fact assured. Up betimes every morning, Constance had her kettles boiling merrily and by seven o'clock many pounds of candy were ready to be packed in the dainty boxes. Then came Jean's part of the work and never had she failed to come to time. True to her word to be a "sure-enough partner," she was up bright and early and had her candies wrapped and packed before her breakfast was touched. Mammy and Baltie, soon became familiar figures in South Riveredge, and many of Constance's patrons believed the old woman to be the real mover of the enterprise. How she found time to convey the candy boxes to the booth, arrange them with such care, collect the money deposited there the previous day by the rapidly increasing number of customers, and still reach home in time to prepare the mid-day meal with her usual care, was a source of wonder to all. Yet do it she did, and her pride and ambition for the success of the venture rivaled Constance's. Failure was not even to be dreamed of. No one ever guessed the hours stolen from her sleep by the good soul to make up for the hours stolen from her daily duties, but many a night after bidding the family an ostentatious "good-night, ladies," and betaking herself to her bedroom above stairs, did she listen until every sound was hushed and then creep back to her kitchen and work softly until everything was completed to her satisfaction.

Friday afternoons and Saturdays, Constance took matters into her own hands, and she soon discovered that another mode of transportation for her candy would be imperative, so rapidly was the demand for Constance B.'s Candies increasing. So after the first two weeks the local expressman was pressed into service, and the old colored man, who for years had run the elevator in the Arcade, received the boxes upon their delivery.

The way in which the old man had scraped acquaintance with Mammy, caused Mr. Porter considerable amusement. Mammy's intercourse with the colored people she had met since coming North, had not been calculated to increase her respect for her race. Finding "Uncle Rastus" at the North, she instantly concluded that he had been born and raised there. That, like herself, he might have been transplanted, she did not stop to argue. But one day when Mammy was struggling with an unusually large consignment of candy, Uncle Rastus hurried to offer his services "to one ob de quality colored ladies," as he gallantly expressed it. This led to a better understanding between the two old people, and when Mammy discovered that Rastus had been born and raised in the county adjoining her own, and that his old master and hers had been warm friends, Rastus' claim to polite society was indisputable, and from that moment, Mammy and Rastus owned the Arcade, and the courtly old negro, and dignified old negress caused not a little amusement to Constance B.'s customers, and the people who frequented the Arcade. It would be hard to tell which grew to take the greater pride in the venture, for Rastus had all the old antebellum negro's love and respect for his white folks and Mammy lost no opportunity for singing the praises of hers. And thus another member was added to the firm and Constance's interests were well guarded.

Not once since launching upon her venture had Constance met with any loss. The little cash box invariably held the correct amount to balance the number of boxes taken from the booth, and the returns surprised Constance more than anyone else.

"I tell you I'm going to be a genuine business woman, see if I'm not," she cried, after balancing her accounts one Saturday evening. "Why just think of it Mumsey, dear, here are fifteen dollars over and above *all* expenses for the week. If I continue like this I'll be a million_nairess_ before I

know what has happened. How are you flourishing, Nornie? Are your Pegasus Ponies as profitable?"

"Not quite, but I'm hopeful," laughed Eleanor. "Some of them are spavined in their minds, I fear. At any rate they don't 'arrive' as quickly as I'd like to have them in spite of all my efforts. However, they are not going backward, and I dare say that ought to gratify me, especially when they are willing to pay me two dollars an hour for helping them to stand *still*. I can't make such a showing from driving my coach as you can make from wielding your big spoon, Connie dear, but ten dollars added to your fifteen will keep the wolf from the door, won't it little mother?" ended Eleanor, laying her hand upon her mother's shoulder.

Mrs. Carruth rested her cheek upon it as she replied:

"What should I do without my girls? I am *so* proud of my girls! So proud!—yet I cannot realize it all."

"You haven't got to do without us. We're here to be done *with*, aren't *we*, Nornie?" cried Constance, gayly.

"We certainly *are*," was the hearty response.

"Then why don't you add my part?" demanded Jean, who had faithfully made her journeys to the Irving School each Saturday morning, and upon each occasion returned triumphant with her candy box empty, but her little coin bag well filled with dimes, for her customers were always on the lookout for her.

"I have, Honey. It is all included in the amounts set down here," answered Constance.

"Yes, but I want to know just which part of it is mine. How much did I sell last Saturday and how much to-day?" persisted Jean.

"Twenty-five packages last Saturday and eighteen this. Forty-three in all. Four dollars and thirty cents in two weeks, and four dollars in your first two weeks. Eight dollars and thirty cents all told, little girl. Two dollars seven and a half cents a week. I call that pretty good for a ten-year-old business woman, don't you, Mumsey, dear?"

"I call it truly wonderful," was Mrs. Carruth's warm reply.

"What do *you* think of it, Mammy?" cried Constance. "Aren't we here to be done with after that showing?"

"Done wid *what*?" promptly demanded Mammy, who had no intention of committing herself before becoming fully informed of all the facts.

"Done *everything* with. Made use of. Worked for all there is in us. Made to pay for ourselves. Isn't that right, Mammy? Say 'yes' right off. Say 'yes' Mammy, because that's why we are big, and young, and strong, and happy, and anxious to prove that we are the 'banginest chillern' that *ever* were. You've said so hundreds of times, you know you have, so don't try to go back on it now. Aren't we *just right*, Mammy? Successful business women and a firm of which you are proud to be a member? The Carruth Corporation, *bound* to succeed because, unlike other corporations, it has a *soul*, yes, *four* of 'em, and can prove that a corporation with four souls can outstrip any other ever associated. *Mine's* as light as a feather this minute, so let's prance," ended Constance, springing toward Mammy, to catch her hardened hands in her own warm ones, and give a beckoning nod to Jean and Eleanor, who were quick to take her hint. The next instant a circle was formed around Mrs. Carruth's chair, the girls singing in voices that made the room ring.

"Mammy, dear,
Listen here,
Isn't this a lark?
Every day,
Work and play,
And each to do her part."

While poor old Mammy sputtered and protested as she pounded around with them willy-nilly.

"Bangin'est chillern! *Bangin'est* chillern! Huh! I reckons you *is*! Huh! Let me go dis *minit*! Miss Jinny! Miss Jinny! Please ma'am, make 'em quit. Make 'em let loose ob me! Dar! You hear dat? Eben Baltie heer yo'in' holler. Bres Gawd, I believes he's 'fronted kase he lef' outen de cop'ration. Dat's hit! He's sure *is*. Let me go dis minit, I say. He gotter be part ob it," and giving a final wrench from the detaining hands, Mammy rushed away crying in answer to old Baltie's neigh, which had reached her ears from his stable:

"Yas, yas, Baltic hawse, Mammy done heard yo' a-callin' an' she's a-comin'; comin' to passify yo' hurt feelin's case you's been left outen de cop'ration. Comin', honey, comin'."

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