The Project Gutenberg eBook of Betty Lee, Junior, by Harriet Pyne Grove

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: Betty Lee, Junior

Author: Harriet Pyne Grove

Release date: January 30, 2014 [EBook #44804]

Language: English

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BETTY LEE, JUNIOR ***

E-text prepared by Roger Frank and Sue Clark

BETTY LEE, JUNIOR

By

HARRIET PYNE GROVE

THE WORLD SYNDICATE PUBLISHING CO.
Cleveland, Ohio—New York City

Copyright, 1931

THE WORLD SYNDICATE PUBLISHING CO.

Printed in the United States of America

CONTENTS

BETTY LEE, JUNIOR

CHAPTER I

A JUNIOR AT “PEP ASSEMBLY”

“Clash, Bim-bang!”

“Toot-toot,” high! “Toot-toot,” low!

“Tooral-looral-loo-oo-oo-oo,” up the scale, “tooral-looral-loo-oo-oo-oo,” down the scale.

“R-r-r-boom!”

Cymbals clashed; horns tooted; scales mounted or fell; bits of popular tunes were tried, and drums occasionally rolled; for Lyon High band was on the platform, in almost full force. All were in uniform and gathered for the greatest Pep Assembly of the year, which would begin when the proper gongs were sounded.

Betty Lee, junior, opening the door of the auditorium, smiled broadly at the sight. Ordinarily Betty would have been in her home room with the rest, waiting for the signals; but she had been sent by her home room teacher on an errand to the office. And on her arrival there, the principal had appeared from his inner office as her message was being delivered to one of the office force.

Looking around for some one who was not busy, he recognized Betty’s presence with a smile. “Betty,” said he—and Betty was proud that he knew her well enough to address her by her first name—“will you please step to the auditorium and see if the band leader has arrived? If so, tell him that I should like to see him a moment before the assembly.”

Armed with this authority, Betty Lee was now invading the present domain of boydom, while the band gathered and practiced after this noisy and irregular fashion. It was fun for everybody and Betty enjoyed her unusual privilege. She hesitated inside of the central door, which she had entered, then walked forward as far as the back row of seats, while she scanned the platform to see if the young man who trained the band had yet come in. She could not see him. There were the rows of chairs, arranged across the stage, the two central rows facing each other. The boys were getting their music in order, putting it upon the standards in front of them, or just sitting down to try out their instruments. Betty, the assured junior now, knew personally many of the band members, and the names of most of the others.

As she waited, not seeing the person she sought, the door behind her flew open to admit a hurrying boy, Chet Dorrance, a senior now and still a good friend of Betty’s. He stopped in his mad haste to speak to her. “’Lo, Betty, how’s this? Going to lead the band this morning?”

“Of course,” laughingly replied Betty. “I’m glad you came along, Chet. The principal wants to see the band leader and sent me to tell him—not the drum-major, you know, but Mr.—What’s-his-name.” Betty lifted her pretty chin a moment.

“You see I’m all fussed, Chet, over such an errand.”

“Yes—you—are!”

“Well, I do hate to go up there to find him, though I thought I might get him from the wings. But would you mind telling him for me, if he comes in pretty soon? It might be possible that he would stop in the office, and I’ll go back there to see if it’s necessary.”

Chet nodded at the explanation. “Sure I’ll tell him. There he comes now,” and Chet indicated a young man who came from the side to the center of the platform. Then, on a trot, Chet traversed the length of the big auditorium to the steps at its side which led into the wings. Betty waited a few moments, to make sure that he really would deliver the message. There he was, motioning back to her as he spoke briefly. With a high salute Chet grinned back at her and sought his horn, while the band leader hurried from the platform, down the side aisle and out at the nearest door into the hall.

“Clash, bing, bang, tooral-looral”—how funny it was! And with a terrific swing of another of the double doors that admitted pupils and teachers into the auditorium, a tall, long-legged senior tore into the room, ran on the double-quick up the aisle nearest, buttoning the coat of his uniform as he went, crossed the stage at the rear, and in an unbelievably short time lugged in the biggest horn of all, shining in its brazen glory.

Betty, still grinning at this latest arrival’s performances, turned to leave just in time to come face to face with another boy, a junior this time, Mickey Carlin, who was carrying a cornet.

“You saved yourself by turning around, Betty,” said the youth usually addressed by the boys as “Irish.” “I was just going to set off a few gentle blasts behind you to see how much you love real music. Going to join the band?”

“Certainly,” replied Betty as she threw up her hands in pretended horror at Mickey’s cornet and statement. “I had to deliver a message for the principal—honestly,” she added, as Mickey made a face which indicated some doubt of her veracity. But Betty was smiling. “I’ve got to fly now before the gong rings.”

Betty, too, joined the ranks of the hurried, as she went back to her home room to report the result of her errand and to explain the length of her absence from the room. The “adorable Miss Heath” was her home room teacher this year and she would believe her truthful. It was such a comfortable feeling to be under a teacher who trusted you and to whom you were “making good.” Betty would have been “boiled in oil,” she declared, before she would take advantage of Miss Heath’s confidence. She did feel a little guilty, however, because she had not hurried to leave the auditorium. Those killing boys! And Betty was proud of the Lyon High band, nearly fifty pieces, and “playing like professional musicians” under their instructor and leader, as one optimistic article in the school paper had declared. She gave a little skip as she thought of it, but slowed her step to enter her home room sedately.

Dotty Bradshaw, the same old Dotty, made big eyes at her, pretending to look shocked. Carolyn Gwynne, darling, precious Carolyn, still Betty’s dearest among the girls, scarcely excepting Kathryn Allen, gave Betty a demure look as she passed in front of her desk to report to Miss Heath. As Betty and Carolyn sat on front seats, across the aisle from each other, Carolyn could hear everything that Betty said, though her tone was low as she talked to Miss Heath.

“I’d been wondering what had become of you,” said Carolyn, when in a few minutes the girls of the home room were in semi-order on their way to the auditorium.

“It was fine to ‘traverse these sacred halls’ just like a teacher. O, Carolyn, I’ve something to show you. Don’t let me forget it. I brought it along so Doris or Dick wouldn’t get hold of it. I’m always forgetting and leaving things about and I can’t blame Dodie for looking at them and asking questions. But you do hate to have *everything* talked over in the family! I really suppose you’ll have grounds for thinking that I’m not in good taste to show it to you but I have to talk it over with somebody!”

“How flattering that you choose me!” mischievously remarked Carolyn.

“Shush! You know I always tell you things that I can tell anybody.”

“I’m consumed with curiosity. What can it be?”

“Do you remember the Don?”

“Oh, yes. You had him at your house one Thanksgiving—our freshman year. Your father had invited him or something.”

“Yes. You know that he just disappeared suddenly and nobody knew what had become of him after school was out. He was supposed to be going on with his education and he was such a wonder all year in athletics. Father missed him from the garage, where he worked and inquired, but never heard. He had intended to go on with his education. Well, I had a letter from him and that is what I want to show you. He doesn’t explain at all, but he sends regards to his friends and asks if he can come—call to see us.”

“Ah, Betty, I shall have to look at that letter!”

“Oh, it’s all right, a very proper letter. I showed it to Mother and Father, of course, for Father was speaking of Ramon Balinsky just the other day. I’ll tell the girls and boys, some of them, and give Ramon’s message, but I just can’t show the letter, for there’s one bit of it that’s a little personal, written in his foreign way. Would it be all right, do you think, if I only said that ‘we’ heard from the Don and that he is all right and sends greetings to all his high school friends?”

“Why not? People usually do say ‘we,’ no matter who got the letter, when it is a sort of family friend. You have a terrible conscience, Betty Lee.”

“No worse than yours, Carolyn Gwynne,” returned Betty with a little laugh, suited to this private conversation, which was rather hard to carry on as they walked. “Anyhow, Mother says that if you can’t trust people to be truthful, you can’t trust them at all.”

“True enough. But you don’t have to tell *all* you know to folks that are just plain curious! Still, how

would it do to tell Kathryn, and have her tell Chauncey; and by that time it would be that 'the Lees' had had word about Ramon and he was sending his best regards or something to everybody that remembered him?"

"Smart girl! I knew you'd think of something!"

Kathryn, coming up behind them, asked at this instant "Why this merriment?" but it was a very quiet bit of laughter that she interrupted and there they were at the door of the auditorium.

The girls made their way to the junior section, where Betty usually sat between Carolyn and Kathryn. The band was playing a lively air by way of escort. Some of the pupils were humming a little with the band and others were talking, though by general consent manners were such as control the usual crowd. They might not have been so good, it is true, had the pupils not known that the principal would tolerate no nonsense; and no one wanted to miss any assemblies, to pass the time in study, or to be sent home.

Lucia Coletti, still in America, still in Lyon High, sat directly in front of Betty and next to Peggy Pollard, who, it may be remembered, had joined the sorority, the "Kappa Upsilons," to which Carolyn and Betty had been invited. Lucia (pronounced Lu-*chee*-a, in Italian fashion), looked back, as she pulled down the seat of her chair, and gave the girls a salute, very brief, but Dotty Bradshaw, near by, rather daringly asked, "is that a Fascisti salute, Lucia?"

"It's a mixture, like me," replied Lucia, not offended, her black eyes flashing an amused glance at Betty. "Listen, Betty," she said. "I want to see you some time today. I want you to help me out on something."

"All right," said Betty.

But the principal was now standing quietly on the platform, as was his custom, his very presence a check upon too vociferous converse. He clapped his hands together several times for quiet. Instantly the talking began to subside, then stopped as the attention of all was secured. All faces turned to the American flag, which stood in silken beauty of red, white and blue at the side of the platform. In the daily lesson of patriotism, pupils and teachers, led by the principal in clear, unhurried accents, repeated the pledge to the flag and country.

Lucia, half American, half Italian, probably born in some other foreign country, Betty thought, gave the salute with the rest, "out of courtesy," she had told the girls. It was her mother's flag, she said. Her father had another, and as for her she was going to *choose* her country!

But Lucia, bright and interesting, very much alive to all the high school and city life, was possibly arriving at a better appreciation of some phases of America and its opportunities than some of the girls of American birth, and from the very difference of environment and customs.

Lucia Coletti was adding to some old-world advantages, and to her early education in Europe, what America had to offer. Betty was both surprised and pleased with the Lucia Coletti who was a junior. And Lucia, in spite of the sorority circle and many other young friends in the circle in which her countess mother and wealthy uncle moved, still had a high regard for Betty Lee, her first helpful acquaintance; for she considered Betty's leadership a safe one, whenever independent Lucia needed or wanted any counsel.

"Let us improve the manner of our entrance into the auditorium," the principal was saying. "I should like to find it unnecessary to do more than lift my hand for attention." A few announcements were made and then the meeting was put into the hands of a senior boy, Budd LeRoy, in fact.

At Budd's invitation, after a rousing number played by the band, the cheer leaders came running out, to all appearances in terrible excitement. But that was their pose. In these days the cheer leaders were obliged to "try out" for their position. Betty could remember when in her freshman year there was only one. Now there were six, arrayed in short sleeved yellow tunics or sweaters of a sort, with a big lion's head outlined in black upon each manly breast. Betty grinned broadly when she saw Brad Warren wearing the lion. So Brad had won in the try-out for some one to take the place of a cheer leader who had left school. Chet had wanted to be a cheer leader, but as he could not very well be a cheer leader and in the band at the same time, that young ambition could not be gratified.

Lyon High was nothing if not up-to-date! And now the yellow-capped cheer leaders wildly ran into a "huddle," conferring apparently, like a football team, and separating at once. One cried:

"Make it snappy! Just as you're going to root for the team tomorrow! Everybody in on it! One-two-three-go!

"Yea—Lions! Fight, fight, fight!
Yea—Lions! Fight, fight, fight!
Yea—Lions! Fight, fight, fight!"

"Now the Big Four yell for the team! One, two, three, four!

"T—T—T—T
E—E—E—E
A—A—A—A
M!

Yea—Team!
Fight, fight, fight!"

A different lad led the school next in one of their rally songs which they sang with a will:

"What's the matter with Lyon High?
Right, all right!
What's the matter with our team?
Watch them fight!

"No luck for the Eagles; that came last year.
We'll show them a seat in the distant rear!
What's the matter with Lions?
They're all right!"

As may be gathered, this occasion was the last Pep Assembly before the game with the Lions' most competent enemy, the "Eagles," of the rival city high school. Again the championship was to be determined. They had lost it the year before. This year the team would "do or die" and the rooters expected to be out in force. Accustomed as they all were to this organized method, of arousing enthusiasm, feeling was not hard to stir this morning, from the very facts of the situation. It might do, as the boys said, to "get a licking once; but never twice!"

Artistically and athletically the cheer leaders tore about, doing their various prepared stunts, rehearsed especially for this occasion. Budd, who was announcing the program so easily, had once been timid about public appearance, but in the course of three years and more at Lyon High, with all its organizations and efforts in the public eye, he had gotten bravely over his timidity. Presently he was announcing a speech from the assistant principal, Mr. Franklin, who was particularly interested in the school athletics and often took part in the faculty-versus-student games. His speech was brief and good.

"You need not be afraid that the team will be over-confident," said he, among other things. "Last year's experience will be a reminder to those who were on the team and to the new material as well. On the other hand, neither will they suffer the handicap of being fearful. They have a record of success this fall. Be there to boost them with your confidence. The new men this year are not without experience. The quarterback that came to us from Kentucky ranks along with Freddy Fisher or the boy you all knew as the Don." Here the speaker was interrupted with loud applause, intended for "Kentucky" and the memories of Freddy and Ramon who had led Lyon High to victory more than once.

"I am looking for some spectacular plays, though we shall not ask for them. While I am not expecting or desiring the team to 'wring the necks of the Eagles,' as someone suggested, I *am* expecting it to put them to flight! I thank you."

Smiling at the vigorous applause which followed his last statement or prophecy, Mr. Franklin left the platform, soon to enter the body of the auditorium, where he stood, an efficient representative of discipline and good order.

As the applause died down, Budd announced speeches by members of the team. First came the Kentucky boy of whom Mr. Franklin had spoken. He was tall and lank, as Kentuckians are supposed to be but often are not. The audience did not know how he had protested against his effort to make a speech. He had finally said he would appear but they need not expect any speech. "Good mawnin," he said and flushed hotly at the ripple of amusement that ran over the audience of his fellow pupils. He stood soberly waiting a moment and put his hands in his pockets, to give him greater confidence, it might be presumed.

"I nevah made a speech in my life," he continued, "and I am quite suah that I can't make one now. But I said I'd get up here and tell you that the team is on the job. We're goin' to do the best playin' of the season tomorrow—and that's all."

"Kentucky," in the midst of uproarious applause, sauntered off the stage without a backward look, thankful, no doubt, that such a public appearance was over. It was different on the field. You were further away from the crowd and thought about what you were doing.

The next member of the team began a sentence and forgot what he was going to say. But the sympathetic if laughing faces of his audience made him feel more at home. He was "terribly rattled," as one of the girls near Betty whispered, but managed to capture an idea, jerkily expressed it and succeeded in getting off the stage without falling over the band, as Dotty Bradshaw put it. But if there were anything clever or critical to be said Dotty never missed it. It was a pity, for Dotty was otherwise so attractive.

The captain of the football team was called upon next. He was somewhat more experienced in the line of speeches, or felt the responsibility more from his position, perhaps. At any rate his speech was a good one and all the more enthusiastically received from being short and to the point. At a signal (who could mistake the actions of the cheer leader) from the active six, the crowd rose in a body and to the tune of "On Wisconsin" sang "On Lions," the Lyon High version:

“On, Lions; on, Lions!
Clean up on that team;
Show them that the black and tawny
Ever is supreme.
On Lions; on, Lions,
Fighting for your fame!
Fight fellows, fight, fight, fight,
And win this game.”

A few fords and reminders from the principal himself followed this song, as his lifted hand quieted the natural slight disturbance of getting settled into seats again.

“Remember that you have in your hands the honor and reputation of the school and that this honor and reputation are even above winning the game. Remember that the other team, the other rooters, are boys and girls like yourselves, most of them fine, and both as *worthy* and as *interested* in their own team’s winning. Do not do anything that is planned to stir resentment. Continue to show the good sportsmanship for which this school stands. Have your fun and songs and root for your team, but show your visitors at our stadium the courtesy that is due them. And should any of them overstep the bounds of propriety, in their loyalty to their team, or their inter-plays parades, keep your own self-control and do not retaliate. Remember that Lyon High counts upon you.”

With this and a few announcements, the principal was through. The band struck up the regular Lyon High song, which the audience rose to sing. Then Budd dismissed the meeting and the boys and girls departed to classes to strains of the latest popular band tune.

“When can you show me the letter, Betty?” asked Carolyn.

“After the Lyon ‘Y’ meeting this afternoon, Carolyn. I have it with me. Here’s hoping I haven’t lost it. Oh, wouldn’t that be *awful*?”

“It depends upon how personal it is,” smiled Carolyn.

“Enough for me not to want anybody else to read it.”

CHAPTER II

“GOLDEN BETTY”

It was a full day for Betty Lee. Most of her days were full, but Betty was well and happy and never worried over her various activities, which had increased since her freshman year, so mixed and full of decisions. One might as well be doing things, she said. If you didn’t do one thing you were doing another. So she had concluded. And as long as she kept on the honor list no one at home made any objection to the list of her interests.

Attractive, friendly, yet independent, showing her clear mind and stability in everything she undertook, Betty was in demand and found herself very well-known, indeed, at the beginning of her junior year. She was considered one of the school’s best swimmers, but had not taken the life-saving tests as yet. That was to come this year. She was working toward it. The hockey season had just closed with Betty rejoicing as captain of the champion team. There was every indication that Betty again would be captain of the junior basketball team, but there were some murmurs at home against this and another junior girl wanted the place. Betty loved the excitement and confessed to herself alone that she would like to be captain. In the spring she was going to take up riding if she could.

Life was a happy proposition for Betty Lee this year. At home she had less responsibility. Her father’s business relations were apparently solid. Amy Lou had started to school. Doris and Dick were freshmen in Lyon High this year. Betty often met them in the halls, when they would exchange salutes; but Doris particularly wanted no interference from her older sister and Betty respected her desire for independence. She had been of some help to them at the start, however, and Doris was secretly quite proud of her pretty junior sister that “everybody” knew for her athletic record and “everything.”

Recitation periods were necessarily shortened on account of the Pep Assembly, which made the schedule a more hurried one. Betty ran downstairs and hopped upstairs, as she went from one to another class, planning how to get in her study for the next day as well as marshalling her forces for the coming class. She read a hard sentence in Cicero to Kathryn as they walked through the hall to Miss Heath’s room. “That’s the way I got it!” cried Kathryn, “but it is so crazy that I wasn’t sure.”

“I may not have it right,” said Betty, “but I think that is what it is.”

“I’ll trust your reading every time,” Kathryn declared.

“Better not; but I found an old text of Mother’s that has *grand* notes in it and I use it along with my own. I could bring it to school and lend it to you in study hall some time.”

“Oh, don’t bother. I’ll ask you about anything too muddly.”

“I’m getting used to Cicero now.”

“So am I, but it’s harder than Caesar because he has a sort of argument, you know, that you have to get.”

Betty was glad that she had study hall the last period before lunch. It was all too short, but she concentrated and lost to all surroundings, “crammed” on two lessons. Latin and Math could be acquired that evening—no—Chet was coming over! There was a young people’s supper and party at the church! Oh, well. She’d get it in somehow. And Betty would.

The afternoon went as busily, though the periods were of the usual length. How was she going to get to that Lyon “Y” meeting when there was orchestra practice? She had not thought of that! But when school was out and she had put away her books in her locker, with the exception of what she must take home, she ran to the auditorium with her violin only to find a notice:

“Orchestra practice postponed until tomorrow. Same hour!”

The violin went back into the locker, for there would be no home practice tonight! Arm in arm with Carolyn Gwynne, who had also seen the notice and waited for Betty, she ran in fine spirits to the room in which the Lyon “Y,” or the older high school group of Girl Reserves, was to meet. “Got the letter, Betty?” asked Carolyn.

“Yes—but I’d better look to see!” Betty opened her little bag, which contained her street car fare and several other things, felt around and found the letter from the “Don,” folded to come within the compass of the bag. “You can read it after the meeting, Carolyn. But don’t you know I’d forgotten all about the church supper tonight and I’ll have to skip home to get a lesson or two before dinner.”

“Stay here and get out Cicero with me. It won’t take us any time because she had us do so much sight reading ahead today. There are two or three clubs meeting and the building will be open, you know.”

“All right. Here’s hoping that this meeting will not take too long. There’s a program, you know, and election of officers. Bess Higgins resigned and so they’re going to have the whole new group elected and let the new president begin right away.”

“That’s funny. How do you like the idea of different officers for the two semesters?”

“I don’t know how it will work, but it makes more girls do things and that is a good thing. Oh, Carolyn, I wouldn’t have missed that Fall Retreat at camp for anything! Just one week-end was glorious and Father says perhaps I can go there for a week or two next summer after school. I wish I could go!”

“Perhaps I can. The family could go on without me and I could go with you and on to our own camp later.”

“Oh, Carolyn! And stay with me at our house before the Girl Reserve camp opens!”

Betty gave a happy skip, but here they were at the door through which other girls were entering. A little group was standing at one side near a window. Kathryn was among them and beckoned to Carolyn and Betty. “This is a caucus,” announced Kathryn. “You are not wanted Betty, only to say that you will be president if you get elected. We have to know.”

“Oh, *do* you?” laughed Betty. “This is so sudden! Why, I don’t care, Kathryn. If there’s anybody else that wants it, I don’t.” Then she drew Kathryn aside to speak more quietly. “Is this the nominating committee?”

“Yes, and some more of us that heard they were going to nominate a girl that wouldn’t do *one thing*. She is sweet enough about some things and she wants the honor of it. I’d like to have her have it for that, but nothing would get put through. Miss Street is new to us and all she knows about Clara Lovel is that she is a senior and is a good student.”

Miss Street was the new leader of this high school group. Betty told Kathryn that there was little use in putting up a junior against a senior, and told her to select another senior to run against Clara.

“There isn’t anything in your objection that it is customary to have a senior for president,” Kathryn countered in this little debate. “One of the best presidents Lyon ‘Y’ ever had was a junior. I found out before I went into this, Miss Betty Lee!”

“All right, Kathryn. I’ll not resign if I’m elected, for Lyon ‘Y’ is one of the best clubs we have and does some good, too. I’m on the committee for the Thanksgiving basket. Will you help me if I have to be president, too?”

“I’ll do anything!” grinned Kathryn, running back to the group of girls. “There are more juniors than seniors working in this club,” she whispered to a junior on the committee. “I bet we get Betty in if you put her up.”

Surreptitiously Betty did look at one of her lessons, whose book she let lie open on her lap during a little of the program. But when the leader of the high school groups spoke, she listened attentively, both for the lovely ideals of service which were presented and for the practical matters which she would have to handle if she were president of this group. It would be a “lot of work” and Betty sighed as she thought about it; but she had “the girls” to help her through. Carolyn, Kathryn, Peggy—perhaps she could get Lucia to join now! Oh, that would be great, because if Lucia joined it meant that some of the “society” girls, or girls that did not care much for anything of this sort would come in. They’d have a membership campaign and she’d appoint Lucia chairman!

Then Betty smiled at herself for planning before her name was even suggested!

“What are you grinning about, Betty?” whispered Peggy Pollard, who had plumped herself wearily down by Betty at the beginning of the program.

“Oh—things,” smiled Betty. There was more or less disorder just now, for the girls were distributing ballots. Then the announcement of names returned by the nominating committee was made and Betty had the experience, not entirely new, of hearing herself named a nominee for president. “I’m going to vote and then skip out,” she told Peggy. “I’ve got lessons to get, Carolyn and I will be getting Cicero just inside the auditorium; so come and tell us how it turned out—like a nice girl!”

“Oh, but we’re going to have tea afterwards,” objected Peggy.

“Well, call us in time for that, like a dear! I’m hard up for time.”

“All right. It will take a while to call off the ballots and tally up everything on the board. I’ll come when we’ve everybody else served. You don’t want to miss those cakes. Our cook made some of them.”

“My—have I almost missed those?”

But Betty and Carolyn slipped out as soon as their ballots had been handed to the girl that collected them. In two seats near a window in the auditorium they sat and read Cicero as fast as possible, deciding to let the undecided points go and cover ground at first, getting the vocabulary looked up at least. “You aren’t the least bit excited over running for office, are you, Betty?” asked Carolyn, stopping in the middle of a sentence. They had to read sitting close together and in a tone, not loud, but such as would not be drowned out by the practicing going on upon the platform. This was the mixed chorus, for whose practice that of the orchestra had been postponed.

“What’s the use?” asked Betty in return. “If I get it, it’s lots of work. If I don’t get it, I think I can stand the disgrace!”

Carolyn joined Betty’s laugh, but added that she was chiefly consumed with curiosity over that letter she was to read. “I don’t believe you’ll let me read it after all!”

“I have my doubts as to its being the thing to do,” returned Betty, “but I’ve got to get this Latin!”

It was wonderful what determined minds could do in a short time, though it seemed no time at all until Peggy appeared as the mixed chorus was departing. Tea and sandwiches, and more tea and delicious little cakes, tasted very good and “reviving,” as Betty declared. Peggy would not tell Betty who was elected until they reached the room and Betty declared that she had lost it of course, or Peggy would not have been afraid that Betty might refuse to come in at all, even for the little cakes.

But no sooner had Betty and Carolyn appeared than congratulations began and the general leader appointed a time to meet with Miss Street and Betty to talk over plans for the present and future. A few days remained before the plans for Thanksgiving baskets must be carried out, before the Thanksgiving recess or vacation. Betty's head was fairly bewildered, she told Carolyn; but she supposed she would "get used to it."

Then the girls found a sequestered spot in an empty recitation room not yet locked by the janitor. "There," said Betty, handing Carolyn the letter.

Carolyn turned it to see the return address on the envelope. "He expects you to answer it, I see, though he gives only street and number."

"I suppose so. He just wants to know if we are alive, of course."

"H'm. Some town in Michigan. I can't make out the postmark."

"He gives the *full* address inside. It's Detroit."

Carolyn, unhurried, in spite of her calm of being so curious, drew the letter from its envelope, remarking that the Don had gotten nice stationery for his letter to Betty. It "looked serious," she thought.

"Nonsense," returned Betty. "Hurry up and read it, Carolyn."

No criticism could have been made of the form of this letter, written in a firm and flowing hand. After the matter of address and date and the more formal beginning, in which Betty was addressed as Miss Lee, the letter ran as follows:

> "After so long a time, perhaps you have forgotten me. I was very sorry to leave the city so suddenly, but it was necessary, in regard to my private affairs, which I am not able to confide to my friends. A letter called me away. I packed, arranged with my landlady and the man for whom I worked and left on the next train. I took my books and I am trying to educate myself a little now that I am working here. I read the best that the libraries have to offer. Perhaps I shall be able to go to school some time again, but it is uncertain, like my residence here.
>
> "So many times I have thought of the kind gentleman, Mr. Lee, whose car I sometimes fixed, of the sweet mother and the golden Betty that made a lonely boy welcome on a holiday. And so I write at last to tell them that I have not forgotten and to ask if I will be welcome to call some day when I can return.
>
> "I shall be so glad if you can write to tell me how you have passed these long months and if your family is well. I have hesitated to write to your father, who is so busy with important things, but I thought that in your kindness you would be willing to answer this letter.
>
> "Please give my greetings to any of the high school friends who remember me. It is a very vivid memory of one of the happiest times I ever had that makes me write this at the near approach of the same holiday.
>
> "With regards to all and gratitude for past kindness, I am,
>
> "Very respectfully yours,
> "RAMON BALINSKY (Sevilla)."

"Why what does he mean by that name in parenthesis!" cried Carolyn. "That's funny!"

"I don't know. There's a town in Spain named Seville, isn't there! But whether that's a part of his own name or not I can't tell. Ramon gets mysteriouser and mysteriouser!"

"Betty Sevilla would sound better than Betty Balinsky, except for the alliteration." Carolyn was very sober as she said this.

"Now don't start anything like that, please."

"'The golden Betty,'" quoted Carolyn, still without a smile, but her eyes twinkled and she laughed as she repeated it. "'Golden Betty,'—my word! Going to answer the letter?"

"Mother says I should, just a little one."

"He writes very 'grown-up,' and the spelling is all right. I don't know why I didn't expect it to be, when I saw the clear handwriting on the envelope."

"The Don had had training before he ever came here," said Betty. "I suppose he gets training from the good English he is reading right along. I wish I knew just what to write him."

"To be friendly enough and not too friendly, I suppose."

"Exactly. Still, Carolyn, from what I saw of Ramon, I don't think he'd ever presume on any pleasant treatment. I'll have to think it out."

CHAPTER III

LITTLE FLIES IN THE OINTMENT

On guard against the dangers of a city, or of doubtful companionship, Betty Lee's parents had little to worry over; for Betty had a healthy mind and body, wholesome activities to occupy her time and girls very like herself for her best friends. The matter of attention from the boys Betty seemed to be able to manage herself, though Mr. Lee took careful note of who and what the boys were.

Betty Lee, junior, was now almost sixteen and attractive. There would be problems of love affairs some time, but not yet, it was to be hoped, though Betty was mature for her age and had considered herself as "going on sixteen" ever since her last birthday. Betty's dreams of a Prince Charming were natural enough but not serious and never connected with anyone in the flesh, unless a thrilling memory of one Hallowe'en and of attention from a college youth on a later occasion could be considered as coming in the category of dreams.

Chet Dorrance had recovered from his first attack of being impressed with a girl and was less "obvious" in his attentions to Betty. But he still preferred her society when he could get it, for picnics, class parties and the like, seeing her home or arranging for her company. Betty in her turn, had confidence in Chet, who was always the gentleman, and felt safely escorted when she was with him. There was nothing "thrilling" about the friendship and the girls rarely teased Betty about Chet. Very little of what could properly be termed social life was permitted by any of the parents who were the safe background of Betty and her friends. Contacts were chiefly at school and in school activities, all very natural and pleasant. Another boy for whom Betty felt a real friendliness was Chauncey Allen, Kathryn's brother. Chauncey had taken a sudden upward growth till Kathryn looked like a little girl beside him and her vivacious ways were in contrast with his quiet though often droll speech and action. He was active enough, to be sure, and was to play with the basketball team after Christmas. From him, since she and Kathryn were together so much, Betty heard all the boy news of the school, but Chauncey rarely engaged her society for any event. Indeed, Chauncey rarely bothered about girls, though he liked Betty, Kathryn said that since Chet fancied Betty, Chauncey would "let it go at that."

In regard to Ramon Balinsky, whom Peggy had once thought so intriguing as a football hero, Betty was grateful to her father when he said that he would write himself, since "the boy might need a friend." "Perhaps he has some new trouble," said Mr. Lee that night before dinner, when Betty caught him alone and asked what she should write. "Write a short friendly note, Betty, and I'll say the rest."

Before the church supper, then, much as Betty needed the time on lessons, she spoiled several sheets of good note paper in the process of getting the appropriate thing said. The note was written and pronounced a "friendly, modest little effort," by the censor-in-chief. Betty then dismissed the matter from her mind, though occasionally thinking of Ramon's expression, "Golden Betty," when as girls do, she spent some time in arranging her golden locks according to the most becoming of the approved high school styles. One had to look well in Lyon High!

But as Betty said sometimes to Kathryn or Carolyn, whenever she was in danger of being spoiled by thinking she could do well in athletics, or looked nice, or felt "set up" about what somebody had said, she always "got a good jolt of some sort, to bring her down a peg or two." And Kathryn or Carolyn would reply, "Life is like that, Betty!"

A little jolt was coming that evening, though Betty, satisfied that she could finish her lessons by rising a little earlier than usual the next morning, happily started off with Chet, a little late for the young people's supper. "Do you have to help any tonight?" asked Chet, who knew that Betty was often called on by the committees. Chet did not belong to Betty's church, but had a little habit of dropping in when something attractive was going on. The turkey suppers were usually served by the ladies' committees, but this one was entirely in the hands of the younger organizations.

"No, Chet, unless with the games. I'm going to help with the Christmas music and the tree and the Sunday school doings and I told them I couldn't do anything more this time. Is Ted coming tonight?"

"Yes. He's bringing his latest girl. She's a freshman, too, at the University."

Betty made a little sound that might have been termed a giggle. Attractive Ted, Chet's brother, the first boy who had claimed Betty's admiring attention on her entrance to Lyon High, was probably not any more given to social relations with the girls than many of the other older boys they knew; but as he had a way of charming courtesy toward a young lady and a frank form of speech about her, always complimentary, he was considered as being in love with one and another in rather rapid succession, a very foolish proceeding, as some of the girls said. Betty reserved her opinion. Ted was a "nice boy" and was doing well at the university.

"Does Ted keep up his music?" asked Betty.

"No. He hasn't any time for it with his freshman work."

“Would you believe, Chet, that I could be as dumb as I was about thinking that I couldn’t join the orchestra until I was a junior?”

“Why? Did you think that, Betty? I could have told you.”

“Well, little country girl that I was, I believed everything that was told me, of course——”

“I haven’t any such impression,” laughed Chet, who thought Betty quite capable of looking after her rights and privileges. He often told her that she was “little Miss Independence.”

“I almost did, anyhow, Chet; and the summer after my freshman year, when I was taking up violin, you know, someone told me that—perhaps just to joke me—and while I *thought* that some of the boys and girls I saw in it were freshmen and sophomores, I supposed it was just because they were specially gifted that they were allowed to play. I wasn’t especially gifted and as I was paying attention to all sorts of other things, I never found out till the *middle of my sophomore year* that junior orchestra only meant *second* to the senior orchestra, sort of a preparation for it! It was just as well, for I needed more lessons and practice.”

“Mother says that you play very well, Betty, and that means something from her.”

“Your mother is a dear. Mine is crazy about her.”

Betty’s mother would scarcely have used the same terms about her feeling toward Mrs. Dorrance, with whom she had become very well acquainted, but Chet understood the common parlance of the girls and was not likely to assume that Betty’s mother was perishing with admiration.

They had been walking quite a little distance to catch a car which would drop them near the church. Now they swung on and finding a seat without trouble, watched the winter landscape as they rode and talked. Some other young people whom they knew were on the car and quite a crowd came from this and another car just ahead, to swell the numbers at the church. But as often happens, though they were a little late, the supper, too, was not being served at quite the appointed hour and Betty and Chet sat down at the first tables to find themselves with many others that they knew. And oh, that good turkey and the full plates! “If you want plenty to eat for your money, Chet,” remarked the boy next to him, “just come to one of the suppers here!”

But whom did Betty find next to her but Clara Lovel, the rival candidate for president of Lyon “Y”? Both girls felt a little self-conscious. Betty and Chet had been seated first and Betty knew that Clara, who came with Brad Warren, did not notice at all who was near her, when she whipped into a seat as she was joking with two or three others. All were pretending to scramble for places. Clara was inclined to make herself a little conspicuous as a rule and was now rather over-dressed for the occasion, though going out with an escort might be considered as demanding special preparation.

As they were served almost at once, it was several minutes before Clara noticed Betty. Betty, who was expecting it, observed from Clara’s expression that her surprise was not an agreeable one, but Betty, who was picking up her fork, pleasantly said “good evening, Clara. This seems to be a good place to come for supper.”

Clara’s murmured reply was scarcely audible and she began to talk in an animated fashion with Brad, who leaned back in his chair, however, to say “how-do-you-do” to Betty and Chet. Supper engaged their attention, with the passing of rolls and butter, cream and sugar, the big dish of cranberry sauce and one or two other homey and appetizing accompaniments of the turkey supper. But Betty did wish that she had a chance to tell Clara that she had not worked for that office against her. Still, it was probably best not to mention it. Clara was quite stiff in her necessary remarks as something must be passed, or when Chet, saying something to Brad, drew Clara into the conversation.

Impulsively, at last, as they were finishing on pumpkin pie, Betty spoke in a low tone, not to be heard in the midst of other conversation about them. Chet was talking to the “waitress,” who had brought him his pie and whom they all knew. She was a junior girl at Lyon High. Brad had turned to the boy next to him with some question about the coming game.

“Clara,” said Betty, “I’ve been wanting to tell you all evening that I didn’t do a thing to work for that being president of Lyon ‘Y.’ The whole thing was a surprise to me and it wasn’t even mentioned to me till just before the election. I imagine that it was the surprise of it to everybody that gave me the most votes—or something like that.”

“The girls who were there wanted you or you would not have been elected,” stiffly said Clara in reply. “But I really have so many things on hand, with my sorority and all we do, and my part in the Christmas play, and my music and art, that I could not do justice to being president of anything. I really can’t approve of a junior’s being president. I was very much surprised that the leader permitted it at all; but I’m sure that you will do very well and I hope that you get through with it without any trouble.”

Clara’s tone was very patronizing indeed, and as she was one of the older seniors, Betty claimed afterward that she felt like a worm! “I’ll do my best,” Betty meekly replied, “and I hope that you will help out on the music at our programs. You play the piano so beautifully. We need some good programs, too.”

“Oh, I couldn’t possibly act on any program committee,” airily and decisively said the senior, “but I might play for you some time.”

“Thank you,” said Betty, feeling that she should never want to ask Clara, yet knowing that she should not feel that way. The mention of the sorority, of course, was to impress a non-sorority girl. Clara was not a Kappa Upsilon, and Betty really did not know to what sorority she did belong.

Betty had not noticed that another girl had come up behind Clara, evidently in time to hear most of what was said, but now one of Clara’s senior friends leaned over to say, “Take the last bite of that pie, Brad. I want you and Clara to help start one of the games.”

“After this dinner?” queried Brad, springing up, for Clara had risen. And as Betty still sat by Chet, she heard Clara say something in a low tone to the senior girl, who said with the evident purpose of being heard, “The nerve of her mentioning it at all!”

It was not pleasant to Betty, who wished, indeed, that she had employed “more sense.” Probably it *was* “nerve,” but she had not meant it so. She did not speak of it to Chet and entered the games happily enough, having learned a little lesson, however. She had not known Clara well enough to bring up the subject; and probably it was not best to be so frank except with your best friends. Betty wondered about that. Clara probably thought that Betty was *gloating* over being elected! Oh, another thing! Betty had forgotten about how the seniors felt about being beaten in basketball the year before. That class, so far as the girls were concerned, happened not to be so good in athletics. The present junior girls usually beat them and Betty was prominent among those who played basketball and hockey. Dear, dear, how complicated things were sometimes. And it was important for the “good works” of Lyon “Y” to have everybody co-operate! “I wonder if I have enough tact to be president of *anything*,” thought honest Betty to herself, as she submitted to having a fool’s cap on her head, for some game and puled Chet by saying that it was the “most appropriate cap she could wear.”

“What’s the sense to that remark, Betty?” asked Chet.

“None,” laughed Betty. “I’m just a little dippy tonight.”

There was plenty of real fun and in a good safe place; but Betty took cold from getting too warm and then rushing out to look at the stars without enough around her. A young university professor pointed out some of the constellations to a group of young people. It was interesting and Betty did not realize how cold she was until Chet said, “You’re shivering, Betty Lee. Come right inside. They’ve a one-cent grab-bag and we may draw whistles for tomorrow’s game.”

“Sure you can afford it, Chet?” laughed Betty as she followed obediently.

That Betty missed pneumonia was providential, her mother told her; but feeling that she was taking cold, Betty herself took the usual preventives and went to bed. It was late, to be sure, and she had intended to get up early the next morning. But she forgot to set the alarm on the little clock and woke only when her mother called her. She set a book before her at the breakfast table and studied on the street car as best she could; but what a poor beginning to the day it was! There was nothing but the game to anticipate, so far as pleasure was concerned. Her throat tickled, but Carolyn, who also had a slight cold, had some cough drops. They positively could not miss that game!

Betty was not sure of herself in recitation that Friday. She stumbled through English, in which she was usually so good that her teacher looked surprised, but refrained from comment, as Betty was one of her best pupils. Her mind would not work in “Math,” but she managed to get through with a recitation in that. One bright spot in the gloom was that there was no recitation in Latin. Miss Heath was ill, the substitute hadn’t come, and they had study hall instead.

Betty, who liked Miss Heath, hoped that she was not too ill and asked Carolyn if it “wouldn’t turn out like that!”

“The one lesson we got, Carolyn, we didn’t have to recite and my study hall came too late to save me. I just about half recited this morning!”

“Well, remember we’ve our Monday’s lesson ahead, Betty.”

“Sure enough. Aren’t you encouraging?”

Betty and Carolyn shared a steamer rug, brought by Carolyn on some previous occasion and kept in her locker. The weather had moderated from the little flurry of snow and a cold day or two which they had had. But at that the game did not help Betty’s cold any. She forgot it in the general commotion, enthusiasm, singing and cheering that went on, but her handkerchief was needed to catch the sneezes.

A wintry sun shone down on field and stadium. Several hundred boys and girls and their elders tensely followed the plays, but oh, at last they won! It was by a narrow margin, for the Eagles were playing to keep the glory won the year before; but what shouts went up from the Lyon High rooters when the last score was made and the boys carried “Kentucky” from the field on their shoulders. “Kentucky” had made the last touchdown.

“And Kentucky will be on the team next year, too, Carolyn,” said Betty. “He’s a conditioned senior, but they say he isn’t going to try to make it this year. He’s going to take some extra work he wants and stay another year!”

“Go home and put that cold to bed, Betty,” was Carolyn’s last bit of advice.

“Oh dear, I suppose I must. I can’t afford to get sick with all there is to do.”

CHAPTER IV

BASKETS AND HUMBLE FRIENDS

Monday brought a Betty “chastened in spirit,” she said, to school. She had spent Saturday and Sunday in bed for the most part and walked to her classes without animation. At lunch the girls, though sorry, could not help laughing over her comical remarks. She had had nothing to do but “think of her sins of omission and commission,” she told them, and worst of all, this morning, at the last minute, she and Carolyn remembered that the lesson they “had ahead” was Cicero and they always had *prose* on Monday!

“Was that why your hand didn’t go up as usual?” cried Peggy Pollard. “I thought it was your cold and that you were half sick!”

“That is what I’m hoping all my teachers thought this morning; but I could look over my work in bed, so I didn’t ask to be excused from reciting. I thought I could get through.” Betty sighed. “I never had half sympathy enough for girls who aren’t strong.”

“I’m so glad you’ve had this lesson,” said a plump and rosy Carolyn. “I’m so delicate!”

Dotty Bradshaw hooted at this and Mary Emma Howland reminded Betty that there was a meeting after school to see about the Thanksgiving basket that Lyon “Y” was to send or take. “You can come and preside, can’t you, Betty?”

“I think so,” said Betty, brightening a little, “but I’m only the president, not the committee, though I was on it.”

“You’ll have to appoint a new committee, Betty,” said Kathryn, “for the chairman of the usual committee is a friend of Clara’s and I heard her say that the election ‘let her out.’”

Betty looked sober. She recalled the disagreeable experience of Thursday night, of which she had thought many times during those two days of being shut in. The ideals of a Girl Reserve group called for a pleasant spirit on the part of its president. “Well, girls, we’ll just wait and see what happens. Can I count on all of you to help me out? I think we don’t want a bit of trouble and whatever the girls want to do, we’ll just accept it, though sorry, you know.”

Carolyn nodded her approval and Kathryn said that they would stand shoulder to shoulder and “eye to eye!” “By the way, Betty, Chauncey said that he would drive us wherever we have to take that basket. He said we oughtn’t to go to some places without a ‘guard’ and that he would be it.”

“That takes a load off my shoulders,” replied the new president. “Father can’t do it and I thought I’d find out from Miss Street how they managed it. I wasn’t on the committee last year. Miss Hogarth is the one who tells us about the families, you know, but Miss Street will consult her. Mary Emma, may I appoint you a committee of one to see every girl and tell her to be sure to bring what she promised—sugar, flour—I have the list somewhere—on Wednesday I’ll announce it at the meeting but not everybody will be there.”

Mary Emma promised and then some one mentioned the other sad omission that made it a “blue Monday,” the fact that there had been no celebration of their victory. “They might have had a nice assembly this morning to celebrate,” said Dotty.

“Miss Orme said that it was bad enough to have ordinary ‘Monday’ lessons,” chuckled Peggy, “without an assembly to ball up the program and make things worse; and the principal must have agreed with her. Miss Heath said that it would have been pleasant, but she didn’t seem enthusiastic either.”

“We celebrated on the spot,” said Kathryn, with a picture of the rejoicing stadium in her mind.

Betty said nothing. She was tired. She would have welcomed an assembly, but it did not matter. The morning was over. But Mary Emma brought up one incident as they left the lunch room side by side. “I *thought* it was funny that you were rejoicing about having your Cicero out ahead; but I knew you kept ahead on your schedule whenever possible, so it never occurred to me to remind you of prose-comp on Monday!”

Betty gave Mary Emma a comical look, but they hurried on to the next duty.

At the Lyon “Y” meeting after school, Betty was relieved to find that only the chairman of the committee had resigned. She promptly appointed the proper one of the committee to take her place and filled the vacancy by appointing Kathryn, for the very good reason that Chauncey would then be properly available as chauffeur and guard. Mary Emma was duly appointed as a special committee of one to take charge of reminding and notifying and to help with gathering in.

On Wednesday afternoon there was great activity about the room in which the committee met. Chauncey, looking like a larger edition of Kathryn, stuck his head inside of the door to call to Betty. “Be back in a minute, Betty. I’ve got to get the car, you know. If it isn’t out there, I’ll have to go home for it. Tried to arrange to have it brought, but ‘Ah dunno!’”

Betty ran from a confusion of girls and bundles to speak to him and Kathryn, bending over a basket, looked up to nod brightly at her brother. “There isn’t the least hurry, Chauncey,” said Betty. “You’ll have plenty of time to go home by street car if you have to. So much has been brought in, more than we asked for, that I think we’ll fix two baskets. We can stop to buy two

or three things that weren't duplicated."

"Need another basket?" asked Chauncey, looking at the array.

"Oh, yes, Chauncey," called Kathryn. "Get one of ours. You know where."

That settled one matter. Betty had thought they would stop at a grocery and buy one as they finished their shopping. There were many little details to carry out in making up Thanksgiving baskets, Betty found. Mary Emma was the one responsible for the extra donations. She was now defending herself to a senior member of the committee.

"Well, I know we planned one basket and I saw everybody who was to bring the things for that, but when other girls were interested and wanted to bring something I couldn't refuse, could I? It was just started by some of them when they overheard what I said to somebody."

"Why, Mary Emma," said Betty, "somebody will bless you for getting more. We've got enough money from what you collected to get the rest we need to fill out. The only question is where's it going. Mary Emma, please go to find Miss Hogarth. She can't have gone home yet. I wonder where Miss Street is."

"She was called home. I forgot to tell you, Betty," said one of the girls. "She was all worried about our going all alone and told us to see Miss Hogarth. She telephoned from home. Somebody's sick. I told her that one of the girls' brother, a senior, was going to drive us to the address and she was awfully relieved."

"Then that's that," said Betty, consulting her list to see if everything in the one large basket was checked off properly. The rest of the bundles they gathered together, after examination, and made a list of the articles needed for the second basket. Mary Emma returned from seeing Miss Hogarth to say that everybody on Miss Hogarth's list had been provided for and that if the girls had so much, she'd advise their taking it to the Associated Charities.

Some of the girls liked that idea and others did not. There was a brief argument about the matter till Betty suggested that they deliver the first basket and then decide about the other. "We might see some place where a basket is needed, you know," she said.

They waited a little for Chauncey, who arrived, however, sooner than they thought it possible, since it had turned out to be necessary for him to go home. Budd LeRoy accompanied him to the door of the room where the girls waited, such of them as were ably to accompany the expedition. The boys carried the baskets, two of them now, since Chauncey had found one at home, and the girls helped with packages that were in danger of being dropped off. "Please remember which baskets those things came from," Betty reminded them and they started, through the halls and down the stairs, to the basement and outer door at the rear, in great mirth and spirits.

"Is this the relief corps!" asked Mr. Franklin, whom they met on the way, and several gay voices answered him.

When the car finally rolled out of the drive upon the wide thoroughfare with its procession of swift machines, there were Budd and Chauncey in front, Betty, Kathryn and one senior girl, whom Betty knew, though not very well, occupying the back. Mary Emma could not go with them and the others, who were either on the committee or were helping after bringing in their contributions, had scattered.

Betty and the senior, Lilian Norris, a sister of Ted's friend, Harry Norris, went into the grocery, at which they stopped, to purchase the extra articles. "Let's stick in a little candy," suggested Lilian, looking at some tempting supplies in a glass case.

"Yes, let's," assented Betty. "I've some money of my own along."

"So have I," said Lilian. "There are some kiddies in this family."

The car went on, Chauncey quiet and skilful in his driving. He avoided the main avenues of traffic in getting through the center of the town to a district quite unknown to Betty. There stood old houses, once occupied by one family, with first, second and third floors and basement. Now every floor housed more than one family, who lived in these close quarters because they could not pay a higher rent, though many of them paid far too much for having a roof over their heads, whatever hardships of living in this way was theirs.

The young people hushed their conversation and the car went slowly where children played in the street or wagons and trucks blocked the way. "It has to be in this square, Chauncey," said Kathryn, looking at the address which Betty had handed her. Chauncey and Kathryn knew the names of the streets, though from time to time Chauncey glanced at the street signs.

Now a shrill siren called and Chauncey drew the Allen car as close to the sidewalk as possible, while a car whied by and was followed by the dashing fire-trucks. "Oh, poor things," cried Kathryn, "think of having a fire in one of those houses!"

They could see smoke at a distance, but no flames. Budd left the car to look at the numbers on the doors nearby. "It's on this side of the street, by good luck," he reported. "Drive a little farther down, Chauncey. It must be near the corner."

Chauncey backed his car from between a truck and an old grocery wagon, though Kathryn suggested that he just park the car where he was. "Nup," said Chauncey. "I want the car right by where you climb to the top of one of these places, maybe. What in the world did Miss Hogarth choose a place like this for?"

“Maybe she didn’t choose. Perhaps somebody that needs things to eat lives here,” replied Kathryn.

“I’d say you’re right,” returned Chauncey. “But I smell cabbage. Somebody has that much anyway.”

Chauncey remained in the car, after helping Budd lift out the larger of the baskets. Lilian jumped out, though saying in a low tone to Betty that she “certainly hated to go up that stairway.”

“Well,” replied Betty, “it would probably be better if there weren’t too many. You stay with Chauncey and Kathryn, Lilian. I’ll go with Budd.”

“Me, too,” said Kathryn, hopping out of the car. “I see a policeman, Chauncey. We’re all right. He’s coming this way.”

While the policeman really approached and stopped a moment to chat with Chauncey, probably with an idea of protecting the good-looking car and its occupants as well as with possible curiosity, Budd led the way upstairs to the door on the third floor to which their instructions directed them. He set down the basket and knocked.

A dingy little girl answered the knock. “How-do-you-do,” said Budd. “Is this the place where Mrs. Harry Woods lives?”

“Yes, sir,” politely said the little girl, eying the basket.

“Ina,” said a voice, “ask them in.” A tired-looking but pleasant-faced woman came from some room beyond, laid a baby upon a large double bed that stood in one corner, and came toward the door. She made a gesture toward a pail of suds that stood near the stove. A tub balanced upon an upturned chair; and a mop was in the pail. “I’m sorry that we aren’t cleaned up, and so late in the afternoon; but the baby was cross. His teeth bother him.”

Budd looked at Betty and stepped back behind her, uncertain whether the plan included entering the place or not. Betty, smiling, said, “Oh, that’s quite all right. There is always so much cleaning to do with a family. Miss Hogarth told us where you lived, but we’ll not come in; we just brought you a little present, a reminder of Thanksgiving, you know.”

Tears came into the eyes of the woman. “Miss Hogarth—may God bless her! She was here once.”

Budd was lifting the basket, preparatory to setting it within the room, when a clatter of heels on the stairway behind him indicated some new arrivals. Three children of various ages ran up behind the visitors and as they moved to give them the opportunity, ran into the room. “These are my other children,” said Mrs. Woods, rather proudly. “As soon as *he* gets work we’ll be all right again, but I surely thank you for helping out our Thanksgiving.”

She started to take the basket from Budd, who remarked that it was pretty heavy for her and he would set it inside. Mrs. Woods indicated the floor under a table which was full of various articles.

The four children, in different attitudes, watched proceedings, though their mother had suggested that they go “into the bedroom and wash up.”

Ina, the oldest one, a serious little thing, as well the oldest might be in this family, started to say something, hesitated and then remarked, “Sevilla’s haven’t had anything to eat for two days, Ma. Could we give them a bit out of that?” Ina pointed to the basket, and Mrs. Woods turned toward her with surprise.

“How do you know that, Ina?” she asked.

“Oh, Rosie sat down on the stairs this morning and when I asked her what was the matter she said she guessed she felt weak. I said was she sick and she said yes, sick about having to pay out all she had in the rent and there wasn’t any left for food. She was hurryin’ to finish some sewin’ she was doin’ for somebody, she said. I just plain asked her when she’d had her last meal and she said night before last.”

“Oh—how dreadful!” cried Betty. “Who are the Sevillas and where do they live? We have an extra basket downstairs and I was going to ask you, Mrs. Woods, if you knew anybody that needed it.” Where had Betty heard that name? “Sevilla” sounded familiar.

Mrs. Woods shook her head. “I know *dozens* that need it. Why, the Sevillas live just below us on the second floor. There’s only two of them, Rosie and the old lady. They’re foreigners and the old lady can’t speak English. I think they were used to having money in the old country. Rosie’s got the wreck of a fur coat and the old lady fixes up sometimes. If you’ve another basket—but you’ll have to be careful how you give it. They’re awful proud. I would be myself if it wasn’t for the children. But I can’t see them go hungry, or even miss their Thanksgiving and Christmas good times if they are offered to them.”

“How would it do if you went with us, Mrs. Woods, and fixed it up about its being a present—and it is! We had a good time fixing up the baskets and we like to share our Thanksgiving, you know.”

Betty’s voice was very earnest and sweet as she said this. Mrs. Woods answered her smile. “Bless you,” she said, “I’ll do it. Watch the baby, Ina, and keep the other children in here while I go down to Rosie’s.”

Throwing her apron over her head, Mrs. Woods led Budd, Betty and Kathryn down the rickety,

dingy stairway to the second floor, where she knocked on a door once shining in its dark wood. But it had been painted and the paint had come off in peeling blotches. Budd ran down the one flight to get the other basket from the car. They waited and Mrs. Woods knocked again. Then there was a stir inside and slow steps approached the door. “Rosie’s out,” whispered Mrs. Woods, “and it’s a good thing. You just stand back a little and I’ll take in the basket.”

The door opened. A tall old woman with lined face stood there, looking soberly at the party. “How-de-do, Mrs. Sevilla,” said Mrs. Woods. “Here’s a basket that I’ll tell Rosie about when she comes in. It’s a present for you for Thanksgiving. I’ll just carry it in for you.”

The dark eyes looked puled and Mrs. Sevilla was probably going to make some protest, but Mrs. Woods calmly set the basket inside of the door, whose handle she took to close it. “How are you today, Mrs. Sevilla?” she asked.

The reply was made in a foreign tongue, but the question was evidently understood. With a puled look the apparently aged woman regarded the basket; and Mrs. Woods, backing out, gently closed the door. “Rosie will come home and find it and then she’ll come to see me, and it will be too late to give it back; see?”

Betty tried to thank Mrs. Woods, and wishing her a pleasant Thanksgiving, the trio hurried away. Betty knew now where she had seen the name Sevilla. But it might not mean anything. There were probably others of that name among the foreigners of the city. But the dark tragic eyes of the old lady haunted her.

Lilian wanted to know what had happened and listened to Kathryn’s full report, with vivid descriptions. “That certainly was the most mysterious old lady I’ve ever seen,” said Kathryn.

“I’ll say the most tragic,” said Betty.

In her turn Lilian had much to say about what the policeman had told Chauncey. “The street where we were,” said Lilian as they swiftly left the district, “is pretty good, the policeman said, with people mostly quiet except all the children; but only one street over and it is awful—I don’t know how many terrible things have happened there this year. He told us not to come that way after night and that the daytime was none too safe.”

“Oh, he was seeing how much he could scare you,” laughed Chauncey, but he and Budd exchanged looks.

CHAPTER V

LUCIA DRESSES A DOLL

In all this time Betty had not seen, except casually, Lucia, who had said that she had something to tell her. Both had been in a rush the next time they met and Lucia said that she would postpone what she wanted to talk about. Betty wondered if it were anything important, particularly if it had anything to do with Lucia's personal problems. From Lucia's manner, she imagined that it had. Lucia's life always commanded Betty's interest. It was so "different."

The paper had a long account of festivities at the Murchison mansion during the Thanksgiving vacation. Lucia would be busy with all the entertaining, though their guests at the house and at the various little parties seemed to be adults.

The girls were busy that first Monday morning, but on arriving at the home room and running to and from the lockers Lucia and Betty exchanged greetings and Lucia said, "Please be my guest at lunch today, Betty. We go to first lunch, I believe, and it ought to be good, though I suppose you are as fed up on turkey and stuff as I am."

"Yes," brightly returned Betty—"turkey and stuff*ing*. But I'd never get tired of it and I doubt if we have it this noon."

"No, of course not. I mean that appetite might not be all that it sometimes is."

"Watch me," laughed Betty. "I may not want much, but by noon I'm always ready to feed the 'inner man.' And thank you, but I think I'd better be my own guest."

"Please, Betty," Lucia persuaded. "I've a plan."

"Good. I'll love to hear it. And I want to talk to you about joining the Lyon 'Y.' Did you know that they made me president of it? We want to have a membership campaign and make it a big group. Please think about joining it, won't you?"

"Why yes, I might, if it isn't too much work. What do they do? I've never paid much attention to it."

Betty explained, as they sat down in the home room to wait for the bell that called them to order. She told about their meetings, referring to the time she had been at the camp, and described their preparing and delivering the Thanksgiving baskets.

Lucia looked interested and asked Betty why she had not asked her to help with the gifts. "I could have done something as well as not," she said.

"There's plenty of time to do something," Betty told her. "We're going to dress dolls for Christmas and, I imagine, fill a basket again. How would you like to dress a doll?"

Lucia smiled at that. "I've never dressed a doll in my life," said she, "but I'll buy one and have it dressed. That would be fun. I'll tell you what we'll do. I asked Mother if I might have you for a week-end some time, and we'll see to it then—if you'll come. Will you?"

"Of course I will!"

"That was what I wanted to plan at Thanksgiving, but I found that I could not, on account of all Mother had on hand. I have a few worries to talk over with you, if you don't mind, and I'll get one of the maids to do most of the sewing. Do you know about doll patterns and things like that?"

"I think so; enough, anyhow."

"Perhaps we could have a meeting of the girls at our house and everybody dress dolls together."

"That will be wonderful, Lucia! You will join us, then?"

"Yes, Betty. I'm a Lyon 'Y' forever, always provided I don't have to do too much."

"I'm not worried about that, Lucia. You see, it doesn't take much time for meetings. We just try to live up to a few ideals, and hear good talks, and have fun, and do a little sometimes for poor people."

"Living up to the ideals will be the worst for me, I'm sure," laughed Lucia. But the last gong rang and the girls were obliged to take their own seats, Betty thinking as she often did, how soon Lucia had slipped into the ways and spirit of the other girls. She was different, too; yet considering how very unlike the life of American girls Lucia's had been, it showed "great adaptability," as Mrs. Lee had called it, for her to enter into the school life as she had.

The time between Thanksgiving and Christmas flew as it always does. Betty found that it was not such a task to be a president as she had thought. The other officers and committees took an interest and programs were easy to plan with all the people they knew who could talk to them or "do things." The leader from the "Y. W." and Miss Street, the leader of the group, were behind them and had ideas. The membership drive was inaugurated and went over well. The girls were interested in the doll dressing and when Lucia invited the entire group to meet at "her house" one Saturday afternoon, there were several more members at once. Mathilde Finn and "her crowd," as Carolyn put it, joined at once.

"Finny," said Dotty Bradshaw, "will not be much good to us, I'm afraid."

“Oh, yes she will,” answered Selma Rardon. “She’ll copy Lucia, and it will do *her* good to be in it, Finny, I mean.”

“It does all of us good, Selma,” said the young president, “and I think it is wonderful of Lucia to think of the very thing she can do to help us most right now.”

In consequence of this plan, two weeks before Christmas or about that time, Betty found herself going home with Lucia on Friday afternoon. Her father had delivered her at school that morning with her over-night bag, which reposed in her locker all day. The Murchison car was waiting at the curb when the girls left the school grounds and Betty tried hard not to feel any importance as she entered it. It was rather pleasant to have Lucia choose her from all of her friends for the week-end. But she had been the first friend, after all.

Among the crowds of departing pupils, one of the senior girls said to Clara Lovel, “If Betty Lee hadn’t stuck herself in to be elected president of Lyon ‘Y,’ *you* would be going home with Lucia, Clara!”

But Marcella Waite, who happened to be with the girls, knew the folly of such a statement. “It isn’t just a Lyon ‘Y’ affair, Bess,” she said. “Betty’s going to stay the week-end. Her father is in the Murchison business and he and Betty met the boat the countess came in on at New York. Besides, Lucia doesn’t need any one to help her get ready to entertain. They have all the help they want, butler, maids and all the rest of it.”

“Well, you may be glad you aren’t in the group this year, Marcella,” said Clara, “with a *junior* for president!”

Of this interchange Betty was blissfully unconscious as she was whirled away in the same dark crimson or wine-colored car that Betty had first entered on the morning when she accompanied the countess and her daughter to school, at Lucia’s entrance there. Leaning back luxuriously in the soft seat, by Lucia, Betty dismissed all cares of school and lessons for the time being. It was all planned. She and Lucia would finish getting Monday’s lesson that night. On Saturday morning they would be driven down town for shopping and have lunch. They would get anything necessary for the afternoon’s meeting and return in time for the arrival of the girls.

After the meeting with the girls, who were to be served a lovely luncheon, Betty guessed from Lucia’s remarks, there would follow the visit with Lucia, till Monday morning took them to school again. What delights might develop Betty could only guess, but in that house a guest would not be neglected she knew.

Lucia was in fine spirits. No hint of any worries which she might have could have been gleaned from anything in her expression or conversation. They discussed the last school news and looked hastily through the copy, just out, of the school paper. The pictures of the football team were prominent with a snapshot of “Kentucky” on the shoulders of admiring rooters. Prominent seniors were being written up and this time Marcella Waite was the choice of the editors. Her picture was at the top of the page and below was a brief resume of Marcella’s character and activities.

“This is good,” said Lucia, close to Betty as they read the paper together, as well as they could for the motion of the car. “Marcella is the finest girl in the Kappa Upsilon sorority.”

“Don’t you like Peggy?” queried Betty.

“Oh, yes. Peggy’s all right, but Marcella is older and very fine.”

“I think so, too. I suspect that you see a good deal of Marcella, since you have been together in the sorority, you know.”

“Not so much. Sometimes Marcella scarcely has time for sorority meetings.”

So they chatted till they entered the grounds of the Murchison place, covered with snow now, the evergreens, heavy-laden, most beautiful to behold, and other great trees, tall and bare, outlined in black and white with the snow that clung to their branches. Betty became rather silent, while Lucia outlined plans and spoke happily of the fun that she hoped the girls would have with their sewing and visiting.

Betty was not accustomed to being admitted by a butler, but demurely followed Lucia up softly carpeted stairs to Lucia’s own room, where Lucia rang for her maid. Their wraps were first disposed of and Lucia followed Betty into the room which was to be hers for the short visit. “I thought at first,” said Lucia, “that I would rather have another bed put in my room, Betty, so that we could talk as long as we wanted to. My bed is one of twin beds and this is the other one. But then I’m used to sleeping alone, Mother reminded me; and she said that probably you were, too, and that we’d better do this way. I hope that you will like the room.”

“It is a lovely room!” enthusiastically cried Betty, though with her voice properly subdued. One could not imagine, Betty thought, that any one could come in talking as noisily as the Lee children occasionally found themselves doing in the sweet liberty of home. Still, their mother would hush too great a tumult, or their father would say quietly, “I’m not in Buxton, Dick. I can easily hear an ordinary tone!”

The maid unpacked Betty’s bag and asked if she should press the dress, confined in the bag all day. Knowing that the Murchison house was very warm, Betty had packed a thin chiffon dress, while wearing a dress to school, as well, that was a little better than common.

“That hangs out easily,” said Betty, “but it is just as Lucia says.”

“Press it then, Giovanna,” said Lucia, and the maid vanished with the frock.

The girls did a little temporary grooming, but Lucia said that they would just visit until time to dress for dinner. The dinner hour, she said, was any time from seven to eight o’clock, according to when Mr. Murchison came, or whether or not they had guests, or what ideas about it her mother had. The servants had learned to adjust themselves to some irregularity. “We have a good class of servants,” said Lucia, “and Uncle pays them well, which insures good service as a rule. Giovanna has been with me a long time and she is like a bit of home.”

“Does your maid like it here?”

“I don’t think so, though this year she seems more resigned and likes to go to the movies. I let her go evenings sometimes and get myself to bed.”

Betty wondered how it would seem to be waited on like that, but she was too busy with her new impressions to do much thinking. “If you are not too tired, Lucia, we might get out our Latin or mathematics together, since we are likely to have so much time before dinner.”

That seemed to be a good plan, but while they made some progress in the lessons, they did more talking, especially after Lucia hopped up to bring out a very beautiful doll, which was to be her contribution. Betty admired quite to Lucia’s satisfaction and Betty did not tell her that the dolls had been bought, alike, simple but pretty, and were to be variously dressed according to the taste of the girl who dressed them. At first she thought that she ought to give Lucia a hint, but she could not bear to spoil Lucia’s interest and she was afraid it would. Probably Lucia would not bring out the doll anyway until the rest were started and then she could use her own judgment. It would turn out all right. Betty was not one to worry unnecessarily.

The girls were still translating when Giovanna appeared to lay out their clothing for dinner. Each was soon occupied with bath and dressing. It was the second one for Betty that day, for she had not anticipated this one before dinner. She chuckled to herself in the tub and wondered how many Lucia took.

Rosy and fresh, she arrayed herself in clean garments and her best frock, hoping that she was “all right” for dinner. Giovanna was busy with Lucia and looked surprised when she entered Betty’s room to find her all dressed. She looked critically at Betty’s hair, but replied that it was “very good,” when Betty asked her if there were anything wrong.

“We’ll go in to see Mother first,” said Lucia, leading the way to the sitting room where Betty had been once before, after the famous hike. The door was closed and Lucia rapped. Countess Coletti’s maid opened the door, to tell them that the countess was still in the bath and to say that she had suggested, if the girls were ready first, a trip upstairs to see “Grandmother.”

Lucia nodded without comment and turned away with Betty. She hesitated. “Mother thinks I ought to go,” she said, “and I suppose she must mean that I take you. Our special friends know, Betty, that Grandmother Ferris is—queer. She is not my grandmother at all, but we call her that. She is the mother of Uncle’s wife and she went to pieces in an accident a few years ago. The doctor says her mind may come back and she’s quite harmless. You might not notice anything, but I thought I’d better tell you for fear she says some of the queer things she does say. She can’t bear to go out of these rooms of hers on the third floor, though we coax her down to sleep in the hot summer days—that is, whoever is here does. Uncle won’t insist on her going to a sanitarium; and so she has a nurse and a maid too and they take turns staying with her. I don’t know what is going to happen when Uncle marries again, and my mother says that he is sure to. That’s *one* worry in this house, Betty.”

Betty nodded soberly. She rather dreaded going, but if it was Lucia’s duty, she surely could go, too. She had never talked to any one who was “queer.” Perhaps she would not be obliged to say anything. Lucia had a second thought, she said, and went to bring the new doll. This looked not a little like Lucia herself, with its waving black hair and black eyes, though its round cheeks and complacent smile were not a reproduction of Lucia, who was a little thinner than when she had arrived from Italy.

“It may amuse Grandmother to see it,” said Lucia, carrying the box which contained the doll.

Up a winding stair they went to a third floor, as imposing as either the first or second and with ceilings as high as those of the second. “There is a little attic over this floor,” Lucia explained, “which makes the floor quite comfortable even in the summer. They go up to keep a current of air passing in the attic and have to watch that floor in storms, of course, for Grandmother’s rooms would be flooded, perhaps. It’s been rather hard for Uncle to get good help to look after her properly; but now he has a nurse that used to be her maid and likes her.”

A door stood open where Lucia stopped. Betty glanced into a beautifully furnished sitting room where some one was sitting, apparently dozing in her chair, and a keen-looking young woman sat sewing nearby. The older woman started up, though the girls had been very quiet. “Is that Laura?” she asked.

Betty saw an anxious, lined face, not very old but having large, troubled eyes with which she scanned the girls, holding to the arms of her chair and ready to rise.

“Not this time, Grandmother,” replied Lucia in cheerful tones. “I came to show you the doll that I’m going to dress for Christmas. Some little girl that doesn’t have a doll is going to get it. The girls of one of my little clubs are coming here to dress dolls this afternoon and this is Betty Lee, one of my friends at school.”

The wild expression had passed from the elderly lady's face and she held out her hand to Betty with a slight smile. Betty quickly crossed the space between them to take the hand offered. Oh, the poor, poor lady! Betty knew that Mrs. Murchison's name was Laura. So she was expecting her daughter to come. Hadn't they dared to tell her that she never would come?

"Let me see the doll, then Lucia," said Mrs. Ferris, as naturally as any one, but she added, "I can't see why Laura doesn't come. She hasn't been in to see me today. But she told me yesterday that she had to go to some club. Do you know what it was, Lucia? But you weren't here then, were you?"

Mrs. Ferris looked troubled again, as if she were trying to recall events and could not. "Don't you think you'd better call up and see if you can find Laura, Bessie? Tell her I want to see her. Oh, I do want to see Laura so much."

"Of course," soothingly said the nurse, addressed as Bessie. Mrs. Ferris thought her her maid as formerly. "Shall I open the box, Miss Lucia?"

But Lucia was already taking the cover from the box and disclosing the doll in its tissue wrappings. "See, Grandmother, it hasn't a thing to wear. I could have gotten dressed dolls, but I had to dress this myself—only I mean Giovanna to do the sewing!" Lucia made a comical face at her "grandmother," who laughed. "That is just like you, Laura. You were always a hand to get out of work."

Turning to Betty, Mrs. Ferris continued. "You know, Mary, that I used to do all the work for Laura and her father and the other children. That was before Mr. Ferris made so much money and the children died, all but Laura. Why, Laura, let me get some of your little brother's things for this baby. Bessie, go to the lower drawer in my mahogany highboy and get me something to dress this child with! There is a long white dress there that Willie was baptized in, and a flannel shirt and bands and embroidered skirts. Bring everything there is!"

Lucia looked troubled, but Mrs. Ferris had only a happy expression as she cradled the doll in her arms. Bessie, who knew that there were no baby clothes in the highboy, also knew where they were to be found. "Wait a moment, Mrs. Ferris," said she, as she slipped out from the door and flew up to the attic with the key to a trunk. What a blessing it would be if this doll would prove a distraction! But one never could tell.

Lucia glanced around uneasily, but saw, through a door that stood ajar, that the maid was moving about there and was within call. "Do you think the doll pretty, Grandmother!" she asked. But Mrs. Ferris was now turning the doll over with a puled expression. "Its hair is so long," she said.

Then Lucia had a bright idea. "Wait till I get the other doll they sent out," she said, "I decided to take this one because I think it is prettier. But perhaps you will like the other better. It looks like a real baby."

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Ferris, still puled.

"Lina," called Lucia, "come here a minute, will you?"

The maid who was in the bedroom beyond, entered at once and needed no direction as she saw the situation. "I'm going down after another doll, Lina," said Lucia. "Just wait, Betty."

"Won't you sit down, Mary?" asked Mrs. Ferris in a moment, politely indicating a chair. Lina drew it nearer for Betty, who sat down. "How is your mother, Mary?" continued Mrs. Ferris. "I intended to get over to see her yesterday, but the weather was so bad. I don't like the winter weather."

Betty saw that Mrs. Ferris expected no answer, but she leaned toward her with a respectful and sympathetic expression on her face. Lina stood quietly by. Then Bessie entered, her arms filled with a large pasteboard box, and Lucia was only a moment or two behind Bessie.

"Here are the things, Mrs. Ferris," said Bessie, depositing the box on a straight chair that she drew up for the purpose. "Wait, Bessie," said the maid, "I'll put up the folding table."

This was done as Lucia exchanged the one doll for the other, Mrs. Ferris evidently approving the change. The second doll was a baby doll, almost as large as a real baby and with soft golden hair like Betty's.

"This is the prettier doll," said Mrs. Ferris quite sensibly. "What made you bring those clothes here, Bessie? Oh, yes. I told you to." Again Mrs. Ferris looked puled. She considered the doll. "This looks like Willie. I believe it is Willie. Poor little thing, with those cheap clothes on! How did that happen, Bessie?"

In a low tone Lucia spoke to Lina. "I'll leave this doll with Grandmother. Perhaps it will amuse her; shall we go?"

"Slip away without saying anything," Bessie whispered, edging around by Lucia. "She will not remember. She is bad today, you see."

It was a great relief to Betty when Lucia drew her toward the door and out. "Oh, Lucia!" she said as they passed down the stairway, "I am so sorry for her! It was so pitiful!"

"Wasn't it! I never saw her like that. Usually she is just a little queer, but her mind was all mixed up today. It just about breaks Uncle's heart to see her, even. She was awfully good to him and made her will leaving everything to Laura and to him, even in case of her daughter's

death. So that is one reason that he wants her to be in her own apartment as long as possible. He can engage people to take care of her, even if she should be difficult to manage and then he knows how she is being treated, you see. Mother has an oversight now, too; but that and some other things are nearly wearing Mother's nerves to pieces. That is why she has so much company and goes so much, though of course, all her old friends want to see her, too."

From the sad scene of the third floor Betty was soon transported to the large dining room of the Murchison home, where the Countess Coletti and a few friends, with Mr. Murchison, the head of the house, sat about a beautifully appointed table with its silver, cut glass and china, its flowers and fragrance. There was cheerful, even clever conversation into which Betty was drawn a little at first, as the older guests politely took an interest in the two girls. But Lucia and Betty, side by side, carried on a low conversation, as they found it proper, or listened with interest to that of their elders. Betty was impressed with the grace and social poise of the countess, but did not care very much for a handsome blonde who sat at Mr. Murchison's right and whom Lucia said was "trying to marry Uncle," though that remark had been made before the party went into the dining room. Relieved from much necessity of talking to any one, Betty had plenty of opportunity to study the people about the table, from whose voices and conversation she could gather not a little about their personalities. She could also thoroughly enjoy the excellent dinner, served in attractive courses.

The countess sat at the proper hostess end of the table and at her right was a gentleman who could not, or possibly did not try to conceal his rather sentimental interest in the countess. Of him Lucia, naturally, had not spoken, but Betty wondered. She knew what her father would do if anybody would say such silly things to her mother! Did the countess like it? Nobody appeared to pay the least bit of attention to it. So Betty decided that she would not be shocked. Probably that was the silly way of some people.

She wished she had the recipe of a wonderful pudding that melted in your mouth and preceded an ice-cream confection. A smile of amusement curled around her mouth at the idea of asking for a recipe at this distinguished place; but just then one of the ladies said something really funny, a clever reply to the countess, and Betty's smile extended into laughter with the rest.

At the close of the meal, Lucia led Betty upstairs again; but they were passed by Mr. Murchison, who patted Lucia's shoulder as he went up and said to Betty that he hoped she would have a pleasant visit. "Make her have a good time, Lucia," said he, starting up the second flight.

"I'll try to do so," replied Lucia.

The girls turned into Lucia's room and changed their frocks for comfortable kimonos. Had Betty been at home, she would have put on her thick bath robe; but she had brought her silk kimono as appropriate to this visit. Lucia's negligee was a pretty affair, and Lucia apologized for the absence of the maid by saying that she would be having her dinner now, she supposed. Lucia tossed her clothes on a chair and her bed, for the maid to put away, Betty supposed; but Betty carried hers into her own room and hung them carefully in a closet, not only because she had been taught to do so, for Betty was no angel or averse to letting things go at times, but because she wanted her garments to keep on looking well while she was here and she did not want to seem to impose upon the service offered. Betty did not mind if Lucia thought her a little careful. It was natural enough, however, though Lucia had told her to "stay and talk," for Betty to take her clothes to her own room. Little details are sometimes disturbing things to settle, but Betty tried to keep in mind what was most important, when she had them to settle.

"Uncle always goes up to see Grandmother Ferris after dinner," said Lucia. "He just excuses himself from the company when we have guests. He goes up some other times too, but *always* then, before she goes to bed, to see how she is."

Betty quite approved this, and beamed on him with such a warm smile when he stopped afterwards at Lucia's door to look in upon them, that he thought, "What a nice little girl Lee has." Lucia had opened her door because it was too hot in her bedroom; yet to open a window would bring cold breezes in, she thought.

"That was a bright idea of yours, Lucia, to show Grandmother that doll, or both of them. Bessie was telling me all about it. It seems that Grandmother is not like herself at all today and is a little feeble, too. Perhaps the 'flu' she had last month is having some effect now."

Mr. Murchison stopped to consider a moment, soberly.

"Bessie says that she has had a wonderful time dressing that baby doll in the old baby clothes, and Grandmother herself told me to speak softly for fear I'd waken 'Willie.' The doll was in her bed! She was very happy and sent her love to Laura——"

Here Mr. Murchison broke off and turned away quickly.

Tears came into Lucia's eyes, but she whisked them away with the little lace handkerchief which lay by her on the desk to which they had drawn their chairs. "Poor Uncle! He couldn't have said another word without his voice shaking, I know. But he wanted to tell me. Oh, Betty, isn't life hard sometimes! I can't study! Come over here on the *chaise longue* and let me tell you things. I've wanted to for a long time."

CHAPTER VI

LUCIA'S CONFIDENCES

There was room for the two girls on the cushions of the silken couch that was rather broader than the ordinary *chaise longue*. Golden hair and dark hair mingled, after Lucia arranged the cushions and settled down herself with her head in the curve of Betty's shoulder and neck. She possessed herself of Betty's hand and said, "I hope you don't mind these close quarters."

"I'm as comfy as can be," returned Betty, giving a squeeze to the slender hand.

"You are such a comfortable person, Betty Lee, and I don't feel that you are ready to take up everything a girl says or does to criticize it. I've been envying Carolyn and Kathryn for seeing so much of you."

"Why, Lucia!" cried Betty, very much surprised. "I have time for more than one or two friends!"

"I know it and that is why I want to talk to you about things. By the way, Grandmother called you Mary, I noticed. There was a young friend of Aunt Laura's, when she was a girl, by that name—Uncle said. If Grandmother could go to sleep by 'Willie' and never wake up, except in heaven, it would be a blessing. I'm glad I thought of taking the dolls to her, though it might have started a good deal of trouble, too. But she usually takes everything sweetly. That's the advantage of having a good disposition, I suppose, if you lose your mind."

"I'm afraid it might not make any difference; but its worth cultivating anyhow," suggested sensible Betty.

"'Like sweet bells jangled and out of tune' Uncle says her mind is, but not 'harsh,' as Ophelia says of Hamlet. I thought of it when we were reading Hamlet in English the other day. But that isn't what I want to talk to you about. It is what I am going to do about staying in America —and that brings in other things. I hardly know how to begin."

Betty said nothing, but laid her cheek over against Lucia's soft hair.

"If you only understood Italian, Betty! *Che peccato!* That means 'What a pity'—for I'll forget myself and want to drop into my natural tongue when I'm telling about home and my father and mother. If I forget and say anything that you do not understand, just remind me, please."

"I wish I did know Italian. Maybe I could learn to speak it some time."

"It's easy, especially when you know Latin and French."

This was the introduction to Lucia's story. She did drop into Italian at times, but caught herself. Betty missed nothing important.

"You can imagine, Betty, how I dreaded coming to America to stay when I tell you that it was at the end of a terrible quarrel between my father and mother. I do not mean a loud, awful time, but one of those still, quiet stiletto exchanges of opinions and decisions. My father accused my mother of not caring for him. Mother set her teeth and said that the matter was of no consequence one way or another because it was quite clear that he had never cared for her. And, Betty, both of them love each other dearly, though I suppose it has gone too far for anything but one of those dreadful divorces. This last talk was before me, and I tried to say something; but both of them told me to keep quiet. It had to be talked through.

"The point was this. My uncle had begged her to come for a while, writing her about Aunt Laura's death and Grandmother's condition and business worries, and some of her money is in the business, you know. Then she wanted to have me in American schools for a while. Also she was homesick. School was an excuse.

"That would have been an interesting thing for me if it had not been for the trouble between my father and my mother. He was tired of trips to America, he said. Oh, one thing led to another and they were so far apart it makes me sick to think about it all. Finally I think my father told her that if she went to America to stay any length of time, that is, to stay with me while I was having what she wanted in school for me, she need not come back, so far as he was concerned. And she said she never would. Betty, my mother packed up and so did my father; and after the next day—I've never seen my father since."

Lucia choked a little, stopped and used the little handkerchief again.

"Before he married my mother he was interested in travel and hunting and all that. So he started right away, for an eastern trip first, over into India and other countries, and now he is on an African *safari*; he wrote me just before he left Cairo for some other point. I've heard from him as often as it was possible for him to write. He does not intend to let *me* go, you know. He said she might have her way for a while with the schools, but that he would come for me. He never asks how my mother is, or mentions her at all. But when I write, I tell him; for I know he wants to know. I tell him about how well she is and a little bit about what she is doing. In the last letter I said, 'to keep from being too unhappy and missing you.'

"I *casually mention* hearing from my father to my mother and I leave the letter where she can read it, pretending to take it for granted that she will read it, of course. But Mother wouldn't ask for the letters and for a long time I think she didn't read them, till one day I wanted to look up something my father said about what he was doing and I found several old letters to

me lying on Mother's desk. Of course she had been called somewhere and had forgotten to take them back to my room. It did not matter, to be sure, except to keep from me that she wanted to read them. Do you think I am very dreadful to tell anybody all this, Betty? You see I want you to tell me what else you think I could do."

But Lucia did not wait for Betty's comment. She went on with the account.

"I'm not going to put up with it, Betty! I'm going back to my father this summer if he wants me! I'm putting by enough money for my fare and passage across, though I think I could cash a draft from him without their finding it out. Perhaps that would bring Mother! I don't know! I've thought and thought about it until I'm most sick over it now." Lucia checked a sob.

"You saw that horrid man at the table tonight and heard the silly compliments he makes to my mother. She doesn't care a *centime* for him; but she's getting so reckless with all this social stuff that I'm most scared for fear she *will* start divorce proceedings."

"Couldn't you talk to your uncle about it?" asked Betty, who thought it a terrible situation indeed. "It doesn't seem to me that it would do for you to just go off, even if your father does want you."

"I will if my mother is going to leave him. I almost ran away to keep from coming." Lucia's voice was defiant.

"Well, then, why don't you write to your father, tell him that you know your mother loves him and tell him just to come over and *get* her!"

Lucia laughed then. "The girls would say that you are old-fashioned, Betty. Men don't carry their wives off nowadays."

Betty laughed but asserted that they "ought to sometimes." "It's their business to take care of their wives and if their wives are—mistaken—to prove it to them. My father would say, 'Now, dear, this is all a mistake. You come right along home with me and I'll explain it to you!'"

"What if she wouldn't go?"

"Then he'd tell her that they must think of the children first and that two people who wanted to do the right thing ought to get along somehow, even if they didn't love each other. I've heard them both say that, about other people."

"You asked me if I couldn't talk to my uncle. I would only that Mother did when we first came and told him all the cutting things my father had said. Uncle just raved and was for a legal separation right away, but my mother saw she had gone too far and told him that they would wait. My uncle called him a fortune hunter; and he thought that about him anyway, before they were married. They talked about it that time in Milan."

Betty could imagine what sharp things must have been said. She was quiet, thinking over what Lucia had told her and Lucia stopped to wipe her eyes again.

"Well," she said with a sigh, "it's helped clear things up, some way, to talk with you, Betty. I believe I *will* write and tell my father to come and 'get her!' I could ask him if neither of them cared enough about me to try to make up, and if he wanted to see some other man fall in love with my mother and try to win her, all for the want of his making love the way he can. Oh, you ought to see my father, Betty. Giovanna says that they fell in love at first sight because of their looks. And my father is *not* a fortune hunter! He hasn't as much money as my mother has and I suppose that is one reason why he was so proud about the whole thing; but he has a good home in Milan. You'd love it, Betty, and I hope you'll be in it some day. Oh!"

Now, indeed, Lucia cried in earnest and Betty, holding her affectionately, let her cry it out.

CHAPTER VII

LYON “Y” AND A COUNTESS

The door stood a little ajar and Lucia, having difficulty in stifling her sobs, suddenly rose and ran toward it, to close it, as Betty guessed. Lucia had merely pushed it to before they had cuddled down in the cushions. But as she grasped the ornate bronze handle, the first notes of something beautiful sounded upon the piano below. Lucia stopped, caught her breath as one does after crying, mopped her eyes again and stood still to listen. After a sparkling prelude, a voice began to sing.

Betty sat up at once. “Oh, that lovely voice, Lucia. Who is it?” Betty had in mind the ladies who were around that dinner table. This was a clear soprano voice, haunting and full of feeling as the song went on.

Lucia turned and softly said, “My Mother.” She waited a few moments and then ran into her bathroom to bathe her tear-stained face. But Betty went over to the door to listen till the song was over. It was nothing that she knew—some Italian song, but Betty felt an ache at her heart. Who was this that could sing like that? Betty had seen the countess in several different moods or phases—that of the capable traveler, the efficient mother when Lucia came home after her slight injury upon the hike, the pleasant, well-poised, gracious hostess—now here was something else.

The song was finished. When Betty heard the voices in conversation again, she closed the door and went back to where her books were, looking over her lesson till Lucia came back. Lucia was smiling and said that it was “all over.”

“I’m not going to be silly and cry again, Betty, but I shall probably want to talk to you about this some more. Here are some of my father’s letters. I keep them in my desk, you see. See how fat they are? He tells me about the hunts and the going through that queer country and everything that he thinks would interest me and help me to learn about it. Sometimes he puts in little things that I know he thinks my mother may read.”

Betty took in her hands a letter that Lucia handed her. It was, of course, written in Italian and very “fat,” as Lucia said. “I don’t think that you were silly to cry, Lucia. I don’t see how you can help feeling as you do. Your father must be a very interesting man and your mother is certainly a gifted woman.”

“Mother was studying music in Milan when she met my father, you know.”

Some slight progress had been made in lessons, but the girls retired earlier than Betty had supposed they would, for when the maid came in after rapping, upon some little errand of Lucia’s clothing, Lucia told her that she was tired and would go to bed very soon. Betty was only too glad to do the same thing and the girls soon said goodnight. In a comfortable bed, under white blankets and a silken comforter, as Betty noticed, she soon fell to sleep. It *was* nice to have a maid fussing around to do things for you, to open your window just the right amount, arranging a little screen of some sort, to see that your clothing was placed properly. But maids weren’t mothers!

Breakfast the girls had alone, as they rose earlier than either the countess or Mr. Murchison. Lucia told Betty that it was unusually early for her on a Saturday morning, but if they did “Christmas shopping,” they were wise to have a good start, as the stores would be full of people. Moreover, the countess herself would want the chauffeur to drive her down later in the day.

“Mother will sleep till noon, I suppose,” said Lucia, “because I think everybody stayed late last night. Uncle will drive his coupe down town, and we can have Horace and the big car all morning.”

The plans for shopping were made. Betty informed Lucia that for a president of Lyon “Y” she knew little about the usual plans for Christmas, but that the committee had asked her to buy certain things. Both girls had also personal shopping to do and it was like shopping with a fairy godmother to go with Lucia. She insisted on paying from her own purse for the materials Betty had been asked to buy. She bought half a dozen more dolls because she thought them “cute.” These were dressed. Betty still felt dubious about what the committee would think, but after all wouldn’t some “kiddie” love them!

It was a rather delirious morning for Betty. If she had not had a list, she would have been too excited to think properly, she said. When she told Lucia that the Lyon “Y” had adopted a family and related the story of the Thanksgiving baskets, Lucia began to buy toys “regardless,” Betty told her.

“Oh, let’s make them think old Santa just had a spill of toys from his old sleigh!” said Lucia, as happy as Betty, looking into the gayly decked windows, or descending into the store basements where the toys were displayed.

Betty had “always” intended to go back to see what was the result with the “Sevillas,” but there was so much to do at school with lessons and tests and other duties and at home in preparation for the holidays that she had not “had a minute” to spare, it seemed. Her father was unusually busy, too; and when she spoke to him about the coincidence of the names and referred to the odd parenthesis in Ramon Balinsky’s letter, he had only said that it “might be

well to look into it."

The crimson car was pretty well filled with packages when Lucia had finished her shopping, for why should they wait to have things delivered when they wanted to see them right away? And Lucia sent the car home, telling Betty that her mother might want it and that there was no use in keeping Horace waiting around while they had lunch down town.

Betty assured Lucia that any arrangement was satisfactory to her, as they entered a pretty tea room and lingered over their lunch, ordered by Lucia after consultation with Betty. Chicken salad and toothsome desserts figured largely in the order and Betty was sure that she would want nothing that afternoon; yet Lucia was serving such a "complete" afternoon tea! But a few hours make a great difference in young appetites.

Clothes bothered Betty a little. She hoped that her frock was proper for an "afternoon dress;" but she felt sure that many of the girls would not dress elaborately, in spite of their coming to a house presided over by a countess. Some of the girls could not, she knew.

When Miss Street and Miss Hogarth arrived in pretty but quiet frocks, Betty felt that everybody would be "all right" for clothes. Lucia herself must have had ideas on the subject; for she wore a dress that she had worn to school. Mathilde and a few of the late joiners, who had been largely influenced by Lucia's membership, were more or less elaborately dressed; but clothes ceased to have much part in Betty's thoughts, as she consulted with Miss Street and Miss Hogarth and the committee about the meeting. The countess came in to welcome the girls and their leaders most cordially. She well knew that the girls would have felt defrauded if they had not had a glimpse of her, as Betty gleaned from some little remark she made to Lucia. Two sewing machines were in the rear drawing room and Giovanna and Lina, in pretty caps and aprons were ready for work.

This arrangement was a surprise to Miss Street and Miss Hogarth, who thanked the countess warmly and remarked that they might have planned to have something beside clothes for dolls sewed that afternoon if they had realized what an opportunity it was. To this Countess Coletti replied that she would be glad to furnish machines and maids and house room some other time if the girls were sewing for the poor. She left the room with pleasant regrets and presently Betty heard the car starting to take her to some engagement or a shopping tour.

It was a petty scene, with the girls, their bright expressions and young figures, their thimbles and sewing bags or boxes, the little heaps of bright materials or filmy white or laces, wide or narrow, and dolls of all sorts, either in the girls' laps or upon the tables. On the walls above them were several fine reproductions of famous paintings and an etching or two. Objects of art had largely been removed from this room to make place for chairs and folding tables and the machines. It seemed a pity to drop any threads or scraps upon that "gorgeous" oriental rug.

Betty clapped her hands for order. "While you get ready to begin sewing girls, Miss Street and Miss Hogarth will tell you what the plans are. The committee, too, may have some information to give you, and I'll call on the chairman now to speak of them. I am too new as president to know much about what the 'Y. W.' does at Christmas time, except a few of the results. I will ask Lilian Norris to explain."

Some of the girls were threading needles and beginning to sew on edges, or to fit little garments to their dolls, according to the state of progress to which the process had arrived.

"I've been talking to Miss Street and Miss Hogarth, girls, and this is what we are to do. You know we decided to adopt a family; and as the Woods family is such a nice one and needs everything so badly, our leader thinks we might as well take them. Please put it to vote, Betty, and then I'll tell the rest."

Betty, widely smiling at Lilian's business-like methods, put the question, with a unanimous "Aye" as the result.

"That is good," said Lilian. "We filled two baskets as it happened, at Thanksgiving, and we were told that both of them 'went to the spot.' Miss Hogarth called afterwards, but the Sevillas, who were the other people, very proud and not asking for any help, had moved; and the Woods lady did not know where they had gone."

At this Betty had a pang. Suppose they *were* connected with Ramon—and she had neither gone to ask them nor written to him! That was the way a body perhaps missed a big opportunity.

But Lilian was still speaking. "I think, girls, that we should be very careful, too, about what we say about our family. They are like us in wanting to be independent and because they haven't the good luck we have, there is no need of rubbing it in by telling everybody about them or what we do. Let's have a little sympathy and delicacy!

"And now I'll tell about the dolls. As you know, we bought some just alike and passed them around to be dressed, each girl paying, however, for her own doll. But then we had the membership drive and a lot of new members and we decided, that is, the committee did, that everybody could select her own doll. And *these* are not to be sent out with baskets, girls. They are to be for the Toy Shop that we are going to have at the 'Y,' and sold. There is to be a prize given for the best-dressed and the prettiest doll in the show—I forgot to say that we're going to have big Christmas doings at the 'Y' down town—and I do hope that our group gets the prize for the prettiest doll and the foxiest booth! The prize is just some decoration or something in the way of an honor, you know. I think that is all, Madam President."

Betty, who was very glad of this explanation, which corrected her own ideas about the dolls, called on the two leaders to ask if they had anything to tell the girls. Both of them confirmed Lilian's statements and urged the girls to make this the most beautiful Christmas they had ever had, for themselves and for others, with their thoughts on higher motives than merely what material things they could get for themselves. Miss Hogarth asked for the names of those who were willing to take part in the carols and those who could furnish machines. Lucia's hand went up to both questions and Betty felt a little warmth about her heart to see how sweet Lucia's face had grown as she listened to Miss Hogarth's brief references to the higher ideals. Perhaps trouble was not so bad for Lucia after all. And it all *must* turn out right for her!

The rest of the afternoon was a jumble of visiting and sewing. The presence of the maids and the machines called for more efficiency than probably would have been shown in an ordinary meeting. Fingers flew. The committee and Miss Street measured and cut out little garments from the "dearest" little doll patterns, bought that morning by Lucia and Betty, who risked sizes and thought that Giovanna, at least, could reduce or enlarge when necessary. The machines hummed away and the two maids seemed to have as much fun as anybody, particularly as Lucia treated them "just like family," according to Mathilde, who was properly shocked. Mathilde, while "sweet as sugar" to Lucia, according to Dotty Bradshaw, could say some very funny things about her. "*I* wouldn't care for such a friend," said Dotty.

Betty had dropped down by Dotty, who wanted to know whether she thought a certain scrap of pretty lace would make a good finish for the neck of the doll dress she was making, or whether a little embroidered collar would be more suitable to the pattern. Betty gave her opinion on this weighty question and then Dotty informed her that Mathilde was "going to ask her if Lucia's father and mother were going to get a divorce."

"I thought I'd better warn you, Betty," said Dotty, "I thought Mathilde chose a funny place to talk about it—Lucia's own house."

Betty smiled. Could Dotty be curious, too? "Thanks, Dotty. Yes, it isn't usually done, talking about your hostess—or talking about people who have just been entertaining you. If I *knew*, I should scarcely give any information to Mathilde or anybody else. I'm having such a lovely visit and I'm sure the more we know Lucia the better we'll like her. And isn't it great of Countess Coletti to take such an interest in 'good works?' Oh, yes, Selma, I'll bring you that pattern in just a minute. I think Peggy Pollard is using it now."

Betty did not try to do any sewing herself. She would finish her doll at home. But Lucia, whose doll had not been brought downstairs, came to ask her if she should display it.

"I'm afraid the girls will think I'm trying to show off if I do, but several of them have asked me where my doll is and I had to tell them I had one. I shouldn't have gotten such an—elaborate one, I suppose; but I did not think and I always choose what I think is the prettiest. What do you think, Betty?"

"I think that you must decide for yourself, Lucia. It does seem a perfect shame that they should not see that pretty thing!"

Lucia looked thoughtful and disappeared from the room for a short time. But Betty noted on her return that she was not carrying the doll; and at her first opportunity Lucia explained. "I did think that perhaps I would bring it down. Giovanna is going to dress it for me—or was. But just as I had it out of its box Bessie came running down from upstairs and said that Grandmother Ferris had asked about it. She had 'Willie' but where did 'Josie' go? Josie was another of her children that died. Isn't it *pitiful*? So I just sent Bessie back with the other doll and I hope that they are having a quiet time putting baby clothes on it. I'll send Lina up as soon as we serve. I think it would be nice to have some of the girls serve and do it myself, don't you?"

"Yes, I do, Lucia," emphatically answered Betty. "How is the grandmother today?"

"Just as quiet and happy as can be most of the time, Bessie says, only awfully bewildered. Help me choose the girls, Betty."

Betty shook her head in the negative, and with a smile advised Lucia to choose the girls that would care most about it.

Lucia gave Betty a bright glance and laughed. Mathilde and two of her friends were among the first asked, Betty saw. She was not needed herself and helped to gather up the precious materials and scraps, distributing them to one and another of the girls. Thimbles were put away and sewing bags laid upon the tables while the conversation did not wane. The girls selected by Lucia to help her were chiefly for ornament; for Mathilde sat at the decorated table in the dining room, to pour chocolate from a silver urn, and the other girls passed the first plates and then sat down, with the rest about the room, to enjoy their own. The careful butler and several maids appeared to do the rest of it, though Lucia and the other girls passed cakes from pretty containers on the table, for a second time. It was all most delightful and from Lucia's standpoint very informal.

The countess came home early and was again gracious enough to appear and speed the parting guests, standing by Lucia as the girls thanked her for their good time as well as for her help to the group. "We are certainly delighted, Lucia," said Lilian Norris, "that you have come into Lyon 'Y' and hope you'll not regret it. We'll not ask too much of you. This has been wonderful."

“It does not hurt any of us, my dear,” said Countess Coletti, “to try to help a little.”

CHAPTER VIII

DORIS NEEDS A SISTER

It seemed a very natural thing that Betty should accompany Countess Coletti and Lucia to church. Mr. Murchison came in later, Horace having returned for him, Betty supposed. Like a little mouse Betty sat quietly between the countess and Lucia to listen to the service. Mathilde Finn, whose church membership was unknown to Betty, sat a few seats in the rear and Betty hoped that Mathilde was not too jealous or that she herself would not appear too complacent over her entertainment. With some of the girls as they were, about notice from the "nobility," it was impossible not to feel self-conscious at times. But Betty had none of that toadying quality in her and was rather inclined to the other extreme, of letting the "society" people go more than their half way if they wanted her company. She knew the sort of people her father and mother admired and numbered among their friends, people who *were* in character and ideals, and it must be confessed that Betty liked "folks that were smart!" By that Betty meant those who had certain qualities of mind, irrespective of clothes, or money, or, indeed, opportunity; for leaders do not always come out of the schools and colleges.

At first Betty could not sing the hymns for listening to the countess. But she soon piped away, sweetly, too, in a sort of duet with Lucia, whose voice was contralto. "I'll sing with you when we go carolling," whispered Lucia, with a bright glance, as she took the hymn-book which they had been sharing.

Betty was ashamed to think afterwards how little of the sermon she heard, after the first of it. The preacher was a little prosy compared to her own pastor; and Betty's thoughts would wander to what Lucia had told her, to Count and Countess Coletti, and with a remorseful feeling to the "Sevillas," who had moved without her knowledge. One moment she felt that it made no difference and that they probably were not in the least connected with Ramon; the next minute she was sure that they were related and had something to do with the mystery that surrounded the "Don."

She thought of various things that Lucia could do, to bring her father—and knew that she could do none of them. But finally the response and the words of the Scripture, quoted or read by the minister, or held in the messages of the Christmas hymns that had been chosen, had their effect on Betty. It would all come right. Why not take it all to the heavenly Father in prayer, as the preacher suggested, and leave it there, so far as worry was concerned?

That afternoon Betty went up with Lucia to see Grandmother Ferris again, at Countess Coletti's suggestion. "She asked for 'Mary' this morning," said the countess. The girls found Mrs. Ferris in bed, the two dolls in a light single bed not far away.

She looked very white and weak, but held out a welcoming hand. Then she put her finger to her lips to caution them. "Speak gently," said she. "'Willie' and 'Josie' have just gone to sleep." She called Betty "Mary" again and spoke of her hair. "Mary, you always had such pretty hair!"

The girls remained only a short time and Lucia had tears in her eyes as they went out into the hall. "It's a good thing that I happened to join the Lyon 'Y,'" said Lucia, "and bought those dolls."

"I wonder if things just 'happen,'" suggested Betty.

The crimson car deposited Betty, with her baggage, at the Lee home, late in the afternoon. Doris, in a fine humor, was just helping her mother set out their light Sunday evening supper. Betty had wondered how Doris would be and had determined not to do any "raving" about her good time, for fear Doris might think she was "crowing" or "gloating" over it; for Doris was a little difficult at times; and it was not unnatural that she should wish to share her elder sister's happy times. But Doris herself asked to hear "all about the life of the nobility."

"I suppose you had a gorgeous time, Betty," said she.

"Oh, yes, and so many girls came Saturday afternoon and we're having the prettiest dolls fixed for the Toy Show. I can scarcely tell you fast enough. When we sit down at the table, I can tell all the details you'd like to know."

But Doris was full of her own plans and told Betty how her mother was letting her "stay all night" with Stacia Barnett, a recent friend, whom Doris was admiring at present with all her freshman heart. There was to be a freshman party that afternoon, a Christmas party, near the Barnett home; so Doris was to go home with Stacia and stay that Friday night and perhaps over Sunday, the Sunday before Christmas. "I am going carolling, too," said Doris.

"That is fine," said Betty, though she did not admire Stacia particularly and wondered at the choice of Doris in being as intimate as the two girls were at present. Doris rattled on, to Betty's relief, and Betty's experience was put into the background, which was just as well.

Later Mrs. Lee came to Betty to ask her what she thought about her permitting Doris to go with Stacia for such a visit. "Doris tells me that Stacia is such a fine girl; and you were not here to tell me anything about her." Mrs. Lee looked thoughtful. "You know I do not approve of week-end visits as a rule, except with older girls. But Doris was so insistent and reminded me that you were having 'everything you wanted'—so for the sake of peace I yielded. I always want you children to do what you want to do, if it is good for you."

“I know you do, and you’re the dearest mother in the world!” warmly said Betty, giving her mother a hug. They were sitting on the edge of Betty’s bed for a mother and daughter chat.

“I don’t believe there is any harm in letting Doris go, Mother. So far as I know, Stacia is all right. She puts a good deal of color on her face sometimes; but some nice girls do, and the freshmen have to try everything, you know. We can trust Doris to have a little sense, I suppose.”

“I’m not so sure,” smiled Mrs. Lee. “Doris is getting a little heady of late. Keep an eye on her at school, Betty. Doris is a lovely child and I want her to have helpful companions, not the kind that *she* has to *help*.”

Betty laughed at that and went on to tell her mother about Grandmother Ferris and the dolls and how good Mr. Murchison was to her. “That is something that I thought Father would like to know about the head of the firm,” finished Betty.

Perhaps it was because Betty had in mind her mother’s injunction that she happened to see Doris and Stacia in one of the halls at school as she passed from one class to another.

Doris, seeing Betty, hastened to turn her face in another direction and stepped behind Stacia. But Betty had already seen that the bright and attractive face of her younger sister was just a little too bright, with a stain of color high on her cheeks and a red on her lips that could only be from lipstick.

“Silly little piece!” thought Betty. “She’s trying to ape Stacia!” And at home that afternoon, she remarked to Doris, “Someone couldn’t see me in the hall this morning.” She gave Doris a meaning look as she said this, but her lips were pursed in an amused smile.

Doris flushed. The applied color had been washed from her face before her appearance at home. “I saw you taking me in,” she pertly said. “Don’t you tell mother, Betty. There isn’t anything wicked about ‘make-up.’”

“Is that what Stacia calls it?” asked Betty. “No, I don’t suppose there is anything wrong; Mother never said no. It’s Father and Dick that say they’ll ‘wash our faces’ if they ever see us with any on. All the same, Mother doesn’t like it.”

“If you didn’t have any more natural color than Stacia has, you’d use it too, Betty Lee!” cried Doris, still on the defensive, though Betty had made no threat whatever.

“I wonder,” said Betty. “Honestly, Doris, I always feel that I want people to like the real me, not any painted up face. But I’ll not speak of it to Mother. I know you want to have your week-end and so far as I know Stacia is a good enough girl.”

This speech seemed to annoy Doris still further.

“Oh, you think you’re so smart because you’re a junior! Mother has promised and I’d have my week-end anyhow. I’d just a little *rather* you wouldn’t tell Mother. I don’t know that I like lipstick myself. But it’s my own affair!”

“Yes,” said Betty, “and those things are between you and Mother, Doris. Still, you shouldn’t let Mother be in the dark about your friends. Have a good time and tell her all about it—is my advice.”

“I’m not asking for advice, thank you.”

This rebellion and withdrawing from confidence on the part of Doris was a surprise to Betty, who realized now that she might have seen it coming. Perhaps she had been too much absorbed in her own affairs, and with her own friends. She must see more of her at school, possibly. Since helping her start her freshman year, she had gone on “her own way rejoicing,” Betty acknowledged to herself. She had Carolyn and Kathryn and she wondered if she had shut Doris out too much. That must be changed, provided she *could* change it now. She wasn’t going to play the part of mentor. It was for her mother to rebuke, or manage, and it would be a delicate proposition to carry out her mother’s injunction to “keep an eye” on Doris.

Betty was a little puled, but the push and stir of her own life with the hard lessons and all the “extras,” as she told the family, she hardly had time to breathe! She came through some examinations on Friday, prepared Monday’s lessons on Saturday, went to Sunday school and church on Sunday and helped get the family dinner. Then she declared that she was a wreck and curled up on her bed, under a warm extra blanket, for a nap.

She had scarcely more than dozed off, she thought, though she found afterwards that she had been sleeping for two hours, when she heard a gay voice and some one coming down the hall; and here was Doris, coming in to put Betty’s over-night bag, borrowed for the occasion, down on the floor with a bump, and a voice none too gracious exclaim, “You here, Betty? I thought I was going to get a rest by myself!”

“You shall,” answered Betty, springing up, thoroughly awake now and looking at her watch. “I thought you weren’t coming home till tonight.”

“I wasn’t,” said Doris, banging the door shut. Betty winced and wondered if Mrs. Lee would not reprove Doris for that. But wise Mrs. Lee had seen the storm behind the gay manner and jolly greeting with which Doris had favored her and her father on her entrance. There was a sudden change now.

“I couldn’t stand it any longer, Betty,” said Doris. “I told Mother just now that I had a little headache from too much candy and that is the truth, but not all of it. I haven’t slept a wink, I

do believe, and I'm about dead!"

Betty was off the bed by this time, helping Doris take off her coat and taking her hat from her hand. "You poor little thing! Let me get you into bed! How about some peppermint and soda or some milk of magnesia for the indigestion?" Betty half laughed as she asked this, and Doris laughed too, but quaveringly, and all at once she put her head on Betty's shoulder and sobbed. "Mrs. Barnett gave me an aspirin for my head. I hated to take it for I never took one before and it made me feel awfully funny for a while. But I had to make some excuse for coming home and my head did ache, though not so terribly. They were just as kind as could be, or meant to be and I'll never tell anybody but you all about it."

Doris said all this in jerks as she sat on the bed, half crying into her handkerchief and letting Betty draw off her shoes and stockings. Only a week before Betty had had another experience with tears, at Lucia's. It made her feel happier than she had been then, to know that her prickly little sister was returning to the state of confidences.

"I can't imagine, Doris, but the thing for you to do is to get to sleep. I'm going to fix something warm for you to drink first."

"No, don't. Get me the peppermint and that will fix me, and don't let Mother know that I'm so dead!"

Usually Mother would have been the first to console, but Doris was sensitive. When Betty appeared in the living room, Mrs. Lee asked how Doris was feeling. "There is something the matter, but I thought that you might handle it."

"Doris thinks that she hasn't slept a wink, Mother. She probably has, for I thought I hadn't slept and found that I had been asleep two hours. Doris says that they were very kind but she seems all tired out and I just helped her off with her clothes so that she could really go to bed. Don't you worry. If she wakes up and wants something to eat in the night, I'll get it for her!"

Mrs. Lee gave Betty an amused look and said, "Good child. I think you may have to give Doris a little more of your time, Betty."

"I've just been wondering about that myself, Mother. I'm sorry."

Little by little Doris told Betty about her visit. There had been a very pleasant party on Friday to which Doris had gone directly from home. Then came the evening with Stacia's family, all kind and pleasant, Doris said, but "different." Stacia's mother and big sisters smoked cigarettes and Stacia "smoked some" before they went to bed and "didn't put up the window; said it was too cold."

"If you think Stacia paints, you ought to see her sisters, and her mother, too. They are all what Stacia calls modern, you know. I liked it at first and they *are* good folks, Betty—at least Stacia's mother and father are. I don't know about her sisters, or her brother.

"Well, the radio went all evening and we had to yell to talk above it. I was too polite at first to talk at all, but I had to. It kept on going for the late programs and with that and the smoke in the whole house and no window up, I couldn't sleep a mite.

"I felt better in the morning and we went down town to do Christmas shopping. Stacia showed me a lovely shop and I got something nice for Mother. You mustn't look in your bag, yet, though, for there's something there for you, too. We had a grand lunch, and then, in the afternoon, Stacia had a little party for me. That is why I can never say a word about all this. They were so *good* to me! I'm going to give Stacia something nice for Christmas—wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I would," gently said Betty.

"That night at supper, dinner, I mean, they had wine, I'm sure. They did not say what it was, but it was in a wine glass and I tasted it and it was terribly bitter. I don't see how anybody likes the stuff. Jim—that's Stacia's brother and such a handsome, dear sort of boy, about eighteen, I imagine—Jim drank a lot of it, till his father said real low, 'That's enough, Jim.'

"Then they took me to a moving picture, not down town, but in the suburb, you know. And we stayed up awfully late with the radio again and this time some more wine, only I didn't take any, only cake. Stacia urged me to try one of her sister's cigarettes. I believe they don't want Stacia to smoke yet, so she didn't do it until we went upstairs. It made me cough just to smell all the smoke, so I said 'no, thank you, Stacia,' and got undressed. And then—" Doris lowered her voice—"about two o'clock, I think, somebody came stumbling up the stairs, and somebody was talking to him, and helping him, I think. Stacia woke up and sat up in bed. We could see a little, for there was a light in the hall. She saw I was awake and I sat up, too.

"Then she said, 'Oh, that's just Jim, coming home drunk as usual.' And she lay down again and went right to sleep! My—I'd never go right to sleep if it were Dick! And I've already asked Stacia to come here some time for a week-end! What shall I do about it?"

"Have her. Mother will like to do it for you. You needn't tell her a thing, but Mother will see some things for herself, you know. We'll give Stacia our kind of a good time and your debt will be paid. And you can keep on being nice to her at school, I should think, Doris. It's easy enough to have other friends and stop being intimate without dropping anybody with a jolt. That wouldn't be kind."

"My, Betty, I'm glad you are my sister! I was afraid you'd want me not to have anything more to do with Stacia, and Stacia likes me."

“Perhaps you can be a good influence, Doris; but it isn’t very good for you to make such a close friend of Stacia. I’m sure you will ‘use good judgment about it,’ as Mother always says.”

“My, I’m glad I belong to this family. But Stacia will think us ‘slow.’ That’s her word.”

“We’ll have a party for her and do so many nice things that she will think being ‘slow’ is the finest thing in the world! Now let’s talk about Christmas presents.”

CHAPTER IX

MYSTERIES, PREPARATIONS AND A “TRADE-LAST”

It was characteristic of Betty’s rushing life, a life she loved, by the way, that she should be whisked from Lucia’s woes and the glimpse of life at the Murchison home to the problems of Doris, in her own well ordered home, and then to the pushing program of school, with the last Christmas preparations. Plenty of sleep at night, on which Betty’s parents insisted as a rule, gave Betty energy for every day’s full program.

There is no time so full of joyous anticipations, merriment and human kindness as that just before Christmas. Temporarily Betty was in charge of a Sunday school class of children, little girls whose teacher was ill. These she was teaching Luke’s beautiful Christmas story and to sing out sweetly “It came upon the midnight clear, That glorious song of old,” for they were to sing that in their Christmas celebration. Betty herself was to be an angel in the Christmas pageant at the church and had finally a minor part in the Christmas play at the high school.

“Oh, yes, Carolyn,” said she one morning at school, “having nothing to do, I thought I’d take on a few more things to practice for! But how can you refuse when it’s all so lovely?”

There were pleasing mysteries at home, packages whisked out of the way and a pretense of not knowing what was perfectly obvious. Of course, teachers had to give a few last tests to make life more complicated, but when Dick and Doris crossly complained of one Mrs. Lee called their attention to the fact that after all the main thing required of teachers was to have their pupils accomplish the required work within certain time limits.

“Oh, I suppose they have to,” Doris acknowledged, “but who feels like studying now?”

And Betty, who always felt that she was expected to be an example, fully sympathized with both Dick and Doris, though her only response was a laugh and a few giddy gym steps performed in the dining room just before she left it to rush to school.

There was generous giving toward the Christmas baskets in Christmas week. The teachers’ room, to which contributions this time were brought, had a corner full to overflowing with packages and cans. The Lyon “Y” basket for the adopted family would have to be a bushel basket this time and more than a Christmas dinner would be provided. The display itself was a good reminder and advertisement of kind things afoot. “Oh, yes; I almost forgot that I was to bring a little sack of flour,” one girl said; and a boy, who, naturally, did not belong to the Lyon “Y” put his hand in his pocket to draw out a quarter and say, “Here, Betty Lee; aren’t you president of that crowd?” as he waved his hand toward the heap of supplies. “Get some candy for the kids. Got a quarter, Tom?” And thus Betty added two quarters to the little fund of money. But she did not know that the boy who gave the first quarter had only ten cents left for his lunch. But ten cents would buy something and the feeling of having done something for some one else is a warming one.

This time Chet Dorrance, Chauncey Allen, Kathryn Allen and Betty Lee were the only ones who were on hand to deliver the Christmas basket. “How’ll we ever get everything upstairs?” laughingly asked Betty, viewing the car after everything was stowed away. “There won’t be anybody to watch the car, for we’ll all have to carry something.”

“Don’t worry till we get there, Betty,” Chet advised. “You just leave all the carrying to Chauncey and me.”

“Not a bit of it!” cried Kathryn. “We want to see those little Woods kiddies. Moreover, cars do lock, Betty.”

“We know where to find them this time anyhow,” said Betty.

Again the Allen car wound round the Lyon High drives out upon the wide thoroughfare, making its way down town and out to the district whose buildings and surroundings made it very clear that poverty marked its inhabitants.

The hall which the young people reached after climbing the two flights of rickety stairs gave some evidence of having been cleaned and there was a rush to the door by young feet, they could hear, after the knock which Kathryn gave.

The door was flung open and grins of pleasure welcomed the high school representatives. “We saw you come and Mother said we could open the door,” said the eldest, her eyes big at the array of what had been brought. “Oh, Mother, come! There’s a bushel basket and lots of things!”

“Merry Christmas,” said Betty, smiling at everybody, as she looked past the children at Mrs. Woods, who again appeared with a sleepy baby that she placed upon the bed. The room, in expectation of the guests, had been cleaned as carefully as possible and Mrs. Woods looked as if there was some hope in living now. She was being helped over the hard place.

“No, thanks, we can’t stay,” continued Betty, at the invitation to come in. “We have to get back.” With this she handed Mrs. Woods the small basket she carried and Kathryn put into the hands of the older girl a package she was holding. Chet and Chauncey lugged in the bushel basket. “Don’t let the children see what’s in the *little* basket till Christmas morning, Mrs. Woods,” said Betty with an air of mystery; and one of the children jumped up and down at that happy suggestion.

Tears came into Mrs. Woods' eyes. "May God bless you all," said she. "And there is a chance that *he* may get work the first of the year, steady work, I mean. He's out in one of the suburbs now, putting coal in for a man."

"Oh, tell me, Mrs. Woods, about the Sevillas," suddenly said Kathryn, more or less embarrassed by Mrs. Woods' fervent thanks, to which Betty was responding with the wish that everything would "come right" for them.

"Yes,—sure enough. Why the old lady was well pleased to be remembered with a Thanksgiving gift and Rosie did not mind as much as I thought she would. You see it was too late to do anything about it and Rosie was worried about her old mother, too. I guess all they needed was something to eat.

"But all at once one morning Rosie came up to say good-bye and they were moving. Some way or other they had got a new trunk and that and some old grips were all that went out. She brought up a few things she was leaving behind. I couldn't make out just where they were going from what Rosie said. She didn't seem to want to tell me anything. I ran down to tell the old lady good-bye; and when Rosie was having the trunk taken out, she said that Rosie was frightened and she didn't know where they were going, and Rosie didn't want anybody to know. They were going to the station from here, but she thought they would stay in the city. Anyhow that was what I made out from the bit of English she has finally picked up and her signs with her poor old hands.

"I've inquired, though, and Rosie isn't working or sewing for the folks she did work for and nobody knows anything. So I suppose they did leave town. Only the good Lord knows what will become of them. The only thing I can think of is that Rosie got a job in some other place, and I hope that's it."

"Did Rosie ever speak of a brother, or cousin, or any relative at all?" asked Betty.

"Never a word about any one. I never knew anybody as close-mouthed as Rosie. She was asked all sorts of questions by the folks around here, of course, but she never let them get well enough acquainted to keep it up. I didn't need but a hint myself. I let folks tell what they want to. I like to keep my own business to myself if I can with all these!" Mrs. Woods nodded at the children as she spoke.

"I wish I'd seen Rosie," thoughtfully said Betty, But it was time to say good-bye and go on to the next duty or pleasure; for this had been a very "Christmasy" day, the girls declared. There had been the last rehearsal for the Christmas play, when the performers were "actually" excused from classes if they had any the "last two bells" or periods. Tomorrow morning the play would be given in two assembly gatherings, in order that the whole school might see it. And that night would listen to the carols.

"Why did you ask about Rosie Sevilla's relatives?" asked Kathryn of Betty, and Betty for the first time told about the name on the letter from Ramon.

"It may not mean anything and again it might," said Betty. "Once in a while I feel worried about it. It just seems that I might have missed an opportunity. There is some mystery about Ramon and there seems to be about these people. That's about the only connection. And they're Spanish, of course."

"I wouldn't worry any, Betty," said Chet. "You can't fix up things for everybody."

"No," said Betty, "but you can help sometimes, Chet. Oh, isn't it getting dark? I'm glad we're out of those streets! Do you think we'll have snow? I do want snow for Christmas!"

"We still have a little left, Betty," laughed Kathryn, pointing to a narrow stretch of dark snow and ice that edged the streets and walks, or spread in patches over lawns.

"Oh, that!" exclaimed Betty. "I mean something soft and white and clean."

"You're likely to get your wish," said Chauncey. "There's one of those gray snow clouds now from where the wind is blowing."

"Will we go carolling if it snows?" asked Kathryn.

"Of course we shall," replied the president of the Lyon "Y." "We have cars and people to drive them and chaperons and everything!"

Another duty was performed. Betty was the first one to be dropped from the Allen car, courteously assisted out by Chet, who would probably have come in a few moments or lingered at the door to talk, if it had not been so near dinner time, and if Chauncey had not privately informed him that no "visiting with best girls" was allowed this time.

And the next day was the "last day of school!"

That welcome day dawned with a few scattered flakes of snow flying in a frosty air. In happy anticipation the Lee children hurried their preparations for school, Betty carefully packing her costume for the play in a light suitcase, which Dick generously offered to carry, provided they "had to take" the street car. It was not always convenient for Mr. Lee to drive his children to school.

"If this goes off as well as the Christmas pageant did at the church, I'll be satisfied," said Betty, her cheeks pink with the exercise and excitement about coming events, as they boarded the street car together. The car was packed with boys and girls on their way to school. Doris and Betty secured a strap each and hung on while they nodded to this one or that one whom

they knew. “Remind me to tell you a ‘trade last,’ Betty, when we get off the car,” said Mary Emma, who happened to be sitting by Betty’s strap.

“I’ll not forget to do that,” said Betty, breezily. “Who said it?”

“Guess.”

But Betty would not guess, and there was too much noise for conversation; for when large numbers of pupils are together, if manners are remembered at all, older passengers are usually thankful. But these high school pupils, if a bit noisy at times, were an interesting and attractive group that needed only occasional reminders from motorman or conductor when too full of spirits.

Arm in arm with Mary Emma, and carrying her suitcase in her free hand, Betty traversed the walk to the high school building. “It was Budd, Betty,” said Mary Emma. “He said that you would have made the best angel in the play—your hair and eyes and everything—and that it was too bad you hadn’t been in the dramatic club longer and that they had to let a senior girl have the part anyway.”

“Why, wasn’t that *nice* of old Budd!” cried Betty, pleased. “And the angel has to say things, so it couldn’t be just looks, Budd meant.”

“Suppose it was—wouldn’t that be nice enough?”

“No, Mary Emma. Looks are something you’re born with and can’t help and they’re no credit. See?”

“H’m. You’re a funny girl! So are people born either with brains or without ’em. I don’t agree with you. And I’d rather have looks than brains.”

“Much you would. But as you’re pretty well supplied with both you needn’t worry.”

“I thank you,” said Mary Emma with mock formality, as they separated inside of the door, Mary Emma to seek her locker and home room, Betty to report first with her costume, before she also would join the other junior girls of her home room.

So old Budd thought she would have made a good angel. That was nice. Budd had been at the pageant at the church. He had a part in the play to be given this morning. And as Betty happened to meet him in the hall on her way to her home room, she gave him such a welcoming smile, without realizing it in the least, that Budd was pleasantly surprised. He believed he’d get ahead of old Chet and ask Betty way ahead for something or other in the party line. Say, why couldn’t he take her to that big moving picture that was coming in vacation? It was a proper one that the Lees would let Betty see. They were almost silly about Betty; but perhaps that was what made her sort of different—and independent! Gee-whilikers—but Betty was independent!

CHAPTER X

CAROLS

A crystal star over the central entrance of the high school building, and within, gave evidence that the school, teachers and pupils, were making much of the season. It contained small electric bulbs of different colors, harmoniously selected, and gave beauty to the large square hall as well as a thrill to some of the pupils. The bulbs were glowing this last morning, and beneath their radiance, the boys and girls, visitors, parents and friends entered to see the play and the last assembly of the year; for before school met in session again a new year would be ushered in.

Betty had merely reported at her home room, for the dramatic director had urged every one to "hurry into costume," as the play would begin at once. There was not a long wait. The older classes were admitted to the auditorium first. The rest and the junior high would see the second performance. No change of scenery hampered the stage directors, for the play was the effective "Why the Chimes Bang," with the old but always beautiful motive of the stranger entertained who proved to be the Christ-child in disguise.

Carolyn had promised to tell Betty exactly "how everything went off" and sat with Kathryn and Mary Emma well toward the front and on the junior aisle nearest the middle of the auditorium. But Betty herself was peeping from the rear of the auditorium, or just outside one of the doors. The senior boy who took the part of the unselfish lad that gives up going to the cathedral, in order to welcome and care for the unexpected guest, Betty did not know very well, but she admired his playing of the part and was horrified when a laugh went over the audience at one moment.

"There! I knew they'd do that," said a senior girl beside her. "It's only because it's so funny to have Jean almost faint in his arms. You see we know everybody! And those bowls they have the porridge in look too new!"

But the audience, who had, it must be said, been warned that they must be a part of the play, behaved most circumspectly when later the walls of the woodchopper's hut parted to reveal a cathedral shrine or altar. From the rear of the auditorium, now supposed to be the cathedral, came the choir, chanting as the organ notes filled the room. Betty was one of the choir.

Up the aisle, up the steps made for the purpose, they went and stood in their places singing. One by one, unhurriedly, up the different aisles, past the quiet students and visitors, came rich man, rich woman, courtier, girl, sage and king, with gifts for the priest to offer. The medieval costumes were impressive. Then, from his place in the background, the lad, urged by the old woman, went forward with his small gift, all he had; and the fabled chimes that had rung for no other, rang for him, as the guest disappeared.

As the organ played the chimes and the lovely girl who was the angel spoke, Betty saw her mother's handkerchief come out to clear misty eyes. There was the hush that meant the success of a message. In a few moments the curtains were drawn to again, and the audience was dismissed.

But as Betty went back to the rear again, to be in readiness for the choir's entrance in the second and last performance, she noticed that her mother remained for that performance, too, though she had not expressed any such intention, and "lo and behold," as her senior friend Lilian said to her, there entered her father, with Mr. Murchison and the countess. "Oh, Lucia, look!" cried Betty, leaning around a group of costumed players to speak to Lucia, who was in the group, as she added her youthful contralto to the choir.

Lucia smiled and nodded. "I knew they were coming," she said.

Perhaps it was due to the inspiration or presence of Countess Coletti, but the second performance, according to Mrs. Lee, surpassed the first. Restless little junior high pupils appreciated the privilege of this assembly and were still at all the proper places. No wrongly timed giggles of laughter disturbed the play, which went through, without seeming hurried, in a shorter time. It was one of the things that one hated to have over, according to Betty, though she was glad that she did not have to pose as long as did the "angel."

"What are you going to do tonight after the carols, Betty?" asked the countess, who had come back to see Lucia a moment after the play.

"Just go home," replied Betty, simply. "It's Christmas Eve, you know."

"Indeed I do know, Betty," returned the countess gravely. "It is going to be a little hard for Lucia tonight. It was last year. I thought I would ask your father and mother and the children over, if they did not think it would be too late. Will you have to trim your Christmas tree at the last minute, or something like that?"

"I don't think so. We still hang up stockings, though chiefly for Amy Lou now! and this year we have just a little tree that she is to help trim after dinner tonight."

The countess smiled. "I will ask your mother at least. Perhaps I ought not. What do you think, Betty?" The Countess Coletti, spoiled daughter and wife, but gifted and attractive woman, looked wistfully at Betty, whose heart was always warm enough to respond to some one's need. In a moment she realized that for some reason the countess wanted them there.

“Why, of course, Countess Coletti—if Mother can manage it and you want us, she will come.”

“If the child should grow sleepy, she could rest as well with us and the car is warm—to take her home.”

The countess spoke reflectively, but now hurried away with a warm smile for Betty, not missed by several of the girls who were changing costumes for school dresses.

But there was no time for Betty to think of anything except the present. Joy of joys, the teachers did not have regular recitations. They played funny games and sang carols. Betty had missed some, but in Miss Heath’s class they sang Latin hymns and songs, the *Adeste Fidelis*, familiar to the Catholic girls in the Latin words, and even “Silent Night,” put into “not very good Latin” according to Miss Heath, but offered for their interest. The board was “covered with Latin poetry,” said Carolyn.

School was dismissed at twelve-thirty, Carolyn and Betty saying an affectionate good-bye, for Carolyn was going away for the vacation. “It’s a shame you aren’t going to *your* grandmother’s,” said Carolyn. “I may get out to the carols tonight, Betty, but it’s more than likely that I can’t. I think we’ll start tonight. Mother wasn’t sure. Have a good time and don’t forget your old Carolyn. Merry Christmas!”

The girls exchanged their greetings thus and Betty slipped a small package into Carolyn’s hand. “Now don’t open it till Christmas, Carolyn—tomorrow morning! Oh, is it really here?”

“It doesn’t seem possible does it? But if we go tonight, mayn’t I open it? It’s Christmas Eve.”

“Sure enough. And lots of people have their gifts on Christmas Eve. Of course you may. But I have your pretty Christmasy package all tucked away, ready to open Christmas morning. I’m sorry to be so late with mine; but you see I just finished it.”

Carolyn laughed. “How you ever had time to *make anything*, I don’t see, but I’ll appreciate it all the more.”

“It isn’t much, but I hope you’ll like it. Yes, we almost ought to be with Grandma tomorrow, but you see she is going away herself. She’s already gone. They’re packing her off to Florida for her own good, though some one is with her. Well, Merry Christmas, Carolyn, and I’ll *never* forget you. Couldn’t if I tried!”

Excited and hungry, the Lee children reached home for a late lunch together. Dick and Doris “gabbled” so fast Amy Lou couldn’t tell a thing, she said, and they had had such a beautiful Christmas morning at their school. Amy Lou almost felt hurt that her mother had gone to the high school instead, or that she could not have gone with her; but Mrs. Lee reminded her that she had visited her school when they had their “great Christmas program” and Amy Lou had “spoken a piece,” for that was what they called it in the old days when *she* was a little girl.

“*We* read things,” importantly said Amy Lou, “or have a ‘number.’” After that she took her dolls into the front room to play school and stood up for half an hour singing all about “good Saint Nick” with an “Oh, oh, oh, who wouldn’t go?” and the rest of it, varied with “Jingle Bells,” “Holy Night,” and songs new and old, learned at school and Sunday school, where music made an especial appeal to little Amy Lou.

“She is entertained for the next hour,” said Mrs. Lee, as she and Betty cleared the table after lunch. The little maid, who had been baking and cooking all morning, was excused for the afternoon and evening, but would come to help with the Christmas dinner.

“And we have an invitation for the evening, Betty. The countess said she had spoken to you.”

“Yes’m. Are we going?”

“Yes. I scarcely thought at first that I could manage about Amy Lou, since Lena ought to have her evening this time; but the countess wanted us to bring her and thinks that she ‘will enjoy it.’ I was quite surprised, but the countess said that she would appreciate our coming, that it was not like a regular invitation to a party, just a sudden wanting to have good friends there. Grandma Ferris is not so well, Betty.”

“Oh! Will you mind, Mother?”

“No. If I am needed anywhere, that is where I want to be. But be sure not to worry, Betty. Christmas Eve must be a beautiful time and if Grandmother Ferris should slip away, it will only be a homecoming.”

“Funny she wants *you* Mumsy, when she has so many older friends.” But Betty said this with an affectionate smile. It was not new that her mother should be wanted when people were in trouble. Well, Lucia wanted *her*; perhaps she could be like her mother some day! But oh, what a lovely time Christmas was. And wouldn’t Amy Lou love the doll they had for her! She was glad Amy Lou liked dolls. She still did herself, though she had stopped playing with them—oh, very long ago, it seemed.

The dinner was an oven dinner, already prepared for cooking and easy to watch while they did something else. The last packages were tied up in tissue paper of the newer gay sort, Mrs. Lee helping different ones as this one or that one must not see. Amy Lou was allowed to help Doris and Betty with packages for their father and mother. Dick as usual had disappeared, not to turn up till mealtime. But Mrs. Lee knew where he was, safely working on an aeroplane in the heated third floor attic of a boy friend. It would probably revolutionize aeronautics, Mr. Lee declared; but Dick good-humoredly took the teasing.

Then the little tree was brought in and it was decided to trim it then and there, instead or waiting till after dinner. Amy Lou was much excited when all the trimmings were brought out. But she sighed as she recognized some favorite decorations saved from the old days in the village. “And I used to think that Santa Claus brought them!” she said with some regret.

“Don’t you believe in Santa Claus now?” asked Doris.

“No. Do you?”

“Mother says Santa Claus is the ‘Spirit of Christmas,’” returned Doris.

“Yes. But it would have been so nice if he could have been just himself and really, you know, come down the chimneys.”

“Oh, well, we’ll keep on pretending, and hang up our stockings just the same.”

“Yes,” brightly Amy Lou answered. “It’s just as true as it ever was, I suppose.”

Mrs. Lee and Betty, who were listening, turned aside to hide their smiles at Amy Lou’s philosophy. “Poor little soul!” whispered Betty. “But she will be happy when she sees all we have for her!”

They need not have pitied Amy Lou at all, for her sturdy little soul had met her first disillusionment at school, at the hands of some other little girls, before whom she would not have shown any deep disappointment over finding Santa a myth. She thought it all over and accepted it; for she could recall a number of facts that seemed to bear out the truth!

And happy they all were that night. No tragedy met them at the Murchison home, whither all except Betty drove after dinner and a reasonable interval. Betty met Lucia and the other girls, who were taking part in the carols, at the big “Y” building.

Lovely, lovely Christmas Eve! So thought Betty as they started in the machines for the different points at which they were to sing “especially,” though the voices rang out all along the way in the beautiful Christmas music. It was still snowing by fits and starts, though not enough to cover the ground as yet. The lights of the city, the soft flakes of snow, and a bright sky above, helped make the Christmas atmosphere; for there were only drifting clouds as yet and behind them, beyond them, or through them shone the starlight.

They stopped at one place where there was a sanitarium in the poorer part of the city. Windows came up a little to make the words and music more clear to the listeners, not only where invalids were lying in their cots, but in the houses nearby. Betty saw a light flash out from a first floor window and glancing in she could see a delicate hand manipulating a lamp, adjusting its wick to the proper height. No gas or electricity there!

The light outlined clearly the head and face of the young woman who was bending over a table, then turning to speak to someone, for whom, perhaps, the light was made. Black hair was gathered into a low knot. Large black eyes looked toward the window. A gay scarf or small shawl of some sort lay on the table. Catching up this, the girl came to the window, threw it up, tossed the scarf around her head and shoulders, drawing it tightly around her face, and looked out.

The glare from a street light fell upon her face for a moment. Sober, almost tragic, the big eyes looked out upon the singers.

They had been singing several short carols but were giving the Christmas hymn beginning,

“Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown When thou camest to earth for me.”

And now, as the girl from the rickety lower window of a tall tenement looked out, Betty thought how appropriate, some way, was the stanza they were singing then, here where the people had so little. Lucia’s rich contralto joined Betty’s sweet voice, as they were close to each other, and made the words as distinct as possible for a group to make them:

“The foxes found rest, and the bird their nest
  In the shade of the forest tree;
But thy couch was the sod, O thou Son of God,
  In the deserts of Galilee.
O come to my heart, Lord Jesus!
  There is room in my heart for thee.”

Betty felt that she was singing to that girl in the window and Lucia, too, was seeing her. But she listened only to the close of that stanza then put down the window; and before the young singers had finished, the light in the room had been extinguished.

“Did you see that *tr-ragic* face, Betty?” asked Lucia, rolling her “r” in the Italian way, as they were speeding along toward the Y. W. C. A. again. It was late and the carols were over.

“Yes. The girl that looked out of the first floor window, you mean?”

“Yes. She was beautiful, too, wasn’t she?” And as Betty assented, Lucia added, “Oh, Betty, I’m learning things!”

Lucia did not explain, but Betty knew that the sorrows of others meant more to Lucia than they ever had meant before. There was “room” in her heart, too! And to Betty the sordid poverty of a city was new. They had always “helped the poor” at home, but there were not so many. The distress could be met. Here it seemed endless Yet on this lovely night it seemed

that there was hope for every one in the greatest of Gifts, of whom they had been singing.

The girls grew gay with the Christmas joy as they chatted with their friends. At the “Y” Lucia telephoned. Then they took a car to a certain corner where the Murchison car would meet them. Everything went as arranged and Betty soon found herself in the midst of the prettiest Christmas decoration she had known. A lighted Christmas tree with the gayest of colors stood outside under the stars, where a little more snow was adding itself to the more artificial burdens of the tree. Within were gay holly and mistletoe and bright poinsettia plants in bloom.

Mr. Murchison led both girls under the mistletoe which hung from a sparkling, old-fashioned chandelier, and laughingly saluted their cheeks. “There!” he cried. “For lack of younger cavaliers, I shall do my duty!”

Amy Lou had succumbed to sleep, though not without a strong effort to keep awake. The countess took Betty by the arm and led her to look at her small sister, peacefully sleeping on a divan in what Betty called the back parlor. She was covered with a gay steamer rug and clasped tightly in her arms a large doll.

“Oh, you gave that to her, Countess Coletti!” exclaimed Betty, though in a subdued tone.

“Yes. I never can resist a pretty doll, so I bought one for Amy Lou. She seemed to like it.”

Smilingly Countess Coletti looked down upon the pretty, sleeping child. The countess herself was lovely tonight in a plainly cut black velvet evening dress. A diamond clasp was her only ornament in the way of jewels, but she wore a few crimson roses that became her well. Mrs. Lee did not wear an evening dress, but Betty thought that “Mamma” was very pretty in her “stylish” silk frock. Some other friends had called up, the countess said, and were coming over. In a short time the main drawing room was full of guests and presently a delicious light supper was served. It seemed the easiest thing in the world in this house for little tables to be arranged and everything lovely to appear as if by magic. But when Betty said as much to her mother afterward, her mother smiled. “It is good planning, Betty, but also competent help, trained to service,” she said.

Amy Lou woke up and behaved like an angel, according to Doris, who did not realize that Amy Lou was now a properly trained little school girl, not a baby any longer. Doris, very much impressed with her surroundings, had been quietly engaged with some books during the first part of the evening. Then the arrival of a friend of the countess, with a girl of about the same age and a boy a little older than Dick, had put the finishing touch to the visit. There had been music and games, while Lucia and Betty had been carolling.

Countess Coletti explained to Mrs. Lee, as Betty learned on the way home. “She told me, Betty, that she had felt the need of us as well as liking to entertain us on Christmas Eve, but that when she found her fears about Mrs. Ferris were unnecessary—she was so much better—she decided to make it a gayer occasion than it might have been. Friends called up and she took the opportunity to invite them in, adding a few others also. It was a very delightful evening for everybody, I think.”

“Don’t you believe, Mother,” said Doris, “that Mr. Murchison is interested in that pretty widow—I’ve forgotten her name?”

“I shouldn’t be surprised, Doris; but we must not say anything, you know.”

“Oh, not for worlds!” cried Doris. “With Father’s being in the business and our knowing them so well——.” Doris trailed off her sentence unfinished, but was probably taking satisfaction in thought induced by that last expression of hers. Betty wanted to laugh, but bless her “dear old Doris,” she would not.

“I have no doubt that the countess and Lucia are missing the count at this season,” said Mr. Lee. “I hope that that family will be together another Christmas.”

It had been a very unusual Christmas Eve for the Lee family, and it was followed by an unusual Christmas morning, for Amy Lou announced that she “might not get up” as early as usual on Christmas. She wanted “to see everything just as much,” but she was afraid she might sleep too late.

That suggestion was welcomed most heartily by the rest of the family. “I’ll put your stocking by your bed, dear,” said her mother, “and everything else; so if you do wake up, you can have them.”

Thus it happened that everything was different, but just as happy. The turkey had been prepared and went into the oven promptly as soon as Mrs. Lee wakened. Breakfast was very, very light, not to spoil the dinner which would be on time. Presents were “just what they wanted” and the little tree shone with its electric lights, gay decorations and little Christmas angel, which Amy Lou and the other children remembered from earliest years. Christmas cards and gifts from absent friends, including “Grandma,” made their hearts warm. And that they were all together, well, sheltered, blessed and happy, Mr. Lee gave thanks before he carved the turkey.

CHAPTER XI

GIVING UP A PLEASANT HONOR

The delightful but irregular and rather upsetting vacation of the Christmas holidays soon became a memory. It must be said that Mrs. Lee drew a sigh of relief when the children were all back in school and hours became regular again without the parties and entertainments, glad as she was to have her children enjoy them. They went through these carefree and youthful days but once. If she could guide and guard them it was enough.

Betty declared to Lucia that the face at the window haunted her. She had “half a notion” to call there and see who was so unhappy. But Mrs. Lee was doubtful of the wisdom of such a call and advised Betty to find out something about the handsome girl from some social worker of the neighborhood. And Betty thought she would take her mother’s suggestion. Yet when was there “time for anything?”

“Mid-years,” the semester examinations, were approaching. Betty was glad that she had studied her lessons at the proper time. She followed the reviews and “crammed” a little on the side, on lines where she was not as sure; but she did not worry as some more nervous girls seemed to do. Peggy Pollard said that she was sitting up nights on Math, and Mathilde Finn looked worried, which was something for Mathilde to do over lessons. Several of the “very nicest” junior girls were being tutored and Miss Heath sacrificed her time and strength to hold a review class after school for some of her pupils who were “shaky,” as Miss Heath told Betty.

“Oh, I’d love to come in, Miss Heath, to review. Could I?” asked Betty.

“You do not need it, Betty, and you would be wasting time. Besides, it is not in Cicero.”

That settled the class question. Betty did need time, though there was little to do now in the girl reserve work, for the committees handled the programs and Betty had little to do except to preside at the meetings. Orchestra practice was interesting, if exacting, and Betty was “crazy about” the Dramatic Club. Basketball practice was going on, but Mr. Lee had asked Betty not to be on the team which played the competitive class games.

It was a disappointment to Betty and she argued at some length, though respectfully, with her father. Her father was “such a dear” and “always let you say anything you wanted to on *your* side,” she told Carolyn Gwynne.

“Here I like athletics almost better than anything,” said Betty, “and want to get honors, and Father won’t let me play! It was getting hurt that time, Carolyn, that did it. I told him that it was only a practice game and that I might get hurt just playing—anything. He acknowledged that what I said was so, but I know he thinks I won’t play so often if I can’t be on the regular teams. He tells me to continue being his little fish in swimming and when I said that I didn’t like the expression, he said ‘Be a mermaid, then—a siren, and lure your cruel father to the rocks.’”

“And what do you think Mother put in? She was listening to our argument and hadn’t said a word, but now she said, ‘financial rocks, Father!’ And that was because we had been talking about the clothes Doris and I need for spring.”

Carolyn laughed and asked when Betty was hurt. “I don’t seem to remember it, Betty.”

“It wasn’t *anything*! I got knocked down and twisted something or other, sort of a sprain, and hobbled around for a week or so. The worst was over a week-end and Father had a doctor to look at my ankle.”

“Oh, yes. I do seem to remember your limping a little one time. Well, the girls will be disappointed and I know they’re worrying for fear Mathilde will be captain.”

“How can she, if they don’t want her?”

“Mathilde is an awfully good player now and stands in with the teacher that has charge this year and she’ll work it some way—she has influence with some of the girls.”

“Yes,” thoughtfully Betty returned. “That makes me feel better about it, though. I’ve been too rushed to pay much attention to ‘politics.’ And I thought a different girl wanted it.”

“How in the world does that make you feel better, Betty?”

“Because I wouldn’t want to fight to be captain or anything. Some of the girls took it for granted that I would be captain, and I was silly enough to believe that perhaps I could be. You noticed what the school paper said, didn’t you?”

“Yes. You got quite a puff on your athletics, Betty. ‘With Betty Lee at the head of the junior team, that unusual class is likely to carry off the honors in basketball this year.’ Aha! No wonder you felt like arguing the matter with your father! Can’t you persuade him? It isn’t too late yet.”

“Perhaps I could get his consent, Carolyn; but I know that it will worry him and after all, it *is* a strain, though so awfully exciting and jolly. If Mathilde wants it, let her have it. The only thing about Mathilde is that she isn’t fair and will take any advantage that she can. We could easily lose games that way, Carolyn, even if she is a good player.”

“We certainly could, and *crede mihi*, Betty, I’m going to see if we can’t get somebody else for captain.”

“Fine! I’ll support you, Carolyn, in anything you start, only I can’t play on the team myself.”

“Worse luck!” But Carolyn laughed. “I ’spect you’re safer to do what your father wants you to do, and you can’t do everything, *crede mihi*!”

“*‘Crede mihi’*—I can’t,” laughed Betty. “Do you suppose *‘mihi’* ought to come before *‘crede’*? Oh, yes, imperative first!”

“*‘O tempora, o mores!’*” replied Carolyn, grinning. “Yes, don’t you remember we looked it up in the vocabulary, after we found it somewhere and then couldn’t find it again? If ‘take my word for it’ isn’t enough like ‘believe *me*’ then I can’t read Cicero!”

This conversation took place long before “mid-years,” as may be gathered from the fact that basketball was in the early stages. Betty’s special friends had been looking up a few Latin phrases to take the place of slang expressions which their English teacher was urging her pupils to drop, telling them that they would soon think in no other terms. Home influences, however, kept Betty and most of these girl from taking on the coarser expressions which they heard from some of their acquaintances.

Started in this way, it became fun to take out of Cicero, orations or elsewhere, little phrases like *ubi est?* or *Quid loquor?*

Quid agis?—O miserabile me!—horribile dictu—age vero—da operam, and other expressions all had possibilities, though sometimes, it must be said that the old Romans would not have recognized some of the uses to which their language was applied. But it was all a part of the very active and happy life led by Betty Lee junior at Lyon High.

Mr. Lee had not asked Betty to curtail any of her pleasures without good reason. Betty’s parents had noted certain effects in the previous year which did not seem good, chief of which was a temporary suffering of Betty’s work during the basketball season and her being more or less nervous and under a strain. Then, as Mrs. Lee watched several games, she saw the possibility of accident in the fast playing, and as Betty thought, the small injury was the final argument.

But this curtailment left Betty more free for other lines of work and her time was too full for many regrets. It was rather pleasant, to be sure, to have certain girls exclaim over her defection and prophesy dire results to the team. And Betty was big enough at heart to be honestly glad when the juniors under Mathilde played well, winning over all the classes except the seniors. There at last came their Waterloo. For the seniors had previous defeat to wipe out. They had the best team that they had ever had in basketball. The girls of that class had never been particularly noted in athletic lines, but as Kathryn declared, they had concentrated on basketball “to beat *us*.” And beat the juniors they did.

The school paper came out with big headlines over the result. The seniors chortled. Chet at first avoided any comment when with Betty, but his eyes twinkled when she congratulated him as a member of the class. “The girls have been very sure they would win over your class ever since you refused to be captain, Betty.”

“Nice suggestion, Chet, but I didn’t refuse to be captain and perhaps I couldn’t have been even if I hadn’t dropped out of the games. Besides, Mathilde is as good as I am.”

“You go too far to be honest, Betty. Sure I know all about that; but it’s more than likely that you would have led your girls to victory. Our girls had a lot of confidence, besides having practiced like mad. Your girls played well, but they lacked that punch to put it over when they had a little bad luck. And they didn’t trust Mathilde as they would have trusted you. It’s funny, but there is a lot in the psychology of a game. It isn’t just good playing.”

“My, Chet! Where do you get ‘psychology?’ Is Ted taking it at the University?” Betty was laughing.

“I reckon! But I get it out of the athletics in the paper. I read the reports of the big games, you see.”

“I suppose so. I only look to see which teams beat. Dick’s the one at our house who reads the sport page.”

CHAPTER XII

COULD BETTY BE STUBBORN?

The independent girl who likes to follow her own opinions and draw her own conclusions is likely to make a few errors of judgment. These come largely from lack of experience; and that lack of experience is the chief reason for the safety to young people in following the direction of their elders in important matters.

On the other hand, as girls and boys grow older, they must be thrown upon their own responsibility in many matters and learn wisdom thereby. The holding of high ideals and the testing of action, conduct and people by them is the greatest safeguard a girl or boy can have. And when it comes to people, most important relation of all, while friendliness and confidence are fine, indeed, and a suspicious attitude to be deeply deplored, when it comes to being led by others, or to being drawn from those high ideals or even minor convictions, a fine reserve is very necessary. Sometimes it is best to withdraw altogether from a friendship rather than be drawn into what is either doubtful or wrong.

Betty Lee's independence was not of the aggressive variety, but she did like to come to her own conclusions, for which she always thought she had grounds in the facts. Betty was a keen little observer and thought about many things, a very good habit. It was usually quite safe to be "easy-going" and friendly, and as Betty had the background of a safe home life and a circle of friends of her own sort, there was very little in social relations to trouble her, and oh, what good times there were! These were connected with the school affairs or with her friends and were sandwiched in between much hard study and her fondness for athletics, with its varied interests.

The friendship which had so distressed Doris had been adjusted without much difficulty, Doris finally taking her mother into her confidence. As Betty had suggested, Stacia was invited for a visit and made much of, with the friendliness, if dignified, which was characteristic of that home. If Stacia found the entertainment dull, she showed no evidence of it and told Doris privately that she thought her mother and father "wonderful."

But as there was no real community of interests between the girls, by spring Stacia's devotion to Doris had waned. Another girl received Stacia's confidences, to the great relief of Doris, who meanwhile had been adding other friends to her list. And it had all come about naturally without any necessity for any coolness or unkindness on the part of Doris.

Doris herself was taking on little grown-up airs and was very fussy at this stage about what she wore and how she looked. Dick's still careless boyishness annoyed her and her remarks about his table manners or general state of oblivion about the state of his collar or tie were having more effect than any reminders on the part of his mother. Dick cared what his twin thought; and if Doris, too, thought he must spruce up, he supposed he'd have to. All this was not lost on Betty and her mother, but aside from some natural amusement over remarks exchanged by the twins; they gave no sign of their interest.

Betty, it was true, was almost too full of her own affairs to think much about her family except at mealtime. Every evening there were lessons, whatever could not be managed in the school study hours. Time after school was taken with meetings or practice or some athletic line. Betty usually put in one half-hour of violin practice before the evening dinner, for the orchestra was working on the big things for their great concert, given by all the musical organizations.

Life was very interesting just now. The birds were singing again. Hikes had begun. And a new member of the junior class was very much interested in Betty. Just at this time senior affairs were absorbing Chet and some of the other boys that Betty knew best and meanwhile this new lad was introduced to Betty by Lucia Coletti one day after class.

"Betty," said Lucia, "I want you to know our new classmate, Jack Huxley. You heard him recite in Latin and Math, didn't you?"

"I'm glad to meet you," murmured Betty, as Jack courteously said "Miss Lee" and bowed. "Yes, Lucia; I noticed that. Are you finishing the junior year with us?"

"Yes. My parents have recently moved here. I have been to school in the East, but that is too far away, my mother thinks, since we came here."

Betty moved along between Lucia and Jack for a few moments of conversation; then they separated. This was the beginning of the acquaintance. Jack was a fine-looking boy with dark eyes, a pleasant mouth, a quantity of very dark brown hair which he wore in the prevailing style back from his forehead. Betty was rather impressed by his courteous manners, though Carolyn did not fancy him and said that he was too sure of himself. But he was a good student and Betty found herself defending him to several of the girls who were a little critical after a time. But perhaps that was because he made no effort to be friendly. Betty did not know. The boy with whom he seemed to chum was "wild," Mary Emma Howland said.

Lucia, in telling how she came to know him, said that his mother used to be a friend of her mother's at school. "They are being invited everywhere," said Lucia, "and Jack is, too. They live in a hotel now, but are moving soon into one of those fine houses that are being finished."

From this Betty concluded that the Huxleys moved in what was known as "society" and her

first social meeting with Jack was at a little party at Lucia's, one quite "informal" and hastily planned, Lucia said. There Jack paid rather particular attention to Betty and after that she met him so often at school, when he would fall in beside her after class, or be at the entrance of the grounds to accompany her to the door; or join her after school, that she knew it was no accident.

Once Chet dashed out of the auditorium door after practice of the junior and senior orchestras together, to find Jack and Betty in conversation just outside in the hall. "Say, Betty, I have to see you," began Chet. "Oh, excuse me. I don't want to interrupt, but I have a message." Chet looked at Jack and Jack looked at him. What in the world was that new junior doing? Was he hanging around Betty? "Hello, Jack," Chet finished.

"There is nothing important, Chet," sweetly replied Betty, turning in friendly fashion to Chet. She was quite aware of the instant antagonism between the boys. But Chet needn't think that he owned her! She *liked* Jack.

"I'll be waiting outside, Betty," said Jack with cool politeness in his attitude. "The message may be private."

"What's that chap around for?" queried Chet looking after Jack, who was sauntering toward the entrance door. "He doesn't belong to either orchestra, band or glee club."

As no reply could be expected, Betty said nothing but continued to look pleasantly at Chet and wait. He lost no time but went on at once to explain.

"Say, Betty, it's Mother that wants you to help her out. There's going to be doings at our church, some sort of a spring festival or something, and Mother says she hadn't any more sense than to say she'd be responsible for a booth. So she's hunting up a few pretty girls she knows—that's Mother's expression, not mine—and wanted me to ask you if you would help her out. It won't be hard, just to dress up in some sort of a costume, I guess."

"That's terribly clear, Chet," laughingly said Betty, "but tell your mother that I'll do anything she wants me too."

"Good for you. I knew you would, and she wants you to come out for dinner tomorrow. Of course I'll hate that a lot! We'll drive around after you, Ted and I, most likely. Is that O.K.?"

"Yes. I'll get my lessons ahead, so I can spare the time."

"Count on the whole evening, Betty. We'll do something or other. Now have you a regular date with that chap? I rather expected to put you on the car myself."

"I haven't any date at all, Chet, but it would be awkward, wouldn't it, since Jack said he was waiting?"

"I suppose it would. So long, then Betty. Say, Betty——," Chet turned back hesitatingly. "I'd go a little slow with Jack Huxley. What little I know about him isn't so good."

"What is it, Chet? He's smart and a perfect gentleman whenever I see him."

"Oh, I don't suppose there's much out of the way. He runs with a pretty wild crowd, though, and he hasn't been here long."

"Well, I scarcely think that he would be invited by the countess to a party for Lucia if he weren't all right." Betty spoke with some decision and Chet looked at her soberly.

"Don't you think so? Maybe not. Did you meet him there?"

"Yes. Good-bye, Chet. I'll be ready tomorrow night and tell your mother that I'd love to dress up and be in a booth."

Betty, who rather regretted a bit of steel that she had put into her tone before, made this farewell as friendly as possible. But Chet's answering smile could scarcely be called one and he hurried down the hall to another exit, in order to avoid Jack, Betty supposed. Oh, well, she couldn't help it. Jack *must* be all right! Why, he was a perfect dear, as Mathilde called him. Not that Mathilde's opinion of any one would be a recommendation, however. He did have some different ideas of things and they had had a few discussions, not about anything very important, but about social life and kinds of girls and boys and the "puritanic ideas" of some parents. That was Jack's expression, and Betty had wondered if her own parents *could* be a little too strict sometimes.

Anyhow, Jack was a nice friend. He had invited her to his birthday party at the Huxley new home and she certainly was going with him when he invited her. Chet need not think that he could tell her what society to choose. She had been to things with Budd and Brad and Chauncey through the year and she simply was not going to let Chet take her to every party the way it had been for a while. This would be an interesting party, for Jack had just told her that he was not inviting many from the high school. "It will be mostly from the old families that Mother knows," he had said, "and you will receive a note from her. But I wanted you to be sure to save the date."

Jack was waiting for her on the steps and joined her with a touch of his cap and that attentive way of bending over her that was so nice. Jack seemed to be considerably older than some of the junior boys. He must be all right! That story about his having been dismissed from the eastern school was all nonsense. Of course his mother wanted him near her!

Betty was so put out that when Jack asked her, as he had before, if she couldn't ride down town with him and have something good, she recklessly told him "she'd love to," though she

knew that her mother was expecting her home at a certain time, or at least expecting to know where she was. It *was* nonsense. She would go home when she got ready. But she *would* telephone her mother from wherever they went.

“All right, Jack, I feel in the humor to do something. I can’t telephone Mother from here now, but I can down town, can’t I?”

“Of course, if you want to. But it’s foolish in my opinion. My mother doesn’t expect to keep track of me.”

“Oh, well, my father says it’s safer nowadays. If I don’t turn up, they want to know where to start looking for me, you know.”

Betty laughed and so did Jack, taking with light hearts the conditions that we are now providing for the younger generations. Jack said something about turning out the police or calling up the hospitals and conducted Betty to where, on a side street, he had parked a small but shining little roadster. “Isn’t this a dandy now?” asked Jack as he helped Betty into the car. “It’s a new one. I’m not supposed to take it to school much, but I was going to get you into it if I could!”

“Are you a safe driver?” laughed Betty, settling back. She was glad that she did not have her books along this time.

“I’m a wonder,” said Jack, in the same light tone. “I’m also old enough to drive. What would you do, Betty? I’d like to get into business pretty soon, as my education has been more or less —um—interrupted. Yet college would be fun. I didn’t like that preparatory school and the old fellow at the head of it didn’t like me much, either. I’ll put in another year in high school, then decide.”

“If you can go to the university or to some college, Jack, I think you’d be almost foolish not to do it. It isn’t as if you were a poor student. You’ve brains.”

“Thanks, Betty.” Jack went a little faster than Betty really enjoyed, but he seemed to have perfect control of his machine and was skilful in traffic. “Are you going to the university?”

“I don’t know. Mother talks about sending me away for a year or two, to give me the experience, but that is only talk so far. Perhaps they can’t do it.”

“Go to the university and then I will. I’ll show you some good times.” Then Jack gave an impatient exclamation and shot around a car that was impeding progress. “See me get through that, Betty?”

“I think you took a chance, Jack.”

“A good driver can afford to take chances, and what’s life without a few chances?”

Betty felt exhilarated in the present but she knew that Jack’s philosophy was not a good one, and none of the boys she knew would have used in her presence the exclamation which Jack had employed. He did not apologize for it, either.

But Betty and Jack had much in common after all, for both were gifted mentally and there was much in school life to discuss. Jack took her to one of the most attractive tea rooms in the city and there Betty met another boy and girl whom Jack knew. They sat at the same table and had all sorts of delectable things of a variety that only school boys and girls, hungry from their last mental efforts, would choose. There was no good opportunity to telephone. Betty decided to let it go. Probably her mother would not worry, since she knew of the orchestra practice and other things that sometimes detained Betty.

She felt hesitant about ordering at Jack’s expense, but Jack insisted on a certain choice of the different possibilities. An immense club sandwich and a cup of hot chocolate “went to the spot,” the other girl said and Betty agreed with her, though she was more reserved in her speech. Only with Carolyn and her girl friends did Betty speak impulsively. But this girl was as free with both the boys and kept them all laughing with bright if not altogether refined speeches. Yet she was quite evidently from a home of wealth and intelligence, from the correct language she used, as well as from her gay dress.

“No, I’m out of school right now,” said Mabel Randall in answer to a polite question from Betty. “Yes, Tommy, angel that you are, I could eat another sandwich with you, very small, you know. I’ll have a Swiss chocolate sundae for dessert. That is pos-i-tive-ly all!”

Both boys bought a box of candy each as they escorted the girls to their respective machines. Tommy gave his immediately to Mabel, who carelessly murmured thanks, but Jack kept his under his arm till Betty was in the roadster, when he tossed it into her lap with a “There now, how’s that for a nibble or two? I’m going to give you a whirl through the parks before I take you home.”

“Oh, that would be lovely, Jack,” said Betty. “Everything is so pretty now; but really I can’t this time. Look at your watch and see how near dinner time it is, and Mother *will* be worried if I am late for that. I tell you what you do, Jack. I think Father will be ready to start home about now. Suppose you take me around to his office and drop me there.” Betty was thinking that she really preferred not to go through the late afternoon traffic with Jack, at the rate he drove. This was a great idea.

Jack demurred, but said that if she really wanted to go to the office he would take her there. “But I’ll not leave you unless your dad is actually there.”

That was a nice bit of thoughtfulness, Betty told him; and when they reached the office building after finding a convenient place to park, Jack took the elevator with her and in a few minutes was introduced to Betty's father. That Jack made a good impression upon him was quite evident, though it was Mr. Lee's custom to be cordial to Betty's friends.

"If it isn't according to rules for Betty not to report at home right after school, Mr. Lee, blame me. I persuaded her that she was tired enough of school and practice to take a ride down town in my new roadster. She couldn't resist it when she saw it—could you, Betty?"

"It is certainly a little beauty, and I did want to get away from books and everything. I left my violin at school, Father. We have another practice, right in the middle of schooltime!"

"I am glad to meet you," said Mr. Lee to Jack, "and I thank you for taking care of my girl and delivering her safely. I hope to see you again."

Jack, who was standing with his cap in his hand, gave Mr. Lee a comical smile. "I suspect you'll be seeing a good deal of me sooner or later, sir."

Then the lad left the office after shaking hands again with the older man who had offered his hand. "Now what, I wonder, did your friend mean by that!" queried Mr. Lee of Betty in a teasing pretense of not understanding.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FAMILY MAKES REMARKS

Mr. Lee telephoned his wife that Betty would arrive when he did. Tired after a day of much thought upon business affairs and some conferences in the office, he listened to Betty's account, after having asked her how she happened to be with "this young man." Betty gave him a full account, with a happy appreciation of the fun they had had.

"I'm not sure that you would approve of Mabel, Papa," she said, "but she's the funny sort and it was all very nice. Jack seems to like me—lately, and he did his best to make me have a good time. I hope Mother won't mind. I just couldn't resist going and I was late anyhow, with all that going over and over of the parts we don't get just right. You ought to hear the leader scold us. He makes us work, I tell you.

"Oh, I meant to telephone to Mother, but there wasn't any good chance."

"I think that she will not mind, daughter," kindly said Mr. Lee. "Of course, we prefer to know where you are, as you know. Tell me about this lad. He is new to the school, you say?"

Betty explained. "And oh, I hope I may accept his invitation to his birthday party his mother's giving for him. I'm to get an invitation, but Jack said that he wanted me to save the date."

"He must think that you are popular," smiled Mr. Lee. "I presume that you may go. He seemed rather an engaging youth. I liked him. As a rule, though, I don't want you to go driving with the boys yet."

"Yes, sir."

Dinner was being put on the table as the car was driven into the garage and Betty and her father hastened to make themselves ready for the meal. As her father picked up the carving fork and attacked the steaming veal roast, he quietly remarked, "Betty seems to have a new boy friend."

Nothing could have been more startling than that remark, it seemed to Betty. She flushed in her surprise; Mrs. Lee turned a wondering look upon her husband, and Dick chortled. Doris sat up straight with a wide grin. Then, drawing her lips together and frowning slightly she remarked, "I'm surprised, Mr. Lee, to hear such an expression from the head of the family. 'Boy friend' indeed! Papa, you're getting quite too modern!"

An amused smile played about Mr. Lee's lips as he put a generous helping of mashed potato by the slice of meat he was offering first. "Modern, is it? Yes, I believe it is and I like it better than the old expressions. It does not seem to mean as much. But by the way, the true head of the family is opposite me. My dear, is the spinach to be put on the plates or served in dishes? I am never quite sure how some of these additions go."

"Served separately, I think," replied Mrs. Lee, with a twinkle of her eyes to match those of her husband. "I am quite interested in your news, though. Will Betty mind if you explain?"

"I could explain," said Doris decidedly.

Betty looked surprised again. Had Jack been with her so much that Doris could notice? She felt quite annoyed, but it would call attention to the fact if she said anything. She smiled as her father offered her the second plate, after serving her mother. "Fix that for Amy Lou, Daddy," she said. "And when you serve my plate, remember that I had a big lunch."

"Oh, you *did*!" exclaimed Doris. "Tell us about it, Betty; did Jack Huxley treat you this afternoon?" Doris was very courteous in her manner at this question.

"Yes, Dory. That was all there was of it. And Papa met him, you know—so he feels facetious about it. Isn't that so, *mon cher papa*?"

"She's talking French now," groaned Dick. "There must be something in it!"

"Don't be silly, Dick," said Betty. "If you'll all have some sense—I don't mean my respected parents, but you—you monkeys, Dick and Doris.

"And me," put in Amy Lou. "Is that the name of Betty's boy friend, Doris?"

"Now, Father, see what you've done!"

"Betty, I apologize," said Mr. Lee with a wave of his carving knife. "I was just in fun, Amy Lou. Is that the way you like your potato, with a valley in it full of gravy?"

Amy Louise gravely nodded, while Mr. Lee heaped Dick's plate next. Whether Dick had had any lunch or cookies from the jar or not, it would make no difference in his appetite for dinner. Betty was the last served and while she waited she gave a rather brief but satisfactory account of her little "lark," as she called it.

"Father said he thought it might be all right for once, Mother; and as Jack had just asked me to his birthday party, I wanted to do what he wanted me to do. And oh, the suggestion of a sundae made my mouth water! But we had much more than that."

After dinner Doris came into the bedroom where Betty was laying off her school dress. "I wouldn't say a word before the family, Betty," said she, "but I've heard about Jack and of course I've seen you with him. Some of the girls think he's wonderful even if he doesn't pay

any attention to anybody but you. And then I heard one of the boys say that he runs with a *wild set* of the *society bunch*! What do you think about it, Betty?"

"I don't know a thing against him, Doris, and I don't think a person ought to believe anything bad without giving a friend a chance, do you?"

"You could see that Father liked him," returned Doris. "I should imagine you could be friends with Jack Huxley and not hurt anything at all. He has such nice manners; and when he is with you he is as polite as can be."

"Yes, always, Doris."

"There's something about you, Betty, that makes the boys do that. They never get fresh or act silly as they do with some of the girls."

"I don't like that expression, Doris—but I think boys know the kind of girls they're with; and besides, the kind of boys I like aren't that sort. I like fun, Dorry—you know that, but I like to talk sense, too. That is one thing about Jack. You would laugh at some of his clever remarks; and then he can tell me about something just as if he were grown up and explaining, like Father."

"Do you like him better than Chet?"

"Don't *ask* me, Doris. I don't like any of them as well as I do Carolyn!"

"Then you're safe for a while," laughed Doris.

"I'm always going to be safe," laughed Betty. "Imagine getting engaged in high school and then finding somebody you liked much better when you went to college! But Doris, I'm not going to pay any attention to gossip about Jack. I'm sure he's a nice boy. He's different and I know he thinks some ideas that our people have are 'old fogy,' but people can't be all alike and I believe in letting other folks—well, they have the same right to their opinions that we have."

There was no one to remind Betty that opinions and action based upon them are very likely to agree. Doris saw Betty's firmly set lips and nodded her head in assent to her sister's opinion. "Anyhow," said Doris, "having Jack Huxley for a friend is going to give you some good times and maybe Chet won't think he owns you."

Betty nodded. "Still, Doris," she said, honestly, "Chet has been a very good friend to me and I can't say that he's tried not to have me accept any invitations from Budd or Brad or anybody—unless it was Ted." Betty laughed and Doris, who remembered Ted's limited period of invitation, was pleased that Betty should confide in her. "He doesn't like Jack, though—but please don't say a word to the girls about any of my doings, Doris."

"I won't and I think it's good of you to tell me about things. Didn't you say that you are going out to take dinner with Mrs. Dorrance and the boys tomorrow?"

"Yes—but there will be some other girls there, too, I think. How would you like it, if Mrs. Dorrance needs any more, to dress up and help in the booths, too!"

"Oh, Betty! I'd adore it!" Doris clasped her hands together as she spoke enthusiastically. "Would she *let* me, do you suppose?"

"Don't be too disappointed if nothing happens, but if there is a chance I'll not forget. Oh, Doris! Jack gave me a big, two pound box of candy and I left it in our car. Ask Dick if he won't go out and get it and we'll all have a treat!"

Doris lifted two expressive hands at that speech. "Will I ask Dick? I will. And I'm Jack's friend for life!"

"Silly," laughed Betty, "run along!"

Doris stopped, holding to the door frame as she peeped back. "Only grown up boys do that for their best girls. You certainly are lucky!"

CHAPTER XIV

AN ANNOYING CALL

The occasional entertainment at the home of Mrs. Dorrance was always welcome to Betty. The next day at school went rapidly and beyond a short business meeting of Lyon “Y” there was nothing to detain her after school. Jack saw her in the halls and walked a few steps with her once or twice, but he evidently had important business with the boys. Chet was as usual, but merely saluted her once in the passage from classes and said: “You won’t forget to come out tonight,” while Betty replied, “No, indeed.”

She dressed carefully and watched the time at home, for she wanted to arrive early enough and no too early. For some reason she had forgotten that Chet had said they would call for her. Perhaps it was Chet’s remark about *not forgetting* that misled her! She was dressed, however, when a jolly load drove up and Chet ran up the Lee steps to ring the bell. Ted, Chet and several girls were in the car, Ted driving, and they added Betty to their number, when she came running along by Chet. There was quiet merriment afoot and Ted called back, “Can you add another blossom to our bouquet of beauty, Chet?”

“Listen,” said Betty, climbing in. “I can sit on somebody’s lap back here.”

“Spoil the ruffles, Betty—wait till I turn down that seat. There you are! You are the last.”

The dinner was good and Mrs. Dorrance seemed to enjoy her young guests. Betty supposed that one of the older girls must be some special friend of Ted’s, his latest inamorata, but there was nothing to indicate it. Ted was his happy self and host to all of them alike. In all, there were four girls, Mrs. Dorrance, Ted and Chet. The time after dinner, indeed, during the meal, was partly taken in explanation of what Mrs. Dorrance wanted the girls to do and a discussion of what costume should be worn. A display of nations was one of the features of the festival and the girls all decided that since they might have their choice among several nations they would represent Holland.

“Do you have to sell just Dutch things?” asked one.

“No, indeed,” said Mrs. Dorrance, “but we’ll have some Dutch specialties in the line of things to eat, you know, if there are any——”

Mrs. Dorrance stopped to think and one of the girls spoke quickly—“Oh, and some china with windmills on it, and wooden shoes and little things like that, to give a Dutch atmosphere.”

“I speak to buy some ‘Old Dutch Cleanser,’” gravely said Ted and raised a laugh, though Mrs. Dorrance said that a few boxes of that “well-advertised commodity” would probably be a funny feature and sell, at that.

“I’ll paint a china cup and saucer with a Dutch design,” said a girl that Betty hoped was Ted’s friend, for she was so sweet. “I’m doing that sort of thing in art now, and I’ll just make that little contribution.”

“We ought to have a little girl or two, to clatter around in wooden shoes,” remarked Mrs. Dorrance. “Betty, you have two sisters. Would they like to do it, or would it be too much trouble for your mother? Our old down town church is short of children that I can ask, or that could assist without a good deal of help on my part.”

“Mrs. Dorrance, my sisters would think it a great privilege to dress up and be in the picture, so to speak. I can help them get ready. And Dick does some carving at school. Could he make a few little tiny shoes? Oh, how would a few fixed up with little pin-cushions inside do?”

“Fine, Betty!” said Chet. “Mother, with all these girls, I think you can fold your hands. They’ll have so many ideas that all you will need to do will be to engage a policeman to manage the crowds around the booth. Put your prices low enough and the ten cent store can go out of business!”

Betty and Chet exchanged glances, merry ones. Chet was a dear, and getting to be as funny as Ted! It was all fixed up about Doris, and Amy Lou, too! How she would love it!

It was another extra, to take time, of course, but Mrs. Lee was interested and promised to help with the costumes. There was plenty of time, for it was to be an outdoor affair, if possible, though that plan might change if there were a rainy week or so, as sometimes happened.

The birthday party, too, was three weeks away from the day Jack asked Betty to attend. That was something to anticipate. Meantime there was a “junior picnic” on a bright spring day. The athletes of the group employed that as a hike, to count on their points, but it was a limited party this time, gotten up by about twenty junior boys, with as many girls as their guests. Jack invited Betty; and one of the teachers of athletics among the girls went along as chaperon.

As none of the senior boys Betty knew could attend this picnic, there was no embarrassment for her in Jack’s friendly attentions. That young man, too, seemed to realize that he must change his attitude and be friendly to the other girls as well. He “could not have been nicer,” Betty reported to Doris at home when she told about their fun and the camp fire and the boating on the river. “‘No canoes,’ Doris, our chaperon said, but we went to that picnic place, you know where they have a little launch. So if there *was* a pretty good current in the river, we were safe enough. I’m glad it’s Friday, for I’m simply dead after all the walking we did. It

wasn't so far from the street car, but we tramped around in the woods, hunting flowers and listening to the birds. It was a wonderful day for birds. Jack doesn't care for hiking, he told me, especially since he has his new roadster; and he says that on the 'next picnic' he's going to take me in it, though I'm sure that I'd rather go with a whole machine full, to be jollier and not to let Jack think it's very—special, you know, Doris. But he was great today, just as nice as can be to all the girls. I think they will have a different opinion of him now. Lucia's being so pleasant to him makes a difference, too. She said when a lot of us were sitting around eating lunch, that her mother used to know Jack's mother when they were girls, just what she told me. And she did the introducing to several girls instead of me, as it happened."

So the busy days whirled by. There was a girls' swimming meet for which Betty had been preparing, though that was only fun. And it happened that Mr. Lee's "little fish" or "mermaid" won more honors for her school, attempting more difficult feats than in her sophomore year. Betty was working now, also, on the life-saving tests, of practical importance, her father told her, though she must be "fit" and ready for them.

One more occurrence that deeply interested Betty Lee happened before the birthday party. It was on Saturday afternoon, when Mr. Lee had come home from the closed office and sat at his desk, for which there was no good place except the living room. He was figuring away at something and looked annoyed when the bell rang. "Mother, I simply must have another spot for his desk," he said whimsically, as with a resigned expression he jumped up and answered the bell himself.

"You shall, my dear," replied his wife, as he disappeared into the hallway. Betty and Mrs. Lee were in the dining room, a little back from the double doors, or rather draped opening which separated the living room from the dining room. The dining table was spread with papers and covered with scraps from the "rag-bag" except where half a dozen tiny wooden shoes stood ready to be filled with the small pin-cushions which Mrs. Lee and Betty were making. Betty was enjoying it. It was so nice to have an afternoon at home just to "fiddle around" and do what you felt like doing. This wasn't work!

But from where Betty sat, she had a good look at a gentleman whom her father was ushering into the front room. Or was he a gentleman? Betty had a momentary impression of a very ordinary looking man, dark, fairly well-dressed but not well set up, as Betty thought. His shoulders were a little stooped and he gave a furtive look through the curtains that fell at the side of the open doorway.

But he began to speak in a suave way, "oily," Betty called it afterwards:

"I'm not here to take much of your time, Mr. Lee, but I was directed to you by some one who thought you could tell me about where I could find a boy that was going here by the name of Ramon Balinsky."

"Yes?" returned Mr. Lee, waiting for more explanation. Betty dropped the little cushion she was making and leaned forward, exchanging a glance with her mother.

The man hesitated, expecting a more enthusiastic reply, it might be presumed. But Betty could imagine the calm but cool expression with which her father was regarding the stranger, having courteously and kindly brought him in.

"Do you know him, Mr. Lee?"

"Yes, I know to whom you refer. He was a nice lad, looked after my car for me at times."

"Yes. I found the garage where he worked and found that he went to school here for awhile. Well, do you know where he is now?"

"That might be hard to say. Perhaps you will explain your interest in him."

Betty, tense, hoped that her father would not tell about the letter. Perhaps this was somebody that wanted to hurt Ramon! There was that story that Ramon was running away from some one, or that he was after somebody himself. Mrs. Lee made a little gesture and smiled at Betty. It meant, "Calm yourself, little daughter," and Betty leaned back in her chair with a soft sigh. Good for her father. He wasn't going to tell everything he knew unless he was sure that it was all right.

"I have good news for him. Some of his mother's Spanish property has been recovered, that is, certain papers found. I was a lawyer, you call it, for the Sevillas."

Betty made a comical face and looked at her mother. This man did not look like much of a lawyer. But perhaps he had fallen upon difficult times.

"Sevillas?" asked Mr. Lee.

"Yes," the man replied, rather fiercely, Betty thought. "That boy is not all that you might think. He has run away because he stole a parcel of jewelry that belonged to a very noble family in Spain. Consequently he has taken a name that belongs to his father's family. But I traced him in spite of it!"

"Well, do you intend to let the 'noble family' prosecute him if you find him?"

"By no means," and the man's voice changed, as he realized that he had let a bit of vindictive feeling creep into his tone. "No, I have arranged that. If he will return what he has left of the jewels and let me know if he has found his mother and sister, all will be forgiven. It is a long case and can't be hastily explained. I must find Ramon first. He did not tell you then that his true name was Sevilla?"

“He said nothing to me about it,” returned Mr. Lee. “Instead, he told some one of the family that he was guarding against injury at the hands of some one who was an enemy. Do you know of any one who would injure Ramon?”

There was a moment’s hesitation. “There is, of course, the matter of the jewels, Mr. Lee. Probably he had that in mind and thought that he was to be brought to justice. But I can prevent that. Now I went out to the school and made some inquiries, Mr. Lee. At the office no one knew what had become of Ramon. I attended a baseball game Friday afternoon and asked some of the boys to direct me to any who knew Ramon best. The coach did not know his whereabouts, but there was one boy who was listening that said you had heard from him recently.”

It was just as well that the visitor could not see Betty’s changes of countenance as she listened to the conversation, perfectly sure that in her role of listener she was quite justified. At the name “Sevillas” Betty’s eyes opened more widely and her mouth formed an “Oh,” as she looked sharply at her mother. Two deep frowns came between her blue eyes now at the mention of the letter. What would her father say to that?

“Yes,” he was replying, “we heard from Ramon just once, some time ago. It was chiefly a letter of courtesy, as we had entertained him and he remembered us pleasantly.”

“Could I see the letter?” eagerly asked the man.

“It has probably been destroyed,” said Mr. Lee, and Betty rolled dark blue eyes at her mother, who knew she had kept it.

“I could probably recall enough of it to satisfy you, though it contained no information that was valuable, I judge. It said nothing of any mother or sister and this is the first that I have heard of them.”

“Very good,” said the man in a satisfied tone. “Where was he?” he then asked sharply. Betty frowned again. *Could* her father tell him? Then the man would find Ramon and maybe kill him, for all Betty knew. Horrors! Her father was telling!

“When he wrote us he was in Detroit, but he gave no house address whatever.”

“Are you sure that no member of your family has heard again?”

“Quite sure, sir.” Mr. Lee spoke in that quiet, final way that usually closed matters in his office. Betty heard his chair pushed back and knew that he had risen. “Here’s your hat, what’s your hurry?” she quoted in a school-girl fashion to her mother in a low whisper. They sat quietly till the final good afternoon was said and her father closed the front screen door. Then Betty jumped up and ran into the front room to meet him.

“Oh, Father, you *told* him! And I know he’s the ‘villain!’”

Mr. Lee grinned, much as Dick was accustomed to do, and approached his daughter with his fists closed and the favorite gestures of small boys about to engage in a fisticuff. That made Betty laugh, too, and she caught at his threatening arms to hold him.

The arms went around her and then he drew her toward where his wife was now standing, questioning with her eyes. “As my son would put it, you think I’ve spilled the beans, don’t you? Well, I haven’t, kiddie.” Mr. Lee dropped his voice to a stage whisper.

“Ramon Balinsky Sevilla is not *in* Detroit!”

“Oh, goody! But how do you know. Didn’t you tell the man that you hadn’t heard from him again!”

“Do you not think I would be justified in a false statement under the circumstances?”

“Oh, Papa, you just want to get up an argument! I know you! No, I think you could have handled it some way and I don’t believe you told a story.”

“Right. Go to the head of the class in diplomacy or whatever it is. No, I have not heard from Ramon, but I heard from some one who has seen him and Ramon sent us a message, from Detroit, my dear, and he was leaving there. In fact, he was at the station when my friend met him. *Now* are you satisfied?”

“No,” said Betty, grinning and drawing her father’s arm still farther over her shoulder. “I want to know what the message was and why you haven’t given it before.”

“The message was his regards, and I merely forgot all about it.”

“One thing, Father, I wondered about. You said Ramon did not give a house address.”

“It was not a house address, Betty. If you will look up the letter I will show you. I’m pretty sure that was his business address. Does anybody love me?”

“I’ll say,” slangily answered Betty Lee, junior, offering a warm embrace.

CHAPTER XV

THE FATEFUL BIRTHDAY PARTY

In the due course of events, the night of the birthday party at the Huxley home had arrived. Betty was in high spirits as she dressed. Doris took great interest in her donning of a new dress, "*so* becoming," she said. "Betty, I never saw you look so pretty. And you don't need rouge, either."

"I should hope not," laughed Betty, looking at her own image in the mirror. "My cheeks are so hot and I'm so excited over this—I wonder why. I've been with Jack enough before."

Doris was going to a party herself, and wished that her new dress, something promised, were ready. But it was not a big party like Betty's. "Papa's calling you, Betty," said she, taking her place at the mirror which they shared.

Mr. Lee, who had been bringing out his car in order to take Doris around to the house of one of the freshman girls, was waiting for Betty in the living room. "Just a word, Betty, before any one comes for you. This is a large party, I believe?"

"Jack said so."

"Will there be dancing?"

"I hadn't thought about it. Very likely."

"Well, as you know, Betty, we do not forbid dancing and I have no doubt that this place where you are going is all right. I intended to inquire more about the people, but it slipped my mind. I have several things to think about, you know."

"Yes sir. Let's sit down, Father. I'm all ready but my wraps."

Mr. Lee sat down and Betty perched on the arm of his chair.

"As I said," Mr. Lee resumed, "we do not forbid the proper sort of dancing. I suppose it is natural for youngsters to like to move to music. And yet it is true that so many evils are connected with the dance—well, our church does not forbid it, but it frowns on all sorts of looseness in manners and company. The chief thing is to keep oneself with the best type of people, I suppose." Mr. Lee looked off reflectively.

"I scarcely know how to warn you, Betty. But I suppose your mother has told you that there is a certain reserve, a certain distance to be maintained by a nice girl when girls and boys mingle?"

"Yes, sir."

"It is a part of charm and attraction and the delicacy that we want our sweet girls to have. Loudness and boldness and familiarity are just the opposites; and I have no fear that my Betty girl will ever have those qualities. But look out for it in others, and *have a care*, Betty. That is all, my child. How pretty you look. Have a good time."

"Oh, I'm going to, I know. Thanks for the warning, my daddy. I'll try to be good!"

In a few minutes Betty was off. Mr. Lee was just drawing his own car from the curb when a handsome car drew up behind his. He was glad to see that it was full of young people. The lad had not come for Betty in his roadster. Oh, to put off the special pairing and above all, love-making, as long as possible! But after all, his girl would have to handle it herself.

In the car Betty found herself with several persons whom she did not know. Mathilde was there, and Jack informed Betty that this was the "inner circle" of guests. Jack was as easily polite as ever, but his eyes were bright and he talked a great deal, excited, too, over his birthday and wanting to play the host.

A chauffeur drove, which was just as well, and after this group was deposited, drove off again. With the rest, Betty was conducted into the handsome new house, of brick and stone, and introduced to Jack's mother, who was receiving with him. A very pretty girl, black-eyed and looking not a little like Jack, was his first cousin, as introduced, vivacious and pleasant.

A maid in newly furnished upstairs rooms had helped the girls off with their light wraps and scarfs, but Betty was more interested in seeing Jack's relatives than the house. "Oh, Dad!" called Jack as he showed his guests to seats, "come in for a minute."

A tall, heavily built man with a very red face came in from a room which Betty supposed was their library from a glimpse she had of some bookcases. He shook hands with the arrivals, made a few jovial remarks and gave Betty a special look over his glasses. "So this is Miss Betty. I have heard of you. You may imagine where. Jack is a good picker of—friends."

Betty blushed a little, to her disgust, but smiled warmly at Jack's father. Perhaps he was nicer than he looked. Anyhow, it was pleasant to be liked. The rooms were furnished with taste. A baby grand piano and the very latest in radios were part of the equipment. Oriental rugs were on the floor. Betty appreciated all that since she had learned about values and beauty in such things. A few of them, in her own simple home, however, satisfied Betty Lee.

One after another the young guests arrived. This was to be a real dinner party, many as there were to be served. Dinner at the Lees had long since been over, but dinner here was served at

eight o'clock—and such a dinner! Betty enjoyed it thoroughly, especially as she was Jack's companion, though Jack's cousin from away was the guest of honor. Dainty courses and more substantial food, prepared in the most appetizing way, were offered. But Betty noticed wine glasses by their plates and wondered. Would wine be used at Jack's?

But in the midst of conversation and consumption of food Betty did not disturb herself over what the future might bring. Nevertheless, she was disturbed when the butler filled the glasses. She would be polite, and said nothing. Immediately, however, some of the boys grew a little hilarious, talking about their "prohibition beer." Jack nodded to the butler, who went around putting something else in some of the glasses.

Betty gave a questioning look toward Jack, who turned to her at that moment. "That won't hurt you, Betty," said he. But he pulled something from his pocket and laughingly, teasingly, poured some sort of liquid into the glass of his cousin.

"Any good, Jack?" asked she.

"The best my bootlegger can get," laughed he in return.

Betty felt sick at the thought. Perhaps he was only joking. He must be. But other boys were doing the same thing, adding something from odd bottles around the table. There were scarcely any boys and girls that she had known in school, though she had met some of them at Lucia's. Perhaps it was a good thing that Lucia had not been able to come. Mathilde, Betty saw, was enjoying herself thoroughly and did not refuse any of the liquor. Jack turning away from his cousin again, told Betty that she was just a "little prude, but a very sweet one," "You'll get over it, Betty. Try a little, just to please me."

"I'm sorry, Jack, but I can't," said Betty. "I'm wishing you just as many happy returns, you know."

"All right this time," returned Jack, for he was in a happy mood and the stimulating drink made him only more affable so far. It was not the first that day.

This was the beginning. No one seemed to be the worse for anything at dinner. There were some games and then the dancing began *a la* victrola, though Jack apologized for not having an orchestra. "Nobody could come," said he—"previous engagements. It was my fault for letting it go until too late."

Betty never did relate the details of what occurred later in the evening, other than to say that matters grew worse, that both boys and girls drank from flasks and that Mr. and Mrs. Huxley had left with some guests soon after dinner, which they had had privately. She had enjoyed the fun at first and forgot about the wine till forced to notice it when the flasks came out, not very surreptitiously. But at last she came to the conclusion that it was no place for her. She looked for Jack and saw that he was more than half intoxicated. One boy asked her to dance and began to embrace her as he asked, hot, liquor-laden breath indicating his state at this time. It was Jack's chum.

Betty slipped from his arms with an apology. "I've a headache, Will, and I'm going to the dressing room to the maid a moment."

That was satisfactory to the befuddled lad, and Betty, troubled and disgusted, and wondering how she was going to get home, flew upstairs. The maid was not in the dressing room where Betty had left her wrap and the scarf she wore around her head at her mother's suggestion. She was glad of that. If she had to get home by street car it would not be so bad. But she had worn her light satin slippers and oh—it was raining! They would be ruined. Where was the telephone? She could call her father, though he might be in bed. It was midnight by this time, Betty supposed.

She wondered where the maid was and timidly wandered down the hall, peeping into rooms evidently used, or intended to be used, by any guest. Then the maid came hurrying from somewhere, too intent on whatever her errand was to notice Betty. But Betty asked, "Where is Mrs. Huxley, please?"

"Oh, dem folks is gwine off somewhere. Dey tells me to look afteh the young folks, an' it's too big a job foh one pusson. I done tol' her so, but she'd had too much o' dat bootleggeh stuff hehse'f at dinneh. Ah's goin' down afteh de cook. Dat young lady in dere's done *passed out*! An' de butleh—he gone, too."

The colored woman waved her dark hand indefinitely.

"Mercy! You don't mean anybody's dead!"

"No, honey, not daid. No, you jus' *keep out*. Ain' nuffin yo' kin do only git yo'se'f into trubble." This addition was because Betty was evidently about to offer help, as she turned uncertainly in the direction from which the colored maid had come. With this, the maid disappeared down the stairs from which the sounds of revelry still rose. Betty went back to get her wraps. Did she have any car fare? Well if she didn't, she'd get on anyhow, one of those cars where you didn't have to pay till you got off. She'd give the conductor her name and address or give him the ring from her finger or—anything! Betty was getting panicky by this time. She *could* not go down stairs with her wrap, and run the risk of being discovered. Probably there was a back stairway. There was, as Betty discovered by looking along the upper halls. Dear me, she would know the way around *this* house again. She wondered why the maid had not gone down to the kitchen that way, but supposed that the cook was to be found somewhere else. It had stopped raining, after only a shower.

It was a lovely night, indeed, with a moon, which helped her around the house, through beautiful old trees and some newly planted shrubbery. There were cars parked along the drive, but the big car in which Betty had been brought was not to be seen. Of course, the chauffeur was driving the older Huxleys, or waiting somewhere for them. Betty knew that there were plays at the theatres and other entertainments going on.

With her scarf held tightly under her chin and her wrap gathered about her, Betty lightly flew to the drive and followed it around, not feeling so lonely where she could see a few of the rear lights. The walk looked spooky! She was almost lost in this neighborhood, but as she emerged upon a sidewalk, she could see at some distance the lights of a street car passing. Then it was not so late that the cars were off! Of course not—was she crazy? A few automobiles passed, but this was off from the main arteries of traffic. Like a slim ghost Betty hurried along, stopping once for breath and to see if her pretty bag contained any street car tickets. Had she had any idea of walking, she could have worn shoes and carried her satin slippers. But they were ruined. That rain had been a light shower, indeed, leaving the night as bright as before. It must have stopped almost as soon as she looked out to see it; but one little puddle, stepped in by the back exit, had been sufficient.

And now she had reached the street car line. She was safe, or hoped so. She hailed a car, and took comfort in the fact that there was an elderly woman also waiting for it. The woman scanned her slippers and said “You got caught in the rain, didn’t you!”

Betty had half a notion to ask her for the fare, but concluded that it would be easier to arrange with the conductor. To be real honest, she made her way straight to the conductor and sat down close to where he stood by the box into which one dropped tickets. Fortunately, there were only a few people on this car.

As soon as the woman had paid her fare and gone back to a seat in the after part of the car, Betty spoke to the conductor.

“Can you tell me how to get to this street?” she asked, naming the street and suburb.

The conductor began to punch a transfer, stopping a moment when Betty added that she hadn’t a ticket, but she was scared and wanted to get home and she could give him her father’s address and he would pay her fare. “What’s your father’s business?” asked the conductor.

Betty told him, as the conductor took in Betty’s appearance and the flying, pretty hair from which the scarf had become disarranged. “I’ll take a chance on you, young lady,” said the man with a half smile, “and pay your fare myself. So you got scared, did you? Better not be out alone so late.”

“Oh, never again! Never again,” gasped Betty. “Thank you, so much! Please what is your name, so we can pay you?”

The conductor hesitated, but evidently concluded that it was best to let the affair be settled that way. He told her, slowly.

Again Betty flew along the way home from the street car half an hour later. And oh, how good it was to see a light at home! Yes, Mother, *Mother*, was still up!

Several short rings did Betty give and when her mother opened the door, she began to cry and laugh a little so hysterically that her mother was alarmed. “What is it, my child? and who brought you home like this?”

Betty hastened to tell her mother that she was not hurt, “only all upset, Mamma,” but she had to have a little cry before she could tell all about it. “Oh, I’m so sorry!” she exclaimed more than once. “Poor Jack! And Mathilde didn’t know what she was doing the last time I spoke to her!”

“Come; you can tell me more tomorrow. I’m going to give you a little quieting medicine, Betty, and put you into bed. I am thankful that you are safe at home. Think about being snug in your own bed and forget the rest till morning.”

“But how’ll I ever explain, Mother—about leaving and everything?”

“That can be the least of your worries, Betty. Your father and I are the ones to ask for an explanation.”

“Oh.” Betty was thoughtful. “But you wouldn’t make a big trouble over it, would you?”

“Do you think that would be like us?”

“No. All right. It’s your affair, Mamma. It’s too much for me!” and Betty took the hot drink her mother offered her, instead of the medicine she had first suggested, and went to bed.

CHAPTER XVI

AN UNHAPPY INTERVIEW

Then there *was* something in the remarks that had been made about Jack Huxley. Betty woke early after a few hours' sleep, recalling the sound of low voices, those of her father and mother, talking over the matter, of course. Careful not to waken Doris, Betty presently gathered up her school clothes and went to the bathroom to dress; but she was not the first one up. She could hear some one, presumably her mother, moving about in the other part of the apartment.

Before Betty combed her tousled golden head, she hurried into the kitchen and found her mother fixing grape fruit for breakfast. It was during a sad but short interval without the little maid. Mrs. Lee looked at Betty with a whimsical smile and asked, "How's the 'wreck of the Hesperus?'"—for that was Betty's favorite expression when she was tired.

Betty, rather white this morning, laughed a little. "How well you understand, Mother," she said. "It doesn't seem quite so tragic this morning, that is, for me. I've been thinking. Wouldn't it be better for me not to tell about this and just to say what a good dinner it was and how much trouble they went to to give Jack a big party, if the girls ask about it?"

"Decidedly so, Betty, for the sake of everybody concerned. You were caught in a group about whose doings we've heard. We'll find out more again before you accept an invitation. But there was no intention on the part of any one to annoy or injure you, though there was not the proper chaperonage; and of course the whole setting was as different as possible from what we approve. But you don't mean that you would continue a special friendship with Jack, do you?"

"Oh, no!" Betty looked rather distressed at the thought of Jack. "If I hadn't been so stubborn, I might have known. There were little things—and then his ideas—and a few things said. But Jack is really a dear boy, Mother."

"Yes. So your father said. We talked a good part of the night."

"I suppose so. I'm sorry, Mother. Well, I'll handle it the best I can, and I decided that I'd not act offended about it to Jack, but just tell him frankly all about how I felt. I wish I could say something to make him see how it is, but I suppose there isn't much use trying."

Mrs. Lee smiled. "It is to Jack's credit that he has been attracted to the sort of a girl you are, Betty. There is certainly no advantage in being unkind; but you must be firm about such associations. No, I suppose with his parents' ideas, his environment and possible heritage, it would be a difficult thing to pull Jack away from that sort of thing; and I should not like to have my daughter run the risk that much association there would bring.

"Your father and I felt very indignant at first. We do yet in a way. But you escaped harm, providentially. No good will be achieved by your adding to the gossip that there will probably be about it. The effect of 'public opinion' is sometimes a deterrent, but in the case of young people, your father and I always think private correction is the best. Just keep as still as you can Betty, and see what happens. Surely Jack will make some inquiry in regard to how you got home."

Betty shook her head doubtfully. "Perhaps he got to be like the girl the colored maid said had 'passed out.' I was so scared for a minute, thinking that she meant really dead! If he did, he wouldn't know a thing about it. It's very queer. I suppose his father and mother really didn't expect it to go so far. When they came back in the car, it was to be used to take us home, I suppose."

"Not much use in supposing. Think out what you want to say at school about it Betty, and we shall see what happens. I have in mind what I want to say to Jack's mother some time. Run along and finish dressing, and awaken Doris, please. You will feel better when you have breakfast. Think about your lessons now, if you can."

"I can all right," replied Betty with a toss of her head and the ghost of a smile at her mother, as she followed directions.

The full program at school was a blessing that day. "Have a good time at your party?" asked several of the girls who knew about it, putting the question in various ways and at different times. And Betty brightly replied that there was a "wonderful dinner" and "quite a crowd." Neither Jack nor Mathilde was at school, which lessened Betty's embarrassment. She really dreaded to meet Jack Huxley. Lunch she hurried through and fortunately there was no practice in anything after school. She hung from a strap in the crowded street car and escaped any prolonged conversation with any one.

"There has been no telephone message from Jack," her mother said, upon Betty's inquiry. "I thought he *might* call up to see if I had gotten home all right, but of course he'd hate to say why he didn't come himself. I have half a notion to call up Mathilde."

But Betty thought better of this. She would not make the first move. And she certainly would never apologize for leaving that party! "Was everyone intoxicated, Betty?" asked her father as he had an opportunity to talk with her privately.

"Oh, no. But almost all the boys and girls had taken a little of whatever it was and were more

—lively, you know, or silly, and there were a few, like me, that didn't know what to do with the silly ones, at least they looked as if they were not enjoying it, and it was sort of loud and noisy—oh, I can't tell you all the little things that made me feel I didn't have to stay and stand it. If Mrs. Huxley had been there, I would have gone to speak to her. I thought of leaving a note for her, but I didn't have any paper or pencil. But I'm not sure that she would have thought it as horrid as I did."

"We shall see that you do not have such an experience again, Betty," said her father. "You will have to have a talk with Jack, of course. That is inevitable. But I am sure that you are able to meet the situation."

Betty was not quite sure just *how* she could meet it, but the very distance from the party was helpful now, in point of time and reflection upon it. Two days went by. No Jack at school. Mathilde was there, but carefully keeping away from Betty as Betty was keeping away from her. Then came the week-end and Monday again. Jack was in his classes. Lucia Coletti was back having had a touch of tonsillitis. Betty saw her and overheard her saying to Jack that she was "so sorry" she missed his party.

But some little echo of affairs had reached the school. The junior reporter of the school paper came to Betty with a puled look upon her face. "Betty, tell me about Jack Huxley's birthday party. We were going to make a note of it, mostly something nice about Jack, if we could, though it wasn't a junior party, of course, and I heard that they were mostly outsiders. How about it?"

"There was a notice of it in the newspaper. Did you see that? In the junior society doings?"

"No."

"There was a list of names given, the more prominent ones, at least, though I was omitted by some terrible mistake." Betty was laughing as she said this. She had been thankful enough when she saw that the list was not complete.

"Well, I missed that. But Betty—one of the boys handed me something intended for a joke on Jack, perhaps, but I've heard something else, too—that it was a wild party and that they had flasks and drank—but you wouldn't have been to one, would you?"

"Not if I could help it," laughed Betty, speaking quite honestly at that. "What was the joke on Jack?"

The girl looked through some notes she had. "I haven't brought it, I guess. Why, it wanted to know why Jack wasn't able to come to school the next day after his party, and some more like that."

"I don't believe I'd put that in," said Betty. "Jack hasn't been here very long; and besides, if there *is* any gossip, it would only make it worse. I'll hunt up the account in the paper, if you like, and bring it to school tomorrow. You might just copy it and add something like congratulations to Jack on his birthday. Mrs. Huxley certainly made a great dinner for Jack, served by their butler and other servants, and the house is beautiful, new, you know. Yes, the crowd was mostly older than we juniors are. Mathilde was the only one I really knew, though I believe there were two or three senior girls there."

"Thanks, Betty. I thought you would know. I believe I'll do what you suggest and if you'll bring that account tomorrow it will be in plenty of time. All the copy has to go in tomorrow afternoon."

The young "reporter" ran away satisfied and Betty turned, to come face to face with Jack. She flushed and her heart beat a little faster than usual. How she dreaded the interview which must occur sooner or later!

Jack was as sober as she ever saw him look, and she did not realize how thoughtful and serious a face she raised to him. Brown and blue eyes regarded each other for a moment. "Betty," said he, "I've got to talk to you. When can I see you?"

"Would you like to come out to the house?" inquired Betty.

"I should say not!" Jack seemed more startled at the idea than rude. "Can't I see you after school? I've got my roadster."

Betty shook her head negatively at that suggestion.

"If you don't want to ride with me, Betty, I'll take you to the nearest park or tea room, where we can talk. I wouldn't mind having you seen with me today, after what I understand they're telling, about the party, in school. Would you do it? What was that girl asking you—if you don't mind telling? I heard you say 'Jack,' as I came up and stopped to wait."

"That was the reporter for the paper, Jack. I think I fixed that for you."

"Thanks. I just found out, Betty, that you went home by yourself. I was mad about it at first, but I got over that and I think I owe you an apology."

"Yes. I think you do, Jack. But it might be just as well if you'd stay mad. Still, we must talk it over. We'll be late to our classes now, Jack. See me after school. I'll meet you in front and we'll decide then where to go."

Betty hurried off, but it was a gym class this time and with the changing of shoes, or the donning of bathing suits for the pool, there was often some irregularity in appearance at the exact time. As Betty cut the water like the goldfish her father sometimes called her, she

wondered what in the world she would say to Jack. Yes, she would let him drive her to the small park not far away. There was the chaperonage of people coming and going, and yet they could talk uninterrupted. If it would do him any good in the eyes of the school to have her seem to be as friendly as ever, she would be glad. Under the circumstances, it could not hurt her and their future dropping of contact was no more than often happened anyway. But Betty did not take lightly what had happened. She would tell Jack just how she felt about it. Yet, dear me, the more you thought about it the worse it was; and who could tell beforehand what she was going to say? Usually it was something entirely different from what you had thought up!

Chet Dorrance and Chauncey Allen, racing to the street car together, saw Betty walking toward the side street with Jack. “I wonder if Betty’s folks would like to have her go around with Jack Huxley if they knew all about him,” Chauncey was looking after Betty, as they stopped to let a few machines pass before crossing to take their car or wait for it.

“I suppose that party must have been all right,” said Chet, “in spite of what they say, or Betty wouldn’t be with him now.”

“You never can tell about a girl,” replied Chauncey. “I’m sorry to say it, Chet, but maybe she likes him.”

“Don’t mind me, Chauncey,” facetiously said Chet, with a grin. “Maybe she does, but I’d rather see Betty pick out some other sort of a boy.”

Meanwhile Betty was settling herself in the gay roadster and Jack was starting.

CHAPTER XVII

CONCLUSIONS

The next scene in this little drama of conflicting ideas and their results takes us to a small park where Jack led Betty to a bench and sat down beside her. Neither wore any hats and the late afternoon sunshine fell upon Betty's gold locks and Jack's dark ones through the Maytime green of boughs above them. They had talked of incidental school matters on the short ride, when Betty had preferred the park to being entertained at a tea room.

At once Jack had began to tell Betty how he had just heard about her going home, through the colored maid who had looked from a downstairs window and had seen Betty outside, "flyin' along as if de ol' Nick hise'f was afteh her!" Jack's mouth showed some mirth as he quoted the dialect.

"That was the way I felt, Jack. Honestly this is no joke. I was frightened about going home, but I was more scared to stay, Jack. I've no doubt but you intended to have me taken home safely. I went to speak to you about matters but I saw that you were in no condition, or mood, for that matter. Why, Jack, I never was where anybody was intoxicated before, and I think it was *terrible*!"

"Oh, Betty, it wasn't as bad as that. You're just a little goose about it. You'll get used to it."

"Never. Do you think I'd risk having my senses half gone, or all gone, and not know, scarcely, what was happening?—besides getting so you have to have it! And how did it happen that you didn't know I was gone? Just because *you* didn't know what *was* happening."

"Ye-ah. That's the reason I wouldn't come out to your house. I thought your father might meet me with a gun."

"Please don't joke about it."

Betty went on to explain that if there had been any older people there at the time, she would have asked to be sent home and made "proper leave-takings." She described briefly her trip home, her satin slippers muddy from the "April shower in May," her talk with her mother, and what her parents thought about the matter.

"You see, Jack, in the little town we came from there was a nice boy next door that we just *saw* going to pieces little by little and having his life ruined and breaking his mother's heart—losing his jobs—I imagine you see more what drinking does to people in a country town where you know everybody. Why, I'd be the most thankful friend you've got, Jack, if I thought you'd let it alone!"

"Honestly, Betty, I don't know whether I could or not." Jack was serious enough as Betty summed up the situation from her viewpoint. He folded his arms and looked down at the grass where a little chipping sparrow was hopping about. Then suddenly his mood changed. "Aw, Betty, come now. It isn't as bad as you think. Why, we've always had liquor of some sort around. Father's had it all his life and it never hurt him. (Oh, hasn't it? Betty thought.)

"I was just celebrating my birthday a little too much—that was all. Let's forget it. I'll make it up to you. Mother's provoked about it and I think she was going to call up your mother today; but whatever our folks think we can be friends, can't we?"

"Jack, as I told you when we began to talk about this, I looked forward to that party, and I did and do appreciate all that your mother and father did to make everything lovely for all of us. It was a wonderful entertainment, dinner, the pretty house, everything, and I don't for a minute think you are responsible for what the other boys brought in in their flasks, or for the way some of them behaved. And you can count upon me, Jack, not to tell about those things at school, or anywhere else, for that matter.

"But to be special friends or see much of each other—we just can't, that's all. We are too different. You think things are all right that I—well, you see how hard it is for us even to talk about them." Betty stopped, for Jack was frowning.

"How about that picnic that we fixed up that night at dinner? You said you'd go. I promise you that I'll not have a drop of anything with me."

Betty had all she could do to keep steady. Jack did like her, and his eyes were so distressed. "Oh, I'd love to say it was all right, Jack, because you've been such a good friend; but even if I could tell you that I would go, Mother and Father would never let me go anywhere with that crowd again."

"How about me alone, with a different crowd?"

"The same, Jack—I'm sorry." Betty, too, looked distressed.

"I don't think you care very much, Betty." Jack jumped up. "I'll drive you home unless you think that your parents will think you quite contaminated by the ride!"

"Would you rather drive me home, or not, Jack? We could easily say good-bye here. The street car line, only a block away, takes me right out home." Betty would really have preferred to take the street car, but Jack vetoed that.

"I'm sore enough over all this," said he, "but I'd rather take you home. I'm not a perfect

bounder, and if you like I'll go into the house and talk to your mother."

"I wish you would," said Betty, dreading it, however.

But when the roadster drew up before the Lee home, Jack courteously accompanied Betty to the front door, but said that he had changed his mind about coming in. "I may do it some other time," said he.

Betty, just inside the hall door, turned to see Jack hurrying out to his car, starting it and rolling off with never a look backwards. She sighed, shut the door and went to ask her mother if Mrs. Huxley had telephoned. She had not. "It's all over, Mother, my talk with Jack. Did you see him bring me home in his roadster? It's the last time, of course, but I can't tell you about what we said just now." To Betty's own surprise her voice shook and at her mother's sympathetic look the tears came.

"I think I've got to go off and cry," she said in a squeaky tone and as she fled toward her room she heard her mother say that she would keep Doris away if she came home too soon. One lovely thing about Mother was that she wasn't curious! She could wait until her children felt like telling her things.

Betty, however, had some repentant thoughts. It would have been better, perhaps, to have braved the opposition, or criticism, or disagreeable circumstances at the party, as her father had suggested, to telephone to him at home, rather than to have risked coming home so late and alone. A city was no place for that. But if she wrote an apology to her hostess it might "mess things up worse than ever," she concluded. Hereafter she would try to "keep her head," but also never to get caught in such a situation.

CHAPTER XVIII

A HAPPY DISCOVERY

Early in May the concert given by the combined musical organizations was given. That was the next great interest for Betty and her musical friends. A close study of good music had been made under the direction of the leader, and the result was an entertainment of which Lyon High was not ashamed.

Betty, pretty and excited, in her light dress, gracefully manipulated a bow in the orchestra. Chet was also prominent, tooting away at the proper time. Lucia sang with the combined glee clubs. Ted Dorrance and his mother sat near enough for Ted to salute Betty with hand and head. The entire Lee family attended; and the countess, with Mr. Murchison and some other friends, sat in the middle of the balcony. The orchestra was one organization where favoritism was seldom shown. You played well or you didn't and were ranked accordingly. You came to practice or were dropped. You behaved or you were sent to "D. T.," the common expression for "detention" or staying after school in a sort of study hall.

But it was good fun and you met other boys and girls who liked music, some of them with fine gifts in the line. And dear me, how wide Betty's acquaintance had grown to be in these three years at Lyon High! Hikes and picnics with the G. A. A. or the class or a few friends; a party here, a meeting there; the Dramatic Club, the Latin Club, the Girl Reserves and Y. W. affairs. Betty needed a private directory, she declared, not to forget "who was who and where she had met them." Some were more interesting than others, and among those who were interesting she counted the "Pirate of Penzance," Marcia Waite's brother, from whom she occasionally heard through Marcia, or Lucia, who was in Marcia's sorority. Once she had a very friendly letter from him and at Christmas time he had sent her a card. He always addressed her as "Titania" in remembrance of their first meeting on Hallowe'en. It was his face that she had seen in the mirror. Wouldn't it be funny if, after all—but what nonsense!

Carolyn and Kathryn were taking a great interest in swimming in this junior year and now all three were working hard at the life-saving tests. Betty longed to have some riding lessons to ride "properly," with Lucia, for from little things that Lucia said from time to time, she fancied this to be Lucia's last year at Lyon High. But Betty could not do everything. Riding would be just as good another year, her mother said.

And now, one lovely week-end, Mrs. Murchison sent for Mrs. Lee. The poor bewildered old lady in the suite upstairs was slipping quietly over the border from life here to life eternal. Betty went over to stay with Lucia, who had told Betty before how they had put the dolls away when Grandmother Ferris had seemed to come to herself for a while, though weak, sleeping a great deal and finally falling asleep not to waken.

"This takes away one reason for Mother's staying here," said Lucia to Betty after the funeral, when Betty came after school to stay all night again. "This is what I wanted to talk over with you, Betty. I wrote everything to my father, Betty, and I wrote again to Italy where he is now. I haven't had a word from him in reply to all I said, or about coming, just cards about where he was and how soon he would reach Italy and how he was having the *palao* opened in Milan. Now *that* may mean something. I left the letter where mother would find it. And Betty, when your mother was here, my mother broke down a little over grandmother's going, and I heard her say, 'Oh, I'm so *lonely*, Mrs. Lee!' And your mother asked her right away if her 'husband' would not soon return from his African trip. Evidently you hadn't told your mother a word."

"Oh, no, Lucia! Of course not!"

"Mother said she hoped that he'd get back safely, and your mother said that the hardest thing in the world was for families to be separated. Probably she has heard some talk about Mother's staying here so long, but anyhow she saw this sort of thing is all wrong, whether I get educated in America or not. I'd stay here another year alone if I could get mother to go back to my father!"

"*Would* you, Lucia? I wish you would stay. I hate to lose you for a friend."

"You're never going to lose me, Betty Lee! I need you. Don't you think it would be nice to have a real old Italian *palao* to come to when you 'go abroad,' as they say here."

"It isn't possible," grinned Betty. "That, Lucia, is a fairy story!"

This conversation took place at the scene of previous confidences, Lucia's own room. And when the girls started to the drawing room a little later, they passed a room in which Betty heard the sound of a machine. "Peep in a moment, Betty," Lucia suggested, stopping Betty as she would have gone more rapidly.

Betty looked in at the open door. There sat Giovanna at the machine, and there in a chair beside her sat a dark-haired girl, simply but neatly dressed, and weaving a needle in and out in the meshes of some beautiful lace. As the girls paused, the needle stopped and the girl turned her head in their direction, to smile at Lucia.

"You saw us in the mirror, didn't you?" Lucia asked, stepping within the room. "Betty, see how wonderfully this lace is being mended. She is practically making lace where it is torn. This is my friend Betty Lee, Rose. Betty—" but the Countess Coletti was at the door and spoke.

“Girls, run right down, please. Uncle wants to see you, Lucia.”

With a smile at the “Rose,” who was about to be more fully introduced to her, she supposed, Betty followed Lucia downstairs, while the countess went into the sewing room. “I thought I’d surprise you, Betty, though I almost forgot it,” said Lucia.

“You certainly did! That is the face that we saw at the window when we went carolling?”

“Yes. It was just accidental we found the girl, though. Mother has some lace to be mended, as you saw; and when she inquired a little, one of her friends told her about discovering this girl that does such fine work.”

“What is her name?”

“Rose Seville, I believe.”

“Seville! That is a place in Spain, isn’t it? First class in geography stand up, as Mother says! And it’s awfully like Sevilla, too!”

Lucia looked puled, then saw her uncle, who came from the drawing room into the hall as the girls reached the foot of the stairs. He was ready to leave the house, they saw. Nodding to Betty, whom he had seen before since her arrival, he detained Lucia for some message; Betty did not hear what it was and would not have listened. She went on into the drawing room and walked to one of the windows that looked out upon the lawns, now lovely with flowers.

Betty was thinking about the girl upstairs. Rose, like the “Rosie” of Mrs. Woods account. Seville, like Sevilla, and that man had called them the Sevillas. At least *he* had not found them; and if this were Ramon’s sister, she must have found enough work to get along. She would ask Lucia if she might talk to this Rose Seville.

Betty had not long to wait and when Lucia came into the room to find her she told her that she had a “mystery to solve,” a statement that interested Lucia exceedingly. They sat down together on the soft cushions of a handsome davenport while Betty told Lucia “all about it.” With a bit of her mother’s energy and direct efficiency, Lucia jumped up and declared that they would find out at once. Two eager girls ran up the stairs to the sewing room, which the countess was just leaving.

“Wait a minute, Mother, please,” asked Lucia. “Betty wants to speak to Rose and I think you will be interested.”

Smilingly, and with her usual poise, the countess waited, Lucia slipping her hand into that of her mother and standing back a little, near the door, while Betty stepped closer to the girl that raised such surprised but beautiful eyes to her.

“Excuse me, Miss Seville,” said Betty, “but your name reminds me of some one that I do not know, but—that I may have some good news for.” Betty spoke rather stumblingly, in her effort not to startle the girl if she were the lost “Rosie.”

“I have been wanting to find a lady and her daughter named Sevilla ever since a Mrs. Woods told me about them.” Betty stopped, for the girl before her turned pale and started to rise hastily.

“But you know I said I have good news for them!” exclaimed Betty, certain now.

“Oh!” exclaimed the girl, dropping back. The countess drew a little nearer and spoke reassuringly. “Rose, this young girl is perfectly safe with any secret you may have, and so are we. Nothing can harm you here.”

“Oh!” exclaimed the girl, softly, again. “I—yes. I am the one they called Rosie Sevilla there.”

“And have you a brother called Ramon? Because we know a very nice boy that was known as Ramon Balinsky here; but he went away and we had a letter from him, and it’s very likely that he will come back to see us some time.”

Now the girl was all eager interest. The countess drew the lace from her hands and lap and sat down herself, in Giovanna’s vacant chair, to listen while Betty told all she knew and Rose acknowledged that they had been looking for Ramon. “Some time I can tell you all,” she said in her soft English with the foreign accent. “Ramon is a good boy. The jewels are our own. That man has been deceiving us first and then doing us all the harm he could. When we at last found out more about him, we tried to escape him and find Ramon. Then he must be looking for us, too. We went away from the rooms we had because I had seen that evil man upon the street here and I knew he would find us. Then a friend we have told us that he had gone and we came back because I could have work here and knew some good people like the countess here. The pretty Italian signorina here told me that she had seen me when the pretty carols were sung. I listened, but my mother, who is old and sick, wanted me to put down the window.”

Rose stopped, but looked troubled. “When did the man come to see your father? He has come back again!”

“It was some time ago,” answered Betty, “and Father thought that he would probably go to Detroit to look for Ramon.”

“He has money—our money, and he will kill Ramon, I think.”

“Perhaps he’s been just scaring you,” suggested Betty. “He did not look so terrible as that.”

“He is a serpent,” said Rose. “Some time I may tell you more, if you care about it.”

The countess, listening, had not much relished having Lucia called the “Italian signorina,” however flatteringly, as Lucia herself had noted by her mother’s expression. Oh, yes, Countess Coletti was making an American out of her daughter—*perhaps*, Lucia thought. But the countess had an idea.

“Rose,” she said, “how would you like to bring your mother here and help me for a while? You would be safe, I think, and especially if we arrange for another of your names to be used. I suppose you have a string of them, like most of the noble families in the old world.”

“Yes. That has been our mistake—but we wanted Ramon to be able to find us if he were still alive.”

“Poor child!” cried the countess. “There are those rooms on the third floor since Grandmother Ferris has gone. They are in a wing, by themselves. I will speak to my brother about it. The nurse and maid who took care of Madam Ferris both wanted to leave. There is much to be done, with her private possessions all to be looked over; and some way I can not bear to do it, or let careless people do it. I could use you in many ways, Rose and we would pay you well. Will you come?”

“Can you mean that?” Rose Sevilla was eagerly leaning forward, almost afraid to believe the countess. Rich people sometimes had kind impulses and then forgot!

“I mean it,” smiled Countess Coletti. “Finish the lace now. Come tomorrow and by that time I will have consulted our new housekeeper and considered the matter of furniture and just what rooms shall be cleared for you and your mother. There is every arrangement for cooking light meals there, since it was often necessary.”

“Mother is more sick with worry than anything,” said Rosie. “This news will make her happy—and to be safe! She is old and has been through so much that it will be like heaven here! I will do everything. No work is too hard for me.”

The countess smiled. “You shall do enough to earn the way of both of you, never fear, though I shall want to know some time what daughter of Spanish nobles is living on our third floor.”

Rose smiled at that. “You shall know all, perhaps, some day. I thank you for *trusting* me!”

At last the trail was laid to bring Ramon and his mother and sister together. Betty felt satisfied. Her neglect or carelessness earlier in the steps of identification had not been fatal to the final outcome. And it was Lucia and the carolling that were finally responsible, as she told Lucia.

“Yes, and who got me to join the Girl Reserves?” asked Lucia. “Now bring my father over here, Betty, and you *will* fix us all up!”

“That is beyond little me,” laughed Betty. “That is quite your job, Signorina Coletti!”

CHAPTER XIX

BETTY SEES "X" SURPRISED

The weeks went by. Father's little goldfish had passed the life-saving tests! She could also do some more diving "stunts" and in "endurance tests" was growing proficient. She was a candidate for more G. A. A. honors at the final award of honors. Hikes you would do anyway, of course. She tramped ten miles one day with a Lyon "Y" group whose leader became rather mixed as to route and the five-mile hike became ten. Oh, well, Betty said, it would count just that much more toward your points. But she had gotten some gravel in her shoes and limped for the rest of the week-end. Life was not always free from drawbacks!

School was nearly out. Betty Lee, junior, would soon be Betty Lee, senior. As usual, the girls "couldn't realize it." Some of them were going to attend summer school. Betty, still keeping on the honor roll, knew that there would be no necessity for her doing it; still if you were in the city, there might be something interesting to take. Yet there was always her violin to practice. She wanted to be a member of the "senior orchestra" next year as well as in the senior class, and that you won by ability, not by rank.

Of Jack Huxley she saw little. He was courteous enough to speak when they met and if they were unavoidably in a junior group together he was as friendly to Betty as to any one. But there was no waiting after school to see her. There were no invitations. And other matters occupied Betty's thoughts.

"I don't want to be inquisitive, or curious, Carolyn," said Peggy Pollard one day to Carolyn Gwynne, "but don't you imagine there must have been something in all that gossip about Jack Huxley's party? I notice Betty and he haven't been together any since. Did Betty ever tell you anything? Or isn't it any of my affair?"

"Betty's never said anything much about the party to me, Peggy, only that it was a big one and they had it all very 'spuy' there, dinner with lots of courses and everything. I really can't remember what she did say. And was it after that Jack stopped being with Betty? He's been around with Mathilde some, I know; but I thought it was because old Chet has been rushing Betty a lot. She was in that pretty Holland booth Mrs. Dorrance was running and you know we girls were all invited out there for a fete they had on her big lawn. But Peggy, I think it's just as well for Betty to stick with the old crowd. Chet, too, will be in the university next year. He has to make hay while the sun shines. I feel sorry for Chet if Betty doesn't like him as much as he likes her."

"Don't worry about Chet, Carolyn. Likely enough he'll meet some girl at the university and Betty will be the one to miss our senior boys. I think I know one or two juniors, though, that won't' be so sorry when that bunch of boys has gone."

"Of course. If they didn't go, then we wouldn't be seniors. I hope the teams won't suffer."

Baseball, the "senior exams," the excitement of the approaching commencement, little social affairs of clubs and groups, more elaborate entertainments, assemblies in the auditorium that no one wanted to miss—all these and more filled the days.

There was a general rejoicing and excitement one day when great loads of handsome books were delivered at the school and a rush occurred at all possible moments to get a copy of the annual Lyon High *Star*. It was the custom to order the books in advance, as they were too expensive to have any copies left over. Not all felt that they could buy one, but those who did were generous with them and it was not unusual to see a group gathered around, peering over shoulders to look at the pictures of groups or individuals, taken some time back, when the camera men came out to the school.

Betty and Carolyn secured their copies among the first and plumped down in seats in the auditorium at the close of school to look at them. Mary Emma and Selma were standing behind them, bending over with interest; and not far away Chet and Budd were chuckling over a copy. Naturally, their own individual pictures with their class were of first interest. "Oh, Betty!" cried Mary Emma, "that isn't half as pretty as you are, but it's pretty good after all! And look at mine—there—on the same page. Isn't that awful! I'm just smirking! Somebody had made me laugh and I was trying to get over it and just smile a little."

"Wait till you see mine," said Carolyn, "before you shed tears. I'm the crossest girl you ever saw, so far as mere looks are concerned."

"Why, Caroline, you just look serious. Of course, you usually don't, but what is a little thing like that?" This was Betty.

Exclamations and some laughter were the order of the next few minutes. Some of the teachers looked "wonderful" and others "you wouldn't know at all." But the book as a whole was eminently satisfactory, with its individual recognitions and personal history as well as the account of the year's progress and activities. Betty would add hers to the other two reposing at home. One more would complete her high school record.

While they still looked at the book, Lucia Coletti opened the central auditorium door and looked in searchingly. "Oh, here you are, Betty. Peggy said that she thought you hadn't left the building yet. I've something important to tell you, Betty. Can you come out to dinner with me? I can telephone home for you if you will. I can get the telephone in the office now. They

said I could."

Lucia's voice was trembling with suppressed excitement, but the girls, still engaged in the pages Betty was turning, did not notice. Selma was talking to Mary Emma and some of the art work by the students themselves was being commented upon.

Betty handed the book to Selma. "You can finish looking at it, girls, and I'll be in the hall as soon as I go to my locker a minute. All right, Lucia. Telephone, or get Mother on the line for me, if you like. I'd love to come."

Betty fancied that there might be some development relative to the Sevillas, now comfortably settled. But she was mistaken. As the two girls left the high school building, Betty with her *Star* under her arm, Lucia in the lowest tones told her that she had received a telegram.

"It was telephoned out to school, addressed to me at Lyon High, and the office telephoned to the home room, you know, to have me stop after school. It isn't signed by anything but an initial, but it is from my father. It was sent from New York. Here it is. You can read it in the car, but don't say a word before the chauffeur."

"Then your father is coming!" said Betty in a surprised whisper.

"Yes. I want you, because Mother has been sick all day, just worn out with all sorts of things, chiefly late hours and all the things that are going on. She is really better than she was yesterday, though. Now she might want me with her, and I must have somebody there that knows, so that one of us can be ready to—oh, well, with just the butler there he might send in a card and Mother wouldn't see him or something. And she's *got* to!"

Betty laughed a little at Lucia's determination. But it was a matter of the most importance to her friend. "Good for you, Lucia. And I imagine if they once see each other——"

Betty broke off, for they had reached the waiting car which so often called for Lucia. She unfolded the piece of paper on which the telegram had been copied down as dictated over the telephone. "Coming. Beach house about six. Surprise. X." The periods were represented by the customary "stop."

"I can't imagine a certain person's arriving anywhere that early in the morning," said Lucia, "so it's tonight."

"In that case, Lucia, I may not stay to dinner. I'd be a fifth wheel, but oh, I'm so glad."

It was no time before the girls were at the Murchison door. Betty made herself at home in Lucia's room while Lucia went to see her mother, the "X" of the telegram, who was to be surprised. Doubtless that was only intended as a public caution, designed to prevent the telegram's being relayed home.

Lucia came back in high spirits. "You ought to see my mother," said she. "She's up and in the most adorable negligee you can imagine. She may dress for dinner. Uncle is to be late. It couldn't happen better. Now if the 'long-absent' Count Coletti is only on time! Mother was so mad at that in the paper once."

Lucia's dark eyes sparkled and her cheeks were hot. Betty said a little prayer in her heart that her friend might not be disappointed with the result. "Mother's been desperately lonely and restless lately and has been on the go nearly all the time," continued Lucia. "Come on; we'll go downstairs and wait. You must be right there and don't stop keeping an ear open for the door, if I'm called to Mother or for anything else. Sometimes the housekeeper wants to see me if she can't disturb Mother."

This was all very thrilling. Lucia could not keep still or very far away from the front window. At the sound of an automobile on the drive, both girls went to the window. It might be Mr. Murchison, of course, or almost anybody. But no. "It's a taxi," Lucia tensely whispered.

On it came, stopping before the entrance. The driver descended from his seat and opened the door. There was a little delay as the passenger was paying before leaving the taxi. The driver was receiving a bill, which must have included a good tip, from the impressive manner and extreme courtesy which followed on the part of the driver. He took out two grips and stood aside to let a slight, distinguished-looking man pass him and go up the steps. He followed, but Betty saw that the butler had opened the door to go out.

Lucia had waited only to see who stepped from the taxi. She was out into the hall, down the steps and in the arms of a surprised father before one would have thought she could reach him. The butler, too, was smiling and welcoming the count. "Why, he was probably here when they were married," thought Betty. "Of course, but Lucia had never thought of it!"

Invited to have a share in this arrival, Betty felt quite justified as she happily watched from the window seat, having a good view from the windows that projected in a sort of rectangular recess at the part of the room nearest the hall.

The door into the hall stood open, but Betty did not come into sight as they entered from without. She wondered if there would be any delay. Would the count go straight to his wife's room? What would happen? She could hear the rapid Italian in which Lucia and her father were speaking. The butler spoke in his accustomed low tones, but with some excitement, too. It was being explained to him. Then up the stairs Lucia and her father went, the butler following with the grips. It was probably the intention to take the count to the proper guest room first, but a door opened and the Countess Coletti asked, "Lucia, who came?" as Lucia was in the lead of the silently coming party.

Then the countess caught sight of her husband. “Oh, my dear, my dear!” And the rest was in Italian. In the tenderest of tones the count was addressing his wife.

Lucia came rushing down the stairs to throw herself upon Betty and cry. “Oh, I can’t help it, Betty!” she cried between little sobs. “It is all right at last! She was glad to see him and he just gathered her up in his arms! I think she is crying, too!”

It took Lucia only a few minutes to gain her self-possession and explain further. “My father says he has come to ‘get us,’ as you said, Betty, but he will stay a while if it is all right with Uncle to let me finish my school. He told me that right away. But the main thing was to find out whether Mother would receive him or not. Of course, we could not mention *that* before the butler. He knew my father. Wasn’t that nice?”

Betty was merely a happy spectator, but Lucia would not let her go, and when at last, after she had been called to her mother’s room for a small family reunion and had come back to Betty a thoroughly happy girl again, she ran to meet her uncle, who came in just then. “Oh Uncle!” she cried, “my father, the Count Coletti, is here!” How proudly Lucia spoke, and there was a little of question in her voice.

“Thank heaven!” replied her uncle, of whose reception of her father she had been so doubtful. “It is high time! I hope he can manage her. It’s beyond me.” But Betty knew that Mr. Murchison was laughing as he spoke. “Tell him that we’ll kill the fatted calf. Have you told the housekeeper?”

“I never thought of it, but the butler knows and he does everything or sees to it, you know.”

And at dinner, when Betty had met the count and he had told her that he already knew her as his daughter’s best friend, one little speech of the countess amused her very much.

“Think, Buddy,” she said using the old term of her childhood for her brother, “think, Buddy, what a social asset he’ll be while we stay!” And with perfect understanding now, Count Coletti looked at his wife and smiled with the rest.

In the course of the conversation, which consisted chiefly in drawing out details of Count Coletti’s African experiences, it was hinted that Lucia might return after a summer in Switzerland to finish her course in the American high school. Betty modestly expressed herself as hoping that she would, and the countess said, “We shall see.”

Truly life was full of thrills to Betty Lee. There was still school to be completed. Chet would get his diploma; and should she have some little remembrance for Chet in honor of his graduation, or not? She would ask her mother. One more year and she would have a diploma, too! But first she had to be Betty Lee, senior.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BETTY LEE, JUNIOR ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™

electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this

work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.