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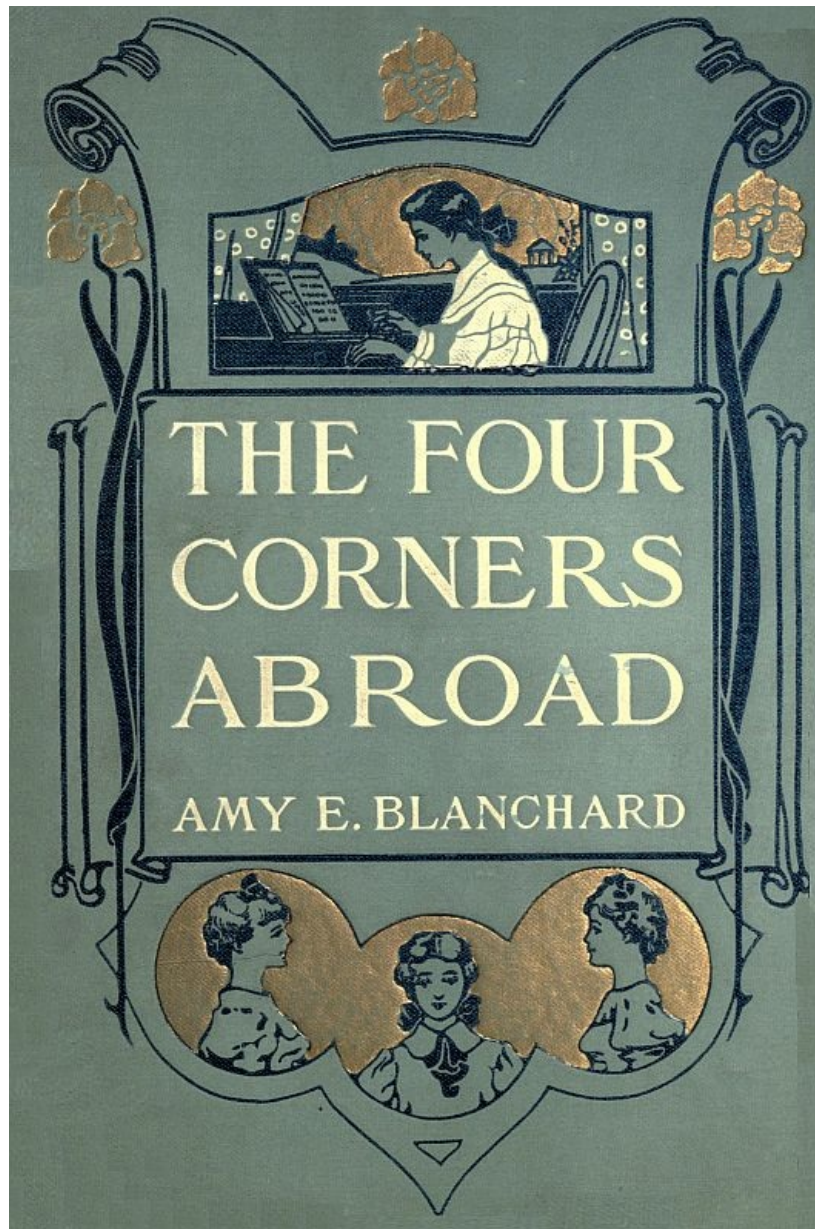
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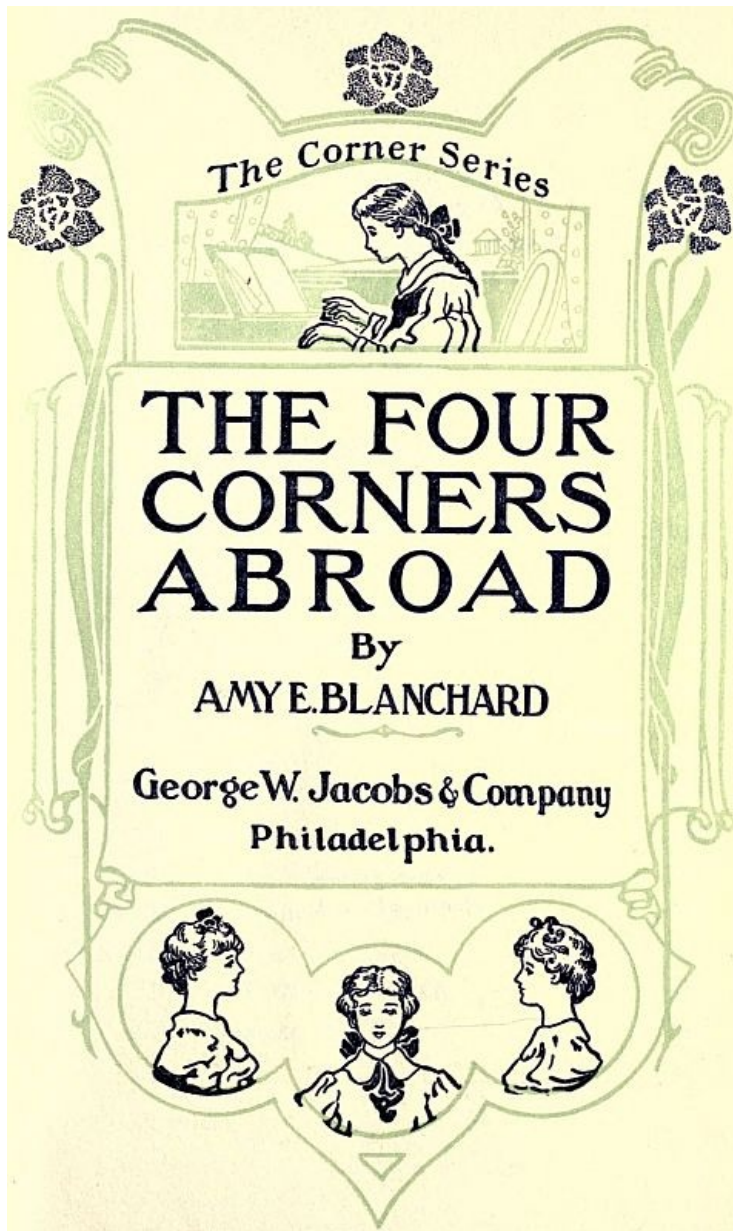
*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FOUR CORNERS ABROAD ***





**JEAN WITH A PIGEON ON EACH SHOULDER WAS
PERFECTLY HAPPY.**

Frontispiece



The Corner Series

THE FOUR CORNERS ABROAD

By
AMY E. BLANCHARD

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Philadelphia.

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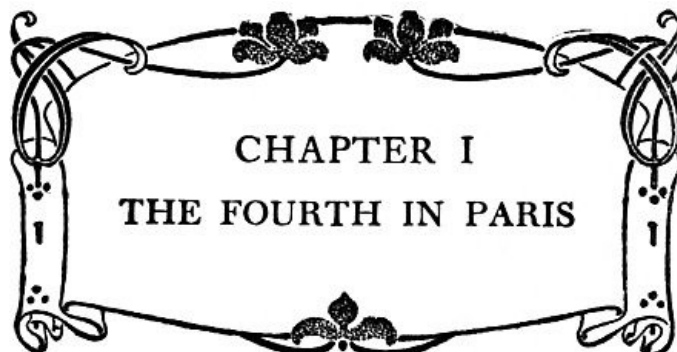
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CHAPTER I
THE FOURTH IN PARIS

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It was at Passy that a little party of American girls were discussing the afternoon's plans one day in July. The three older girls were most interested; the two younger were too much engrossed in a game of Diabolo to notice very much what the others were talking about.

"You see it's raining," said Nan Corner, a tall girl with dark hair, "so we can't go in the Bois as we intended."

"Neither do we want to follow Aunt Helen's example and go hunting for antiques," put in Nan's sister, Mary Lee. "What do you say we do, Jo?"

Jo Keyes was drumming on the window-pane and looking out at the rather unpromising weather. "I see an American flag, girls," she said. "Hail to you, Old Glory!—Goodness me!" She turned around. "Do you all know what day it is? Of course we must do something patriotic."

"It's the Fourth of July!" exclaimed Nan, "and we never thought of it. For pity's sake! Isn't it ridiculous? We never made very much of it at home, but over here I feel so American when I remember Bunker Hill and Yorktown and our own Virginia Washington, that I could paint myself red, white and blue, and cry 'Give me liberty or give me death,' from out the front window."

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"I beg you'll do no such thing," said Mary Lee, the literal.

Nan laughed. The twins stopped their play and began to take an interest in what was being said. "Do paint your face red, white and blue and lean out the front window, Nan," said Jack; "it would be so funny."

"Let Mary Lee do it," said Nan, putting her arm around her little sister; "she's already red, white and blue."

"Let me see, Mary Lee, let me see," said Jack, eagerly.

The others laughed. "Blue eyes, white nose, red lips," said Nan, touching with her finger these features of Mary Lee's.

"You fooled me," said Jack disgustedly. "I thought she might have lovely stripes or something on her face."

"Foolish child," returned Nan, giving her a squeeze. "We must do something, girls, and look 'how it do rain,' as Mitty would say."

"Can't we have torpedoes or firecrackers or some kind of fireworks?" asked Jean.

"The gendarmes might come and rush us all off to the police court if we did," Jo told her. "They're so terribly particular here in Paris, that if a cab or an auto runs over you, you have to pay damages for getting in the way." [11]

"Thank heaven we're Americans," said Nan fervently. "I am more eager than ever to flaunt my colors. Of all unjust things I ever heard it is to run you down and make you pay for it. They needn't talk to me about their *liberté, fraternité, and égalité*. I'll give a centime to the first one who thinks a happy thought for celebrating, myself included."

Jo was the first with a suggestion. "Let's have a tea and invite the grown-ups, your mother and Miss Helen. We might ask that nice Miss Joyce, too. We can have red, white and blue decorations and dress ourselves in the national colors, and it will be fine."

"The centime is yours," cried Nan. "You always were a good fellow with ideas, Jo. Now let's set our wits to work. Who dares brave the elements with me? I shall have to go foraging in the neighborhood."

"I'll go," cried Jack.

"I'd love to go foraging," said Jean.

"If you want any assistance in carrying bundles, I'm your man," said Jo.

"Then you twinnies would better stay at home with Mary Lee," said Nan. [12]

"But we do want to go, too," begged the two.

"I don't see why you want to get yourselves all drabbled, and very likely you'd take cold," remarked Mary Lee. "For my part I'd much rather stay in."

This quite satisfied Jean, but Jack still pouted until Nan suggested that she help Mary Lee arrange the room and think up their costumes; then the two oldest girls with umbrellas, rubbers and waterproofs set out. Mrs. Corner and Miss Helen had gone to the city to attend to some business at their banker's and would not return till later, therefore, the girls concluded, it would be an excellent time to try their ingenuity; they had been accustomed to do such things before now and their imaginations, never rusty at any time, were in good working order.

"I know what I shall do," said Mary Lee, as soon as the door closed after Nan and Jo. "I shall sew red stripes on one of my white frocks. I have some Turkey red I was going to make into a bag; I'll use that."

"What can we do?" queried Jean.

"We shall have to get the room ready first," Mary Lee told her, "and then we'll think of our dresses. Go into Aunt Helen's room, Jack, and get all the red Baedekers you can find, and if you see any blue books, bring them, too. Jean, go into all our rooms and bring any red-border towels you see." [13]

"What are you going to do with them?" asked Jean, pausing at the door.

"You'll see. Trot along, for we haven't any too much time."

Jean ran off and presently came back with a lot of towels hanging over her arm. These Mary Lee disposed over the largest sofa pillow so as to give the effect of a series of red and white stripes, setting a blue covered cushion above the first. When Jack returned with the books, which she managed to drop at intervals between the door and the lounge, Mary Lee made neat piles on the table of the red and blue covered volumes, the white edges giving the required combination of color.

"There are a great many more red than blue ones," remarked Jack, watching the effect of Mary Lee's work. "I know what we can do, Mary Lee, we can cover some of the books. I saw some blue wrapping-paper in Aunt Helen's room."

"A good idea. Great head. Bring it along, Jack." And again Jack scampered off to return in a few minutes with the blue paper which Mary Lee used to cover the books needed.

"That does very well," she commented, surveying her work with pleased eyes. "Now we'll have to wait till Nan comes before we can finish up here. Fortunately Aunt Helen has blue and white tea things, and they will need only to be set on a red covered tray. I won't do that yet before I see what Nan and Jo bring back with them. Now, I'm going to sew the stripes on my skirt. We will see about you chicks when Nan comes." [14]

She went off bent upon carrying out her design of wearing a red striped frock and blue tie. "I've a lovely idea," Jack whispered to her twin. "Let's go into mother's room and I'll show you." And the two disappeared closing the door behind them.

Half an hour later Nan and Jo returned. Mary Lee met them, red striped skirt in hand. "Well," she exclaimed eagerly, "did you manage to get anything?"

"Indeed we did," Jo replied. "Look at these flowers. Aren't they just the thing? We found an old woman around the corner with a cart full of flowers and we took our pick." She held up a bunch of red and white carnations with some blue corn-flowers.

"Perfect," agreed Mary Lee. "What else did you get?"

"Some red candies." Nan produced them. "We shall put them in that little blue and white Japanese dish of mother's. We have a beautiful sugary white cake, and I am going to make a little American flag to stand up in the middle of it. We have some lady-fingers which we shall tie up with red, white and blue ribbons, and with bread and butter I think that will do. My, Mary Lee! you've done beautifully. It looks fine. Who thought of the red Baedekers and the blue books?" [15]

"I did, or at least Jack helped out the idea with the blue paper covers."

"Where are the kiddies?"

"In mother's room getting ready. I've been basting these red stripes on this skirt. I've the last one nearly finished. What are you going to wear, Nan?"

"I'd copy-cat your red stripes if I had time, but I can cut out some stars and paste them on a blue belt, maybe, and wear a white shirt-waist and a red skirt. Jo has a striped red and white waist she can wear with a blue tie. We must hurry up, for time is flying and I have still the flag to make."

They skurried around and soon had everything arranged to their taste. "Now I'll make the flag," said Nan, "though I'll never get as many stars as I need on such a tiny blue ground, for there are such a number of states. Perhaps I can find a scrap of that dark blue challis with the tiny white stars on it; that would do very well to paste in one corner." [16]

Mary Lee and Jo followed her to the room which the three shared in common. The twins had a little room adjoining and from this issued a murmur of voices.

"Who has taken my paint box?" cried Nan diving down into her trunk. "I've looked everywhere for it. I was sure I left it on this table."

"I'll bet that scamp Jack has it," declared Mary Lee.

Nan opened the door leading to the next room and there beheld the two sitting on the floor, the color box between them. A mug of water stood near. Jack had just painted a series of ragged stripes across her white shoes and was regarding this decoration with much complacency. Jean was about to emulate her twin by similarly adorning the white stockings upon her slim little legs. She had carefully begun at the very top and had just made her first brush mark.

"Do you think there should be thirteen stripes?" she was asking Jack when Nan opened the door.

"You wretches!" cried the latter. "What are you doing with my paints?"

"We're just fixing up for Fourth of July," responded Jack thrusting out a brilliantly striped foot for Nan's inspection, and in consequence upsetting the mug of water over the color box. [17]

"I should think you were just fixing up," returned Nan. "Just look at my color box. You've nearly used up a whole pan of vermilion, and now look what you have done. Get a towel, Jean, and sop it up. You've spoiled your shoes, Jack. They'll never be fit to wear again."

Jack looked ruefully at the feet in which she had taken such pride.

"Mayn't I stripe my stockings, Nan?" asked Jean looking up from her task of mopping up the water.

"No, chickie, I think you'd better not."

"But Jack has such beautiful stripes," said Jean regretfully.

"I'll tell you what you can have," said Nan. "I've a lot of red ribbons and I'll wind your sweet little pipe-stems with those."

Jean was so pleased with this idea that she did not mind the aspersions cast upon her slim legs.

"That will be lovely," she agreed, "and it will save the trouble of painting. I saw it was going to be quite hard to have exactly thirteen stripes and all the same width."

Nan picked up the sloppy looking color box. "I've got to make a little flag," she said, "and as soon as that is done I'll get the ribbons for you." She bore off the colors into the next room and proceeded hastily to make her flag, sticking a bit of the starred challis in one corner for the field. When it was completed she looked around for a proper staff, and finally settled on one of her paint brushes whose pointed handle served excellently well to stick in the centre of the cake. [18]

Having put it in place, Nan stood off to see the effect. "It doesn't look quite right," she observed. "What is the matter with it, girls?"

"You've made thirteen red stripes instead of having thirteen in all, red and white included," Mary Lee told her. She was always an exact person.

"Dear me, that's just the thing," said Nan. "Why didn't I know enough to do it right?"

"Never mind," said Jo. "Nobody will notice it, and I am sure it looks very well. Isn't the table lovely? I wish they would come."

"Oh, but I don't," returned Nan. "I've yet to dye, and I promised Jean to wind her legs for her. They will look like barbers' poles, but she'll never think of that, so please don't let any one suggest it. It is so late I'll have to fling on any red, white and blue doings I can find."

"I'll wind the legs," volunteered Jo. "I'm all ready as you see, and you've had the most to do." [19]

"Good for you," responded Nan. "I'll get the ribbons."

"Don't you think," said Jo, "that we ought to have speeches or something?" Jo was always great at that sort of thing.

"It wouldn't be bad." Nan was quick to accept the suggestion. "You get up a speech, Jo. We'll sing Yankee Doodle and Dixie to comb accompaniments, and I'll recite that poem of Emerson's about the firing of the shot heard round the world. What will you do, Mary Lee?"

"I might give a cake-walk," she replied; "that would be truly American."

"Let's all do a cake-walk," Nan suggested. "We have the cake, you see, and you can dance a breakdown, Mary Lee, and sing a plantation song."

"The programme is rolling up splendidly," said Jo. "Go along, Nan, and get dressed. If you stand here talking the guests will be here before you are ready."

Nan rushed off and, in her usual direct and expeditious manner, soon had herself arrayed. Her blue skirt, white shirt-waist and red sash gave the foundation of her costume which was further enlivened by a red, white and blue cockade, made hastily of tissue-paper snatched out of various places. This she wore in her dark hair while she had put on a pair of red stockings with white shoes, the latter made resplendent by huge blue bows. [20]

"Your get-up is fine," cried Jo, regarding her admiringly. "You always outdo every one else, Nan, and with the least fussing and the slightest amount of material. Here I've taken the trouble to put these white stars on a blue belt, and Mary Lee has basted all those stripes around her skirt, yet look at you with that dandy little cockade and those fetching blue bows which didn't take you five minutes to make."

"There they come," cried Mary Lee.

"Start the teakettle, somebody, while I go tell Miss Joyce. I hope she has not gone out." She rushed off leaving the others to begin the tea-making. On the way from Miss Joyce's room, where she fortunately found the young lady, Nan encountered Mrs. Corner and Miss Helen. "Happy Fourth of July," cried the girl. "Get your things off, please, and come right in to tea; it's all ready."

"Good child," answered Miss Helen. "We are ready for tea, for we are both tired out. There was so much red tape connected with this morning's business. We'll be right in, Nan." [21]

"You didn't get wet?"

"Fortunately we didn't, for we had a cab."

"Good! then you won't have to change your gowns. Don't stop to prink, mother dear, and come as soon as you can." She stopped to snatch a kiss from her mother and hurried back. Her costume had indicated that something out of the ordinary was going on, but the grown-ups were not prepared for what met their eyes when they entered the little sitting-room.

"Well, if this isn't just like you children," exclaimed Mrs. Corner when she saw the array.

"Is it just like them?" Miss Joyce turned with an appreciative smile. "Then all I have to say is that you have the dearest children in the world."

The entertainment began with Jo's patriotic speech which was given while the ladies drank their tea. There were sly hits at the rights and wrongs of foot passengers in Paris, references to the difficulties of the French language, to the law forbidding anything to be placed on the window-sills, to the lack of sweet potatoes and green corn, to the small portions of ice-cream

served, and the whole oration was full of such humor as brought much laughter and applause. Jo was always happiest in such impromptu speeches. Next each girl provided with a comb covered with tissue-paper gave a shrill rendering of Yankee Doodle and Dixie, then followed Mary Lee's breakdown, and next Nan's recitation. After this the twins, not to be outdone, sang a ridiculous negro song, patting juba as they did it. The whole performance ended with a cake-walk in which Nan and Jack surpassed themselves, taking the cake amid much laughter and applause.

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"I haven't laughed so much for a year," said Miss Joyce, wiping her eyes. "I must confess to having felt rather blue this gloomy day, but you dear things have driven my homesickness so far away that I don't believe there is any danger of its coming back for a long time, certainly not while you are in the house. How did you think of all this?"

"Oh, we often do such things on the spur of the moment," Nan told her. "It's much more fun than to plan a long time ahead. We never realized what day it was till Jo chanced to see an American flag hanging from a window near by. You know down in Virginia we don't make much ado over the Fourth, but here in Paris somehow it seemed quite different, and we suddenly felt wildly patriotic, so we had to let off the steam in some way, and this idea of Jo's was very easy to carry out."

"It's been an immense success," Miss Joyce assured her. "The decorations are so original, and such costumes, I don't see how you managed to get them up in such a short time."

[23]

Nan looked down at her flaunting blue bows. "It's nothing when you're used to depending upon whatever comes handy. This blue paper happened to come around a package, and one can pinch up a couple of bows in no time; as for the other things, it just means a little ingenuity. When we were out in California we used to have a different kind of tea every week, and it was lots of fun to think up something new."

"We like to encourage our girls to exercise imagination and invention," Miss Helen remarked. "Nowadays when children are not encouraged to read the old-fashioned fairy tales, and have so many toys that they never have a chance to invent any plays for themselves, there is danger of certain fine qualities of mind being left out of the composition of the coming generation."

"I quite agree with you," said Miss Joyce. "Creatures of 'fire and dew and spirit' must feed on different mental food from the ordinary, and I'm sure your girls will always possess individuality."

"That is what we are aiming for," returned Miss Helen.

Jack's intention was so good, that she was spared a scolding on account of the shoes, and the afternoon ended happily though it continued to rain dismally. Jack, it may be said in passing, seldom allowed an occasion to go by without getting into some sort of scrape, and that she had done nothing worse than spoil a pair of inexpensive white shoes was really to her credit. Jean admired her own red strappings so unreservedly that she continued to wear the decorations till bedtime, while Nan's cockade still adorned her head at the dinner table.

[24]

"We shall pass but one more national holiday over here," she remarked, "and what's the sense of being in a foreign country if you can't remember your own sometimes! To be sure the tri-color is French, too, but it means the United States to us." So ended this Fourth of July which was a day long remembered.



[25]

CHAPTER II

THE DAY OF BASTILLE

[26]

[27]

MADAME LEMERCIER smiled indulgently when the afternoon's celebration was described to her. "Ah, but you will be here on our great day," she said. "And then, my friends, you will see. Paris is gay like that upon our holiday. If you have your Forrs July, and your great Vashington, we have our Fourteen July, our day of Bastille. We must zen see ze city, ze illumination, ze dance, ze pyrotechnic at night. You will allow, madame," she turned to Mrs. Corner, "that your demoiselles

have ze freedom not encouraged at ozzer time. Ve are a free peoples more as before, upon zat day. Each does as he will, but we do not abuse, no, we do not take advantage of ze liberte, for zough we rejoice we do not forget our native politeness. It will be perfectly safe, zough a gentleman escort or two will not be of objection."

"What does Bastille mean, anyway?" whispered Jack to Jean as they left the dining-room together. "Is it anything like pastilles, those funny sweet-smelling things we had in California? Maybe she said Pastille, though it sounded more like Bas than Pas."

[28]

"I don't know which it was," confessed Jean. "I wasn't thinking much about anything she was saying. You'd better ask Nan; she'll know."

"Did Madame say Bas or Pas?" Jack put her question.

"She said Bastille," Nan told her, "and it isn't a bit like the pastilles you have in mind. In fact there isn't any more Bastille at all. Do you remember when we went to Mt. Vernon that we saw the big key there?"

"I believe I do remember something like a big key. What was it the key of? I forget."

"The Bastille was a great big fortress or castle, and was where they used to imprison nobles and other people who had offended the government or whom the kings wanted to get rid of. It was a very massive and strong place. Its walls were ten feet thick, and it had eight great towers. It was a terrible place, and when the Revolution began one of the first things the Revolutionists wanted to destroy was the great fortress, so they cried, 'Down with the Bastille!' Then they had a tremendous fight over it, for to the mass of people it represented the power of the monarchy, and to the monarchy and the nobles it meant their greatest stronghold. At last the Revolutionists got in, and it was destroyed, blown to pieces. The fight took place on the fourteenth of July and that is why they celebrate the day as we do our Fourth. It will be good fun to see what they do, I think."

[29]

"But it is ten days off. What are we going to do till then?"

"Lawsee, you silly child, there will be plenty to do. We're going to Versailles and to St. Cloud, to the Musée de Cluny, to Père le Chaise, to the Louvre, and dozens of other places."

"I want to go up the tour Eiffel," said Jack, who delighted in such performances, the higher up the better.

"I suppose you'll not rest till you get there," returned Nan laughing.

Indeed, there was enough to do in the next ten days to keep every one busy, for each had some special wish to be fulfilled and where there were five youngsters to satisfy, there was little danger of time hanging heavily on their hands. Mary Lee loved the Jardin des Plantes, Jo never tired of the boulevards, and delighted in riding on the tops of the omnibuses. Nan reveled in the Louvre and the Musée de Cluny, Jean liked the Luxembourg gardens, the Tuilleries and the river, Jack wanted to climb to the top of every accessible steeple and tower in the city. Whenever a church was being discussed her first inquiry was always, "Has it a tower?"

[30]

Paris was too full of opportunities for Jack to miss anything that was in the least feasible, and she was always so innocently unconscious of doing anything out of the way that it was hard to make her realize that she must be censured. As Miss Helen said, it was all the point of view, and from Jack's standpoint, if you did but tell the truth, did no one harm, and pursued what seemed a rational and agreeable course, why stand on the manner of doing it? She and Jean were allowed to play in the Bois within certain limits, for it was very near to their *pension*, and they could be found readily by one of their elders if they were wanted.

"But," said Mrs. Corner, "you must not go further without some older person with you." This order the children always fulfilled to the letter and Mrs. Corner felt perfectly safe about them.

But one morning, Jean chose to go back to the house for something she wanted, and on her return Jack was nowhere in sight. Jean waited patiently for a while, and then not daring to go beyond bounds, she returned to the house to report. Nan immediately left her practicing to go in search of her little sister. She ventured, herself, further than ever before, but after a long and fruitless hunt came back to where Jean had been left as sentry, this being the spot where she had parted from her twin.

[31]

Nan was not easily scared about Jack, but this time she felt there was cause for anxiety. Suppose she had fallen into the lake; suppose she had been beguiled away by some beggar who would strip her of her clothes and hold her for a ransom. Nan had heard of such things. "I hate to go back and tell mother," she murmured.

Jean began to cry. "Oh, Nan, do you think she could have been run over by an automobile?" she asked.

Nan shook her head gravely. "I'm sure I don't know, Jean. She always manages to turn up all right, and has the most plausible reasons for doing as she does, but this time I cannot imagine where she could have gone. Mother and Aunt Helen are both at home and so are Jo and Mary Lee, so she could not have gone anywhere with one of them." She again looked anxiously up the road.

"Oh, there she is," suddenly cried Jean in joyful tones.

"Where? Where?" cried Nan grasping Jean's shoulder.

"In that cab coming this way. Don't you see her?"

Nan waited till the cab stopped, then she rushed forward to see Jack clamber down from the side of the red-faced *cocher*, shake hands with two gaudily dressed women of the bourgeois class, and walk calmly off while the cab drove on. [32]

"Jack Corner!" cried Nan, not refraining from giving the child a little shake, "where have you been? Do you know you have scared Jean and me nearly to death? Poor little Jean has been crying her eyes out about you."

"What for?" asked Jack with a look of surprise.

"Because she was afraid you had been run over or had fallen in the lake. Where have you been?"

"Just taking a ride around," said Jack nonchalantly. "You might have known, Nan," she went on in a tone of injured innocence, "that I wouldn't go anywhere without an older person when mother said we were not to, and there were three older persons with me."

"But didn't you realize that Jean wouldn't know where you had gone, and that she would be frightened about you?"

"I didn't think we would be gone so long," returned Jack. "You see I know the *cocher* quite well. He has a dear little dog he lets me play with sometimes. Aunt Helen always tries to have this man when she can, so to-day when he asked me if I didn't want to ride back with him, he was going back to the stand, you see, I said, *Oui, monsieur, de tout mon cœur*, and so I got up. Then just as we were going to start those two ladies came along." [33]

"Ladies!" exclaimed Nan contemptuously.

"One of them had beautiful feathers in her hat," returned Jack defiantly.

"Well, never mind. Go on."

"They wanted to take a drive, but they wanted to pay very little for it, and finally the *cocher* said if I could go, too, he would take them for a franc and a half. So they went and they stopped quite a time; we had to wait, the *cocher* and I."

"Where was the place?"

"I don't know. It was somewhere that you get things to eat and drink. They didn't ask me to take any of what they were having."

"I should hope not. So then you waited, and the *cocher* brought you back?"

Jack nodded. "Hm, hm. He was going to take the ladies further, so when I saw you and Jean I said I would get down, and here I am all safe and sound," she added cheerfully.

"You ought to be spanked and put to bed," said Nan severely.

Jack looked at her with wide-eyed reproach. "Why, Nan," she said, "I didn't do a thing to make you say that. He is a very nice *cocher*; his name is François, and I am sure I minded mother. It would have been quite different if I had gone off anywhere alone. Mother said an older person, and François is very old; he must be forty." [34]

"Well," returned Nan, "mother will tell you that you are not to go anywhere with strange *cochers*, or strange any other persons, and that will be the last of that sort of performance."

Jack gave a deep sigh, as of one misunderstood. It was very hard to keep up with the exactions of her family who were continually hedging her about with some new condition.

After this the days passed quietly till the fourteenth came around. Madame Lemercier pronounced the city deserted, while Miss Joyce declared it might be by Parisians, but was taken possession of by American tourists. The Corners, however, wondered whether it could be possible that it ever held any more than those who crowded the streets that evening when they all set out to see the sights. Along the Seine they concluded they would be able to see more than elsewhere, so they made the Louvre and the Palais Royal their destination. The streets were full of a good-natured, jostling throng. Every now and then the party would come upon some dancers footing it gaily in some "place" or at some street corner. The cafés were thronged, and there were venders of all sorts driving a thriving trade. From the bridges ascended splendid fireworks which were continually cheered by the gaping spectators. Illuminations brightened the entire way. No one forbade joking, singing students to walk abreast so they would take up the entire sidewalk, for no one minded walking around them. [35]

"One can scarcely imagine what it must have been during that dreadful Reign of Terror," said Nan to her aunt when they reached the "Place de la Concorde." "This jolly, contented crowd of people is very different from the bloodthirsty mob that gloried in the guillotine then. Just over there the guillotine was set up, wasn't it? And, somewhere near, those horrible fishwives sat knitting and telling of the number of the poor victims. I think this 'Place de la Concorde' is one of

the most splendid spots in Paris, but I can never pass it without a shudder."

"Too much imagination on this occasion, Nan," said her aunt. "You must not let your mind dwell upon such things when you are trying to have a good time. One could be miserable anywhere, remembering past history. I am sure to-night doesn't suggest an angry mob. Don't let us lose our party. We must keep an eye on them. I thought I saw Jack wriggle ahead, through the crowd, by herself."

[36]

"I'll dash on and get her," said Nan, "and stand still till you all come up." She managed to get hold of Jack before the child was wholly swallowed up in the crowd, and cautioned her to keep close to the others if she would not lose them.

But Jack was always resourceful and independent. "It wouldn't make any difference if I did lose you all," she declared. "I could find my way back, and the *conciergerie* would let me in."

"That cross old creature? I shouldn't like to bother him," returned Nan. "He is an old beast."

"Oh, no, he isn't always. If you call him *monsieur* often enough he gets quite pleasant," Jack assured her.

"I'll be bound for you," Nan answered. "We must stand here, Jack, till the others come up. Don't you think it is fun? I can't imagine where so many people came from, all sorts and conditions."

"I think it is very nice," returned Jack, "but I wish Carter were here with his automobile, and I wish he were here anyhow, so he could dance with me. I'd love to go dance out in the street with the rest of the people. Won't you come dance with me, Nan?"

[37]

"I'd look pretty, a great long-legged girl like me in a crowd of French '*bonnes*' and '*blanchisseuse*,' wouldn't I? Suppose we should be seen by some of our friends, what would they think to see me twirling around in the midst of such a gang as this?"

But in spite of this scoffing on Nan's part, Jack was not easily rid of her desire, and looked with longing eyes upon each company of dancers they passed. Nan managed to keep a pretty strict lookout for her little sister, but finally she escaped in an unguarded moment, and was suddenly missed.

"She is the most trying child," said Mary Lee, who had experienced no difficulty in keeping the tractable Jean in tow.

"Jack gets so carried away by things of the moment," said Nan, always ready to make excuses for her little sister. "She gets perfectly lost to everything but what is interesting her at the time, and forgets to keep her mind on anything else. I'll go ahead as I did before, and probably I shall find her."

But no Jack was to be discovered. Mary Lee scolded, Jean began to cry and Mrs. Corner looked worried.

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"We can't leave the child by herself in the streets of Paris on such a night as this," she said anxiously. "There is no telling what might happen to her."

"Don't bother, mother dear," said Nan. "I'm sure she can't be a great way off. You and some of the others stand here, and I'll go ahead with Aunt Helen. We'll come back to you in a few minutes."

"I verily believe I caught a glimpse of her," suddenly exclaimed Jo.

"Where?" asked Nan, craning her neck.

"Over there where you hear the music."

"She's possessed about the dancing in the streets, and very likely she is watching the dancing."

They all moved over in the direction from which the music came, and there, sure enough, in the centre of a company of dancers, was Jack with a round black-whiskered Frenchman, whirling merrily to the strains of a violin.

Nan and her Aunt Helen edged their way to the outskirts of the circle of onlookers, and then Nan forced herself nearer. "Jack," she called. "Jack, come right here."

Jack cast a glance over her shoulder, gave several more twirls, and was finally surrendered to her proper guardians by the rotund Frenchman who made a low bow with heels together as he bade adieu to his little partner.

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"I did it, Nan, I did it," announced Jack joyfully. "He was a nice man and he called me *la petite Americaine*. He has a brother in New York and was so pleased when I told him I had been there. He is a barber and he gave me a flower." She produced a rose proudly.

"Come right over here to mother," said Nan, paying small attention to what Jack was saying. "She is worried to death about you."

"Why?" asked Jack in her usual tone of surprise when such a condition of affairs was mentioned. "Madame Lemercier said on Bastille day every one could do just what she wanted,

and I am sure I was only doing what dozens and hundreds of other people were doing. What was there wrong about it, Aunt Helen?"

She looked so aggrieved and innocent, that Miss Helen, between smiles and frowns, could only ejaculate, "Oh, Jack, Jack, there is no doing anything with you."

Even after she had joined her mother and had been told how alarmed Mrs. Corner had been, Jack could not see the least indiscretion in joining in the dance. "Anybody could do it," she said, "and you didn't have to pay a cent."

"It is the question of Jack's point of view again," said Miss Helen to Mrs. Corner. "Jack has been told that every one in Paris does as he or she chooses upon the fourteenth of July, and why not she with the rest? She could understand Nan's not caring to dance because she objected to being conspicuous; as to any other reason, it never entered the child's head." So, as usual, Jack got off with a mild reproof, and the party went on their way without further trouble, Miss Helen and Nan keeping Jack between them, and Nan never letting go for one instant her hold upon Jack's arm. [40]

To the two youngest of the company there was a great excitement in being up so late in the Paris streets, and when they stopped at a café, less crowded than most, and in a quiet street, to have *limonade gaseuze*, their satisfaction was complete.

After this there was less sightseeing, for Miss Helen and Mrs. Corner had shopping to do, and Nan had an object in making the most of her time in Paris, as she was anxious to add to her knowledge of French, intending to specialize in languages when she entered college. Mary Lee, with not so correct an ear, acquired facility less easily, and Jo declared that it would be impossible for herself ever to get rid of her American accent. But it was Jack who soon picked up a surprising vocabulary which she used to the utmost advantage, jabbering away with whomsoever she came in contact, be it some *cocher* or the learned professor who sat next her at table, the chambermaids or Madame Lemercier herself, with whom the girls had lessons. Jack had not the least self-consciousness, and never feared ridicule. Jean, more timid, would have learned little, if her twin had not urged her to exert herself, forcing her to speak when they encountered some little French girls in the Bois. [41]

These little girls came every day for an orderly walk with their governess, and for a discreet hour of play. Jack liked their looks, and was determined to make their acquaintance. She accordingly smiled most beguilingly upon them but for some time could win no more than shy smiles in return.

"I mean to make them speak to me," she told Jean.

"How are you going to do it?" asked Jean. "Maybe their governess won't let them speak to strangers. She looks very prim."

"I reckon she only looks that way because she is French," returned Jack, nothing daunted. "I saw her watch me playing Diabolo, and I know she thinks I do it well."

"You're awfully stuck up about it," replied Jean, herself less expert.

"No, I'm not. I can play much better than some of those great big girls, and I know I can, so what is the use of pretending I don't?" [42]

However, it was not this which won the response Jack hoped for, but it was because chance gave her the opportunity of returning a book which the governess left on a bench one day. Jack saw it after the demure little girls had gone, and she pounced upon it, carrying it triumphantly home and presenting it the next day to the owner with a polite little speech. The thanks she received made a sufficient wedge for Jack and she was soon talking affably to the little girls as well as to the governess. Jack could be the most entertaining of persons, and it was no time before she had an absorbed audience. After this it was a common occurrence for the twins to meet Paulette and Clemence in the Bois, and the little French girls were never refused permission to play with the two Americans.



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CHAPTER III

HOUSEKEEPING

[44]
[45]

"It is certainly a question which is hard to settle," said Mrs. Corner one morning to her sister-in-law. "I've just been talking to Madame, and she thinks she must go."

"Go where? What's a hard question?" asked Nan looking up from a page of translating.

"I am afraid we shall have to make a change," her mother told her. "Madame Lemercier has decided that she must close her house for the remainder of the summer and go to her sister who has taken a villa in Switzerland, filled it with demoiselles and has now fallen ill."

"There are loads and loads of *pensions*," returned Nan.

"Yes, but we want just the right one. This suits us in so many particulars that I am afraid we shall never chance upon its like again. Here we have pleasant, airy rooms, an adequate table, and good service. We are near the Bois, and the trams, yet we escape the noise of the city. To be sure it would be more convenient to be nearer the shops and some other things, but, take it all in all, I am afraid we are going to find it hard to select. I do so hate to go the rounds; it is so very exhausting."

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"Aunt Helen and I will do it. Mother must not think of wearing herself out in that way, must she, Aunt Helen?"

"Of course not," replied Miss Helen. "There is one thing you must consider, Mary, and that is your health before anything else, and we shall all raise a protest against your doing any tiring thing like hunting up *pensions*."

"You make me feel that I am a very worthless, doless creature," returned Mrs. Corner.

"We want to keep you right along with us wherever we are," Nan remarked. "I, for one, have no idea of having you rush off to Lausanne or some such place and leave us to our own devices here in Paris, and that is what it will amount to if you don't take care of yourself."

"Hear the child," exclaimed Mrs. Corner. "You would think she was the mother and I the daughter. I dare say you are right, Nan, and I meekly accept the situation, in spite of your superior manner."

"Nan's had so much responsibility with the younger children," put in Miss Helen, "that it comes quite natural to her to bring any one to task."

"Was I superior?" asked Nan, going over to her mother and caressing her. "I didn't mean to be. You are so precious, you see, that I have to think about what you ought and what you oughtn't to do."

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"I quite understand, dear child, though it does make me feel ashamed of myself to have to give up my duties."

"Your duty is to coddle yourself all that is necessary," Miss Helen told her, "and this matter of changing our *pension* is to be left to Nan and me."

"Bravo!" cried Nan. "When you use that authoritative manner, Aunt Helen, we all of us have to give in, don't we, mother?"

"I know I do," laughed Mrs. Corner.

"How should you like to take a furnished apartment?" asked Miss Helen after a moment's thought. "I shouldn't be at all surprised but that my friend, Miss Selby, could tell us of one. You could have a maid who would relieve you of all care, and Paris is full of French teachers, so the children could go on with their lessons. We have not much more shopping to do, so you could sit back and rest."

"I believe I should like that plan," answered Mrs. Corner. "It has been so long since we had anything like a home that it would be a very pleasant change."

"I think it would be perfectly lovely," declared Nan. "I've always longed for an apartment in Paris, since I heard Miss Dolores tell about the way her cousins used to live here. By the way, we ought to be hearing from Mr. St. Nick. And what about England, Aunt Helen?"

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"We'll get this other matter settled first, and then we'll see what is to be done next. Your mother declares she wants no more of England after her last rainy, chilly experience there, and I am not sure it would be best for her to venture. She is tired, and I think a rest is desirable for her." Mrs. Corner had left the room to speak again to Madame Lemercier.

"Shall we go at once to see Miss Selby?" asked Nan. "She has such a dear little studio, and has been in Paris so long that I am sure she can help us out, Aunt Helen."

"We may as well start at once," agreed Miss Helen. "Go get on your things, and I will be ready in a few minutes."

"I was thinking," said Nan when she returned, a little later, "that Miss Joyce might like to come and help to overlook the children, when we older ones are not on hand. She will be adrift after

Madame goes, and she is not well off, you know. She speaks French like a native, and she might relieve mother of some care. She is fond of the kiddies and if we should happen to take that trip to England, we would feel more comfortable about leaving mother here."

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"That isn't a bad idea," returned Miss Helen, "and we may be able to follow it up if the apartment becomes a fixed fact."

The two started off, and were gone all morning, not even appearing at the midday meal. Early in the afternoon they came back looking rather tired, but triumphant. "We've found it," cried Nan; "the dearest place."

"What have you found?" asked Mary Lee, who, with Jo and Mrs. Corner, was in the sitting-room.

"Haven't you told her, mother?" said Nan. "Good! then I'll have all the fun of breaking the news. We're going from here. Madame Lemercier's going. We are all going."

"Are you trying to conjugate is going?" asked Mary Lee.

"No. Wait a minute and I'll tell you. Madame Lemercier has to close this house because her sister is ill in Switzerland. Result, the Corners are thrown out upon the wide wide world. Aunt Helen and I have been to see Miss Selby—you know Miss Selby, Mary Lee, the one who has that pretty studio, and is so entertaining—well, my child, listen; she knew of exactly what we want in the apartment-house where she is. Another artist has an apartment there, a big one, and he is very eager to rent it because he wants to go to Brittany. We looked at it and it will be all right, I think, though it has one bedroom short. However, we can eat in the living-room, and put up a cot in the dining-room for me or somebody. There is a *femme de menage* who goes with the apartment, and we can rent everything, even the table linen, the Huttons say. It's awfully cheap, too."

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"Where is it?" asked Mrs. Corner.

"Over in the Luxembourg quarter, mother mine, convenient to everything. Do let's go."

"It sounds all right," said Mrs. Corner. "What did you think of it, Helen?"

"It seemed just the thing to me, and we were most lucky to find it, I think. The Huttons go out on Monday, and we can move right in, bag and baggage, as soon after as we choose. Of course it is very artistic with sketches and studies on the walls, but it looked comfortable, and Mrs. Hutton seems to be a good housekeeper."

"It would be better if we could remain this side the river," said Mrs. Corner doubtfully. "I am afraid it will be rather hot over there."

"It is quite near the Luxembourg Gardens, and I noticed the rooms appeared airy and well ventilated. We are hardly likely to have warmer weather than that of the past week."

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"True. July is the hottest month. I'll go to-morrow and look at the place, if you can go with me, Helen. We may as well settle it at once if it is satisfactory."

"I shall be delighted to go with you, my dear," returned Miss Helen.

Jo, listening, looked rather subdued and thoughtful.

"Won't it be fun?" said Nan in an aside.

"For you, yes."

"And why not for Miss Josephine Keyes, pray?"

"I shall have to rejoin Miss Barnes and her girls. You know it was just because we rearranged the schedule so I'd have the chance to stay longer and give more time to French and German, that I was allowed to slip out of the party while they were doing Holland and Belgium."

"But it will be some time before they come to snatch you, and you surely will not desert us."

Jo brightened visibly. "Oh, would you really take me in, too? I thought maybe I would have to do something else; go into a school or something. I'm here for study, you see."

"You don't mean to say that you thought we would leave a single lamb to the ravening wolves of Paris?" said Nan. "I thought better of you, Jo."

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NAN VOLUNTEERED TO GO FOR SUPPLIES.

"But I would be perfectly safe in a convent or somewhere."

"*Naturellement*, but you don't go there unless you have a distinct yearning to do it. You are in mother's charge and she means to keep you under her eye."

"Then I must be the one to sleep in the dining-room."

"I've staked out that claim myself. You are to room with Mary Lee; we have settled it all."

The visit to the apartment was made by Mrs. Corner the next day, and resulted as Nan hoped it would, so the following Monday saw them move in with their belongings. Miss Joyce, upon being interviewed, was delighted to accept the proposition made her, but as there was not room in the apartment for her, Miss Selby, across the hall, offered her spare room for the time being, and so Miss Joyce became one of them, going on with her own studies and assisting the others in theirs.

"It is the greatest help in the world to me," she confided to the always sympathetic Miss Helen, "for I have to pinch and screw to make both ends meet. Madame Lemercier let me have my little room with her in consideration of my helping her with beginners, and with the prospect of being deprived of that source of supply, I was feeling rather blue, and pictured myself subsisting upon crusts in a garret. You dear people are so intuitive and have come to my rescue in such a sweet way, as if the favor were all on your side."

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The *femme de menage* failed to appear at the appointed hour, not quite understanding when she was expected, and Nan, who delighted in rising to occasions, volunteered to go forth for supplies. "There is a fascinating market not far off," she said. "We passed it the other day when we were coming here. And as for *crêmeres* and *boulângeries*, and all those, there is no end to them. I'll interview Miss Selby and get her to tell me the best places to order regularly. Who'll go to market with me?"

"I will, I will," came the chorus.

"Jack spoke first," said Nan, "so come on, sinner. Don't tell me what to get, mother. If I forget anything I'll go again, or the maid can when she comes. I am just longing for some of the things we can't get at a *pension* table. I am going to carry a net, just as the working people do. I don't care a snap who sees; it is only for once, anyhow. There is a nice smiling *concierge* lady downstairs, very different from that vinegar jug at Madame Lemercier's. You might give a list of groceries, mother. I am not so well up on those, and I can order them from Potin's."

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She and Jack started out gleefully, returning with their supplies after some time. Then the three older girls set to work to cook the second breakfast on the gas-range. The kitchen was a tiny one and the three quite filled it, but they managed very well and their efforts were received with great applause.

"Of all things," cried Mrs. Corner; "fried eggplant; my favorite dish."

"And sliced tomatoes with mayonnaise," said Miss Helen. "How delicious."

"Strawberries and cream! Strawberries and cream!" sang out Jean delightedly.

"And actually liver and bacon, a real home dish," said Miss Joyce. "Nan, you are a jewel."

"It's the best little market," said Nan. "There is everything under the shining sun to be found

there. I never saw so many kinds of fruits and vegetables, and they are really very cheap. Some of the things, the eggplants, for instance, look different from ours; they are a different shape and much smaller, but I saw most of the vegetables we are used to having at home, except green corn and sweet potatoes. As for the fruits, there are not only the home varieties but others, such as figs and some other queer things I don't know the name of. I bought the most delicious sort of canteloupe for to-morrow's breakfast, but it was more expensive than those we have at home."

[55]

"I almost wish we were to have no maid," said Mrs. Corner.

Nan laughed. "If you could see the array of pots and pans there are to wash you wouldn't wish. I hope Marie or Hortense or whatever her name may be, will soon appear, for I am tired." She fanned her hot face with a newspaper.

"You poor child; you have worked too hard," said her mother sympathetically. "We will have the *concierge* lady, as you call her, come in and do the dishes. That is one of the advantages of being here; there is never any trouble in getting a person in to do whatever you may wish to have done. This is delicious bread, Nan, better than we had at Passy."

"Miss Selby told me where to get it. They call these lovely yard long two-inch-diametered sticks, *baguettes*. Aren't they nice and crusty?"

Mrs. Corner ate her meal with more relish than she had shown for some time and Nan was satisfied that the move was a good one.

The maid did not appear till the next morning, so the whole party dined at a queer little restaurant near by, staying to listen to the music and to watch the people come and go. Nan prepared the morning coffee which was pronounced the best since the home days, and as the baker had not failed to leave an adequate number of *baguettes*, and the milk and cream were promptly served, there was no need to go forth for the early meal.

[56]

Jack sighed over leaving her friend, the *cocher*, and the two little playmates, Clemence and Pauline, but she soon became interested in a beautiful cat, called Mousse, which lived in the drug store below, and who played a number of clever tricks, these being displayed by his master with great pride. Jack discovered, too, that the *concierge* had a parrot, so the child found her entertainment here as easily as she had done elsewhere. Jean was satisfied with dolls and books in any place, and moreover, being very fond of good things, thought the change from Madame Lemercier's rather frugal table one to be approved. Mary Lee and Jo found plenty to do in watching the life which went on in the streets, while Nan liked to go further afield to the market which she declared was as amusing as a farce. "I wish you could see the bartering for a piece of meat," she told the family. "There is one butcher I could watch all day. I never saw such expressive contortions, such gesturings, such rollings of eyes and puffings out of cheeks, and then to see a scrap of a Frenchwoman wriggle her fingers contemptuously under his very nose, while he looks fierce enough to bite them off, is as funny a performance as I ever beheld. Then after they have squabbled, and shrieked and abused each other long enough they end up with such smiles and polite airs as you never saw. You should hear Hortense answer the market people. She always has just the smartest and sauciest things to say, and how they do enjoy that sort of thing. Besides the market itself is really a sight to see. Even a stall with nothing but artichokes on it will be made attractive by a fringe of ferns, and as to the hand-carts piled with flowers, they ought to be a joy to any artist. I counted twenty different varieties of vegetables to-day, and as many kinds of fruit. We can scarcely do better than that in America at the same time of year. Oh, no, I wouldn't miss going to market for anything. I feel so important with Hortense walking respectfully behind me, ready with advice and polite attentions."

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Tall, slight, dark-haired Nan was nearly sixteen. "My girl is growing up," sighed her mother. "She has the nest-building instinct, Helen. We shall not have her as a little girl much longer."

"She has still some years left," returned Miss Helen. "She has many childish ways at times, in spite of her being the eldest, and of having had more responsibility than the others. When she enters college it will be time enough to think that womanhood is not far off."

[58]

Nan, Mary Lee and Jo had just set to work at their French history. Nan was discoursing fluently, flourishing her book as she talked. "And here in these very streets it went on," she said. "Can you realize, girls? Fancy the Louvre seeing so many wonderful historical events. It was from there that the order went forth for the massacre of the Huguenots on that dreadful night of St. Bartholomew, and—"

"I don't want to fancy," Jo interrupted. "It is bad enough if you don't try to. It's too grewsome, Nan, to talk about."

"But it impresses it on one so vividly to talk about it, and we shall remember it so much better; besides I like to imagine."

"I don't see the good of it when it is all over and gone," said Mary Lee. "There is no use shedding tears over people who have been dead and in their graves a hundred years. That is just like you, Nan, to get all worked up over things that are past and forgotten."

"They never will be forgotten," maintained Nan, "unless you forget them, which you are very liable to do, if you take no more interest. Well, then, if you must be slicked up and smoothed down by something sweet and agreeable, pick it out for yourself; I am going to study to learn and not because I want to feel comfortable."

[59]

"There's the *facteur*," interrupted Jo. "Let's see who has letters." She rushed to the door to be the first to receive the postman's sheaf of mail. "One for you, Nan," she sang out; "another for Mrs. Corner; one for me,—that's good,—and actually one for Jack. Two for you, Nan, for here's another."

Nan had already torn open the envelope of her first letter and was eagerly scanning the contents. "Just wait a minute," she said. "This is exciting. Please put the other letter somewhere, Jo, till I get through with this. Oh, I do wonder——"

"What is it, Nan?" asked Mary Lee, seeing Nan's excitement.

"Wait one minute. It's——"

"You're so exasperating," said Mary Lee. "You just jerk out a word and then stop without giving a body an inkling of what you mean."

"I'll tell you in one minute. I must finish reading."

Seeing there was no getting at facts till Nan had come to the end of her letter, Mary Lee gave up in despair and went off to deliver the other mail. But before she returned Nan had rushed wildly to her mother, and Mary Lee found the two in lively conversation. "Oh, but can't we?" she heard as she opened the door of her mother's room. [60]

"Can't we? What we?" she asked.

"You and I, anyhow," returned Nan. "It is a letter from Mr. St. Nick. He and Miss Dolores are at San Sebastian. Tell her, mother. Oh, do say we can go."

"There, Nan, dear, don't be so impatient," returned Mrs. Corner. "Just wait till we can talk it over. It cannot be decided all in one minute, besides, I have not had time to read my own letter yet. I see it is from Mr. Pinckney, and I have no doubt but that it is upon the same subject."

"I wish you would tell me what it is all about," said Mary Lee despairingly.

Nan thrust her letter into her sister's hand. "There," she said, "read it for yourself."

This Mary Lee proceeded to do while Nan hovered near, trying to gather from her mother's expression what she thought of the proposition which Mr. Pinckney had made.

"It is out of the question for us all to go," said Mrs. Corner as she laid down her letter. "We have taken this apartment and have made all our arrangements, and to allow even you and Mary Lee to take that long journey alone is something I could not think of." [61]

"Oh, mother!" Nan's voice expressed bitter disappointment.

"If there is any one country above another that I do want to see, it is Spain," said Mary Lee sighing as she handed back the letter she had been reading.

"I am sorry, but I don't see how it can be managed," returned Mrs. Corner. "However, I will talk to your Aunt Helen about it and——"

"If there can be a way managed you'll let us go, won't you?" Nan put in impatiently. "If we should happen to find any one going that way who would chaperon us it would be all right, wouldn't it? Mr. St. Nick said he would meet us anywhere the other side of Bordeaux. He suggested Biarritz and there must be thousands of people going there."

"There may be thousands, and doubtless are, but if we don't know any one of them it would not do any good."

"We surely must know one," replied Nan still hopeful.

"Let's go and watch for Aunt Helen," said Mary Lee, as eager as Nan for once. She adored Miss Dolores and had looked forward to meeting her with her grandfather, so now to have the opportunity thrown at them, as Nan said, and not to be able to take advantage of it seemed a cruel thing. They went back to the living-room to pour out their enthusiasm to Jo, who looked a little wistful though she was greatly interested. [62]

"I should miss you awfully," she said, "though Miss Barnes and the other girls will be coming along soon, and I should have to go anyhow, I suppose."

"It won't be so very long even if we do go," Nan assured her; "not more than a month."

"Oh, I shall keep busy improving each shining hour," said Jo cheerfully, "and it will be so good to have you back again."

"That's one way of looking at it," laughed Nan. "Oh, I do hope we can go."

"Go where?" asked Jack who had just come in.

"To Spain," Nan told her. "Mr. St. Nick has written to say that he will not take no for an answer. He wanted the whole Corner family to come, but mother says it is out of the question, so it has dwindled down to Mary Lee and I, if any one goes at all. Who's your letter from?"

"Carter."

"Carter? Well, he is nice not to forget us. What does he say?"

"Read it." Jack handed over her letter which Nan must have found not only interesting but amusing, as she laughed many times before she had finished reading. "Cart is a nice boy," she said as she folded up the sheet. "I shall be glad to see him again."

[63]

"It will be many a long day before you do," remarked Mary Lee.

"Not so long as you think, maybe," returned Nan. "He may come abroad in the spring, and says perhaps we can meet in Italy if we are there then."

"We're pretty sure to be, for we shall not leave Munich before March, Aunt Helen says."

"There's Aunt Helen now," exclaimed Jack who was watching from the window. And the appearance of Miss Corner put an end to all thoughts of Carter Barnwell for the time being.

Nan projected herself so suddenly upon the little figure that it staggered under the onslaught. "Oh, Aunt Helen," she cried, "blessed and always helpful godmother, the fairest of fairy godmothers, we do so want to go to Spain and you must use your fairy wand to create a chaperon for us. Make her out of anything, old rags, toads, anything, anything, so we get her. Please do."

"What are you talking about, you catapult. You have nearly knocked the breath out of me, you great big Newfoundland dog trying to be a terrier pup. You forget I am not your superior in size if I am in years. Let me get off my hat and give me breathing space, then tell me what the excitement is."

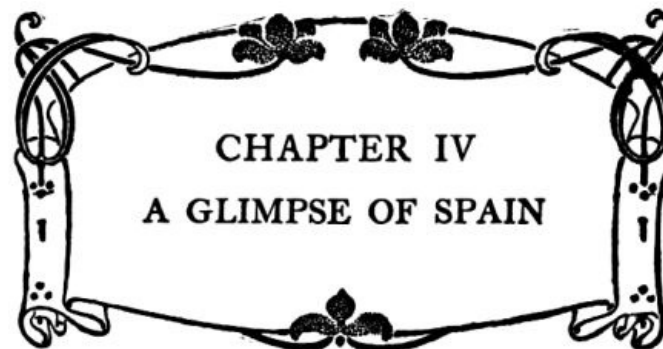
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Nan released her aunt and allowed her to collect her senses before she told her tale which was listened to attentively. "I'd love to have you go," said Miss Helen.

"Of course you would. You are always that sort of dear thing."

"But just at present I don't see how it is to be managed. However, I will put on my thinking-cap and perhaps the next twenty-four hours will bring me an idea."

"When Aunt Helen puts on her thinking-cap a thing is as good as done," declared Nan to Mary Lee, and both felt quite sure that the journey to Spain would be undertaken.



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CHAPTER IV A GLIMPSE OF SPAIN

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SURE enough the faith Nan had in her aunt was not without foundation, for that very evening Miss Helen learned from her friend, Miss Selby, that the next week an acquaintance was going as far as Poitiers, and that there would probably be no difficulty in arranging to have her act as chaperon to Nan and Mary Lee as far as that city.

"And really," Miss Selby assured Miss Corner, "it will be perfectly safe to allow them to go on alone as far as Biarritz, for it is not a long journey, and their friend will meet them. They can both speak French fluently enough to get along perfectly, and I have several safe addresses which I can give them in case their train should be delayed, or in case their friend fails to arrive on time. I have an acquaintance at Bordeaux and another at Biarritz, so in case of delay all they will have to do will be to take a cab to either address. I will give them notes of introduction so they will have no trouble whatever."

Miss Helen was enough of a traveler herself to feel that this would be sufficient precaution, but Mrs. Corner demurred, and at first could not be persuaded to give her consent to the girls traveling any of the distance alone, but at last she yielded and wrote to Mr. Pinckney that he might expect her two elder daughters to arrive at Biarritz on a certain day, and the two set off in high spirits.

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"It's such fun to go bobbing along the streets of Paris in a cab," said Nan, "to take your luggage

along with you and not to have to bother about street-cars or anything. I wish we had such nice cheap cab service at home, don't you, Aunt Helen?"

"That is one of the advantages upon which I am afraid I do set a higher value than my friends at home would have me. There are several things on this side the water which I claim are advances upon our system at home, and because I say so my friends often think I am unpatriotic. But never mind. There is the Gare d'Orsay where we are to find Miss Cameron. Look out for your pocketbook, Nan, and be sure not to lose your ticket."

Miss Cameron was found promptly and in a few minutes the girls were established in their train. They were glad to be able to whisper together for Miss Cameron had a friend who was going as far as Orleans, and who shared the compartment with them, therefore, Mary Lee and Nan were not called upon to take part in the conversation. [69]

It was still light when they reached the pretty town of Poitiers which, set upon a hill, looked picturesque and interesting as the travelers left the train and were borne up a steep incline to their hotel.

"It is a perfectly dear place," decided Nan enthusiastically. "We must get some post-cards, Mary Lee, and send them off to mother and the rest of the family."

"We mustn't forget poor old Jo," said Mary Lee. "I know she is missing us this blessed minute."

"Who is Jo?" asked Miss Cameron.

"One of our school friends who came over with us. She won the prize of a trip to Europe and has been with us right along." Nan gave the information. "Tell us something about Poitiers, Miss Cameron."

There was nothing Miss Cameron would like better to do. She was a teacher who was spending her vacation abroad and was enjoying it hugely. She was neither young nor beautiful, but had a way with her, Nan confided to Mary Lee, and both girls liked her. "I should like to go to her school," Nan said to her sister.

"So should I," Mary Lee whispered in return. So they asked many things about the school which was in Washington, and by the time they had learned all they wanted to know, the top of the hill was reached and they turned into a winding street which led to the quiet hotel where they were to stay over night. [70]

"When we have had dinner," said Miss Cameron, "we can go to the Parc de Blossac where we shall see the people and hear the band. I'd like you to see something of the town before we leave to-morrow. There are two or three nice old churches and the little baptistry of St. Jean is said to be the oldest Christian edifice still existing in France."

"I am sure I shall like to see that," declared Nan, who loved things old and romantic. "I like the looks of this place, anyhow," she went on. "It is perched so high and has an interesting air as if it had looked out of its windows and had seen things. Then the people are nice, wholesome appearing men and women, quite different from those you see in Paris. Their faces are more earnest and good, somehow."

Miss Cameron looked pleased. "You are quite a critical observer, Nan," she said. "I quite agree with you, for I haven't a doubt but that your impressions are correct. But here we are. We will not make toilettes, but will only brush off the dust and have our dinners."

The dining-room was airy and pleasant, and the dinner good; after it was over there was still daylight enough for them to find the way easily to the Parc de Blossac. They discovered this to be a pretty, restful spot, as they hoped it would be, and the hour they spent there added to their pleasant impression of the little city. [71]

They were up betimes the next morning for they wanted to make the most of the few hours they should have. To the consternation of all three it was ascertained that Miss Cameron, who was going in a different direction, would be obliged to take an earlier train than the girls would.

"I am so sorry," she said. "I was sure there would be a train south before so late in the day, but as my friends, who are to meet me, will have to drive some distance, I don't see very well how I can fail to keep my promise of arriving on time."

"We shall do very well," Nan assured her. "We will ask very particularly before we get on the train if it is the one for Biarritz, and there will not be a bit of trouble, I am sure. We have very little luggage, you know."

"And I am sure I can see that it gets on all right," said Mary Lee.

"I am so sorry," repeated Miss Cameron looking quite worried. "It never seemed within the bounds of possibility that there should be no train before that hour. If my friends were near telegraph offices and such things I could wire them, but a French *chateau* near only to a small village is too unget-at-able for words." [72]

The girls continued to protest that they would have no difficulty at all, and finally Miss Cameron yielded to their protests that she must leave them to take care of themselves, and at last waved them a farewell from her car window. "Be sure you send me a card that I may know you have arrived safely," were her last words, and they promised.

But it must be confessed that when they faced each other, two strangers far from home and mother, they felt a little sinking at heart.

"Do you think we need sit here in this station for a mortal hour and a half?" asked Mary Lee. "Couldn't we walk about a little?"

"I suppose so," Nan responded a little doubtfully, "but we must be sure to come back in time. We've seen the cathedral and the baptistry. We have seen the outside of St. Hilaire-le Grand, and the inside of St. Radegunde and Notre-Dame la-Grande. We have been to the Parc de Blossac and up and down a number of the streets. I wonder what else there is to see that we could do in an hour."

"It is an awful walk up that hill and it is warm."

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"I should say it was in a noonday sun. We might go a little way very slowly. I have been longing to go up on that nice craggy place and look down. When we get back we will buy some post-cards and send them off; that will pass away the time."

They mounted the steep hill for a short distance, stood for a while looking up and looking down, then returned to the station and started toward the little stand where they had seen some post-cards. As Nan opened the small bag she carried, she gave an exclamation of dismay. "Mary Lee," she cried, "have you my pocketbook?"

"No," was the answer.

"It's gone." Nan looked hurriedly through her larger bag which held their toilet articles, Mary Lee watching her anxiously. "It's gone," she repeated, "clean gone, and there is no time to go back and look for it."

"Do you think you could have left it at the hotel?" Mary Lee asked. "We could write and get them to send it if it is found."

"No, I am sure it is not there. I had it when we stopped to buy the chocolate. I paid for that, you know. After we left that shop I remember that the catch of my little wrist bag came unfastened; it caught in something. I shut it up without looking, but the pocketbook must have fallen out then, for it was right on top. Of course some one picked it up and there is no use hunting for it; we haven't time. Thank fortune! the tickets are safe, and the bulletin, or whatever they call it, for the baggage."

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"Had you much money in it?"

"About twenty-five francs and some loose change. Mother said I'd better not carry more. I have a check which I am to get Mr. Pinckney to have cashed for us, and if we need more it is to be sent, though mother thought the amount of the check would be ample. How much have you, Mary Lee?"

Mary Lee opened her purse and counted. "About ten francs and a few centimes."

"That ought to take us through, if we don't have any delays or accidents," said Nan, though she looked a little worried. "Fortunately we have paid our hotel bill here, and we have those notes of introduction that Miss Selby gave us. I have no doubt but that at one of those places they would cash our check even if Mr. Pinckney should fail to meet us, so it isn't quite as bad as it might be." She spoke reassuringly, though she was in some doubt about the matter. "I am glad we have that chocolate," she went on. "We won't get the post-cards, for we have already sent one to mother from the hotel. When we get to Bordeaux, instead of having a hearty meal, we can get some rolls or something and save the money in case of an emergency."

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Mary Lee said nothing, though she felt that Nan had been careless. It was very like her not to look in her bag to see if all were safe after it became unfastened. She was always so absorbed in what was going on around her, and had not the exact and precise ways of her younger sister. Mary Lee would never have budged till she was certain that every article she carried was in place. Nan was grateful for her sister's silence, for Mary Lee was not given to holding her tongue on such occasions.

"I think that must be our train," remarked the latter. "I am sure one is coming." She looked sharply to see that the umbrellas and bags were not left, and followed the trunks till she saw them safely on the train, then she climbed into place by Nan's side, breathing a sigh of relief.

The two girls were silent for some time after the train began to move. They felt rather depressed. All sorts of possibilities loomed up before them. Presently Nan said, "I wonder if we have to change cars. I saw that this train was marked Bordeaux, but I didn't see any Biarritz on it."

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"We'd better ask at the next stop. You do it, Nan; you are so much more glib with your French than I am."

Nan made her inquiry in due course of time and found that the change must be made. "But it is in the same station," she told Mary Lee, "and our baggage is booked through, so there will be no trouble, the guard says."

"I hope it won't be dark when we get to Biarritz," said Mary Lee after a while.

"I am afraid it will be, but I am sure Mr. St. Nick will be on hand. You know Miss Cameron telegraphed to him as soon as we knew what train we should take. I had no idea that the train would take so many hours, though, and neither did she. However, he will be there all right."

But in spite of her show of confidence, the elder girl did have her misgivings, and the two were rather quiet as the daylight faded. They ate their chocolate and rolls pensively, feeling rather ashamed at having so frugal a meal till they saw two of their fellow passengers, well-dressed personages, cheerfully supping upon like fare which they, too, had providently carried with them.

"I don't believe it makes a bit of difference about doing such things in France, at least," Nan whispered. "You know the French are very frugal, and even well-to-do people practice economies we would never think of." [77]

It was dark indeed when they left their train at Biarritz and Mary Lee kept very close to her tall sister as they stood waiting on the platform. "Suppose he isn't here," she said tremulously.

"Then we will take a cab to that address Miss Selby gave us," said Nan bravely, though feeling a sinking of heart as she thought of doing even that.

But at that moment a portly form approached and a hearty voice called out, "There you are, you poor little chicks. I *am* glad to see you."

"You aren't half as glad to see us as we are to see you," returned Mary Lee fervently.

"Your train was an hour late," Mr. Pinckney told them; "but what can you expect in this country?" he added.

"Oh, they are never late in ours, are they?" laughed Nan. "It is good to see you, Mr. St. Nick. When I beheld your dear big round self coming toward us I could have shouted with joy, for we were feeling a little bit scared."

"Tut, tut, how was that? You don't mean to say you came from Paris alone?"

"Oh, no, mother would never have allowed that, and she would never have allowed us to venture anyhow, if she had known how things really did turn out." She gave him an account of their journey ending with the tale of her lost pocketbook. "And so, you see," she said, "we were a little bit afraid we might not have enough to get through on, and we hated to go to a strange *pension* and not have enough money to pay our way." [78]

"Too bad, too bad," said Mr. Pinckney. "I ought to have come all the way to get you."

"But that wasn't necessary," Nan told him, "and it is all over now. It was only a scare and not a real danger, you see, for we had a most quiet and uneventful journey from Poitiers. An infant in arms could have taken it with perfect propriety."

"Especially if it had been in arms," put in Mary Lee.

"That sounds just like Miss Propriety, Prunes and Prisms," said Mr. Pinckney. "Well, my dears, your rooms are all ready, and you have nothing more to bother about from this time on."

"And is Miss Dolores with you?" asked Mary Lee.

"Left her at San Sebastian. It is nothing of a run there, you know. You will see her to-morrow."

After this there was no more trouble, and the girls gave themselves up to listening to the plans made for their pleasure. They were too tired to lie awake long, but they awoke in the morning full of enthusiasm, ready to enjoy the dainty breakfast prepared for them and served in loveliest of gardens. Mr. Pinckney would not hurry them away before they had seen the beautiful coast of the famous watering-place, and insisted upon their having a little drive around before their train should leave. [79]

"And this is where the young King of Spain used to come to see the queen when she was Princess Ena," Nan told Mary Lee.

"I wish they were here now," returned Mary Lee.

"You may have a chance to see them before you leave Spain," Mr. Pinckney told her, "for they travel about a good deal."

"Before we leave Spain! Doesn't that sound fascinating?" cried Mary Lee.

"What! You think it will be fascinating to leave us?" said Mr. Pinckney in pretended surprise.

"Oh, dear, it did sound so. No, indeed. I never want to be long away from you and dear Miss Dolores, Mr. St. Nick," Mary Lee hastened to say.

"That sounds more like it," he answered.

"Are we going to stay right in San Sebastian?" asked Nan.

"For only a few days, then we are going further up the coast. Oh, you will like it, you two. It is real typical Spanish life that you will see and such scenery! Well, of course, we are not backward in boasting of our own scenery, but we can't match these Spaniards. They are the most frankly self-appreciative people I ever saw. Talk about American self-esteem, it is nowhere. You'd think [80]

there was never a mountain, a river, a valley, a field, a church or a house, a man, woman, or even a donkey that quite came up to those on Spanish soil. It is amusing, generally speaking, and I suppose it is what they mean by Spanish pride, but I get a trifle tired sometimes of the everlasting bombast, and have to do a little boasting on my own account that they may understand they have a few half-way decent things on the other side of the water. I like them, too. Hospitable, just like you Virginians. Kind-hearted, courteous—again like you people from the Old Dominion. All Dolores' kith and kin are prepared to take you in and give you as good a time as can be had. There is nothing they won't do for you, and do it gladly."

It was when they had arrived at San Sebastian that they first realized that they were really in Spain. "See that dear donkey with panniers at his sides," said Mary Lee.

"And that queer ox-cart," continued Nan; "no, it is cow-carts they have in Spain. Don't they look like pictures of the old Roman carts?" [81]

"They are practically the same," Mr. Pinckney told her. "You will find that Spain retains many ancient methods and customs."

"And there is a woman wearing a mantilla, the first we have seen," Nan went on. "Now, I know we are in Spain. What a beautiful blue, blue sea, and how gay it looks on the Esplanade, do they call it? Oh, Mr. St. Nick, it is a beautiful place. I am glad we are to be here for a few days."

Miss Dolores came running to meet them, and bore them away to their room next to hers in the pleasant hotel where they were to stop. And then began the happiest of times, for if they were not driving around the pretty town, they were walking on the Esplanade watching the crowds of people from everywhere, or they sat on the piazza and saw the gaily dressed guests come and go. So passed the rest of the week, and then they left this favorite Spanish watering-place to go to a less well-known, but no less interesting spot further along the coast.

There was wonderful scenery to be seen from the car windows the entire way; great mountains towered above them, picturesque villages lay in valleys below. Corn-fields either side the road reminded them of their own Virginia. "It does me good to look at them," declared Nan. "I'd almost believe myself near my own home if I didn't see a donkey or a cow-cart every little while." [82]

"Do you see that gray building perched away up there?" Mr. Pinckney directed her attention to a monastery crowning a hill. "That was built in the tenth century. It is nearly a thousand years old."

"Dear, dear, how very young I feel," laughed Nan.

"It makes me feel very young myself," declared Mr. Pinckney. "I am a mere infant compared to this old civilization."

"There's the sea, the sea! and the mountains go almost down to meet it," cried Nan. "This surely is grand scenery; I don't wonder they boast of it. Now, it is like waltzing with Willy; we go round, around, around. Ah, we are going up again. There is another tunnel ahead. We stop at Bilbao to-night, you said. What is it like?"

"A nice clean little commercial city. Nothing very remarkable to see there, but it is pleasant and cheerful as well as comfortable, a well-ordered town. You will notice all the Spanish features there; cow-carts and donkeys, women carrying trays of fish or bread on their heads. Sometimes there will be a pair of wooden shoes on top of the fish and an umbrella on top of the shoes. Everything is carried up there, it seems, and they walk along quite unconsciously. Our rooms look out on the Arenal, so you will have a chance to see the street life of the cities before we go off into the provincial districts." [83]

They reached Bilbao by dark, but from their windows they could look down upon the brightly lighted streets, could hear the band play in the little park opposite, and could realize that they were really in the land of Don Quixote.

The next afternoon found them arrived in a pretty little village nestled at the foot of the mountains. The great house into which they were ushered was called the *palacio*, and was centuries old. A high wall surrounded the garden where flowers blossomed the year round. The bare floors were of oaken planks hewn by hand. Outside the windows the balconies bore hanging vines or boxes of pinks, the Spaniard's favorite flower. In the *patio* pigeons strutted about, the little house dog rested in the shade of the orange trees, and a thrush sang sweetly from its cage hung in the doorway.

"It is something like California," whispered Mary Lee to her sister.

"Of course," returned Nan. "California was Spanish not so many years ago." [84]

It was but a few minutes before a girl a little older than Nan came down to meet them. "E ahm glahd to zee you," she said smiling and putting out her hand.

Miss Dolores laughed. "Mercedes has been practicing that sentence for days. It is the only English she knows. This is my cousin, Mercedes Cabrales," she went on, "and these," she spoke in Spanish, "are my friends, Nan and Mary Lee Corner. You must all call each other by your first name; we do so in Spain."

Mercedes led the way up the front stairs and took the girls into a lofty room, rather scantily

furnished but comfortable. There she left them with a parting nod and smile.

Nan went to the window. "I see mountains everywhere," she said, "and the sea is just over that hill, Mr. St. Nick says. That dismal creak is not the hum of a large variety of mosquito, Mary Lee, but it is a cow-cart. In these country places they wouldn't do away with the creak for anything because otherwise how would they know when to wait on the widest part of a narrow road till the cart coming in the opposite direction had passed? Isn't it all queer and different from anywhere else? There are two parrots next door; I hear them, and that must be a chapel where the little bell is hanging in the belfry. I love these balconies. The big ones are *gallerias* and the little ones *miradores*. There are lovely gardens behind all those stone walls, and the roads lead on up, up the mountains. Mr. St. Nick has been telling me all about it." And then Miss Dolores tapped at the door and they all went down to meet Doña Teresa and her son Don Antonio.

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CHAPTER V

A FIESTA

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ALTHOUGH Mercedes could not speak English she knew French very well, and therefore through this medium the girls were able to become well acquainted. They found this new friend a simple-hearted, gentle Spanish girl with an eager mind, and such accomplishments as gave a denial to the impression that Spanish girls must not be expected to be in the least intellectual. She and her sister had a French governess for several years and were to have an English one the following year. "So," said Mercedes, "the next time you come I shall speak to you in English."

"It makes me quite ashamed of myself to hear how well she speaks French," said Nan, "and to know that she expects to master English and German, to say nothing of Italian. I feel now that I must work harder than ever at languages. What stupid things we are compared to her. She speaks French like a native, is quite at home with Italian, and has a reading knowledge of German. When shall I know so much as all that? Don't you like her, Mary Lee? She has such lovely dark eyes and such pretty soft hair, then she is so ready to do things for you and to think of things to please you."

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"I think she is a dear," agreed Mary Lee. "I am wild to see her in her *aldeana* costume. She is to wear it to-morrow, and she is teaching me the *jota*. We must both learn it, Nan, and you must get the music for it. It would be fun to have costumes and do the dance when we go home."

"That would be great," declared Nan. "I wonder why they call them *aldeana* costumes?"

"Oh, don't you know? *Aldeana* simply means peasant, or as we would say, country costumes. I asked Miss Dolores. Mercedes will wear the peasant costume of this part of Asturias, you see."

"I understand. There come two of those funny squeaking cow-carts. What a noise they make. I am glad it is the haying season, for I think those carts piled up with hay and led by a tall man or a peasant woman carrying a long pole across the shoulders are such picturesque things."

"Everything is picturesque," agreed Mary Lee. "I love those dear little soft-nosed burros, only I wish the people treated them better. I saw a girl on one this morning. She was making it go very fast, and I wondered why it was going at such a gait till I saw she was sticking a long pin into it every few steps."

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"They are cruel to the donkeys," acknowledged Nan, "but I think they are very good to the other animals. The poor burros get the worst of it, and seem to be creatures made only for ridicule and abuse. Oh, Mary Lee, I do believe that is a band of gipsies coming, real Spanish gipsies. Aren't they interesting? I suppose they are coming for the *fiesta*. Look at those two children with scarcely a rag on. Did you ever see such wild-looking, impish little things? And the man with the velveteen coat and red sash, do see his big *sombrero*. I hope we shall see them again." She turned from the window to greet Mercedes who came in to bid them come down to the *patio* to practice the *jota*.

Her pretty peasant dress was all ready for the morning, for it was quite the thing for others than the mere peasants to adopt the local dress on such occasions. She would wear a short red skirt with bands of black velvet around it, and smocked at the belt. Her brocade bodice trimmed with jet would partly cover her white chemisette. Around her neck she would wear a long chain with a handsome old reliquary attached to it. Very long filagree earrings would be fastened upon her ears, and upon her head she would wear a gay silk handkerchief tied in a peculiar way. A fancy apron of yellow silk completed the costume. Miss Dolores had consented to wear a *manta de Manila* or soft shawl wound gracefully around her, and in her hair a red *clavel*.

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"You, too, must wear a *clavel*," said Mercedes, "for you are to dance the *jota*, and if you will, you can also wear *mantas de Manila*. You shall have Antonio for a partner and when not him, I will dance with you."

The little village where the *fiesta* was to take place was but a short distance away. The entire Cabrales family, which included Doña Teresa, her son Antonio, Mercedes and the two younger daughters, Maria Isabel and Consuelo, went with their guests, so theirs was quite a large party which arrived in front of the old church in time to hear the rocket-bombs, and to see the great *ramas*, or pyramids of bread, carried inside. Then all entered the ancient, low-arched edifice, where glimmering candles at the altar gave the only light. Upon the bare floor were many kneeling figures of women wearing black *mantillas*. The men occupied the gallery above the rear of the church, or stood at the back near the door.

"Isn't it solemn?" whispered Nan to her sister.

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Just then with the chanting of the priests was mingled the song of a canary, then another chirped up, and a third joined in, so that all through the service the little songsters did their part.

"You will see the *danza prima* here," Miss Dolores had told them. "It is the most ancient and primitive of the Spanish religious dances. It can hardly be called a dance, in fact. And the *ramas*? They are huge pyramids on which are hung circular loaves of bread, and which are adorned with flowers and branches of green; that is why they are called *ramas*. They indicate the fruits of the harvest."

So when the moment came for the young men of the village to bear forth the *ramas*, the girls watched eagerly to see the body of maidens, in *aldeana* dress, taking a peculiar step backward, always backward, and beating their tambourines and drums while they sang a monotonous chant. The figure of the Virgin, in dazzling array, preceded the *ramas*, and as the procession issued into the open air again the rocket-bombs went up again. Women carrying tall lighted candles brought up the rear of the procession which moved around the church. The *ramas* were set up again outside while the Virgin was carried back to her shrine and then the real *fiesta* began.

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"Almost all the *fiestas* have some special feature, some religious dance to distinguish them from one another," Miss Dolores told the girls. "At Llanes they have a very old dance called the *danza peregrino*, or dance of the pilgrims which is supposed to date back, no one knows how many centuries, to the days of the pilgrims, and the cockle-shells and staves are still conspicuous in the dress the children wear when they give the dance. At Ribadasella they have a procession of boats upon the water, which is quite pretty."

"I'd like to see that," said Nan.

"Perhaps we shall be able to. Now, we will wander about a while to see the people and the booths before the dancing begins."

"Why, it's just like a fair," remarked Mary Lee. And indeed, to see the stands where cakes, beer and wine were offered for sale, to see the women squatting on the ground in front of baskets of nuts or fruit, to see the merry-go-round and the merry crowd made one think that it might be anything but a religious occasion.

"The dancing has begun," cried Mercedes. "You must come." She urged the girls forward to where upon the grass two lines had formed, the men opposite the girls. A man with a violin and a woman with a drum were beginning the music of the *jota*, and presently Nan found herself opposite Don Antonio while Mary Lee had Mercedes for her *vis-à-vis*. Don Antonio was a tall, serious-looking lad of nineteen, but when with arms aloft, he snapped his fingers, and took graceful steps, he seemed quite a different person from the grave young man who had ventured but a few remarks to the American girls. Nan soon caught the spirit of the dance, while Mary Lee, under the teaching of Mercedes, was presently snapping her fingers and taking her steps with the best. It was energetic exercise and they were rather tired when the last notes of the *jota* ended.

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"Now let us go and have some cider and cakes," proposed Mercedes.

"Cider? Do you have cider here?" asked Nan.

"Oh, yes," was the reply. "In Asturias we raise many apples, and cider is a favorite drink. I see Antonio has supplied us with cakes. We will go over there under the trees and have our feast and then we will walk down by the sea."

"I am so glad to see so many in peasant dress. Why don't the men wear it?" Mary Lee put the question.



MARY LEE WAS SNAPPING HER FINGERS AND TAKING HER STEPS.

"*Americanos?*"

"Yes. They go to Buenos Ayres, to Mexico, to Venezuela, and when they come back they do not wear any more the *aldeana* dress, and they are always called *Americanos*."

"And what are we?" Nan put the question, a little puzzled to know how she and her sister would be distinguished. If they were not Americans what could they be?

"Oh, you are *Inglesas*," Mercedes told her.

"Because we speak English, I suppose." Nan was not quite sure that she liked this method of classification.

"Oh, yes, that is why, certainly," returned Mercedes. "See there is a man over there wearing the Asturian cap, the old man with a long peaked cap which hangs down one side."

"And so you don't call us *Americanos*," Mary Lee returned to the subject, after looking at the man with the peaked cap.

Mercedes smiled and shook her head.

"I always forget there is any America but the United States," said Mary Lee, "but of course South Americans have just as much right to be called so as we have. Dear me, do see that poor deformed creature, and there is another." She stood appalled and again Mercedes smiled.

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"They always come to the *fiestas*, and they are not so deformed as they appear though they must be truly so, and must show that they are else they might be taken for impostors." She stopped to give each of the supplicants a copper coin. "The big coppers are *perronos* or the big dogs," she explained, "the little ones, *perrinas*, or little dogs," and each of the Corner girls took a *perrono* from her purse to put into the outstretched hands.

"Ah, there are the Gallegos; you will like them." And Mercedes hurried them forward to join a crowd gathered around two women, one with a guitar, the other with a tambourine. They were saucy, mirthful looking creatures who turned knowing eyes upon the strangers and after whispering to one or two of the nearest bystanders, broke forth into a fresh song which caused much amusement.

"What are they saying?" asked Nan, as she saw all eyes turned in her direction.

Mercedes laughed. "They are singing about you. They say you are like a *clavel* with your pink cheeks, and that Mary Lee is a golden bird. They say you should be in the queen's court and that your husbands will be sure to occupy high places."

"Oh, dear!" Nan looked this way and that, feeling very conscious, to the delight of the audience. To be made the subject of improvisation seemed to the girls a very unusual experience, but presently they realized that it was a very common thing here in Spain, that it was meant as a compliment, so when the tambourine was passed around each girl dropped in her offering and the Gallegos smilingly started in a new direction.

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More dancing and more feasting. The grass was trodden into the dust; the piles of cakes were perceptibly diminished; more people were arriving. The train brought numbers from the nearest towns and villages; carriages drove up with occupants dressed in their best. There were two sets of couples for the next *jota* in which even small children in the *aldeana* dress joined, all being perfectly familiar with the step.

An Andalusian with a sweet worn voice trolled out his ballads in a minor key at one end of the grounds; at the other end a blind violinist drew his bow raspily and in cracked tones sang a wild Asturian melody. The lame beggars hopped hither and thither, the paralyzed ones crawled nearer, the maimed accosted each newcomer.

Soon the bright daylight began to fade. Long shadows crept across the grass, the ancient church, ten centuries old, grew grayer in the failing light. "One more look at the sea and then we go," said Mercedes. So they wandered down to the rocky shore where great crags rose on every side. Beyond these sparkled the Cantabrian sea which, softening the air, made it possible for chestnuts and orange trees, palms and apple trees, to live in neighborly fashion. [99]

"We have flowers in our garden the year around," Mercedes told them, "and even when there is snow on the mountains it is not so very cold here."

"I know it is perfectly beautiful now," responded Nan. "August and no great heat, the sea so near and no sharp winds. It is perfect. The kind of weather that is just right, and that you don't have to think about one way or the other."

"What wonderful caves there seem to be about here," said Mary Lee looking off toward the rocks.

"There are a great many, and the old folks tell you that they are inhabited by fairy folk, the *inxanos*, we call them, tiny little people who live underground and build these rocky houses for themselves."

"Oh, I'd love to hear about them." The subject appealed to Nan's fancy. "Do people really think there are such fairies?"

"Some of the peasants do, and they have great tales to tell. Then there are the *xanos* who are water fairies and live in the streams and fountains. You must see the great caves near our village. I will take you to them to-morrow. We must go up the mountain, too, and there is a place not so very far away, from which you can see a great distance. We shall drive home to-day and you can see the Peaks of Europe, our highest peaks anywhere about." [100]

The Corners never did forget the drive home over the best of hard roads, above mountain streams and green valleys, the great Peaks of Europe glistening far off, and the nearer mountains bathed in sunset glory. They encountered a band of gipsies with their donkeys, traveling along the white road which wound around a high hill, and these seemed more than ever picturesque, the orange and red of their costumes showing vividly against the gray background of rock.

There were more *fiestas* after this, but none that gave the girls greater enjoyment. They saw later the quaint little town of Ribadasella decked in the Spanish colors, and they enjoyed the procession of blossom-adorned boats when Santa Marina took place. They saw, too, the feast of "Our Lady of the Hay" when the great hay harvest was over and honor was done to the Virgin of a little chapel in the woods. There was a long day spent at Llanes which was very gay upon this feast of San Roque. It ended with a dance which kept up till very late. To this the girls did not go, though, at different times during the night, they heard revelers returning home. [101]

Mary Lee and Nan had picked up a little Spanish when they were in California, and now continued to add constantly to their stock of words. In consequence they were soon able to carry on conversations, haltingly, to be sure, with Doña Teresa and Don Antonio, and managed to understand something of what was said to them.

"I wish you had been here for our day of San Juan," Mercedes said to them.

"What did you do then?" asked Mary Lee.

"We had a *fiesta* at the house of our good doctor whose name is Juan. As it was his feast day we went very early to hang garlands about the gateway and the windows. We set up a tree in his *patio*, and many persons from far and near brought presents to him. He provided cakes and other things for the feast and we danced till dark in front of the house. From all the neighboring villages the young people came dancing the dance of San Juan all the way, singing as they came. It was very pretty."

"Oh, what awfully nice things you do here," said Nan. "I think it is lovely to celebrate days like that." [102]

Mercedes nodded. "Yes, we think it is. We enjoy our *fiestas* and we have many of them. If you were to be here you would see. I think you should stay a year that you might understand what goes on at every season. Could you not stay a year?"

"Dear me!" Nan smiled. "What a darling thing you are, Mercedes. We'd love to stay but we must study. We go to Germany in the fall."

"Oh, you could study here with the English governess and you could learn Spanish. Would it

not do as well as German?"

Nan gave her a hug. "I should love to do it, but we must do as our mother says."

"Of course. I understand that, but I should like you to stay and so would mother, my brother also."

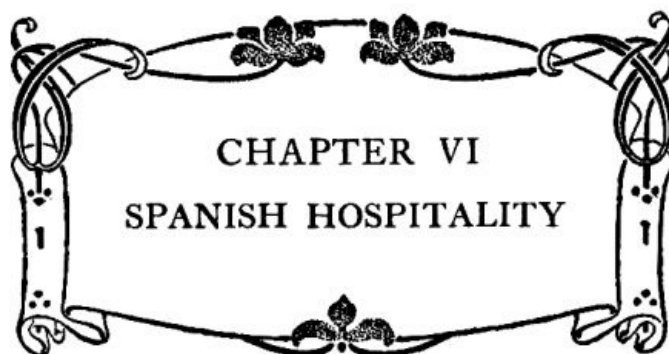
"It is perfectly lovely for you to say so, but I suppose we must be thankful to have as much as a month here, and as we speak French all the time I am losing none of my knowledge of that language, while I am also learning a little Spanish. I hope some day you will come to our country and then you will visit us in our home."

"I should like much to do that. My cousin Dolores says I shall come if my mother permits, and my mother says when I have learned to speak English it will be time enough to talk of going, so I shall work very hard, and when you see me in your country I shall be saying more than 'E ahm very glad to zee you.'" She laughed merrily.

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"You will come, of course you will. I shall speak often to Miss Dolores about it so she will remember to write to your mother so often that she will not forget about it."

"We shall have to do all we can to have you see our Asturias, as much as is possible, while you are here for this short month." And with this intention to be carried out it was to be expected that the days did not hang heavily. If there was not a *fiesta* or a *feria* there was an excursion to the seashore, or to some neighboring town; there was maybe a fishing party or a long drive to some mountain village, and the longer they stayed the more attached did the girls become to sweet Mercedes, and the more interesting did they find the beautiful province of Asturias.



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CHAPTER VI SPANISH HOSPITALITY

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THE great caves which stood each side the little beach to which the girls often went were remarkable for more than one reason. They served as bath houses, they were unique in construction and they suggested tales of folk-lore in which Nan delighted. Through one of these caverns, as through an arched passage, one could go to get a better view of the stretch of sea beyond, while from the rocky hill above a still better view was to be had. The way to the sea was rather rough, and only the younger ones of the household cared to travel it often. Mr. Pinckney declared it was too great an effort for his portly person, and Doña Teresa said it was out of the question for her to attempt it, so often but the three girls, Nan, Mary Lee and Mercedes, would find their way there. They must first pass through one of the winding streets, or roads, of the little village, then over a stony way leading past the small chapel of Nuestra Señora del Henar, in the woods, and on through shady paths till the sea was at hand.

A daily dip in the salt water was desirable, however, for Miss Dolores who was not very strong, and therefore one morning the family was surprised by the arrival of a stout little donkey and cart which Mr. Pinckney explained he had bought for the use of the family. So in the jouncing, bouncing cart thereafter the four went, the little donkey not seeming to mind the load in the least. Often, nevertheless, Nan or Mary Lee would insist upon getting out and walking up-hill to spare Master Neddy, as they called him. It goes without saying that the lines of this special donkey fell in pleasant places when Mr. Pinckney became his purchaser.

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In spite of the donkey, the girls often preferred to take long walks, sometimes stopping at the house of a peasant to see something quaint and old of which Mercedes had told them.

"Would you like to see an old, a very old loom, and some one weaving linen?" she asked one day.

"We should be delighted," responded Nan.

"Then we will go. It is not far and perhaps my cousin Dolores would like also to go. The old

woman I know well, and she will be pleased to welcome us. The house, too, is old, oh, so old, I do not know how many years, hundreds, I think, and I am sure you will like to see it."

So the four started off up the long white *carretera*, passing on the way first a creaking cow-cart loaded with hay, then a *viajante* in his wagon lolling back and singing a strange song ending in a weird note, next a little shepherdess tending her two sheep which cropped the herbage at the side of the road, then an old woman bending under a mass of hay so great that the wizened face and bright eyes could scarcely be discerned. All these gave a cheerful "Adios" or "Buenas tardes" as they passed.

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As the girls turned off the *carretera* and entered a narrow winding road, Mercedes said, "I want you to see the little chapel of Nuestra Señora de Soledad. It is such a quiet little spot where it is. When I am sad or unhappy I go there, for it seems as if it were nearer heaven than some other places."

She led the way to where the tiny chapel stood at the meeting of two paths. Truly "Our Lady of Solitude" could have no more fitting title. The rustling of leaves on the great trees, the murmur of a little stream, the song of a bird, the occasional creaking of a distant cow-cart were the only sounds heard. The girls stepped up on the small porch, without which is never a church or chapel in Spain, and looked in through the iron grating at the unpretentious little figure in her shrine, then they sat down on the porch to rest.

"How still it is," whispered Mary Lee to Miss Dolores. "I wonder how long the 'Lady of Solitude' has been here."

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"Many, many years, no doubt. The chapel is very old, as you see. Many of these small churches and chapels were demolished, or at least abused by the French in 1808, but this one has evidently escaped. It is charming. I think I shall make a sketch of it for my cousin Teresa. She will like it, for she has known and loved it always."

They left the little chapel and mounted higher, then making another turn they came to an old gray house set in a *patio*. There was an entrance to the lower floor from below, but a long flight of crooked stone steps led up outside to the upper floor. A great tree overshadowed the house; under it some white hens were picking around industriously. Above, in the small windows, were set boxes of pinks and geraniums—no house so poor but had its *clavel*. Mercedes mounted the crooked steps, the others waiting below till an answer to the knock should come. "Manuela is in," Mercedes announced. "Will you come up or will you wait till she comes down to open the lower door? The loom is below."

Miss Dolores decided that they would wait, although Nan and Mary Lee were hoping they could see the inside of the old stone house.

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"Perhaps we can go later," whispered Mary Lee to her sister.

Mercedes joined them, saying, "You will find it very dark and dingy, but clean."

Here Manuela opened the door and they stepped into a room whose blackened rafters were very near their heads. The earthen floor was beaten down hard by the tread of those who had gone in and out for centuries. A tiny window gave the only light, and under this was set the great unwieldy loom which Manuela started going. The clumsy shuttle clacked noisily as the weaving proceeded. A pile of coarse linen lay near; it was such as the peasants had for household use, and was literal homespun. Manuela, though quite overpowered by the sight of these strange visitors, was, nevertheless, dignified and gracious, and at Mercedes' suggestion offered to show the rest of the house.

Up through the narrowest of crooked stairs they groped their way to the kitchen, a dark little place, but clean and orderly. There was no stove in the great fireplace but only a stone platform which the girls decided looked like an ancient altar, for it was on the top of this the fire was kindled. In this primitive way all the cooking was done, and so it was in most houses, even in those of the well-to-do. A shining array of copper and brass utensils hung near the fireplace, and some old blue and white plates stood a-row on a shelf. In the next room there was but little furniture; a bed, a settle, an old chest, a small mirror, a picture of "Our Lady of Covadonga," a few gaudily colored prints of various saints. Though the rooms seemed small and dark they were tidy and Manuela, in her black frock and with black handkerchief tied over her head, was not an inartistic figure in the midst of the setting. She offered them flowers, a pink *clavel* and geranium to each, and they took their leave. As they passed out of the *patio* two women, bent under their loads of hay, came through the gateway to deposit their burdens in the loft back of the kitchen.

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"Now," said Mercedes, "if you can stand the walk, I should like to show you my favorite view. It is a long climb, Cousin Dolores, but Antonio said he would meet us with the cart at the foot of the last hill and he will help you up to the top."

With this prospect Miss Dolores decided to undertake the walk. It was a long one, but it was worth the effort to see from the top of the high hill seven villages nestled at the foot of the mountains on one side, and a semicircle of sea on the other.

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"I never beheld anything more glorious," cried Nan enthusiastically. "We have, of course, some greater and more magnificent scenery on our Pacific coast, but this is unique. To see half the world mountains and half sea from the top of a hill not a mile from home is not vouchsafed everybody."

"I knew you would like," said Mercedes well pleased. "I think there is no finer view in all Asturias."

At the foot of the hill they found Neddy and the cart, and went home joyously, taking turns in the cart to spare Neddy.

It was rather late when they passed by the *plaza* in the centre of the village, and here they saw that something was going on, for a man was setting up two poles, and some paraphernalia near by suggested that he had intentions in other directions.

"A *comedia*!" cried Antonio.

Nan looked at Mercedes questioningly.

"A *comedia*, a little drama on the *plaza* to-night. We must all come to it, all of us."

"Is there a tent, or what?"

"It is in the open air. These are strolling players."

Nan marveled, but was very curious and eager to see the performance. Supper was always a late meal, sometimes it was not served before ten o'clock, but there was always a *merienda*, chocolate, tea or coffee at five, so one did not mind. This evening the meal was hurried a little so it was over by nine, yet even then the play had not begun, though the performers were drumming up custom, as the roll of the drum proclaimed some time before the party reached the spot. This kept up for another half an hour, the crowd gathering slowly. But at last a ring was formed around the centre of the *plaza*, some brought chairs, others sat on the steps of surrounding houses, some squatted on the ground, some stood up. In all the windows and balconies overlooking the spot, spectators were gathered. [114]

The two American girls were perhaps the most eager ones in the audience, for this was a rare treat to them, and they were curious enough to see the performance begin. It seemed long delayed, but at last two men came out and did some acrobatic feats; these were followed by a little play of which Nan and Mary Lee understood very little. Then a small girl and a tiny boy walked a tight rope. Next came a mock bull-fight in which the tiny boy took the part of a *toreador*, and ran so precipitately from the pretended bull at each onslaught that he brought forth shouts of laughter. At last the mock bull amiably presented himself to be killed and the victorious *toreador* retired amid great applause. [115]

"That is the only bull-fight I want to see," whispered Mary Lee to Nan. "But I am glad to know how they do it. Nobody was hurt and the youngster was too funny for words."

The next act on the programme was a pretty dance given by the little girl, after which came a second farce in which a donkey appeared, and then the hat was passed around. Mr. Pinckney declared that a *peseta* apiece was none too much for such a novel performance, and thereupon dropped a gold piece into the hat to the surprise and joy of the actors.

"You have seen real old-time play-acting," he told the Corners. "It is the primitive method of performing dramas. So Shakespeare gave his plays, and so the old Spanish dramatists, Lope de Vega and Calderon, saw theirs played."

"It was great fun," the girls declared, "and we shall not forget it in a hurry."

"What a country of surprises it is," said Nan. "It isn't a bit like any other, and I am so glad we could come."

The crowd had dispersed, seeming actually to melt away, so quickly the *plaza* was deserted by all but two or three persons. Among these was the little girl who had taken part in the show. It seemed to be a family affair in which mamma beat the drum, papa and another younger man took the principal parts, and the children fitted in wherever a place could be made for them. [116]

Nan stood watching the child, who, with a candle, was searching for something. "What have you lost?" asked Nan in her best Spanish.

"My slippers," said the child, and Nan could see that she had been crying.

"She has lost her slippers," said Nan to Mercedes. "Let us help her look for them. I wonder if that is why she has been crying."

Mercedes put some questions. "It is not that," she told Nan, "but she had to walk the tight rope, which is really a wire, without them, and it cut her poor little feet badly."

"Dear me!" Nan was all sympathy and rushed off to tell the tale to Mr. Pinckney, who, as usual, was moved to a better condition by a poultice of money. He slipped a gold piece into the child's hand and she went off happily, since she had now more than enough to make good the loss of the slippers.

"Rather an expensive performance for you, grandfather," said Miss Dolores smiling.

"Not so very," he replied, "when you consider what we pay for opera in New York, and this was much more of a novelty." [117]

"That is just like you, Mr. St. Nick," said Mary Lee. "You play Santa Claus all the year round."

The time flew by till there were but three days left. One of these was given to Covadonga which all were eager to see.

"I love the story of Pelayo," Miss Dolores told the girls.

"Who was Pelayo, anyhow?" asked Mary Lee.

"He was the son of Favila, a Goth of royal lineage. He commanded the body-guard of Witiza, and his enthusiasm and influence roused his compatriots to fight. The different tribes by this time, the fair Goths, the Iberians of lofty stature, as well as the descendants of the Romans, had become Asturians all and made common cause against the Arabs. In those long ago days, when the Moors were trying to become victors all over Spain, the Asturian mountains became the refuge of the tribes who united against the Moors. They were headed by Pelayo. The Berbers sent Al-Kaman to vanquish these spirited and defiant people. Pelayo drew them into the great gorges at Covadonga and there they were slain by thousands. Pelayo was then made king by his victorious people. This was in 718, and so you see Asturias was the cradle of the Spanish monarchy. You must see the cave where Pelayo and his followers took refuge, and if you could stay till the early part of next month you would be here when the great pilgrimage takes place. The figure of our 'Lady of Covadonga' is much venerated."

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"I have seen a number of pictures of it in the houses of the people here," said Mary Lee.

"I should like to read about Pelayo," said Nan. "Is there anything special that tells of him?"

"There is a wild poem and many legends. You can see Pelayo's tomb and that of Alfonso I and his queen when you go to Covadonga. There is much romantic history of this part of Spain."

"I would love to read it all," Nan declared, "and when I get a chance I am going to study Spanish so as to get hold of what I should like to know. One hears much more about Granada and Andalusia, but I am glad we came here first."

The trip to Covadonga was the last one undertaken, and then the girls set out upon their return trip which Mr. Pinckney and Miss Dolores were to take with them, going on from Paris to Switzerland.

Mercedes actually shed tears at the thought of parting from her new friends, and the reserved Don Antonio looked very solemn. He presented each of the girls with a huge bouquet of flowers, while Doña Teresa gave them a box of chocolate and a bottle of *anisado*, the latter as a remedy against any ills which might befall digestion during the journey. The two younger girls, Maria Isabel and Consuelo, gathered ripe figs from their own tree to present to the travelers, and would have added more flowers to those the girls already had, but were told by Mercedes that no more could be carried. Mercedes bestowed her favorite antique reliquary upon her cousin Dolores, gave Mary Lee a tiny silver cross with a figure of San Roque upon it, while Nan received a tambourine. Mercedes would have given them her entire *aldeana* costume as well, if they had not protested that they would not be able to pack so much in their trunks.

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"I have always heard," said Nan to her sister, "that you have but to admire anything in Spain, be it great or small, to have it offered to you, though one must not accept it."

"I am sure that Mercedes was quite sincere in wanting us to accept her dress," returned Mary Lee.

"I am sure she was, and I think the people usually are. I never saw such generosity as they all show, from the peasants up. I am sure I know exactly how the dresses are made, and we have the photographs of Mercedes in hers to remind us, so I think we shall have no trouble if we ever want to make them for ourselves."

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"And perhaps Mercedes will come over to see her cousin. We must be sure to make her have a good time, Nan."

"Indeed we will do that. Isn't it nice to have a Spanish girl friend? Won't the girls at home be interested when we tell them about her?"

"They will think we are great on having unusual friends," said Mary Lee. "You remember how excited they were over Daniella at school last year."

"Indeed I do. How long ago that seems, and how much we have seen since then."

"And how much more we shall see before we get back."

"So far I like Spain best," decided Nan.

"I, too," returned Mary Lee.

Back again they traveled, leaving behind the creaking cow-carts, the panniered donkeys, the towering mountains, the blue sea, and above all the warm-hearted Spanish family with whom their month's stay had been all too short.

"We shall never forget you," Nan assured Mercedes, "and some day we shall meet again; I am sure of it."

Mercedes, with swimming eyes, declared she hoped so, and the whole family having gone to the train with their guests, they waved farewells from the platform of the station, the last thing

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they saw being Neddy's gray ears as Mercedes and Maria Isabel drove him around the corner.

"Some day," remarked Mary Lee, as she settled back in her seat, "I mean to come back to Spain. I shall take that nice little house that Mercedes told me could be rented for forty dollars a year, for then I shall be old enough to keep house. I shall hire a servant for two dollars a month and I shall live on figs and chestnuts."

Miss Dolores laughed. "You would certainly need many doses of *anisado* if you were to do that," she said.

"For all there is so much corn in this part of the country," remarked Nan, "we didn't see any of our old home corn bread."

"No, and you never would see. The meal used by the peasants is poor stuff compared to ours," Mr. Pinckney told her. "They make it into a thick solid mass which is as unappetizing as it is unwholesome. Look over there, Nan; there is that old monastery you are so fond of, and the church attached to it. Pretty soon Mary Lee will see the town where her San Roque was honored in *fiesta*."

"That was a great *fiesta*," said Nan reminiscently. "How Jack would have enjoyed those funny fire balloons they sent up, the pigs and such things, the *perigrinos*, too." [122]

"And those great giant figures dancing the *jota* all the time the procession was moving," said Mary Lee.

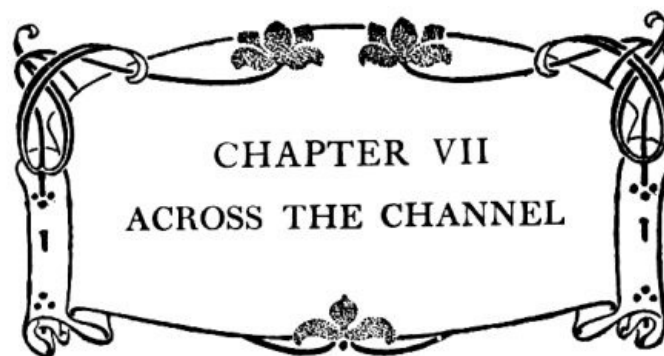
"There was nothing very solemn about it, as there was at Celorio," Nan went on. "To be sure, San Roque had a very serious expression, but everything and everybody else were as gay as larks."

With such chat they beguiled their way till night brought them again to Bilbao and the next afternoon saw them leaving San Sebastian and saying farewell to Spain. "*Adios, España!*" cried Nan.

"You may say *Adios*, if you choose," said Mary Lee, "but I shall say only *Hasta mañana*; for I mean to come back."

Miss Dolores smiled down at her, for she well knew that part of this enthusiasm for Spain was due to Mary Lee's love for this señorita for whom she had always held a worshipful feeling.

There was no stop this time on the French side of the line, for they took the express to Paris and arrived there after a heavy rain when the French girls with their high heels and fluffy skirts were daintily stepping across the puddles, and before the hour when the students of the Latin quarter were ready to go forth to the restaurants and cafés for the evening meal. A quick drive from the railway station and the girls were again under their mother's wing, eager to tell of their adventures in Spain. [123]



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CHAPTER VII ACROSS THE CHANNEL

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"THERE doesn't seem to be anything to do but to bob about from place to place," said Miss Helen a few days after the girls had returned from Spain, "and as long as we are all over here together we may as well make the most of our opportunities, for once you girls are in college there is no knowing what we may have to do. Now, I vote for England for the next move, and, Jo Keyes, I appoint myself a committee of one to invite you to go along."

"Me?" Jo jumped to her feet. Though Miss Barnes was now in Paris with her party of girls, Jo had not failed to be on hand when Nan and Mary Lee returned.

"Yes," Miss Helen responded, "you are here for study, and surely nothing will give you a better groundwork for your English literature than a flight to England. I am sure Miss Barnes will not

object to your spreading out your prize a little thinner so it will last longer, for I promise you shall be at no great expense. Miss Barnes will so soon be returning, that I have not the least doubt but that she will consent to your remaining in our company if I talk the matter over with her. You remember that she does not take her party anywhere except on the Continent, and this chance for seeing England is one I know she will not want you to miss."

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"How good you are, Miss Helen," Jo answered heartily. "I should so love to go."

"Perhaps you can go to Munich with us, too," said Mary Lee. "I don't see why you shouldn't go along; as you have been allowed to leave Miss Barnes' party, anyhow, and have been with us most of the time, why not keep right on? I am sure it would be cheaper than going back to the Wadsworth school. I hope you have written about it to your father, so you won't have to go back when Miss Barnes does. You know we talked it over before we went to Spain."

"Yes, I have written all that you have said, and I am expecting an answer any day, for if I do stay with you Miss Barnes must know, otherwise, I shall have to be ready to take passage when she does. I really have great hopes, though I am deadly afraid to talk about them for fear they will not be gratified."

"When do we start for England, Aunt Helen?" asked Nan.

"Let me see. The Huttons are coming back next week so we shall have to give up the apartment then."

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"It doesn't seem possible that we have had it two months," remarked Nan.

"That is because you were not here during a whole month of our stay. I think we may as well start off at once, so as not to have to make two removes. We shall want to get to Munich as near the first of October as we can, so you girls may arrange for school work as promptly as possible.

"What do you say, Mary?" She turned to Mrs. Corner who had been listening, but had taken no part in the conversation. "I know you are rather afraid of the English climate, and I don't wonder, but September will not be as dubious as April, I am sure. Often the weather then is the very loveliest. Will you go with us, or shall we leave you and the twinnies here?"

"Oh, oh!" came mournful wails of protest from the twins. "Don't leave us behind, Aunt Helen."

"If you get tired," went on Miss Helen, still addressing Mrs. Corner, "we can leave you with one or two of your brood in some quiet place while we make short migrations."

"You put it so alluringly," said Mrs. Corner, "that I would be very ungracious if I didn't fall in with your plan. I think I can stand it for a short time, for I could rush down to Torquay, or some such place if it turned suddenly chilly. I have a weakness for tagging along with these girls, strange as my taste might appear to outsiders. I think they should see London, and since you agree to leave me behind whenever the energies of the party become too much for my powers, I agree to go."

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"Good! Good!" cried the twins.

"Then since we are all agreed," said Miss Helen, "we may as well make out our line of march. Nan, just hand me my Baedekers, those two on Great Britain and London."

Nan hastened to obey. "I always get so excited when it comes to the point of making out the route," she said. "What do you propose, Aunt Helen?"

"I thought it would be rather fun to let each one choose the place she wants most to see, and if her reason is good and sufficient, and the place is within a reasonable route we'll take it in."

"That's a fine plan," declared Nan. "Who's to begin?"

"Your mother, I think."

All eyes were turned on Mrs. Corner. "I vote for Canterbury," she said. "We crossed from Dieppe last time and did not take it in. There are three interests for me there: first, the cathedral, second, the Huguenot church in the crypt, and third, the association with the Canterbury pilgrims."

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"Good child," cried Miss Helen. "Go up head. Your reasons are excellent. Moreover, if we cross from Calais to Dover we shall be exactly on the line to London when we take in Canterbury. By all means Canterbury, and incidentally Dover, which has a wonderfully fine old castle. Now you, Nan."

"No, you, Aunt Helen."

"Then I choose Oxford which is always interesting to me and will be to you. So far it stands Dover, Canterbury, London, Oxford. What next? Your turn, Nan."

"I'd love the Lake District above all things, if it is within the limits. You know I made a special study of that region last year when I was getting up my theme. I should so like to see that little Dove cottage where Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy lived, and there are dozens of spots that the poems refer to that I should love to see. Next to the Lakes I should like the Lorna Doone country."

"We certainly must manage one of them, the Lakes if it is possible, for yours is a most worthy reason. Now, Jo, you have the next say."

"Stratford-on-Avon is mine, please. I don't think I have to give any reason for wanting to go to the Shakespeare country."

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"No, it is quite obvious. It works up beautifully, for it is not far from Oxford. Now, Mary Lee, what do you choose?"

"If you say Oxford I will take Cambridge, though London is what I most want to see, so leave out Cambridge if it is an out-of-the-way place. I am crazy to see the Zoo in London, and after that anything will suit me."

Miss Helen smiled. Mary Lee's fondness for animals was always evident. "You shall certainly see the Zoo," her aunt told her, "and when we get to London we will follow the same plan of choosing what we like best; then every one will be suited. We may have to leave out Cambridge, but we shall see later. What is your choice, Jack?"

Jack had been thinking very hard. "I'd like to see the white peacock on that castle wall," she said.

"Rather vague," Nan murmured to her mother. "What castle, chickadee? Where did you hear about white peacocks?"

"Mr. St. Nick told me. He saw them."

"Oh, I know; she means Warwick, Aunt Helen. I remember that Mr. St. Nick and Miss Dolores were there. Isn't it Warwick, Jack?"

"I think so."

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"That will not be out of our way at all," said Miss Helen. "We can include that in our Shakespeare country, for it is practically the same. Now, Jean."

This young person's desires were divided between a wish to eat clotted cream in Devonshire and to see Southdown lambs which would grow up to be sheep. The good things of life were generally uppermost in Jean's mind. She had read of clotted cream in one of her favorite story-books, and had heard Mr. St. Nick discourse upon the Southdowns.

"What a choice," cried the others.

"Well," began Jean in an aggrieved voice, "I'm sure everybody feels crite as I do, only they don't say so."

"I think there will be no difficulty about indulging your yearning for clotted cream in London," her aunt told her. "As for the Southdowns, we can perhaps come back by way of New Haven and Dieppe when you will be able to see the Southdowns of Sussex, so probably both your desires can be fulfilled."

"I wish I had made two wishes," said Jack regretfully. It was always a grievance when one twin had anything the other did not.

"Suppose you were to make another, what would it be?" asked her aunt.

Jack considered. "I think," she decided, "I should like to see the moping owl."

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"You ridiculous child," cried Mary Lee, "to go to England to see owls and peacocks that you can see any time at home."

"Well, I never did see a white peacock nor a moping owl," said Jack, "and I'm sure you want to go to the Zoo yourself. I've seen hooty owls, but not the moping kind. Uncle Landy showed me a hooty owl that used to live in our barn and catch mice."

"Have you an idea what she is talking about?" Jo asked Nan.

"Of course I have," returned Nan, putting her arm around her little sister. "I remember the creature that Unc' Landy used to call a hooty owl, and Jack has heard me repeat Gray's *Elegy* too often for me not to know about the moping one. I'm afraid, dearie," she turned to Jack, "that you wouldn't see the moping owl if you went to—what is the name of the place, Aunt Helen, Stoke Poges? Thank you. I don't know how long owls live but I fancy that special owl must have died years ago; if not, he must be ready now to drop off with old age, so he couldn't possibly fly to the ivied tower."

"We can take a day for Windsor castle and Stoke Poges, perhaps," said Miss Helen, "even though we can't be sure of the owl. Let us see how our itinerary reads now. From Calais to Dover, to Canterbury, to London, to Oxford, to Cambridge—that means retracing our steps a little if we go to the latter."

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"Oh, but you know I gave up Cambridge," said Mary Lee. "I really am not so very keen about it; I'd rather see Oxford, anyhow."

"How very English that keen sounds," laughed Nan. "I know where you picked that up; from those English girls we met at Madame Lemercier's."

"Now let me see what we can do," said Miss Helen still absorbed in her plans. "We shall probably have to leave out Cambridge, for it is a pretty long list to cover in so short a time. We will say Oxford, Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick. We will try for the Lakes and let Jean eat her clotted cream in London, so that will leave out Devonshire, and if we come back by way of Dieppe we shall sail from Newhaven and that will give us a glimpse of Sussex. That will be the better way and I think we can do it all without too great a rush. Now, off with you, and begin to pack up."

The girls scudded to their different rooms, and began to chatter over the new plans. "I wish we could go to Scotland," said Nan, "but we are trying to do a great deal in a very short time, which mother thinks is always a mistake. You see we gave up so much time to Spain that we have very little left for England, but I am awfully glad you are to have a whack at it, Jo." [136]

"It is beyond my wildest hopes, for I thought France and Germany would be my limit. It is all due to that blessed aunt of yours. I believe half the reason she suggested the trip was on my account."

"Don't you believe it. She thinks it will be great for us all, though I know she included you when she first thought of the advantage of it. Once we settle down in Munich there will be five solid months of German."

"And that is no cinch," declared Jo.

"It is a fearsome language," agreed Nan, "though they do say ours is about as hard. I don't believe that, however, for I am sure getting the pronunciation of English is much easier than to conquer that fearful German grammar; ours is mere child's play compared to it. You are not going to take all those things, are you, Jo? We shall be gone only a month, and the bulk of our luggage will be left in storage here for us to pick up on our way back."

"Who's getting English expressions now?" queried Mary Lee from the depth of a trunk. "Why don't you say baggage?"

"Because they won't know what I mean in England. I say but we'll have a lot of boxes, shan't we?" she went on with a strong English accent. "My word, but I'm a silly ass to think I can get all this in one box. How is that, Jo? Shall I be taken for an English girl, do you think? There, I believe I have chosen judiciously. I must go and ask mother. Perhaps she will think I shall not need that extra frock." [137]

Another week saw the travelers on their way. After a short crossing from Calais, which every one dreaded, but which no one minded in the least, they set foot on the pier at Dover. "If any one mentions the white cliffs of Dover to me," said Miss Helen at starting, "I'll cut out her special choice of places from the trip." And in merry defiance the girls skirted the subject, saying everything but the exact words, till Miss Helen threatened to abandon them at the first stopping-place.

Mrs. Corner declined the steep walk to the castle, but the girls were all eager to take it, and were not disappointed in what the place had to offer. Nan's romantic soul delighted in the banquet hall, the little gallery where the minstrels used to sit and the small room where the ladies retired apart. "I can fancy it all," said the girl. "Never have I had those old times brought before me so vividly."

"Old times," said Mary Lee. "This isn't nearly so old as things we saw in Spain." [138]

"But I don't read Spanish romances and I do read English ones," retorted Nan.

The magnificent array of armor greatly interested Jo, who examined coats of mail, helmets and shields to her heart's content. Jack was awe-stricken by the well three hundred feet deep, but Jean was most interested in the birds outside the castle and the flowers in the crannied wall.

The way to Canterbury was short and here they arrived before night, to be established in a quaint little hotel but a stone's throw from the great cathedral.

"I am glad the town still looks so old," said Nan. "One doesn't need so much imagination to fancy the pilgrims, and as for the cathedral,—well,—words fail."

A daily visit to the cathedral seemed a necessity to them all. They would wander around the beautiful close, admiring this fine ruin, that old porch until it was time for afternoon service when all would go to spend an hour in the beautiful interior while the service went on.

It was on one of these occasions that Jack was found to be missing. "She was here a minute ago," said Nan. "You all go in and I will try to hunt her up. Very likely she is watching the rooks; she is crazy about them." But search as she would no Jack did she find, and finally decided to join the others in the church. She had scarcely seated herself, when, looking across to the seats in the choir, she saw Jack smiling from the archbishop's pew, quite happily settled by no less personage than the gracious wife of the archbishop himself. [139]

"How did you dare to go there?" asked Nan severely when she encountered her waiting at one of the great doors after service.

"A lady invited me," said Jack coolly, not at all appreciating the fact that she had been in the seats of the mighty. "I was standing in the doorway looking around for you all, and that nice

pleasant lady came along and asked if I were alone. I said yes, but that I was looking for my family. Where do strangers sit? I said, and she told me to come with her, so I went."

"She was the archbishop's wife," Nan told her, "and you have been quite honored. I suppose you were out watching the rooks and that was why we couldn't find you."

"Yes, and I am glad I was, for I wouldn't have sat in the archbishop's pew if I had gone in with you," returned Jack complacently. She always comforted herself by deriving such benefit as she could from any of her escapades, and if truth must be told she usually did come off with flying colors. [140]

Mrs. Corner, who was interested in getting some records for a friend at home, determined upon a visit to the pastor of the Huguenot church, and took Mary Lee with her as the others had planned to go to St. Martin's. "You can tell us about your visit and we will tell you about ours," said Mary Lee to the others. "Time is too short for everybody to do everything."

"It was fine," cried Nan when she met Mary Lee later in the day.

"He is the dearest man," responded Mary Lee, "and he told us such interesting things, how Queen Elizabeth let the Huguenot refugees have their services in the crypt of the cathedral, and how there have been uninterrupted services held there ever since. There used to be a great many Huguenots in Canterbury, and there are still a number of French names, though a great many have become Anglicized. Baker used to be Boulanger, and White used to be Blanc. Now the congregation is very small, and there is very little money to pay the minister, but he is full of faith, and is so enthusiastic and simple-hearted. He believes that everything will come out all right. Just think, Nan, if it were not for him the services would have to stop, and after all these years it would be a shame. If I were very rich I would send him a big fat check, for I don't know any one who would use it more unselfishly. He lives in the tiniest little house, and 'does for himself' as they say in England. He had been working in his garden when we got there, and apologized for his appearance, but I just loved his simple ways, and—oh dear——" She paused to take breath. [141]

"Go on," said Nan. "I am tremendously interested."

"He is so dear," continued Mary Lee, "and brought out some of the very old books he has, for as he said, 'I will show you the so many interesting things that I have.' He left his parish in Canada to come over here to take up this work because there was no one else who would do it, and he is so eager for the honor of this early church. He doesn't seem to care at all about himself. He ought to have a nice big rectory instead of that box of a house, and he believes that some day he will have, if it is best, but he thinks more of its being a dishonor to the church than of his own discomfort to live as he does. We are all going to the service in the crypt to-morrow afternoon. Do you know who Beza was? We are going to hear some of the old hymns that are in the old Beza hymn-book, and they will sing them just as their fore-fathers did, the pastor promised us." [142]

"Good!" cried Nan. "I want to go, too. We haven't had a bad time, either, Mary Lee. You know St. Martin's was a Christian church before Saxon days and before St. Augustine came to Great Britain. It was fixed up as a chapel for Queen Bertha; she was the wife of Ethelbert. We saw the old font where he was baptized. There are some curious slits in the thick walls, and they are called 'leper's squints,' for you see the lepers couldn't go inside but stood outside and peeped in. The verger saw we were more interested than most visitors are and he told us a lot. He showed us where the old wall began and where the authentic Roman bricks are. There is a beautiful view of the town and the cathedral from the churchyard. I brought you an ivy-leaf that had fallen from the vine over the church, and we got some post-cards and a little pamphlet on our way home. Aunt Helen says it is called the Mother Church of England, and that though at Glastonbury Abbey the church had its actual beginnings, that it is now in ruins. I should love to go to Glastonbury, but I am afraid we cannot do it on this trip."

"You know Aunt Helen has promised that some time we shall come over and spend a whole summer in England, and then we can go." [143]

"I'd like to spend weeks in Canterbury, and come to know every brick and stone by heart. Aunt Helen and I are making a list of the places we love best and, as you say, some day we are coming back and we mean to stay a long time in each of those places we do love. At least that is what we say we will do, and it is nice to think that we may."

"Hasn't it been an interesting day? I never expected to get so enthusiastic, but somehow that dear French pastor stirred me up so I couldn't help being wild about everything he was interested in."

"Only one more day and then London," said Nan, half regretfully.

"That will be fascinating enough, dear knows. Who could have believed it, Nan, when you were playing your tunes on a log for a make-believe piano and I was running around with Phil, that in a couple of years we should be flying all over Europe."

Nan looked thoughtful. Those days did seem very far distant now, yet they were dear days, and even with lack of means they had enjoyed life in that old Virginia home. "Shall we ever be content to settle down again, I wonder?" she said. "There is still so much ahead; school, college, and then ___" [144]

"The then is a long way off still," said Mary Lee laughing. "I don't believe we need to bother about it yet."

"Sensible as ever, Mary Lee," said Nan with an answering laugh.



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CHAPTER VIII IN LONDON TOWN

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THE bells were ringing out the noon hour when the Corners arrived in London, yet it seemed a quiet and dignified place after Paris. Miss Helen had chosen a neat little hotel for their stopping-place to which they drove directly. The party had amused themselves during the journey from Canterbury by choosing what they most wanted to see. Mrs. Corner selected Westminster Abbey, Nan the National Gallery, Jo the British Museum, Mary Lee the Zoo, Jack the Tower, and Jean Kensington Gardens.

"Gracious! but there is a lot to see," Jo remarked as she turned over the leaves of a copy of Baedeker's London. "It would take weeks to do it all, and I suppose the longer you stay the more you find to see; that's the way it generally is."

"It is particularly so with London," Miss Helen acknowledged. "We shall have time only to skim off the cream this trip, but we can see the most important things."

It was Jo, perhaps, who was most impressed by Westminster Abbey. Many of the things and places in Europe were but words to her for she had "scrambled up" as she said, and the time she had passed at Miss Barnes' school had been her only opportunity for real culture, but she was so bright and wide-awake, so eager to absorb information that Miss Helen congratulated herself that she had asked the Western girl to join the party.

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"I can't realize it," whispered Jo, after standing a few moments in mute awe before the monuments in the Poet's Corner. "Of course I knew there was a Westminster Abbey, but I hadn't an idea what it was like. Now, I shall never forget. It seems a stupendous thought that all this great number of celebrities should be buried here, and that you have them all in a bunch before you, so to speak. I feel now as if they had really lived and not as if they were names at the end of poems."

The visit to the Abbey took up most of the morning, but as Mrs. Corner was tired, and the twins soon wearied of looking at pictures, it was decided that Miss Helen should take the three elder girls only to the National Gallery while the others returned to the hotel.

Nan would fain have gone at once to the pictures and could scarcely be dragged away to the nearest restaurant for a hasty lunch. Bath buns and crumpets were ordered, the girls saying that these things were so often mentioned in stories of English life, but when Jo asked for lemonade she was told there was none, but she could have a "lemon squash" which proved to be the same thing. "I shall soon catch on to the Englishisms," said Jo, "and you will hear me asking for a grilled bone and skittles and winkles with a lot of other queer things before I leave here."

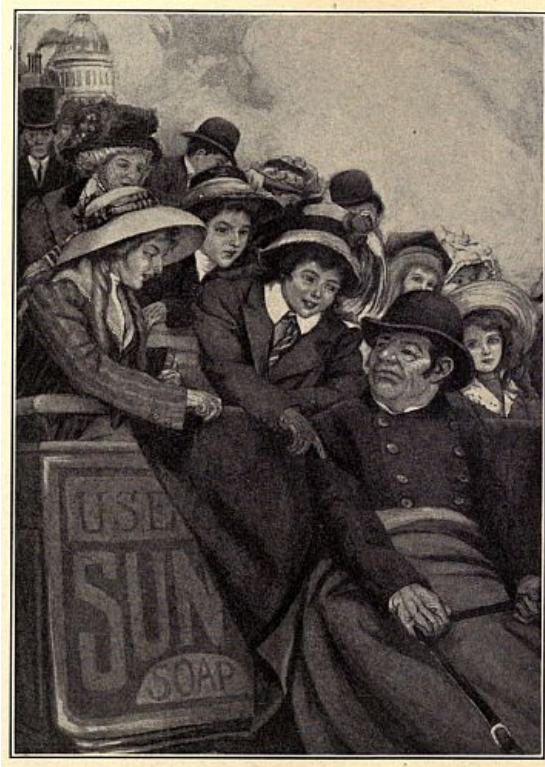
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"I like the National Gallery much better than the Louvre," decided Nan, as, foot-weary, Miss Helen declared they must not try to see more that day.

"We can come back," she said, "for it is a remarkably choice collection. There are so many of the best examples of the best artists that one gets an idea of nearly every school of painting through many of the world's famous pictures here."

"I am going to begin a collection of photographs and things like that for a sort of History of Art," Nan decided. "It will be a lovely way to study, and there are so many good reproductions one can get."

"That is an excellent idea," agreed Miss Helen, "and I am sure Miss Barnes would greatly approve of your spending some of your prize money in that way."



JO MANAGED TO GET NEXT TO THE DRIVER.

"What shall you buy with the rest of it, Nan?" asked Jo.

"I haven't quite decided, but I think I shall spend it all in books and pictures. Don't you think, Aunt Helen, it would be nice to buy books at the places associated with the authors? For example I could get a set of Shakespeare at Stratford-on-Avon, Wordsworth in Grasmere, Gray at Stoke Poges, and so on. You see then they would serve a double purpose."

"I think it would be an admirable plan," said Miss Helen, "and just the kind of thing you will enjoy, Nan. Don't spend more than half your money in England, however, for you will see things in Germany and Italy that you will want, not to mention Paris."

"I think I will make my fullest collection of Rossetti, for you know he was the subject of my theme that won the prize."

"That would be quite right and proper, and you will find some charming pictures here."

"Don't you think we shall have time for the Portrait Gallery to-day?" asked Nan wistfully.

"Surely not to-day, dear. There is nothing more wearying than picture galleries, delightful as they are. You will have mental indigestion if you try anything more. Perhaps you and I can slip off sometimes and come here while the others are doing things we don't care so much about."

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"I'd like to see the Zoo well enough, but I would much rather see pictures."

"Then we might let the rest go to the Zoo while you and I do pictures all day. There are the Wallace collection and the Tate Gallery still to see."

"Oh, Aunt Helen, do you think we shall be able to see both as well as the Portrait Gallery?"

"We can go to at least one of them, I think. They are some distance apart so we cannot attempt them both in one day. To-morrow we have decided to go to the Tower, and as we shall then not be so very far from St. Paul's we must see that. Perhaps day after to-morrow will give us a chance for one or another of the galleries."

Nan gave her aunt's arm a squeeze; the two were walking ahead of Mary Lee and Jo. Aunt Helen was always so ready to respond to Nan's desires, for they were great chums.

They waited for a 'bus which would take them to their hotel, all clambering on top that they might better see the life of the London streets. Jo managed to get next to the driver and extracted a deal of information at the expense of a threepenny tip. In consequence the way was made so intensely interesting that they were carried beyond their destination, and walked back chattering like magpies.

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They found Jean complacent at having tasted clotted cream, and Jack in the dumps because she could not go out into the nearest square. "It is the stupidest old place I ever saw," she complained. "They lock their gates and won't let you in unless you have a key. At home and in Paris all the squares are free. Stingy old English! They keep their gardens all walled up, too, so you can't get so much as a peep at them. They are just the meanest people I ever saw."

"There are plenty of places that are free," Nan tried to console her by saying.

"Where?" asked Jack.

"Oh, Hampstead Heath, Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park," said Nan.

Jack whispered the names to herself as she stood looking out of the window. "Nan," she said presently, "won't you go with me to Hyde Park or somewhere? It is horrid to stay in the house."

"Dear chickabiddy, I am so tired. I didn't realize how tired I was till I reached home. I have been on my feet the entire day. Perhaps some other time we can go."

"Is it very far?" asked Jack.

"Not so very, but it is far for a tired body like me to go there to-day."

Jack was silent a few moments. "London is an awfully big place, isn't it?" she said presently.

"The biggest city in the world."

"Would you be afraid we'd get lost if we went alone?"

"Well, I don't know. I would carry a map, and if we did stray into unknown regions, I'd ask a bobby to set us right."

"What is a bobby?"

"A policeman. They have such nice, big, kind policemen here; they are always so ready to help one."

Jack made no comment and presently left the room.

"Where is Jack?" asked Mrs. Corner as they were about to go to dinner.

No one knew. Nan had been the one who saw her last. "She wanted me to go to Hyde Park with her," she told her mother, "but I said I was too tired."

"Do you suppose the little monkey could have gone off by herself?" asked Mary Lee.

"I am sure I don't know. I verily believe that is what she has done, the minx!" exclaimed Nan. "She asked me whether I would be afraid of getting lost in such a big city, and I very innocently told her I would trust a policeman to set me right, so no doubt she has serenely gone off to follow out my suggestion."

Mrs. Corner looked alarmed. "That child alone in this great city! Almost anything could happen to her."

"Trust Jack," said Nan. "She will come out of it all right. See if she doesn't."

And true enough they had not sat down to the table before Jack appeared jubilant. She had found her way to Hyde Park, had been greatly entertained by watching the people, and had been piloted home by a series of bobbies who proved very acceptable company. "One of them has a little girl just my age though she's 'arf an 'ead taller, he told me," Jack informed her family, "and she knows this part of London like a book."

"Jack," said her mother, "if you are going to keep on doing things of this kind I shall not have an easy moment. Some dreadful thing might have happened to you. Have you forgotten what I told you when you went off with the *cocher* in Paris?"

"No, I didn't forget, but that was Paris, and you never said I mustn't go here where every one speaks English. I sat quite still after I got to the park," Jack went on in an injured tone. "I didn't run about a bit, and there were bobbies with me all the way back."

"Nevertheless, I cannot allow you to rush off by yourself. You have often been told that you must never go without some older person."

"The bobbies were much older," argued Jack plaintively. "I did remember that you had said that, mother, and I didn't ask any children, only the bobbies."

"Jack, you are perfectly incorrigible," returned her mother. "Please to remember that hereafter, in whatever place we may be, that you must always come to me to ask permission before going anywhere at all. If you disobey this order I shall have to send you to a school where they will be very strict with you."

Jack sighed and looked much aggrieved. As usual her point of view seemed a very reasonable one to her, and she could not understand why she should be dealt with so hardly when her intentions had been good.

She kept very close to the party the next day, however, and lagged behind only once. Nan ran back to see her standing gazing curiously at one of the Beef-eaters, stationed at the point from which they had just made their exit. "Do come on, Jack," said Nan. "What are you loitering here for?"

"I wish you all wouldn't be in such a hurry, Nan," said Jack. "I was just going to ask the Beef-eater whether he liked beefsteak or roast beef best, and whether he eats anything but beef."

"You are such a goose, Jack," laughed Nan, and hurried her little sister along to where the others were waiting to go to the White Tower.

"Now that we have seen the place where so many sad scenes in English history took place, I think it would be an excellent plan for us all to lunch at Crosby Hall," said Miss Helen as they came away from the Tower.

"What is Crosby Hall?" asked Jo.

"It is a famous old building which, I am sorry to say, they threaten to pull down, so this will probably be our last chance of seeing it," Miss Helen answered. "It was built in 1466."

"Before America was discovered," ejaculated Jo.

"Yes, and it was considered the finest house in London at that time. It was once occupied by the Duke of Gloucester before he became Richard III, and no doubt he hatched many of his plots under its roof; it was very convenient to the Tower, you will see."

"Where is it?" Nan asked.

"On Threadneedle Street or Bishopsgate within, I am not quite sure which, but we shall soon see."

"What dear quaint names," said Nan. "I love these funny old streets."

"Tell us some more about Crosby Hall, Aunt Helen," said Mary Lee.

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"It has had a variety of experiences," Miss Helen went on. "For after being a private residence it became a prison, then it was turned into a meeting-house, later into a warehouse, next into a concert hall. Now it is a restaurant and a very good one. I think you all will enjoy a meal in the hall where Shakespeare was sometimes a guest. He mentions the place in his Richard III."

"It is an awfully nice surprise to spring on us, Miss Helen," said Jo. "I think it will be great to go there."

"What are we going to have for lunch?" asked Jean. And every one laughed.

"I think for one thing we must have some chops, such as one can get only in England," her aunt told her. "There is a fine grill at Crosby Hall where they cook a chop to perfection. While they are doing the chops we can look around, and you will find yourself in a very interesting place."

"I should think it was interesting," said Nan later. "Dear me, I feel so queer to be sitting here where Shakespeare dined and where Richard III ordered his chops."

"Are you trying to make a pun?" asked Jo.

"No. Why, may I ask?"

"You surely remember the conundrum about a cold chop and a hot steak."

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Nan smiled, but immediately looked grave. "We are entirely too near the Tower to make ghastly puns," she said. "Poor dear 'Lady Jane Grey,' and poor dear little princes. I wonder if that wicked old uncle planned that horror within these walls."

"One can imagine almost anything," said Mrs. Corner, "but I think we would better not try to imagine too much, for here come the chops, and they are solid facts indeed. Look at the size of them."

"What a number of nice-looking Englishmen are here taking their lunch," Nan remarked to Jo. "See their mugs of ale. Doesn't it make you think of Dickens and Thackeray and all those? I'd like mighty well to stay in London long enough to prowl around all those old Dickens places. I'd like to see the Charterhouse, and the prison where Little Dorrit was, and oh, dear me, London is too big to be seen in a hurry. Why can't we stay here instead of going to Germany so soon?"

"You forget about that summer when we have promised ourselves to come back. London will keep, Nan," her aunt reminded her.

They lingered over their meal, content with their surroundings till Miss Helen mentioned that if they started at once there would be time to see the old church of St. Helen's, adjoining, before they should go to St. Paul's.

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"You're a saint, isn't she, Aunt Helen?" said Jean. "Of course we ought to go."

"We'll not go for that reason particularly," her aunt returned, "but because Shakespeare was a parishioner of the church when he lived in London, and because it is a quaint little place in the very heart of what Londoners call 'The City.' This is one of the most interesting sections of London, and scores of famous names are connected with it. If we had time we could see the church of 'St. Botolph without Bishopsgate' where John Keats was baptized, and could go to Leadenhall Street to see the old House of the East India Company, where Charles Lamb was a clerk for so many years. Alexander Pope was born not very far from here, and Samuel Pepys is buried in the church of St. Olaves. Then, too, the old Huguenot church used to be on Threadneedle Street, and many a poor emigré was given a helping hand by the little body of French Protestants who used to gather there."

"Oh, yes, that dear pastor of the French church at Canterbury told us about it," said Mary Lee.

"The new French Protestant church is at Soho Square," remarked Mrs. Corner, "though I am

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told the old Dutch Protestant church is still in Austin Friars, and that the congregation refuse to part with their property valuable as it is."

"I'd love to go there," said Mary Lee.

"We can't, we simply can't," cried Miss Helen. "We shall have to give up referring to interesting places or we shall become unhappy because we haven't time to give to all. That summer to come we will do nothing but wander around London, and after we have seen it all if there is any time left we will give it all to England."

"Oh, dear, but I shall not be here," sighed Jo.

"Who can tell?" said Miss Helen cheerfully. "One never knows what will happen."

"That is true," returned Jo brightening.

"If any one had told us that day we met Daniella Boggs on the mountain that she would one day go to boarding-school with us, and that she would be ten times better off than we were then, I am sure we would have laughed them to scorn," said Mary Lee. "So, Miss Jo, don't you say you will not be here, for maybe you will."

"It is nice to think there can even come a maybe," said Jo, "and indeed we could go further, and continue the Daniella story by saying that if any one had foreseen that one Jo Keyes would be over here because of a prize given by Daniella's uncle you all would have laughed more scornfully than before." [161]

After St. Helen's came St. Paul's, the Whispering Gallery, the crypt and the many parts that all visitors must see. Then there was another ride home on the top of an omnibus, this time Jack being the one who secured a seat by the driver, and if he did not earn his threepence in answering questions, it was not Jack's fault.

The following day all but Miss Helen and Nan set out for the Zoo. The latter had a quiet day browsing around the galleries, and enjoying one of the times the two delighted in. There was always a peculiar bond of intimacy between them. No one understood Nan as well as her Aunt Helen and there was no one to whom she more readily showed her inner self. Since Miss Helen was Nan's godmother as well as her aunt, Nan had a feeling of proprietorship which she claimed whenever occasions like this offered. She had a fine time spending some of her prize money on photographs, having Miss Helen's undivided attention when they came to select.

"You see," said Nan, "when all the others are along, there is no use in trying to do anything like this, and I do want to think calmly, for to me it is a very important question, whatever it may be to the others. I must have those two Browning portraits, Aunt Helen, for they were Londoners before they became Florentines." [162]

"I should certainly get those," Miss Helen approved the choice.

"And Dickens and Thackeray."

"Without doubt."

"And would you get Wordsworth and Rossetti here or trust to finding copies at Grasmere?"

"I think I would take them while you are sure of getting just what you want."

"Who else? Keats, of course, and, oh, dear, it is going to be harder than I thought."

"Wouldn't it be a better plan to select what you're sure you want to-day and come again after you have made a list?"

"Oh, but can we find time to come again?"

"We'll make time, even if we have to stay a day longer to do it."

"Bless you, my bestest aunt." They pored over the photographs for a half hour longer and then Nan declared she was satisfied for that day, and they went off, Nan carrying her precious package and feeling very rich in her new possessions.

The British Museum occupied the greater part of the following day, which was ended up in Kensington Gardens, and then came a trip to Windsor Castle which included a further journey to Stoke Poges where, if Jack did not see her moping owl, Nan found a charming little photograph of the old churchyard, and on the way home bought a pretty copy of the Elegy in which to put it. There was a second visit to the National Portrait Gallery, taken one day when the rest were out shopping, and this time Nan completed her purchase of all photographs she intended to buy in London, and spent so much time poring over her collection that she was in danger of not getting her trunk packed in time the next day when they made their start for Oxford. [163]

"I feel very much as if I had been faring on guide-books," said Nan, as they settled themselves in the train. "And as for Aunt Helen, I know she feels like one. If she had a red cover I would take her for a Baedeker."

"I am sure Jean knows every item on the list at the pastry cook's, and Mary Lee dreamed last night that she was a monkey and began climbing over me," said Jo.

"Now, Jo," began Mary Lee.

"Well, didn't you?"

"I had a sort of funny dream about monkeys," Mary Lee admitted.

"As for Jack," Jo went on, "I defy any 'bus driver in London to keep up with her questions."

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"I know where you come," cried Nan. "You would have turned into a mummy if you had gone to the British Museum once more."

"She is anything but one now," said Miss Helen, looking at Jo's plump figure and saucy nose.

"As for me," put in Mrs. Corner, "I feel as if I had met many old friends from whom I am now parting with regret."

The train started and soon the smoke of London was but a gray cloud in the distance.



CHAPTER IX

WORK

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"GET up, lazybones, get up. Don't you know you are to see the whole of Oxford to-day and go to Stratford to-morrow?" cried Nan, shaking Jo from her slumbers.

"Hm, hm," answered Jo sleepily turning over.

Nan gave her another shake. "Don't you know that the toast is getting colder, the black tea is getting blacker, the eggs getting harder and the slabs of bacon getting slabbier and flabbier? I am going to breakfast."

"Dear me, Nan, is it as late as that?" said Jo sitting up suddenly.

"Yes, and there is honey instead of the marmalade you don't like," replied Nan over her shoulder. "Mother got some yesterday."

Jo, thoroughly aroused, sprang from her bed to rush through her toilet and join the others down-stairs.

"We thought maybe you didn't care to see Oxford," said Miss Helen smiling as Jo came in hurriedly.

"Well, no," drawled Jo. "I've seen Harvard, you know, and what are colleges anyhow? I never expect to take a degree and why should I be interested in Oxford? Of course I will go with you all if you insist, but if it were Earl's Court, for example, where there is a maze, a water toboggan and such things, I might be more enthusiastic." It was like Jo to turn off things in this way, and every one laughed.

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"You know," said Miss Helen, "that Hawthorne called High Street the noblest old street in England, so that is one of the things we must be sure to see."

"And Addison's walk," put in Nan.

"To be sure, and you girls will find the Bodleian Library very fascinating. As for the colleges themselves, with their chapels and quadrangles, if you do not think them beautiful as well as interesting I am much mistaken."

"Again we sigh for that entire summer which cannot be ours," said Nan.

"Yet——" Miss Helen began.

"Oh, I know what you are going to say," interrupted Nan, "and we know all about that possible future. When do we start out?"

"As soon as I can gather the brood together. Don't dawdle, any of you, if you love me."

Her appeal was not without effect, for the whole party appeared in a very short time, and they set forth to go from college to college, to walk up High Street, to turn into Addison's walk and to return at night tired out. [169]

"We fairly skipped through," remarked Mary Lee. "I have a confused jumble of colleges in my brain, and can't for the life of me tell Brasenose from Oriel or Lincoln from Queen's."

"Study your post-cards, my dear," said Nan, "and they will tell you."

"Not everything."

"What they don't tell Baedeker does, so I wouldn't bother my dear little brain with trying to remember so exactly. As for myself, Oxford represents a mass of beautiful ivy-clad buildings, more or less resembling each other, lovely gardens, chapels and cloisters, a cathedral, a library and one long fine street. That is all the impression my mind has received. After a while I shall try to separate the conglomeration by looking over my post-cards, but just now I am capable of seeing it only as a whole, an impressionistic picture, as it were."

"Shall we have another day of it, Miss Helen?" asked Jo.

"I think another morning, so we can take the train for Warwick in the afternoon. It is not so very far and we need not start very early."

"Then, ho for Stratford-on-Avon, where we shall become Shakespeare mad, and for Warwick where Jack can see her white peacocks," cried Jo. [170]

Yet the glories of Warwick Castle were less attractive to the twins than the little tea-garden on Mill Street, which, indeed, pleased them all.

"I never saw such a dear little place," said Jack with satisfaction.

"That cunning cottage with vines all over it," said Jean.

"And that lovely tangled garden down to the very water's edge," Nan put in.

"And the ducks, look at the ducks!" cried Mary Lee.

"Is this little stream really the Avon?" asked Jo. "What a fine view of the castle from here."

"It is the loveliest place to rest in," said Mrs. Corner sinking into a seat by one of the little tables.

"Are we going to have plum-cake?" whispered Jean.

"Pig!" exclaimed Jack scornfully.

"How did you happen upon such a charming spot, Helen?" asked Mrs. Corner.

"I have been here before, and it was one of my pleasantest memories of Warwick. Mother and I came more than once when we were here."

Nan's thoughts flew back to her stately grandmother, whom she had known but such a short time, and she fancied her sitting at one of the tables sipping her tea and looking up at the great castle walls. The girl turned to her Aunt Helen. "I am glad you told us that," she said in a low voice and Miss Helen gave her an appreciative smile, for she understood what was in her niece's thoughts. [171]

"There comes a boat full of young folks," cried Jo. "Isn't that interesting? It is just like an illustrated story, isn't it? They are going to stop here for tea. Aren't the men fine looking, and the girls are exactly like those you hear about. I can't say that they have the style of the Americans, but they have lovely complexions."

"Come, let's feed the ducks," suggested Jack when the others were still sipping their tea. "It will be such fun, Jean, and I am sure they are expecting it."

Jean was not quite sure that she was willing to sacrifice any of her plum-cake to the ducks but concluded she would give them some bread. "No doubt they will like it just as well," she told Jack.

They lingered so long in the charming little garden that the melodious cathedral chimes were ringing for six o'clock when they reached the hotel, enthusiastic in their praises of the castle and of the little tea garden on Mill Street.

Stratford-on-Avon, with a walk across the pleasant country to Anne Hathaway's cottage took them an hour when it had to be decided whether the Lakes or Devonshire should be included in the next move. Finally, Miss Helen proposed that she and the three eldest girls should take a flying trip to the Lakes, leaving Mrs. Corner and the twins at Warwick, a place where they were delighted to stay, with a promise of the tea-garden every afternoon and a sight of the peacocks on the wall of Warwick Castle between whiles. Mary Lee declared she much preferred Grasmere to Cambridge, and so Nan had her wish, for she beheld Dove Cottage, Helm Crag and all the rest of the places made familiar to her by her last year's study of Wordsworth. The limits of the trip were reached at the Lakes, and then they turned their faces southward to catch a glimpse of the Sussex downs on their way to Newhaven. [172]

Once more in Paris to gather up trunks and to make ready for a long stay in Munich with a glimpse of Switzerland on the way. There had been a meeting with Miss Barnes and her party of schoolgirls and great doings for two or three days before the Corners should separate from the others. Jo, to her great joy, had received permission to stay behind. Daniella had bidden them all a reluctant farewell. The summer had been a sort of fairy-tale to the little mountain girl, and if she had not received altogether correct impressions, and had often been bewildered, yet she had made great progress and could scarcely be recognized as the same girl who had so fearfully entered Miss Barnes's school the year before. Now she did not dread going back, for the same company with whom she had been traveling all summer would be hers for another year. Yet she bade a wistful farewell to her first friends, the Corners, whispering, "I wish you were coming, too," as she took her place in the train which should bear them all to Cherbourg.

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So while these traveled west, the Corner party journeyed east, and at last they reached the clean, pretty city where they would settle down for days of study. The two younger girls were to be day-boarders in a small school, while the three elder ones were to give most of their time to particular studies. All would have lessons in German while Nan wanted to make a special point of music.

"You're going to stay with us, mother, aren't you?" said Jean wistfully. "You're not going to leave us here all alone like we were last year?"

Mrs. Corner smiled at the aggrieved tone. "I shall stay here till after Christmas anyhow," she promised, "and then if I must go away for the coldest months we shall all be together in Italy by the first of April."

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Jean sighed. After so much freedom it was hard to adjust one's self to school routine, and as yet she had not settled down to the new conditions. "Shall we have to wear funny hats and do our hair in braids up over the tops of our heads or around our ears like the German girls do?" asked the little girl whose looks were something of a matter of pride to her.

"I think you will do as you have always done in that direction," her mother told her. "You are not a German girl, you know."

"But Fräulein is very particular," spoke up Jack. "To-day one of the German girls came with her hair done like ours, and Fräulein marched her out of the room and slicked up her hair and braided it so tight her eyes almost popped out of her head. She came back looking so scared."

"And, oh, dear," groaned Jean, "we have to walk along so soberly when we go out for exercise. We don't dare turn our heads, and the girls look so creer in those funny little flat hats, as if they had crackers on their heads. I feel like a craker, or something, myself."

"Do you mean a cracker or a Quaker?" asked Jack mischievously.

"I mean a craker that you spell with a cu," replied Jean with dignity.

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"Look here," said Nan laughing, "you youngsters mustn't begin to whine the minute we get here. Goodness! do you suppose there are not thousands of girls who would give their eyes to be in this beautiful place and have the chances you have? We have been junketing around for so long that we don't want to do anything else. Every mother's daughter of us has got to work; that is what we came to Munich for, and between times we shall have more to see than you would get in any other dozen cities rolled into one."

"It's all very well for you to talk," said Jack. "You are going to operas and grown-up things like that, and we can't."

"But you can do other things, and the operas and concerts are a part of my musical education; they would bore you to death. There are ever so many things for you to do."

"Tell me," said Jack, getting into her eldest sister's lap. Nan always made things pleasant for her.

"Well there is the Englischer Garden, a beautiful park that isn't walled in like some of those in England. There is a playground for children there and fine walks and drives. Then just now the October Fest is going on; it is something like our county fair at home."

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"Are there merry-go-rounds and side-shows?"

"Yes, ever so many."

"Good!" Jack brought her hands smartly together.

"And then there are the museums full of all sorts of interesting things that you will like to see. On Saturdays we can make lovely excursions to Starnberger See or the Isarthal, and on some other days there is music played by military bands in different places. I believe it is every day at the Guardhouse on the Marienplatz, and every other day at the Feldhernhalle on the Odeonsplatz, but we can find out exactly. Those are amusements of the present; in winter there will be other things."

"What?"

"Well, there will be lots of skating."

"I can't skate very well."

"It will be a fine chance to learn here. About Christmas time there is always a fairy play for children, and at other times there is the marionette theatre that you and Jean will adore. Then, too, we shall probably go to the mountains for the holidays where you can see all sorts of funny doings."

"What kind?"

"Oh, *ski-ing*, and *rodeling* and all that."

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"They're funny words, and I haven't the least idea what they mean."

"*Ski* is spelled with a k, but it is pronounced as if it were *she*, and *rodeling* means simply tobogganing on a small sled. *Skis* are great long things something like snow-shoes. I am crazy to learn to *ski*, for it must be something like flying. Then there will be the carnival that begins in January, though I don't suppose we shall see much of that. Besides, Jack," she went on, "the Munich streets are lovely. There are so many pretty squares and parks and fountains, not to mention the shops, so I don't think we could get very lonely or bored. After all I have told you I am sure you will think it is a nice place to be in, and that we shall have a good time here."

"I know I shall when you are around, you dear old Nan," said Jack, rubbing her cheek against her sister's.

"Even Aunt Helen is going to study," Nan said. "She knows French mighty well but her German isn't up to the scratch, she thinks, and she says while studying is in the air she will take advantage of it."

"We aren't going to stay in this hotel, are we?"

"No, we are going to a *pension* Aunt Helen knows of. There isn't room for us there now, but next week there will be, and we shall probably stay there till we go to Italy. Aunt Helen says it is nice and homelike, and we can be left there in perfect safety if mother and she have to go away."

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"Will there be any other little girls?"

"I don't know. Very likely there will be. Now I must go and practice that dreadful Bach thing that I am getting ready for to-morrow." She gave Jack a hug and went off.

"Nan's such a nice old comfort," said Jack to her mother. "She always smooths out the wrinkles for me. I hope she won't get married before I do."

"I don't think I would begin to worry about that just yet," said Mrs. Corner smiling.

"Oh, I'm not worrying; I'm just taking time by the oar-lock."

Mrs. Corner laughed outright while Jack wondered why.

"Mayn't we go out into that pretty square where the big fountain is?" she asked.

"I don't like you to go alone."

"But it is so near. You can look out of the window and see it, and I am asking permission," said Jack as if the mere matter of asking were all sufficient.

"But you know over here in Europe little girls don't run about as freely as they do at home. Get one of your older sisters to go with you."

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"Nan can't; she has to practice and Mary Lee has gone somewhere with Jo, and Aunt Helen went to see about lessons or books or something."

"Then I will go with you and sit by the fountain while you amuse yourselves."

This arrangement pleased the twins mightily. The big Wittelsbacher fountain in the Maximilianplatz was a thing to be admired and they were never tired of watching, what Jack called, its big splash of water. "I feel so satisfied when I look at it," she told her mother. "I never saw a fountain with so much water all going at once."

"I wish we could have brought over our dear little doggie," said Jean as she watched numberless little *dachshunds* trotting by.

"We couldn't very well do it," Mrs. Corner told her, "for we should have had to carry him around everywhere, and there is a law in some countries which makes it very hard for travelers to bring in their dogs. He is much better off where he is."

"I am afraid he will forget me," said Jack, whose dog the little creature really was.

"I don't doubt but that he will be quite ready to make friends again," her mother told her.

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"I never saw such a crauntity of dogs as there are in Munich," said Jean. "I think everybody must own a dog, and there are more *dachshunds* than any other kind."

"I like them best," Jack declared. "With their little short legs and long bodies they look so funny, and they have such serious faces as if they had something to do and it was very important that they should get it done."

"There come Aunt Helen and the girls," cried Jean.

Miss Helen with Mary Lee on one side and Jo on the other mounted the little incline which led past the bench where the three were sitting. "Why," cried Miss Helen, "what are you doing here?"

"Mother came over with us to sit by the fountain. Isn't it a beauty, Aunt Helen? We like it so much."

"I like it, too, and we are so pleasantly near it. Indeed, I think this is a very convenient part of the city, for we are within walking distance of almost everything. Where is Nan?"

"She said she had to get that music into her fingers before to-morrow, so she is the only one who didn't come out-of-doors."

Miss Helen sank down on the bench by the side of Mrs. Corner. "I am tired," she said, "and in this thoroughly democratic place where one can do exactly as she pleases, I don't mind sitting openly in a square where the public passes by. That is one of the things I like about Munich. Nobody seems to mind wandering about deliberately. Men and women take time to stare into the shop-windows, and no one pays the least attention to them. You can wear your old clothes and not feel that you are dressed worse than half your neighbors. People here seem to live for something more than to change the fashion of their sleeves and to rush for ferry-boats and trains. They take time to enjoy themselves, as few do at home. I wonder if it is too late for a cup of tea. I feel the need of one."

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Mrs. Corner consulted her watch. "It is just a little after five."

"Then, Jack," said Miss Helen, "go tell Nan she has practiced long enough and I want her to come with you to join us at the *Conditorei* on the Promenadeplatz. We will go there and you can meet us; it is only a little way from here."

Jack scampered off to obey, for this would be a new entertainment and Nan must not miss it.

"What is a *Conditorei*?" asked Jean.

"It means a confectioner's as near as I can make out, though this one seems to be a tea-room as well. It is a very pleasant place to go. You can choose your cakes at the counter and take them to the table with you, or else you can order them brought. I generally like to pick out what I would like best."

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"That is what I should like," said Jean with much satisfaction, "for then you get them sooner. I am very glad you came along, Aunt Helen, for we mightn't have gone to the tea place if you hadn't."

Jack and Nan soon appeared, and the girls found it a very agreeable thing to sit in the pleasant little place watching the persons who came and went. There were many Americans among them, and the Germans were noticeable from taking their pet dogs with them here, as to other shops.

"You always see a collection of the dear things outside the big department stores," said Mary Lee. "I've counted a dozen sometimes, and even outside the churches you see them sometimes waiting for their masters. I like the way they are made to belong to the family and taken out as a matter of course; only sometimes they get so tired and look so bored and unhappy, though no doubt they would rather go than be left at home."

"I like those magnificent horses," said Nan. "I never believed there were horses with such noble arched necks, except in pictures or in statuary. They are the biggest things I ever saw, such great massive splendid specimens."

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"They come from the north of Germany," Miss Helen told her. "They are used for draught horses, and you always see them harnessed to the big wagons. The oxen here are very large, too, and you will often see them hauling a load of bricks or stones through the streets."

"I have noticed a rather curious thing," remarked Mrs. Corner. "Sometimes you will see a wagon with a horse harnessed to one side the pole and not in shafts; it has a most curious effect, a very one-sided look."

"I saw something funnier than that," said Jack: "a man and a dog pulling a cart piled up with all sorts of stuff, old chairs and bits of stovepipe and things like that. The dog was pulling just as hard as the man and when the man stopped the dog lay down and seemed so pleased to think he had been helping. I liked that dog earning his living. I hope he gets well paid for it in nice food with plenty of bones to gnaw."

Here Jean heaved a long sigh having eaten the last morsel of her cake. "It was so good," she said. "May I have another piece, mother?"

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"My dear child, I think one slice of that rich Prinz-Regenten cake is quite enough for one afternoon. Another time, but not now," and Jean mournfully accepted the decree.

"Speaking of Prinz-Regenten," said Miss Helen, "I am sorry we had to miss the Wagner Festival at the Prinz-Regenten Theatre, but we had to give that up or the trip to England."

"I really don't think we have been unwise in taking England instead," said Mrs. Corner, "for we

shall be here long enough to enjoy all the opera necessary. The prices at the Festival are so very high, five dollars for a single performance, and I am told it is chiefly tourists who patronize the opera then. Sensible people wait till they can hear the same singers later on at a lower price."

"Nan is wild to hear Herr Knote," said Jo. "She already has ten post-card pictures of him and is always on the lookout for more."

"Of course," returned Nan. "He is the greatest German tenor, and why shouldn't I want to hear him; besides he isn't like some of the others, for everybody in Munich respects him and that speaks well, for he lives here."

"How do you know so much?" asked her mother.

"My music teacher told me."

"So that is what you talk about."

"It is one of the things. I am supposed to get history of music as well as the theory and practice, and he belongs to the history, I am sure."

"Without doubt," her aunt assured her, rising to go. "Well, Nan, I hope you will not be disappointed when you hear him."

"I know I shall not be," said Nan with conviction. "Frau Burg-Schmidt says his voice is simply great."

They wandered out into the street and across the fine Maximilianplatz to their hotel, feeling that they had chosen well in settling in Munich for six months.



CHAPTER X
A NIGHT ADVENTURE

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NAN was going to the Grand Opera for the first time in her life and she was in a state of wild excitement over it. As yet the Corners had not learned the mysterious workings attending ticket buying in Munich, and it seemed to them the most difficult of undertakings.

"From all I can learn," said Miss Helen, "there are three places in which you can buy tickets. The programme is generally announced at the end of each week for the following week, and the tickets are for sale on Sunday morning. You can rise before six o'clock and go stand in line till nine, when the office of the Hof-theatre is open. If you are lucky you may not have to stand more than an hour after that, and if it is not a subscription performance, or as they call it, an *abonnement*, you may get a good place for a small sum. Missing your chance at the Hof-theatre, you can rush off to the old Academia to take the same chances. If the Academia fails you there is still the Kiosk in the Maximilianplatz. The trouble is, however, that you seldom know until the day of the performance who is going to sing."

"It seems to me a most unsatisfactory arrangement," returned Mrs. Corner. "I could never stand in line for hours, Helen, and surely you should not and we cannot let either of the girls do it."

"Perhaps we shall find an easier way after a while," Miss Helen replied. "When we get to the *pension* no doubt we shall learn the ropes from Fräulein Bauer. We will wait till then. I have heard that sometimes when the Ring is to be given, the students take their blankets and camp out by eight of the evening before the tickets are to be sold. A friend told me that one student hired a *Dienstmann* to stand in line for him, paying him six marks, and by the time his turn came in the morning all the tickets had been sold, though I believe that was for a subscription night."

To hear all this was a disappointment to Nan who had hoped that opera would be one of the first pleasures she should have, and she resolved that as soon as they were settled in their *pension* she would interview Fräulein Bauer on her own account and see if there were really as

many difficulties as reported, or if it was merely a matter of knowing how.

It was, however, upon the very day that they arrived bag and baggage at Fräulein Bauer's that Nan came home from her music lesson in a turmoil of excitement. "Frau Burg-Schmidt wants me to go to the opera with her to hear Lohengrin," she cried. "She says I should hear Lohengrin the first of the Wagner operas. Lohengrin and Knote of all things! Oh, mother, say I can go. Quick, please, please."

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"My dear, don't get so excited. I don't see why you shouldn't go. I suppose Frau Burg-Schmidt will bring you home."

"Of course. At least she said we could take the car from the Hof-theatre right to our nearest corner. I am to telephone if I can go and she will meet me in front of the theatre, or if I miss her there I have the number of the seat and she will wait in the corridor by the *garderobe* place nearest. It is *dritte Rang, Loge II Vorderplatz 1 and 2.*"

"It is all Dutch to me," said Mrs. Corner smiling. "But, Nan, you must not go out alone after night even to meet her."

"But it won't be after night. It begins at six o'clock when it is broad daylight or nearly so."

"Six o'clock?"

"Yes, all the operas begin at six or seven and sometimes the very long ones begin as early as four or five. I shall be home early, you will see."

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"What a queer idea, and when shall you get your supper?"

"I'll take a bite before I go and nibble something after I get back. You can save me a *brodchin* from supper, mother, and a bit of ham or sausage; that will be enough."

"It certainly is a peculiar arrangement, to have next to nothing before one starts out and probably be so hungry that there must be a hearty meal just before going to bed."

"But I may go? It is such a chance, for Frau Burg-Schmidt will explain the motifs to me, and tell me when to look for them. She just happened to have the ticket because her husband was called away on business."

"You may go, since it seems an unusual opportunity which I couldn't deprive you of."

"Then I will go telephone."

"You'd better get Fräulein Bauer to do it for you."

"All right."

Nan was not long in concluding her arrangements and next turned her attention to her dress. "I suppose I ought to wear something rather nice," she said to her mother.

"Yes, I think you should. One of your prettiest white frocks will do."

"And my white coat and gloves."

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"Yes, the coat will be warm enough, I am sure."

"I don't suppose I ought to wear a hat." Nan was doubtful.

"Probably not. You can put your pink Liberty scarf over your head and you may take my opera glasses."

Nan felt very grand indeed when she was ready to start out, opera bag on arm and spotless gloves on her hands. At the last moment her mother demurred in the matter of going without a hat on the street. "I think you would better wear one," she decided, "and you can leave it at the wardrobe with your coat if necessary, for it does look queer to see you going forth without a hat while it is yet light." So Nan laid aside the scarf and put on a light hat.

"I think myself that I feel more comfortable this way," she said. "I will keep my eyes open and see what other persons do, so as to know the next time."

"You have money with you? In case it rains you must come home in a cab and send Frau Burg-Schmidt in it after you have been dropped at your own door. Be sure to pay the *cocher* for both courses and give him a tip, so Frau Burg-Schmidt will be at no expense on your account."

"Yes, mother."

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"And you know the way perfectly? Perhaps you would better go in a cab anyhow to make sure. I don't feel quite comfortable to see you start out alone."

"Oh, no, mother, I'd much rather walk; it is really no distance at all and Frau Burg-Schmidt says lots of girls go alone and that it is perfectly safe. Munich isn't like Paris."

"Then have a good time, dearie. Good-bye."

Nan put up her mouth for a kiss and started off, her mother watching her from the window and feeling a little uneasy still. Miss Helen was out and so were the other girls. "Perhaps I should

have gone with her," said Mrs. Corner to herself, "for even though I am tired we could have taken a cab, but it was all so unexpected and Nan was in such a hurry to get off I didn't think of it. I hope she is all right."

When Miss Helen returned she assured her sister that she need have no fears for Nan. "She will find her way without difficulty, I am sure," she said, "and even if the Frau isn't there she knows enough German to inquire her way to the seats. I have seen numbers of girls going about alone and Nan knows perfectly well how to take care of herself."

Indeed Nan had no difficulty at all in reaching the Hof-theatre, nor in distinguishing the plainly dressed figure standing at the foot of the steps waiting for her. She trembled with excitement at the sound of the first note of the orchestra, and for the remainder of the time was utterly lost in the fortunes of Lohengrin and Elsa, in the wonderful music, and between acts in the strange surroundings. It pleased Frau Burg-Schmidt to see the intent look on the girl's face, and the tensely clasped hands. "She has temperament," she told herself, as Nan's old teacher at home had said before.

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"Oh, it is over," sighed the girl when the curtain went down after the last act. "It was so short."

Frau Burg-Schmidt laughed. "Not so short; it has been several hours."

"So long as that? I can scarcely believe it."

"And it is not quite over, for see, they call out the singers over and over again."

Nan watched with pleased smiles while from the galleries came continued applause, tempestuous clappings of hands with cries for "Knote! Knote! Knote! Bravo! Bravo!"

"It is an enthusiastic audience. These Müncheners do always so," said Nan's companion. "We do not fear to applaud when we like a thing."

At last the outer curtain was dropped, but even then the calls and clappings went on, but that was the last of it for the tenor would not appear again.

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Nan went home in a dream. She followed Frau Burg-Schmidt mechanically into the car, and sat down, her vision still filled with the picture of Lohengrin disappearing from view in his swan boat. She scarcely heard when Frau Burg-Schmidt said good-night to her.

"Here is your corner, my dear," she told her. "You are but a few steps from your door and you have your key, so I will not wait for I must change here and my car comes."

Nan had but a few steps to go before she stood in front of the great door of the building in which was her *pension*. She felt in her bag for her key. Fräulein Bauer had said there would be a light burning and a candle set for her. She fumbled around for some minutes but could not find her keys. She tried the handle of the door; it would not turn. In Munich evidently everything was closed up early. She stood wondering whether she should ring the Hausmann's bell or the one of the *pension* when some one passing saw the white figure standing there and halted, then passed on, but presently returned. Nan shrank into the shadow of the big door. Suppose the young man should speak to her, for a young man she could see it was from the single swift glance she gave. What could he think of a girl alone in the street after ten o'clock?

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Suddenly the Lohengrin vision faded and she was only Nan Corner in a strange city in a foreign land trying to get into her boarding-house. She pressed the electric button under the name of the *pension*, and again began to search in her bag for the keys, turning toward the light as she did so, the better to see.

The young man who was standing a few paces off suddenly came forward. "Nan, Nan Corner," he exclaimed. "What are you doing wandering about Munich alone?"

A friendly voice and a solicitous one. Nan looked up. "Dr. Paul," she cried, "of all people. Oh, I am so glad to see you." She explained the situation, ending with: "I know the keys must be somewhere, but they are not in my bag." Again she searched nervously.

"Let me hold your bag," said Dr. Paul. "And you look in your pocket, if you have any."

Nan gave a little laugh, and put her hand in her coat pocket but the keys were not there. Suddenly her hand went up to the chain around her neck and then down to her belt. "I remember," she said, a little abashed, "I took the keys from the bag and put them on the chain so as to be sure not to lose them, and I was so perfectly carried away by the music I forgot I had done it. Here they are, Dr. Paul. I am glad I didn't ring again for evidently the maids weren't roused by the first ring."

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Dr. Paul turned the key in the lock and they stepped inside, the great door closing with a clang after them. All was dark and silent.

"Goodness!" cried Nan, "and they said they would have a light for me. Imagine coming home at ten o'clock at night anywhere in America and finding it like this."

"They certainly drive their thrift beyond the point of necessity, it seems to me. I have some matches in my pocket; I will strike a light and we will look for the stairs."

"We only came to the *pension* to-day and that is why I don't remember exactly in the dark,"

said Nan. "How long have you been here, Dr. Paul?"

"I came to town yesterday. My *pension* is a block further on. I am with a German family whom some friends recommended to me, and I think I shall be very comfortable. They speak North German, which is an advantage. I was going to look you all up to-morrow. Your Aunt Sarah told me I should probably find you here."

"And shall you stay long?"

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"Several months. I am here for some special courses, and for hospital work."

"Then we shall see you often."

"You can count on that. Here are the stairs and I see a glimmer of light on the next floor. We'll follow it up and probably will find your candle."

They stumbled up the winding stairs which grew lighter as they mounted. At the top they found a night lamp on a table and a row of candles set in line. Each candlestick bore a slip of paper. The pair examined these gravely. "*Zimmer* ten, *Pension Bauer*," read Nan. "I suppose that must be mine. Ours is the next flight up. We are on the second floor, or what they call second over here; we would say third."

"I'll go up with you to keep off the bugaboos," said the doctor taking the lighted candle from her hand and following her up.

At the head of the stairs Nan turned. "How will you get out?" she asked. "I am sure the front door shut with a spring lock. I will go back with you."

"Then I'll have to see you to your door again."

"And we might keep that up indefinitely." They both laughed softly.

"Give me your key," said the doctor, "and I'll let myself out. I will bring it to you in the morning. You will not want it till then?"

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"No, indeed, but I hate to think of your going down in the dark."

"Do you think I'm afraid of the dark, Nan Corner?"

"Of course not, but——"

"You are, I verily believe."

"Not exactly, only it would have been sort of boogy and spooky if I had to come through that court and up that first flight by myself."

"And it would not have been the proper thing for you to do."

"Nobody ever imagined that in this age such a necessity would arise. We will all petition for a light at the very entrance. I know mother and Aunt Helen will be horrified at this outer darkness. I was so thankful to see you, though at first——"

"Own up you were scared."

"Yes, I was, and with good reason. I saw you stop and I tried to climb in through the keyhole or the crack of the door, but couldn't. Oh, but I was thankful it was you, and I remember it isn't the first time you've proved a friend in need. I don't forget last year. Be sure to come early to-morrow. I am wild to hear all about Aunt Sarah and the boys, not to mention all the other dear people at home. Good-night. Won't you take my candle, even if you don't the candlestick?"

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"No, I would dribble the grease all over myself. Good-night and thanks for the key."

Nan stood holding the candle over the baluster until the last footfall had ceased and then she unlocked the door which led into Fräulein Bauer's apartment. She found her mother and her Aunt Helen waiting for her. A tray on the table held rolls and butter, some slices of cold ham, a glass of milk and a compote of apples. "I am so glad you waited up for me," said the girl as she came in.

"It isn't very late," said her aunt, "so it is nothing of a favor."

"I know it isn't, but it seems as if I had been away days."

"Has it been as great as all that?" asked her mother. "I am glad to see you back safe and sound. Fräulein Bauer said she would have a candle below for you, so I knew you would find your way in."

"Yes, but it is as dark as pitch on the ground floor, and it isn't like it is in Paris where the *concierge* is right at hand to let you in if necessary. I suppose there is a Hausmann, but there are no signs of his having rooms anywhere about."

"And you say there is no light at the entrance?"

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"Not a glimmer; it is as black as a wolf's mouth."

"That will never do," said Mrs. Corner decidedly. "We can never in the world stay here under such conditions. Suppose we have callers in the evening, what is to be done?"

"Give it up," returned Nan.

"And for ourselves, a party of ladies coming in after dark to be obliged to enter a dark court and come up as dark a stairway is not to be thought of. That must be remedied at once. I shall see to it to-morrow."

"So the opera was great, was it, Nan?" said her aunt.

"I should think it was. I will tell you all about it presently. At first I didn't believe I could ever think of anything else for days, but I had an adventure and——"

"What do you mean, Nan?" asked her mother in alarm.

Then Nan told about the missing key, the meeting with Dr. Paul Woods and the journey upstairs. "I was scared to death at first," she admitted.

"I was right in my misgivings about letting you go off alone," said her mother. "I cannot understand how Frau Burg-Schmidt should have left you to come in by yourself." [203]

"She didn't think anything of it, for there were ever so many girls coming home by themselves. Frau Burg-Schmidt did get out with me, of course, and would have come all the way, but she had to change cars and her car happened to come along right away, so as she knew I had a key and that I was but a few steps from the door she left me. If I hadn't been so stupid as to forget about changing the keys from the bag to the chain it would have been all right. No, it wouldn't have been quite all right, for I should have had to grope my way up that dark stairway alone. Oh, but I was glad to see Dr. Paul. He always was a dear. Wasn't it strange that it should happen to be he who came along at just the right moment?"

"It certainly was most fortunate," acknowledged her mother. "Is he to be here for any length of time?"

"Oh, my yes. He is going to do some studying and we shall see him often. Now I will tell you about the opera. It was heavenly, and the stage setting was perfectly fine. I shall never forget that beautiful blue and silver Lohengrin and I was so mad with Elsa for doubting him, yet I was sorry for her, too, because it was all that wicked Ortrud's fault. The music was divine. Such an orchestra! and Knote sang like an angel; you never heard a more beautiful voice, and oh, mother, it was so perfectly fine to have Frau Burg-Schmidt explain the different motives to me and tell me when they came in. You have no idea how much more interesting it made it. She is going over the score with me and wants me to learn to distinguish for myself. I think I can pick out several already. She is so enthusiastic and rouses your ambition so you want to do your very best." [204]

"But I cannot excuse her leaving you in the street like that, and I am afraid I cannot allow you to go out with her, if there is a chance of such a thing occurring again."

"Oh, mother, please don't say that, and please don't say anything to her about it, for I think she is very sensitive and high-strung, and it really was my fault for being so stupid as to forget where I put the keys."

"That may have been a part of the trouble, but a woman of Frau Burg-Schmidt's experience should know better than to desert a young girl like you at this time of night in a foreign city." Then seeing Nan's look of distress, she added, "However, we will not talk any more about it now, but provide against such a contingency next time. Did you have good places?" [205]

"Very good; that is, it was a fine place for hearing the music, and all the musical people prefer it to the parquet or the balcony where the seats are much higher priced. And, mother, I might have gone in my school dress for all it mattered. People wear anything; flannel blouses, queer reform frocks which look perfectly dreadful on the fat women—all sorts of funny rigs are worn. They sit around and munch chocolate or take rolls from their bags and nibble those between the acts or eat pretzels. It is the most free and easy place I ever saw. For all that, there was perfect order, not a whisper while the music was going on. Of course the lights are turned down during the performance and are only turned up when the curtain drops. Every one was so absorbed and didn't dream of talking or looking bored as I have seen them do at home at plays."

"I must confess there is that advantage on the part of a German audience," remarked Miss Helen. "They go for the pure purpose of hearing the music, not to show their clothes nor to chatter with their friends nor because it is fashionable, and I think we may well take pattern from them in our big cities."

"And the enthusiasm," Nan went on; "it made me wild to hear them call and call for Knote and for Morena. Oh, I did enjoy it. I shall never forget this night." [206]

"But you are forgetting to eat anything," said her mother.

"I'll drink the milk, but I really don't feel hungry, for I am too excited; besides Frau Burg-Schmidt had some chocolate with her and I ate a piece of that. I must go to bed, for Dr. Paul is coming early to see us and to return the key. I have had such a glorious time, mother dear, so please forget the adventure part of it."

"Don't lie awake thinking about Lohengrin," said her mother kissing her good-night.

"I'll try not."

"I hope it hasn't been too much for that excitable brain of hers," said Mrs. Corner as Nan went out.

"Nan will always be intense," replied Miss Helen. "We can't deprive her of such joy as she finds in music because of that."

"No, but she does enjoy things with such a vengeance."

"And suffers in proportion. That is the way she is built, Mary."

"Like her father, very like."

"Dear Jack. Yes, she is like him."

The two sat lost in thought for a while. Presently Miss Helen spoke. "How old is this Dr. Paul Woods?" she asked. "I have almost forgotten. He was away at college while we were at Uplands." [207]

"He is not more than twenty-three or four. A very bright young man and a fine one. I've known him since he was born. His father has always been our family physician, you know, Helen, and Mrs. Woods is one of my dearest friends."

"Yes, I remember that. Mother always preferred Dr. Harley, so I never saw much of the Woods," said Miss Helen folding up her newspaper and rising. "It is bedtime, Mary."

"I know. I am going." But Mrs. Corner sat for another half hour, her book unnoticed before her.



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CHAPTER XI SETTLING DOWN

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THE problem of getting opera tickets was solved the next day when Dr. Woods made his visit. "I have promised myself to stand in line every week," he said, "and if you will commit the buying of the tickets to my charge I promise to do my best for you. It is just as easy to buy four or five tickets as one. I shall probably not treat myself to anything more expensive than places in the *Dritte Rang*, but I can get yours anywhere you say, provided there is a chance of doing it."

"That relieves us of a great responsibility," said Miss Helen, "though it seems rather an imposition upon you."

"Not a bit of it. I should be very unhappy to know that any of you ladies were on your feet out there in the cold when there was a man around to do the standing for you."

"Spoken like a true American and a Virginia gentleman at that," said Miss Helen. "Nan proposed to be our opera ticket buyer, as she is the most interested, but her mother objected."

The doctor gave a quick glance at the slender dark-haired girl, almost too tall for her years. "As her medical man I sternly forbid it, too," he said. "It is not the thing for any delicately bred woman to do. Some of these sturdy Germans may be equal to it, but none of your race. No, Miss Helen, I insist upon your letting that duty fall upon me." [212]

"Then please accept our united thanks. We do want Nan to have as much opera as is good for her, but we don't feel that we always shall want to pay for the highest priced seats, if we can get any at all at lower rates."

"I shall frequently make a rush for Stehplatz," declared the doctor, "for I am putting all my spare cash into my work and my amusements must be of the cheap kind. However, there couldn't be a better place to find such. One can listen to a first-class concert for the meagre price of fifteen or twenty cents, if you don't mind going to a concert hall where people sit around little tables and drink beer. It is always most quiet and orderly and you see a good class of persons at such places, for they want to hear the music and do not want the least noise."

"Every one in Munich drinks beer," remarked Nan. "Even the *München kindel* is often pictured

with a glass of beer in one hand and a bunch of radishes in the other."

"Who is the *München kindel*?" asked the doctor.

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"Have you been in the city twenty-four hours and have not made its acquaintance? Why, it is everywhere, on calendars, cards, liqueur glasses, all sorts of souvenirs, bonbon boxes, signs, and I have even seen the little monkish hood and cloak imitated in a covering for my lady's pet dog. Here," she picked up a guide-book from the table and handed it to him.

"Oh, that? Yes, I have seen the little fellow, but I didn't know what it meant except that it seemed a sign and seal of something Münchener. Do you know its origin?"

"I know something, though no one appears exactly to know why it happens to be a child. You probably know that Munich originally belonged to the monks who lived in a monastery on the Tegernsee. Their place was called München. There are a number of stories about how the little *kindel* happened to be used, but Aunt Helen says it was probably adopted as the seal of those way back monks. Some one told me that there is a legend which says our Lord came in the form of a little child in monkish dress to bless the town and the good work of the monks, and that ever since the München *kindel* has been honored. Others say that it is simply because as time has gone on different artists and sculptors have tried to improve on the original design and it has become what it is now. I like the legend best though perhaps the other is truer. I have become very fond of the little monk's smiling countenance. Sometimes he has a book in one hand and two fingers of the other are outstretched in benediction, but when he is very hilarious, he waves a stein of beer in one hand and a bunch of radishes in the other."

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"Wise Nan," said the doctor. "Whenever I want archaic information about the city I shall come to you."

"Nan may be able to tell you all about those funny old things," broke in Jack, "but what I want to hear about, Dr. Paul, is home. Did you see Phil and Gordon? How was Aunt Sarah when you left? Is Mitty there? Are the cats looking all right? What was old Pete mule doing when you saw him last?"

Every one laughed and then every one turned eagerly to the doctor, for what did not Jack's questions bring before them? The old brown house, with the garden behind it wandering up-hill, Aunt Sarah bustling around, Phil with Trouble at his heels running across the field between his own home and the Corners', Old Pete standing by an angle of the fence, wagging his long ears as he looked up and down the road.

"Do tell us about everything," said Mrs. Corner drawing her chair a little nearer.

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"Miss Sarah was very well and getting ready for her boys who hadn't come when I left," responded the doctor. "I saw a pair of black legs scudding across the garden and I fancy they must have been Mitty's. As for Pete, I am afraid I don't remember about him, and I did not see any of the cats. Yes, I did; a big gray Angora came out and blinked at me as I was saying good-bye to Miss Sarah."

"That must have been Lady Grey," remarked Jack.

"The Lewis's are all well. Miss Polly is to be married at Christmas, as I suppose you all know."

"Oh, dear, and we shan't be there," sighed Mary Lee. At that moment the glories of travel, the novelties of foreign lands were as nothing compared to the bond which linked them to old Virginia.

"And your own family?" said Mrs. Corner. "Your mother and father?"

"Mother is well and so is father, better than usual. A new doctor has settled in town, an enterprising young fellow with the acquirements of foreign study still clinging to him. Father said that if I meant to hold my own in the town I must study abroad, too, and if eventually I concluded to step aside and let Hastings have the field I would need some work over here wherever I might settle. He thinks he can keep up our end for six months and then I shall go back and make up my mind whether father shall retire in my behalf, or whether he will keep a few of his oldest patients and transfer the rest to Dr. Hastings."

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"You are not going to desert us, Dr. Paul?" said Mrs. Corner.

"I am not sure. At all events we shall see when I get back. You all have deserted your old neighbors, why shouldn't I follow your example?"

"But not for always," said Nan eagerly. "We shall go back to stay some day, shan't we, mother?"

"Are you sure you will want to, Nan?"

"I am sure I would like to feel that I could come away sometimes, but there is no place like home. I want to live most of my life there, and I surely want to die just where I was born."

"It isn't a very big world, that little town of ours," said Dr. Paul smiling at her ardor.

"It is big enough. After we have seen the great outside world it will be the most delightful thing to go back and think about it all."

"And your music, your college career and all that?" said Miss Helen.

"Don't you think it will give as much pleasure there, the music, I mean, as anywhere? And I am sure our University has brains enough in it to keep my poor supply guessing. Nobody need rust out where our University is." Nan spoke proudly. [217]

"Good for you, Nan!" cried the doctor. "You are loyal to the core. That is the way to talk. I am going to sit down this very night and write to father about what you have said. It will do him good to know how you feel. He thinks a lot of Miss Nancy Corner."

"Must you go?" said Mrs. Corner as he rose to take his leave.

"Yes, I must. I am not fairly in harness yet, but I have a lot to do."

"You will come in and see us often, I hope."

"Won't I? Mother is depending on it, I can tell you. The fact of you all being here made it easier for her to see me go. And Mrs. Corner, remember, I am yours to command. You must not fail to call upon me for anything in the wide world that I can do for you, just as you would on Tom Lewis or any of the boys at home. I want the privilege of being your right hand man, as I am the only one of your townsmen here."

"You are a dear boy," said Mrs. Corner laying her hand affectionately on his shoulder, "and I shall be delighted to take you at your word whenever occasion requires on condition that you write to your mother that I say she needn't worry over her son while Mary Corner is on hand to have an eye to him." [218]

"I'll do it and it will be no end of comfort to her. She expects me to come home with forty slashes on my face and an insatiable thirst for beer."

"Are you going to wear a green or a blue cap or what color?" asked Jean.

"I'll wear my own American headgear, if you please."

"And you won't have those sword cuts all over your face?" said Jack.

"Not if my present stock of vanity holds out. I am afraid you would never be my sweetheart if I allowed myself to be hacked up in that style, Jack."

"Oh, but I shall never be your sweetheart," returned Jack calmly. "I am Carter's. I used to be Clarence's, but I most forget him, and he doesn't write to me, but Carter does."

"I see. Well, anyhow, I shall not submit to having my noble countenance marred. Now, I must go, Mrs. Corner. It is so good to see you all and such a temptation to stand and talk. I'll come soon again, if I may."

"As often as you please. I've neither music nor German to absorb me, for I intend to spare myself all I can, so when the others are busy you will find at least one at leisure," Mrs. Corner assured him and he went off leaving all with a feeling of nearness to home which his presence had given. [219]

A new arrival at the *pension* that day filled the last of Fräulein Bauer's rooms, and decided who was to complete the house party. A pleasant American woman with her son and daughter took rooms opposite the Corners. The family now consisted of the six Corners with Jo Keyes, Mrs. Hoyt, son Maurice and daughter Juliet, a stout Russian lady and her son, "the Herr Professor," as the Fräulein called him, a jovial German, and a severe looking dame whose nationality no one seemed to know. Nan insisted that this last person was a Nihilist, while Jo declared she was an American refugee. Mary Lee thought she must be Italian, because she liked macaroni and asked for more olive oil on her salad. She did not seem to be very fluent with German, though no one had heard her speak any other language. She sat at the extreme end of the table, and bowed with great stateliness to the others whenever she came in or went out.

It was Miss Helen who at last discovered the lady's nationality, and announced with great glee that she knew.

"I am positive she is Russian or Polish or something like that," declared Nan. "I am sure she has a bomb concealed in her room and has designs upon the Prince Regent." [220]

"I am convinced she is Italian," Mary Lee differed from her sister. "She has such black eyes and hair, and I saw her with a letter in her hand that had an Italian stamp on it, and it was addressed to Signorina something or other."

This seemed fairly good proof, but still Miss Helen shook her head.

"She might be Spanish," ventured Jo, "for, as you say, Mary Lee, she is very dark. If she were Russian why doesn't she talk to the other Russians at the table?"

"I hadn't thought of that," said Nan, "though maybe she doesn't want them to know she is Russian for fear they will find out her plots."

Miss Helen laughed aloud. "You are away off, Nan," she said.

"Perhaps she is a Greek." Jack thought up this.

"Or a-a-Austrian," Jean ventured.

"Then she'd speak better German," objected Nan.

"What do you say, Mary?" asked Miss Helen. "No one so far has guessed right. You must have a chance."

"She might be French, perhaps Canadian French."

"But the Italian letter," spoke up Mary Lee.

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"I had one from Italy myself this morning addressed to Signora Corner," Mrs. Corner told her.

"Then that falls through," said Jo. "Give it up, Miss Helen."

"My dears, she's plain, dyed-in-the-wool, United States American, from Chelsea, Massachusetts."

"Oh, oh," came a chorus of laughing exclamations. "The very idea! How did you find it out?"

"I encountered her on my way down-stairs this morning, and she asked me if I knew where she could find a second-hand book-shop. I happened to know of one and I told her. We were going in the same direction and we walked together a little way."

"Is she any kind of an anything?" asked Jack.

"That is rather a vague question," said Miss Helen. "Couldn't you be a little more exact, Jack dear?"

"I mean is she a doctor or a teacher or anything like that? She looks like she might be something besides just a plain woman."

"She certainly is a plain enough woman," remarked Nan with a laugh.

"She didn't mention that she had a profession, though I think she is here for a special purpose, perhaps," Miss Helen told them.

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"American," said Jo reminiscently; "that's the limit. It shows that one can never tell. Why, we might have discussed our most intimate affairs before her, and never have dreamed she could understand a word of what we said."

"Which goes to show that one must be very careful about one's speech when traveling abroad," said Mrs. Corner.

"What do you think of the new girl and boy?" Jo asked Nan that same day.

"They're rather nice, I think. The boy seems a jolly sort of somebody and the girl is very friendly. They are going to school and seem to have a number of friends here, which will make it pleasant for us. Mother likes Mrs. Hoyt. They know some of the same people at home and spent an hour reminiscing after dinner. I am glad on mother's account, and Aunt Helen's, too, that she is so nice."

The American part of the *pension* soon resolved itself into a very congenial party. Nan struck up a friendship with Juliet Hoyt, while Maurice dangled after Jo and Mary Lee. Maurice was a merry, gentlemanly lad with dancing brown eyes, and a frank mouth. He was always ready for fun, and as both Mary Lee and Jo were very fond of outdoor sports the three had long walks together and promised themselves later that they would skate and *rodel* and *ski* as often as they could.

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It was not long before Maurice's schoolmates found out that Mrs. Hoyt's sitting-room was a very pleasant place, and that she herself was a sympathetic person into whose ears they could pour their woes or whom they could come to in hours of homesickness to be comforted, therefore there was scarcely a day passed but some one of Dr. Mann's schoolboys wandered into *Pension* Bauer for cheer.

Nan and Mary Lee had always been thrown a great deal with their boy cousins, and Jo was so full of life that she naturally attracted boys, so it must be confessed that Mrs. Hoyt was not the one chiefly sought. "But there is safety in numbers," she said to Mrs. Corner, "and I want my children to have good honest friendships among both boys and girls, so do please let your young people frolic with mine; it won't hurt them one bit. Moreover I think it is much the better plan to allow them to have their friends here where I can overlook them and take part in what goes on. It seems to me that the surest way of keeping the confidence of both my boy and girl is not to be too severely critical, and to make whatever place stands for home as happy as possible."

Mrs. Corner quite agreed with her, and though half a dozen boys vied with one another to see which could nearest match in socks and neckties the color of Jo's winter suit, the Sunday after she appeared in it, and though Maurice insisted upon sending daily notes to Mary Lee these were all very harmless matters. It was something to make even their elders laugh to see the six boys in green socks and neckties as near of a color as possible, and when Mrs. Corner read the little jokes which passed for notes she saw what very innocent nonsense it all was. So the young folks had the best of times and afforded much amusement to their families.

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"Winter is at hand," said Nan one day as she came in from her lessons. "They are covering up

our beautiful fountain that we all love so, and they are beginning to pack up the rosebushes and plants in the parks. I wish you would see how beautifully they do it. They have loads and loads of evergreen stuff that they put around the bushes, so when they are done up, instead of looking like scarecrows wrapped in straw they are nice, neat, well-shaped cubes and cylinders of green that don't offend the eye in the least. Of course they can't do the fountain that way, for it is too big, and it has to have an actual house of boards built over it. I am thankful for one thing, for though they cover up so much else they can't do anything to the Frauenkirche."

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"I am glad of that myself," returned Miss Helen. "I love the way those two big towers dominate the city."

"It is such a nice orderly place," Nan went on. "If a pile of boards and building materials must be in the street, it is piled up as carefully as possible so as to take up the least room; it isn't pitched helter-skelter all over the place as it is so often at home."

"They certainly do things of that kind very carefully; I suppose because they take more time. We are always in such a rush at home."

"Another thing I like," Nan went on, "is the number of big landmarks there are. Somehow, although it is really quite a large city, it doesn't seem so. There is plenty of space, and buildings are set so you can see them easily. They aren't crowded in little narrow streets so they make no show at all. When I see the big fountain I know I am nearly home. The Neue Rathaus is another landmark, the Isarthor is another, the Odeonsplatz still another, while if you catch sight of the Frauenkirche no matter where you are you can tell in exactly what direction you ought to go."

"I am glad you are so contented, my dear," said Miss Helen, "as long as you are to be here for the winter. I think the others are, too."

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"Yes, I am sure they are. Jack was delighted because she happened to be with you when the figures came out on the clock in the tower of the Neue Rathaus."

"Yes, we happened to be just in time."

"It certainly is a fine building. Indeed, it seems to me that Munich has nothing but fine buildings wherever you go; fine gateways and arches and parks. I like those old painted houses, too. In fact I think Munich is delightful beyond words, and if Italy surpasses it I shall not be able to stay in my skin."

"It doesn't exactly surpass it. Each has its own attraction. To me there is no place quite like Italy; it has an indescribable charm. I am afraid we shall not find the sunshine here that we should get there."

"I am sure it has been lovely for a whole month, scarcely a rainy day. Think how beautiful and sunny it was that day we went to the Starnberger See."

"Yes, but I am told in winter the sun shines seldom. You see Munich is on a plain where the mists gather and remain. While the sun may be shining brightly on the mountains above, here it will be dull and gray for weeks at a time. You remember that even at the Isarthal it was clear and bright, yet we found Munich wrapped in mist when we came back. It is said to be healthful nevertheless."

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"I don't like the not seeing the sun, but maybe we won't miss it so very much so long as it doesn't rain much. There is one thing that is very funny to me, Aunt Helen, and that is to see how the women work. It looks ridiculous to see a woman in an absurd Tyrolese hat with a feather sticking up straight behind, turning the tram switches, and to see them carrying heavy loads of wood on their backs or pushing a big cart through the streets is something I cannot get used to. Look at our little Anna here at the *pension*, she goes down into the bowels of the earth somewhere and brings up coal, great buckets of it, over two long flights. Imagine expecting a servant to do that at home."

"The German point of view is quite different from ours in more than one direction, you will find."

"I have noticed that. The other day when we all went out to the Isarthal with Fräulein Bauer and her brother, although he was as polite as a dancing-master in most ways, he never offered to help her or any one up those hundreds of steps one must climb to get to the station at Höllriegelsgreuth-Grünwald."

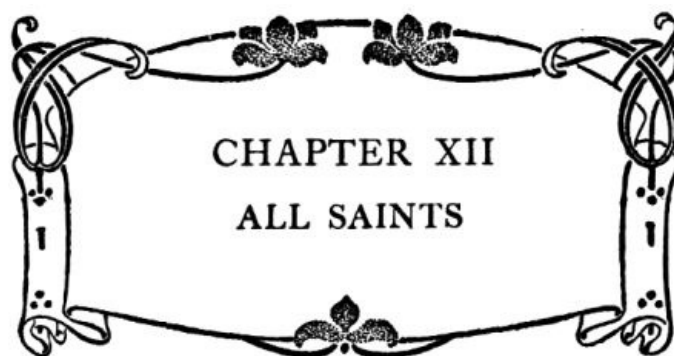
Miss Helen laughed. "How did you ever remember that long name, Nan?"

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"Oh, I made a point of it because it was so nice and long. As I was saying Herr Bauer seemed quite a pig by the side of Dr. Paul who is always so lovely and courteous to every one. Fräulein Bauer was quite overcome when he rushed back to help her. I don't believe a man ever did such a thing before for her."

"As we were just saying their standards are very different from ours, although you will not find so great differences in the upper classes. Generally speaking, a woman must be a good *hausfrau* and make the men comfortable to reach the proper ideal; failing this she is a worthless creature in the estimation of most of the men."

"Give me my own, my native land," sang Nan, "and above all, give me the blessed men from



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CHAPTER XII

ALL SAINTS

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SUNDAY was always an interesting day, for there were many things to do. The little American church near the Odeonsplatz was a homelike place where once a week, at least, one could imagine himself at home, so familiar was the service in one's own tongue, and here the family generally went. After church it was the custom to promenade up and down the Parada, and with the rest of the citizens to listen to the music of the band which played upon the balcony of the Feldernhalle.

But there was one Sunday when the morning service was unattended by any from *Pension* Bauer, for all took their way to the cemetery. This was the day of All Saints, and every grave, even the humblest, was decorated, lights were set to burn, and the whole place looked like a great garden of blossoms. There were many persons walking quietly around, old women were stationed to watch the tall candles or to replenish the swinging lamps.

"It is very solemn and very beautiful," said Nan to Dr. Woods, with whom she was walking. "I never imagined anything quite like this, but I think it is a beautiful custom."

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"The royal tombs are decorated to-day, too," said Dr. Woods. "We ought to go to St. Michael's, for in the crypt there King Ludwig II and a number of others are buried. A great many persons visit the place every year, for this is the only day upon which the place is opened to the public. If you all are not too tired we might go there from here."

Nan agreed and they passed on to where Jean and Jack were standing whispering together.

"Look, Nan," said Jack, "at that little girl over there. She is putting that one little candle and that tiny bunch of flowers on a grave. She looks so poor. I wonder whose grave it is? I hope it is not her mother's."

"See, she is coming away," said Nan. "Don't watch her so closely, dear; it doesn't seem kind."

The two children turned quickly away, but could not forbear watching the little girl as she slowly passed out the gate.

"I wish I knew about her," said Jack following the departing figure with sympathetic glances.

"Let's go, Nan," said Jean; "it is so sad here."

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"I don't think you twinnies ought to have come," Nan told them.

"Oh, yes, we ought. We like the flowers and the lights, but we don't like little girls like that to be so poor as not to have more flowers and candles," Jack returned.

They now came up to the rest of the party and proposed the walk to see the royal tombs, but Mrs. Corner decided that she was too tired to go and, therefore, the twins went home with her while the others continued to the church. Here a long procession of persons passed steadily in and out of the crypt, where masses of flowers and brilliant lights surrounded the tombs of dead royalty.

"I'd like to know more about King Ludwig II," said Nan to her companion. "The Bavarian succession is so mixed up in my mind I never do get it straight."

"There is a little history of Bavaria that I saw somewhere. I shall be glad to bring it to you, if you would care to look it over. You will find this a most interesting kingdom, full of romance as well as of solid fact. The unfortunate Ludwig II was son of Maximilian II and grandson of Ludwig I. The present Prince Regent is a son of Ludwig I and a brother of Maximilian II. He is, therefore, uncle of Ludwig II and of the poor mad king Otto, the actual king."

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"I will write that all down, and then I can remember it better," said Nan. This she proceeded to do. "I should like very much to see the history, thank you, and get all these Ludwigs and Maximilians straightened out. It will make the places named after them so much more interesting. I did get a sort of half idea from all those wonderful castles we have been making trips to see, but I am not yet quite exact."

"I think you will like the legend called 'Weibtreue' which tells of an event away back in the twelfth century."

"Tell me it."

"The story goes that Welf VI with his wife and followers were besieged by Konrad, the Hohenstaufen. After a long time they said they would yield, but Konrad was so angry at the long resistance that he declared that every man should be killed, though he consented to allow the women to go out first, each being allowed to take with her the thing she valued the most. Finally when the city gates were flung open out came a long train of women, and what do you think they had on their backs?"

Nan's eyes were bright as stars. She loved this sort of legend. "What?" she asked.

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"The Countess Ida, Welf's wife, came first and on her back she carried her husband. Each of the women following carried either a husband, father, lover, son or brother."

"Good!" Nan's hands came together. "And what did Konrad do?"

"His soldiers were furious at the trick, but Konrad himself was so struck by the women's devotion that he forgave them every one."

Nan laughed. "Now I know why the women of Germany have such mighty strong backs. They began their training away back in the twelfth century and evidently have kept it up ever since, for they carry such loads as I never saw."

Dr. Paul laughed, and the two, having passed through the Karlsthör and up the wide Lenbachplatz, waited for the others who had lagged a little behind.

Mrs. Hoyt's sitting-room was more of a rendezvous on a rainy Sunday afternoon than at any other time, and when the chill mists had resolved themselves into a persistent drizzle, the young people gathered in the cheery place to forget outside conditions and to get rid of the blues. Here, after dinner, Nan found Mary Lee and Jo with the Hoyt family and two or three of Maurice's schoolfellows. Mrs. Hoyt was dispensing toasted buns, Lebküchen and chocolate, and it was the coziest of companies.

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"Just in time," Mrs. Hoyt told her. "Sit right down wherever you can find a place, Nan. We have none too many chairs, as you see."

Maurice jumped to his feet and gave Nan his place while he took a position on the floor by Jo, who was seated on a sofa cushion by the window.

"This is nice," said Nan in a satisfied tone. "It is so much like home, and one does get tired of foreign doings once in a while."

"I thought we'd better stay in this drizzly afternoon," remarked Mrs. Hoyt. "Juliet, for one, should not go out, for she has already taken cold."

"If she has taken cold give her quinine; if she has taken anything else, give her thirty days," advised Maurice, between bites of Lebküchen. And of course everybody laughed, as he meant they should.

"This is the best Lebküchen I ever ate," said Nan. "It is much better than any we have had."

"That is because it is the real Nuremburg article," Mrs. Hoyt told her. "There is none quite so good. Have you been to Nuremburg, Nan?"

"No, but perhaps we shall go before it gets too cold. Aunt Helen was speaking of it only yesterday. I want so much to see the Hans Sachs house, the old streets and the Burg."

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"There is really a great deal to see there, and it is a convenient point from which to go to Rothenburg, which, if anything, is even more picturesque. If you like an old mediæval town you will have it there."

"Then I hope we can go to both places. I particularly want to see Nuremburg on account of its being the scene of the Meistersinger. I love that street scene, and I hope the real thing looks just like it," replied Nan, who by this time had heard several operas.

"It is quite exact," Mrs. Hoyt told her. "Boys, stop demolishing those cushions; this is not a dormitory for a pillow fight. Do be sensible."

"We would be if we could, Mrs. Hoyt," replied Henry Olcott, whom the boys dubbed Heinz, as a German contraction of Heinrich.

"I don't see what Mr. Mann does with such a lot of animal spirits," continued Mrs. Hoyt.

"There are fifty-seven varieties," remarked Jo, "and they are all pickles."

"Not all, please, Miss Jo," said Henry prostrating himself at Jo's feet. "Thy servant is a baked bean with tomato sauce; try Heinz."

"I can vouch for the sauce," retorted Jo. "Get up, silly, I am not a heathen idol." [238]

Just as Henry was rising to make a dignified salaam, one of the other boys gave him a push and down he went again on his knees, to the detriment of his new trousers.

"I say, this is too much rough-house," exclaimed Henry. "Mrs. Hoyt, call these fellows to order."

"Come, boys," cried Mrs. Hoyt, "you are getting too obstreperous. We shall have to sing hymns to sober you down."

In a few minutes they were all standing at the piano singing "Onward Christian Soldiers" with all the vim their youthful voices possessed, Nan accompanying. They sang for an hour, the boys coming out strong on the hymn of the St. Andrew's brotherhood, and all those with any sort of martial spirit. As a fitting close, Mrs. Hoyt selected "For all the saints who from their labors rest," since this was All Saints day.

The lads had entirely quieted down by the time this was ended, and Dick Langham, the most exuberant of them all, had actual tears in his eyes as he whispered to Mrs. Hoyt at parting, "I just wish my mother were here, Mrs Hoyt; I'd like to play baby and get in her lap. Those old hymns took me right back home."

"Come to us whenever you want to be mothered," Mrs. Hoyt responded. "I won't promise to take you on my lap, Dick, but I will do my best to cheer you up." [239]

"Thank you, I'll come," said Dick, bending low and kissing her hand.

The boys trooped out as darkness settled down on the outer world. The electric lights showed shining reflections on the wet street. Maximilianplatz looked quiet and empty. The "honk-honk" of an automobile once in a while speeding along, and the noise of a passing tram-car alone interrupted the quiet till the bells of the Frauenkirche pealed out the angelus.

The rain continued with greater force the next day, and Jean, who had taken cold through staying too long in the cemetery, was kept at home from school. She found it rather dreary, for there were none of the accustomed pets which at home helped to beguile the hours, nor had she her favorite story-books. She was usually a patient little body and able to amuse herself, but to-day time hung heavily and she looked many times at the clock, saying mournfully, "It is such a long morning; I wish Jack would come. What can I do, mother, to pass away the time?"

At last having exhausted all her resources, Mrs. Corner was obliged to think up some new entertainment. "You can stand there by the window," she said, "and tell me what things you see that you don't see at home." [240]

This struck Jean's fancy at once and she stationed herself where she could look up and down the street. "I see four *Dienst*—do you say *männer*?"

"No, I think it would be *Dienstmänner*."

"Then I see four *Dienstmänner* with red caps on."

"That is one thing. Write it down. Here is a paper and pencil."

"*Dienstmänner* on corner," wrote Jean. "I see two soldiers not a bit like ours."

"That makes two things."

"And a man wearing a cloak, a man on a wheel, and the cloak flies out behind in the funniest way. Nobody wears cloaks at home and all the men, women and children do here." She wrote this down carefully and then looked out again.

"What do you see, Sister Anne?" asked her mother after a while.

"I didn't see anything creer for a few minutes, but now I see something: the man and the dog pulling the cart together. That will be a fine thing to write down. Now I see two of those great big horses Nan likes so much; they are pulling a long wagon piled up with beer kegs, and there's another horse harnessed to one side the pole like you were talking about the other day. That is quite different from the things they do at home. Oh, and there is an old woman with a load of wood on her back. She carries it in a sort of rack. It looks like a lot for such an old woman to carry; she is all bent over with the weight of it." [241]

"That you would scarcely see at home."

Jean was silent for a time. "There are a great many dogs," she said after a while, "*dachshunds* more than any other kind; but those you see at home, though not so many. I reckon I won't put them down. Now I see something," she began after a pause. "It is the woman that turns the switch there by the car track; she has that funny hat on, and a cloak. There goes a man and a little boy and both are dressed differently from any one we see at home. The man has on a *Jäger* costume, and I suppose the little boy's is meant to be the same. He has black velvet trousers embroidered with green, and a little jacket. His stockings come below the knees so the knees are bare. He has a hat on with a long feather sticking up in the back, and some *edelweiss* at the

side." She wrote this all down carefully and surveyed her work with pride. "I think that is a great deal to see," she told her mother, "and I suppose if I stayed long enough I would see crauntities of other things. I am going to take this home with me and show it to my friends." She watched for some time, but saw nothing more of unusual interest.

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"Suppose we vary it a little," said her mother, seeing the amusement was beginning to lose its zest. "See how many things you know the German names of; that will be an excellent exercise, and will be an interesting way of studying."

Jean found that she knew much more than she supposed, though she did not always know how to spell the words, and soon became rather weary of looking them up in the dictionary, but she had really passed a long time at the window, and was relieved to find that very soon it would be time for Jack to come in. So she sat down to watch for her.

But Jack seemed unusually late, and Jean became actually impatient before she saw the little figure in red coat skipping across the street with her Aunt Helen, who had gone to the school for her. Jack came in with her usual impetuosity. She carried a small package, and this she thrust into Jean's hand. "It is for you," she said. "We stopped to get it, and that is why we were so late. We got it at that lovely toy shop on the Karlsplatz."

The windows of the toy shops were a never failing source of entertainment to even the older girls, for they held miracles of ingenuity in the way of toys. To Jack and Jean it seemed that such a kitchen as one window displayed, or such a wedding-party as another showed, it would be the height of bliss to possess. Jean especially admired the tiny dishes which contained make-believe articles of food of every kind and description, all so natural that it seemed hard to believe they were not good to eat. Jack liked the kitchen with its array of cooking utensils, its dust-pan and brush, and its basket of marketing which stood ready for the cook's attention.

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Jean opened her package with pleased anticipation on her face, and found a pretty little doll and two of the tiny plates of make-believe food. The doll was one she had admired the last time she and Jack had stood before the shop-window. "It is a darling," she said, "and I just love the little dishes. Did you buy them yourself, Jack, with your own money? It was lovely of you, if you did."

"I bought the doll and Aunt Helen the dishes. Oh, Jean, what do you think we did? We stopped at the Kiosk on our way home and Aunt Helen bought tickets for the loveliest fairy play that we are all going to next week. It is for children and it is called 'The Princess Herzlieb'; that means the Princess Heartlove. Isn't it a lovely name?"

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"It is lovely and I do hope I can go," returned Jean ecstatically. She loved fairy stories above everything.

"Of course you can go. It isn't for about ten days, and you are not really ill, you know."

"I'm sort of ill," said Jean putting on a lackadaisical expression; "mother thought I had fever last night." It would never do to have her condition underrated, of course.

"Well, you will surely be well in ten days."

Jean admitted that she might be well by that time, and after deciding to call the doll Princess Herzlieb, the two went off together to play.

"I saw that little girl again this morning," Jack remarked when they were established in a corner. "The little girl we saw yesterday in the cemetery, the poor little girl."

"Oh, and did you speak to her?"

"No, I only smiled. I am thinking, Jean, that it would be nice to do something for her at Christmas. We have always done something for somebody then, you know."

"But you don't know where she lives nor anything about her."

"No, but maybe I shall see her again. I will watch for her. I saw her this morning as I was going to school."

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"What was she doing? Just walking along?"

"She was talking to the woman who turns the switch near our school."

"Then maybe the woman would know."

"I thought of that, and if we don't see the little girl again before Christmas we might ask the woman or get some one else to do it. I know Nan would."

"Did she look very poor?" asked Jean trying to settle the doll before a table of books she had built.

"Poorer than ever, for she hadn't her Sunday clothes on."

"Maybe mother will let us give her some of our things."

"Maybe she will. I don't suppose she will have any Christmas tree, do you?"

"I don't suppose she will."

"I heard Mrs. Hoyt say that everybody does have a tree in Germany."

"Everybody?"

"Oh, I suppose there are some who are too poor. Maybe the switch woman is the little girl's mother, and it was her father she was putting the candle and flowers for."

"I am going to ask her when we know her."

"Oh, Jean!"

"Yes, I am. I don't think it would be anything at all. Jack, we ought to be saving up for Christmas, and here you've been spending money for me."

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"Because you had to stay in and have a stupid time." There was nothing worse to Jack than to be deprived of her time out-of-doors.

"It wasn't very stupid. Mother made up some nice creer plays. I'll show you what I did." She produced her paper and informed her sister that she intended to add to her list of unusual things and to play the same play on rainy days in every new city she chanced to visit.

Jack quite approved of the play, and at first wanted to copy the paper, but finally decided that she would rather pick out the things herself.

"I think I will get a little blank book," she said, "and then I can keep them all together."

Jean thought this a good plan, and they concluded that some of their next allowance should be spent in this way.

By this time it was getting too dark to continue their play, and the Princess Herzlieb had finished her meal so they bore her into the sitting-room, where Nan had just finished practicing, and where Jo and Mary Lee were struggling over their German grammar.



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CHAPTER XIII

THE FAIRY PLAY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

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As the time for the fairy play approached the children grew more and more eager. Even the elder members of the party were going; the Hoyts, too, had taken tickets.

"Do let us have our own tickets, mother," begged Jack before they started. "It seems so nice to really own them, and so much more important than if some one else gave them in. We will take good care of them. I'll put mine in my pocketbook, and I'll promise not to lose it."

"It will be to your own sorrow if you do," her mother told her. "Here it is. Perhaps it is a good plan to let you have this much responsibility, for it will give you a chance of depending upon your own wits."

Jack stowed away her ticket safely, giving only stealthy peeps at it once in a while during the time they were on the street-cars which would take them to the Gärtnerplatz theatre. At the last moment before they entered she looked to see if it were there, and held it tightly as she was about to follow the others. Miss Helen was in front, the older girls came next, Jean was just ahead of Jack. Suddenly Jack's eye fell upon a forlorn little figure by the door, wistfully watching the faces of the many happy children who were entering the door. Jack paused, and gave a long look at the child to make sure she was the same they had seen in the cemetery on All Saints day. She had not met her since the morning she saw her talking to the switch-tender, but she was very sure that she was not mistaken in believing her to be the one in whom she and Jean were interested. She stood smiling at the little girl and received a timid smile in return.

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"*Gehen zie* in theatre?" asked Jack in her best German.

"*Nein*," answered the child.

"Warum?" inquired Jack.

"*Ich habe kein billet.*"

Jack hesitated but a moment before she thrust her ticket into the hand of the child who looked astounded. "Here," said Jack, and then she rushed tumultuously away leaving the child gazing from the ticket to the fast disappearing figure of the little girl who hurried off.

Jack had a good bump of locality and knew exactly what car to take in order to return home, and thither she went, not without some regrets at her impetuous generosity, it must be confessed, but on the whole quite satisfied with herself. It seemed a very long afternoon, but she went bravely through it, occupying the time by writing to her friend Carter Barnwell, and by doing such things as were not encouraged when her elders were at home. It was a fine opportunity to pick out tunes on the piano, for example, and to leap from chair to chair pretending that there was only water between. She could also rummage and dress up, choosing Nan's frocks for the latter performance, since these would trail further on the ground. She put a suit of Mary Lee's on a pillow and pretended it was another person while she, herself, was the Princess Herzlieb, so after all the time did not go slowly. [251]

She was standing by the window watching when the family returned.

"Jack Corner, you are the most surprising child I ever saw," began Nan.

"Oh, but you missed it," cried Jean. "You never saw anything so lovely."

"Hush, Jean," said Mrs. Corner. "Jack, dear, I want to know how it happened the little girl had your place."

"We were so surprised when she came in," said Mary Lee. "We thought you were right behind us, and that the little girl had taken the wrong seat for there were two empty just the other side, though they were filled later, but no indeed, there was the number all right. You never saw such an amazed child as she was in all your life. I don't suppose she had ever been in such a place before." [252]

"Tell us about it, Jack," said her mother taking the child's hands in hers.

"I saw her standing on the steps watching the people go in, and she looked so poor and miserable, and I thought of the candle and the flowers and that maybe she never did have any good times, so I asked her if she were going in and she said no, she hadn't any ticket, so I said here, and I gave her mine and ran."

"You impulsive little child," said her mother. "Why, dearie, rather than have had you give up the play I would gladly have let you take my place. Indeed, as soon as we had inquired of the little girl how she came to have the ticket I did go out to find you, but you were nowhere to be seen."

Jack looked a little regretful. "What did the little girl say?" she asked. "What did you all talk to her about?"

"Your Aunt Helen asked if she had found the ticket, for she thought you must have dropped it. But the little girl said, no, a *mädchen*, a *gnädiges fräulein* gave it to her, and then we knew."

Jack turned eagerly to Jean. "Did you ask her name, Jean, and where she lived?" [253]

"I forgot. I was so excited about the play, but Aunt Helen asked, didn't she, mother?"

"Yes, her name is Bertha Metzger, and she lives over the other side of the market. Did I understand you to say, Jack, that you had seen her before?"

"Why, yes, didn't Jean tell you? She is the little girl we saw in the cemetery that Sunday, the one who had only a little candle and such a measly tiny bunch of flowers."

"And that is why you felt like doing this for her, I see."

"Of course that was it."

"Oh, Jack," exclaimed Jean again rapturously, "it was so lovely. The Princess Herzlieb was beautiful, and the prince so handsome. It was like a real fairy-land with roses and things, and the fairy godmother lived in a cunning house, and had the dearest boy pigeons to carry her messages. They would flap their wings just like real pigeons, only they were people dressed up to look like pigeons. Then there was a funny fat old cook that made everybody laugh; you ought to have seen him, he was so ridiculous."

"I don't care," said Jack with pretended indifference.

"And the brother of the princess was changed into stone because he was a very bad boy, and the princess could break the spell only by going into the king's kitchen and working like a servant for a year, and in all that time she couldn't speak a word; if she did there would be no chance of her freeing her brother from the spell. Oh, it was so exciting I was so afraid she would have to speak." [254]

"I don't care," said Jack, not quite so bravely.

"And," Jean went on still intent upon her tale, "there was a great big Christmas tree at the last

and the king and the king's brother—he was the prince who loved the princess—and a lot of the court were all there, then afterward the prince found the princess and she had served her time as a servant so she could free her brother, so she did, and oh, it was fine. There were so many lovely things. There was a fairy who appeared and disappeared like magic, and—oh, yes, I forgot, there was such a funny dance—"

"I—don't care," said Jack in a broken voice and rushing from the room. After all, her sacrifice had not seemed to mean much. Every one had been entertained and had not missed her greatly. Even Jean, her own twin, had not said she was sorry that her little sister was not there, but seemed, on the contrary, rather to triumph over her. They had not said much about Bertha, and—well the tears began to run down her cheeks as she stood alone in the dark by the window of the room where she and Jean slept. [255]

Presently the door opened softly and some one came in. "Is that you here in the dark, Jacksie?" It was Nan who spoke. "I am so sorry you missed the play. I couldn't half enjoy it for thinking about you. But, honey, you did the loveliest thing for little Bertha, and you are a real little Princess Herzlieb yourself, because poor Bertha is shut out from everything, from all the lovely things and the comforts you have and you broke the spell by making a sacrifice, just as the Princess Herzlieb did in the play."

"Oh, Nan, did I?"

"Of course, for you gave her such a wonderful pleasure. I wish you could have seen her great eyes and her happy little face. She will remember this afternoon all her life, I am sure. Aunt Helen and I talked to her as we were coming out, and we are going to find out more about her. Her mother is dead and she doesn't know where her father is. She lives with an aunt who has a great many children and I think must be very poor."

"Maybe she is the switch woman."

"Very likely. At any rate we shall find out soon, and we are going to see about a jolly good Christmas for them all. Do you remember last year and little Christine? You did that, too, little Princess Heartlove. Your old Nan understands, doesn't she? I know you can't help being half sorry, but when you see how it will all turn out for Bertha, you will be glad you served without speaking." [256]

"You are so nice, Nan," said Jack, giving her sister a close hug. "You always do understand, and you never think I am half as bad as other people think."

"You are anything but bad. Sometimes you do thoughtless things, but you don't really mean to be naughty."

"I forget."

"I know you do, and after a while you will learn to remember. You don't do half as many wrong things as you used to. I know something else; I know if you hadn't spent your money for Jean's doll you would have had enough to buy a ticket for Bertha and could have kept your own."

"How did you know?" said Jack a little embarrassed.

"Because I know what your allowance is, and I know you had only a tiny bit left after you bought the doll."

"I had just car fare to take me home." [257]

"Exactly what I thought. Any one of us older ones would have been glad to help you out, but like the reckless little body that you are, you rushed off and didn't give us a chance. If you had waited a few minutes you might have known we'd come out to hunt you up."

"I wanted Bertha to have the ticket and I thought I'd better go, so she wouldn't try to give it back to me."

"Oh, of course, I know exactly why you did it, but next time give the rest of us a chance too. We could all have chipped in and have bought her a ticket, that is supposing there were any to be had. They were very cheap, anyhow, so you could both have had your fun."

Jack gave a little sigh. She realized that she had rather overstepped the mark in her effort to be generous, but now she did not regret it, for Jean had only seen a Princess Herzlieb, and Nan had said she was one herself; that was much better, and Nan had missed her, whether any one else did or not. It was worth while to have done something that no one else had thought of doing, and for which Nan had praised her.

True to their word Miss Helen and Nan did go to hunt up Bertha Metzger, and found that she really did live with the switch-tender in a little back street. The place was poor but respectable enough. Frau Pfeffer, the aunt, worked very hard to support her five small children and Bertha, too, and it was hard to earn enough for food and clothing for all. Bertha's father had suddenly disappeared, and had not been heard of for a long time. He had been nearly crazed by the loss of his wife, and about the same time had lost his place in a factory. Frau Pfeffer, herself, had come from the country after the death of her husband and had tried to find her brother, whom she believed to be in Munich, but had not been able to learn anything about him. He had gone away to look for work, his neighbors said, and had promised to return for his little girl whom he had [258]

sent to her aunt.

There was nothing of the whining beggar about Frau Pfeffer. She told her tale simply as a matter of course, and did not hint at her needs. She worked hard, but not so hard as many others, for she could sit down much of the time, and though it was often cold, still that was nothing when one was used to it, and she considered herself very fortunate to have the work to do. Bertha could help a great deal. She was to be relied upon, and did not let the children get into any harm. The father's name was Hans Metzger, and she was sure if he were alive he would come back.

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The conversation was not carried on without some difficulty, for Frau Pfeffer's Bavarian dialect was hard to understand, and Miss Helen was not very proficient in German. Nan had a better command of the language and was very quick, but even she found herself at a loss for a word very often, and oftener still, could not distinguish what Frau Pfeffer was saying.

Miss Helen and Nan walked home together after their visit, coming through an old part of the city, and happening upon various curious corners where old painted houses faced them, and where the crooked streets would have misled them if they had not carried a map. As they went along they planned what they should do for the Pfeffer family. Every Christmas for several years the Corners had tried to help some one who needed assistance, and they had been most fortunate in their efforts. The sad little picture of a forlorn child offering one meagre candle and a few broken flowers as a decoration for her mother's grave on All Saints day had moved them, although it was Jack who had really done the most to awaken the interest of the others. Jack, whom one would never suspect of such things, and who had given her family more anxiety and care than all the rest put together, yet it was she who, the year before, had given her Christmas stocking to a little lame girl in New York, for with all her thoughtlessness and her capacity for getting into scrapes, hers was the warmest heart of all.

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That same day Dr. Woods came in, and was told the story which was at the moment the most interesting theme of conversation. He, too, thought it a case which should be given attention. "What we want to do," Nan told him, "is to find the father. Frau Pfeffer is quite sure he will return, but he may not be alive, though she firmly believes he is."

"Perhaps I can help there," said the doctor. "What is his name?"

"Hans Metzger."

"Where was he last seen?" Dr. Woods took out his note-book.

"He left Munich to find work."

"Do you know where he intended to go?"

"No, but perhaps his neighbors would know."

"I will inquire. Can you tell me what was his last address?"

"I can give you his sister's. No doubt she will know where he lived last."

"That will do. All right. I will start up a line of investigation at once. Perhaps among us all, we may get hold of a clue. And how goes the German, Nan?"

"It is a fearsome language," said Nan solemnly. "I wish you could have heard me trying to make Frau Pfeffer understand me, though I think I struggled harder, if anything, to understand her. Such a dialect! I don't see how they make it out themselves, and I don't see, either, how they master the German pure and—no, I can't say simple, for it is exactly the opposite."

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"I admit it is pretty hard, and if I hadn't tackled it early, I would be in a regular fuddle now. But I took my grasp young, and have managed to hold on, as you will do."

"I don't know. I like French, or any of the Latin languages better."

"Yet there is a sort of rugged dignity about German which is very attractive. Its literature is very rich."

"I suppose so, and I may find its attractions later, but not when I am stumbling into pitfalls caused by declensions and constructions."

"If I can help you out at any time, don't fail to press me into service."

"I may keep you to that offer."

The other girls, including Juliet Hoyt, considered Dr. Paul much too elderly to be interesting, and at his appearance generally betook themselves to the Hoyts' rooms, where the more frivolous company of schoolboys suited their tastes. Nan, therefore, was often left to do the honors if her mother and aunt were not at hand, and Nan, be it said, did not consider it a hardship, for she liked Dr. Paul, and often when Mrs. Corner and Miss Helen returned from an early concert they would find the two laughing and talking together most happily. Nan liked the Hoyts and enjoyed the nonsense which went on in their sitting-room where there were seldom less than two or three boys, but her love of music was too real for her not wanting to escape from a series of dances banged out to rag-time measure.

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"It is more than I can stand," she told Dr. Paul. "A little rag-time is jolly enough, and I am not so superior as to despise it altogether, but a whole evening of it is more than I can stand."

"Yet even that is better than some other kinds," responded Dr. Paul. "There happens to be a man at our *pension* who at home has the reputation of being an accomplished musician because he professes to play classical music. He comes from some small town, and his companions are evidently not among the elect. He does play execrably. I wish you could hear him."

"I don't," interrupted Nan laughing. "I know the kind. I suppose he will keep right on for the rest of his life as he has begun, varying his performance sometimes by bringing in a bit of improvisation, terrible improvisation which has no rhyme, reason, melody or anything else. I know such a person who blandly told me she sometimes altered Chopin and Beethoven to suit herself. Fancy! Oh, I know your man will cheerfully keep on, not knowing the difference between good music and bad, and because he has always associated with rag-time people who think any one who plays anything heavier than Hiawatha must have a standard so high that ordinary mortals cannot venture to criticise the performance."

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"I perceive you are acquainted with the species. Yet, after all, I sometimes think it is a pity to know too much about music, for one certainly has a narrower range of enjoyment."

"But think of the quality of it."

"I wonder if it is really more than that of a man I used to know at college who would say, 'Give me a bag of peanuts and an interesting book and I'll enjoy myself.' Why, I read half of 'Les Miserables' at one sitting."

"For peanuts read candy, and you will have about the speech of a schoolmate of mine."

"Are you going to take up counterpoint and thorough-bass?" asked the doctor.

"Dear me, no. I don't aspire to composition. If I overcome technique and get in a little harmony I shall be doing well. I am doing intricate Bach things now, but I have an inspiring teacher and I don't mind the hard work. You should hear her play. Talk of temperament! I never saw anything like her."

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"And I fancy Miss Nan Corner is not lacking in that particular."

"I believe Mr. Harmer used to think so, but I feel like a very automaton compared to Frau Burg-Schmidt."

"I haven't heard you play since you were at home last winter, but——"

"Then you wouldn't let me practice; you told me to frivol, I remember."

"You needed to frivol then. That is where it was a time to quench the fires of genius."

"I believe I have felt years older since that experience," said Nan thoughtfully, "and I am sure it is why mother does not want to leave us alone again. I believe you had something to say to that, too, Dr. Paul."

"You mustn't expect me to give away the secrets of my profession."

"Then it is about the only thing you aren't willing to give away," returned Nan laughing.

"Do you like stingy people?"

"Ask a Virginian that? Dear me, what are you thinking of? No, I suppose I am lacking in a proper admiration for thrift when I say that I would rather that a person were too extravagant than parsimonious."

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"I shall never be a rich man, I am afraid," said the doctor with a half sigh.

"Comfort yourself with thinking about the deceitfulness of riches, and keep on being the generous man your father is, and you will be all right. Listen to my grandmotherly advice and remember that I have three younger sisters to deal with."

"And I have none."

"Then consider that Nan Corner is ready to be as sisterly as she knows how, for any better big brother than you are to us all, I do not care to see. Here come mother and Aunt Helen."

"And you have not played for me."

"You must wait till my joints are so limber that I can make my fingers form a right angle with the back of my hand; that is what I am aiming at now."

Then Mrs. Corner and Miss Helen came in and the doctor went forward to meet them.

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CHAPTER XIV
"STILLE NACHT"

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THAT Christmas was very near at hand was apparent by more than one outward and visible sign. "Though they don't begin to prepare for it nearly as early as we do," remarked Mary Lee.

"I think it is nicer not to," said Jack, "for there they begin so soon that it fools you into thinking it is very near when it is weeks off, and you get so used to seeing Christmas things that you forget they aren't there all the time."

"The first thing we must do to make us feel that Christmas is coming is to see the *krippen*," said Miss Helen.

"What are *krippen*?" asked Jean.

"They are representations of the Nativity, generally, though sometimes they represent other religious subjects such as the Flight into Egypt, or the heralding angels appearing to the shepherds. They are often very elaborate, and the best display of them is at the National Museum, where you can see fac-similes not only of German *krippen* but of Italian and Sicilian ones. The different churches also have them. There is one of the Advent now at the Theatinerkirche. You twins will be delighted with the little figures which are sometimes really wonderful."

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THE CHILDREN STOOD IN AWE AND DELIGHT AT THE
KRIPPEN.

They all started out the very next day to view the *krippen*, stopping first at St. Cajetans-Hofkirche on the Theatinerstrasse, where the children stood in awe and delight before the scene of John the Baptist preaching the coming of our Lord. The tiny figures were very perfect, the centurion soldiers and listening multitude were artistically grouped, a little brook of running water made a pleasant murmur as it wound its way along. It was not more than four inches wide, but it added much to the scene. The whole was lighted and stood out in strong contrast to the dim church in which it was enshrined. As Miss Helen dropped some *pfennige* into the cup ready

for contributions a sepulchral voice in some dark corner murmured: "*Gott sei dank*."

Through the lower rooms of the Museum, where it was impossible not to linger a little to see the many curious and interesting things, the party took its way to the upper floor, where through a dark labyrinthine way they passed to find the lighted *krippen* set up on each side. There were a great many, and it took a long time to make the rounds. Some were quite simple; others were very elaborate. There were street scenes with every conceivable sort of figure, wonderful interiors and exteriors where the Wise Men were shown in all the pomp of Eastern magnificence; there were gardens and palaces, temples and churches, processions, and, above all, the rude stable with the manger and the Holy Family.

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"They are the most marvellous things I ever saw," said first one and then another of the girls. "Such perfect little figures, such fascinating landscapes, such variety of expression and action, such typical costumes."

"The Sicilian ones are the best," decided Nan, "though those of southern Italy are about as good."

"I wouldn't have missed it for anything," declared Jo, as they came to the last one. "You are a duck, Miss Helen, to think of bringing us here. I am going to haunt the churches from now on to see how many *krippen* I can discover."

"Oh, can't we go back and do it all over?" asked Jean.

"Dear me," said Miss Helen, "I thought we had made a very careful examination of them all."

"But I do like them so much and I can't remember them all by seeing them just once."

"Perhaps we can come again," her mother comforted her by saying. "I think this must do for now, and there will be others in the churches."

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"They will be changed quite often at the Theatinerkirche, I am told," said Miss Helen. "I believe there is a new *krippe* each week."

"Oh, there comes a new word. I suppose *krippe* is the singular and *krippen* the plural," said Mary Lee.

"Naturally. The word I find means literally a manger. We can see a very interesting display of *krippen*, Christmas ornaments and such things down on Sonnenstrasse and the Sendlingeethorplatz. The peasants make the little *krippen* and bring them in for sale just before Christmas."

"Oh, do they have them anywhere but in the churches?"

"Yes, indeed. A great many private houses have them and they are considered quite as much an institution in some families as the Christmas tree, though of course, these would be the Roman Catholic families. You can see them of all sorts and sizes. Munich is Roman Catholic, you know, although there are many Protestants here and many Protestant churches."

"I should love to have a *krippe* to take home even if I am not a Roman Catholic, mother," said Jean. "Couldn't we have one?"

"I don't see any reason for not having one, although it would be rather hard to pack. We will see about it."

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"And may we go this afternoon to look at them?"

"Haven't you had enough *krippen* for one day? I think we'd better wait especially as the choice will be better a little later on," her aunt told her.

The Christmas trees were arriving, and as the party proceeded homeward they saw them being set up in their little stands, in every square and open space.

"They do everything here in such a nice pleasant way," said Nan, as she and her aunt walked through the forest of trees standing erect all along the Maximilianplatz. "At home now, they throw the trees in a pile or crowd them together in any old place. Here each tree looks as if it were really growing, and that this were an avenue of them growing just for Christmas. You can so easily see exactly how they look and can pick out what you like without any trouble. How good and Christmassy it smells, and what quantities of trees there are, then there are more coming. Can they sell so many, I wonder? The whole city seems to be full of them."

"When you consider that nearly every family in Munich will probably have a tree, you can imagine the number will be somewhat lessened by Christmas Eve." And true enough, as it proved, there was scarcely a tree left, at least on the Maximilianplatz, by the day before Christmas. More than one of the number went to the *Pension* Bauer, and one was purchased for the family of Frau Pfeffer.

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Before this, however, there was the expedition to Sonnenstrasse to see the collection of Christmas-tree ornaments, *krippen* and such things which the country folk had brought for sale, and which were set out in small booths all along the street. Jean's fancy fell upon a tiny *krippe* which she and Jack bore away in triumph.

The days were very short and sunless, so that nightfall came very early, but in spite of that the

streets were full of people who filled the big shops, or loitered along the streets, stopping leisurely before the windows to look in, and because it seemed the general custom for every one to go out as soon as it got dark, the Corner family followed suit.

"I suppose they do it to save candles," said Miss Helen. "There is German thrift for you."

"I think it is great fun," said Nan. "Why shouldn't they come out and look at the pretty things? The shop-windows are very attractive especially now, and some of the things are very cheap. I saw a fascinating silver chain on Sonnenstrasse, and it was ever so much cheaper than in other shops in more fashionable parts of the city. It is much handsomer, too. Jo and I gloated over that window."

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"That was the one from which we had such difficulty in dragging you, wasn't it?"

"Yes, we saw so many pretty cheap things there, and we wanted to buy them every one. I'd love to give Jo that chain."

"How about giving it to Nan?"

"Oh, it's too expensive to give myself when all I can rake and scrape must go toward buying other things. If I can't get that special chain for Jo, there is another that I think will come within my limit and which she likes quite as well. Don't you love the way the men come sauntering along and stand before the windows? It gives one such a sense of leisure and real enjoyment of life to see them go dawdling about. That one we just passed is going to give his wife furs for Christmas, I know. He is looking at every piece in that window with a critical eye. Oh, Aunt Helen, do look. Did you ever see anything quite like that? A huge sausage dressed up with a huge satin bow, red satin at that, and there is a boiled ham pranked out with blue ribbons and artificial flowers. Truly *schinken* and *wurst* are dear to the German heart."

They were coming around by the Karlsthor to enter one of the big department stores where Nan had seen a certain book she wanted to get. "I would like you to see if you don't think it would be a good thing to give to Dr. Paul," she said to her aunt. "He has been so kind and good in so many ways, just like a big brother. I must give him something, and as he is very fond of dogs I thought I would get that funny book of *dachshunds* for him."

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Miss Helen agreed that this would answer admirably.

"There are some dear little pieces of peasant pottery out on Turkenstrasse," Nan went on. "I think they are lovely. On the next street to the pottery shop are some queer wooden boxes which are made by the peasants, too. I want two or three of them. One I shall give to Juliet Hoyt, and a little jar to Mrs. Hoyt. I haven't decided what I shall give to Maurice."

"You certainly are finding out all the odd corners and out-of-the-way shops," said her aunt.

"I snoop around when I am coming home from my lessons, and Frau Burg-Schmidt told me about the boxes."

"I should like to see them, myself."

They decided that they would have time to hunt up the two shops, and continued their walk, coming home with mysterious packages which they refused to show to any one, and which they promptly stowed away with their other Christmas purchases.

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From this out there was much whispering and many remarks, such as: "Nan and I are going out together this afternoon; you needn't come, Jean." Or, "Mother, would you mind not going with us to-day?" But there were other times when all must go together to select what was intended for Bertha Metzger and her little cousins. After talking the matter over Mrs. Corner and Miss Helen decided that it would be better for the girls to contribute from their regular Christmas money, and not receive any extra amount. "They will be much happier knowing the joy of sacrifice," Mrs. Corner said. "They are perfectly willing to go without a tree for themselves if we will furnish one for the Pfeffers, and each has agreed to be entirely satisfied with a modest present from her sisters, so as to have more to spend for Bertha."

"You are a wise mother, Mary," said Miss Helen. "I am sure the girls will enjoy their Christmas much more for having to exercise a little self-denial. I don't suppose I need be limited in making my gifts, need I?" she asked laughing. "You don't want to discipline me, do you?"

"I don't believe you need it," returned Mrs. Corner affectionately.

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There were many interviews with Frau Pfeffer, and on the morning before Christmas Eve all five of the little Pfeffers with Bertha were sent to spend the day with a neighbor, and then the Corners took possession. The tree was set up and each had a hand in the trimming, the twins feeling very important, as this was the first time in their lives that they had been allowed to take part in such a performance. When it was finished they all stood off to see the effect of their handiwork.

"It's perfectly lovely," cried Jack ecstatically. "I'm glad we made up our minds to have this instead of one of our own, for it is much more fun to trim it for some one else."

"The little angel on top is beautiful," said Jean, "and that star on the very tip is so bright. Yes, I am glad they have the tree instead of us, but I am glad we can have our stockings, Jack."

Jack agreed that she would not like to give up the fun of hanging up her stocking, and they stood looking at the tree while Nan, Mary Lee and Jo were arranging the Christmas packages. Besides the warm clothes for each member of the family, there were toys and a basket of substantial food.

"Do put in something sweet and unwholesome," Nan had begged when her mother and aunt were packing the basket. [279]

"Need it be unwholesome because it is sweet?" said Mrs. Corner laughing. "If they don't eat too much at once, I am sure it need not be."

"And please don't say we have given foolish things to the children," Nan went on. "The clothes are very important, but after what you and Mrs. Hoyt have given we think they ought to have toys. They are so cheap that they can have a lot. We have only one apiece from each of us."

"I don't think that will be too many," Mrs. Corner decided. "They will enjoy a few much more than an overabundance."

So the foolish toys were added, and stood in proper array with the more sensible gifts.

Railway switches must be turned even on Christmas Day, but Frau Pfeffer had a substitute on Christmas Eve, and could joyfully celebrate that holiday dear to the German nation. It was scarcely less dear to the party of Americans who gathered in *Pension* Bauer. That they might have more to spend on the Pfeffers they had agreed not to invest more than fifty *pfennige* on any but the Pfeffers, outside their own families, and it had been great fun to see what could be had for the small sum of twelve cents. But Munich was full of cheap and pretty articles, and the assortment was varied, Nan's peasant boxes and jars showing up finely. These presents were to be distributed on Christmas Eve, German fashion, while the family were to have their own celebration on Christmas morning, as they always did at home. [280]

"You can't come into the sitting-room," said Miss Helen speaking through a crack in the door as the children returned from their morning at Frau Pfeffer's.

"You can't come in here," called Mrs. Hoyt poking her head out of the room on the opposite side of the hallway.

"Dear me! Where can we go? What secrets!" cried they all, only too glad there were such. "I suppose we can go into our own rooms," said Nan. "Come on, girls."

The odor of *küchen* filled the air, and there was an excitement in the frequent scurrings to and fro of the maids.

"Who all are coming to-night to help you celebrate?" asked Juliet Hoyt who joined the others in Nan's room after the work of tying up packages was finished, and it was nearing supper time.

"Dr. Woods; I think that is all," Mary Lee told her. "You see we are quite a party in ourselves, seven in all, and he will make eight."

"Four of Maurice's friends are coming," Juliet said, "so we shall be seven; that makes fifteen in all. Not a small number of Americans to get together. Of course Fräulein Bauer will have a tree. She has asked us all to come and see it, and she has been baking wonderful things, the maids say. Those silly boys, I know, have been spending every penny of their allowances on us." [281]

"They shouldn't do it," said Nan severely. "We have only fifty *pfennige* presents for them."

"They would do it. Mamma tried to reason with them, but it was no use, and I suppose we shall be deluged with candy, flowers and books. Mamma laid down the law and told them we would positively accept no other kind of gift, and that she would countenance no extravagance."

"I am glad she did," said Nan. "It would be very embarrassing if they gave any of us handsome gifts."

"It is sort of fun to be in here talking about boys," remarked Jo. "It reminds me of our boarding-school days. I declare I could eat something good and homey this minute. It seems hours since we had dinner, and I have had a long walk since."

Nan jumped down from the bed, where she was sitting with her feet curled under her, and fumbled among some packages in a drawer, presently bringing out a bag which she tossed over to Jo. "There," she said, "that's all you'll get. You must save up for this evening for we are going to have an extra fine supper." [282]

Jo opened the bag, fished out a pretzel and began to nibble it. "Just the thing to keep me occupied," she said, "and yet not too sustaining. Shouldn't you like to see the little Pfeffers when they discover the tree?"

"And Bertha," put in Jack.

"Bertha, of course; she counts in with the rest."

"Frau Pfeffer was so excited that I am sure she has been sending cars off on the wrong track all day," said Mary Lee.

"She is to leave at six and it is that now," said Nan. "Dear me, it seems much later for it has

been dark so long. I wonder what she will do first, look at her presents or light up the tree."

"The first thing she will probably get something to eat, for she will be hungry, and so will the children. I suppose Bertha and the five will be standing waiting outside when she gets there," Mary Lee decided.

"But will she let them in till the tree is lighted?" said Jack. "It would be so much more of a surprise."

"We shall find out to-morrow, for I am sure we shall see some of them," said Nan. "It is really Christmas Eve for it is as dark as a pocket. Don't let's have any light. Froliche Weihnacht, girls! Now let's be cozy and do something to suit the season till we are called to supper. Jo, you're nearest the stove, just put a shovel or two of coal on that fire, so we can be good and warm. I don't think it has died down entirely."

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Jo opened the door of the great tiled affair which stood in the corner, and peeped in. "I think there is enough left to start up again," she said as she threw on a few shovelfuls of coal. "I used to stand in such awe of these great porcelain stoves, or ovens, as they call them here, but they are not so bad, and when I get home I shall deny the report that one cannot keep warm in winter anywhere in Europe. I'm sure we have been warm enough. There, it is going ahead splendidly. What shall we do to be in keeping with Christmas Eve?"

"Suppose we sing *Stille Nacht*," suggested Juliet. And they began the good old German Christmas hymn, their young voices sounding sweetly to those busy in the next room. Then, as if answering, from the street below a band struck up the same air. The hymn was scarcely finished before Anna came along the corridor, knocking at each door to say: "*Zu tisch, bitte*," and they trooped out to the feast of good things which the Fräulein had prepared for this special occasion, and which was served earlier than usual since a second supper would be ready about nine o'clock.

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The severe Miss Smart from Chelsea had departed to spend the holiday in the mountains, thither, too, the Herr doctor and his mother had gone, and the jovial German was taking supper with friends, so only the American contingency appeared at table. Herr Eckler was to return later, Fräulein Bauer told them.

"When can we go to the sitting-room?" asked the twins as they arose from the table.

"In a few minutes," Mrs. Corner told them.

"You must visit us when you have exhausted your own surprises," said Mrs. Hoyt, "and then we will all go and look at the Fräulein's tree."

The Corner children and Jo gathered around their door on one side the hallway; Juliet and Maurice with the four boys, who came in a bunch, on the other waited till at the word "Ready!" all rushed into the rooms opened to them.

"A tree after all!" cried the twins.

"Yes, it was the good Fräulein who sent it in all trimmed," Mrs. Corner told them, "and she has given us each one of these."

"These" proved to be wonderful gingerbread figures such as all had seen in bakeshop windows for the past fortnight, and which were really marvels of the baker's art. Then came the little presents from the Hoyts and their boy friends. For Nan a small glass with a München kindel upon it; a little can with the inscription "I hope you will enjoy your can o' tea (*K-no-te*)," this from Maurice, and from Juliet a photograph of Nan's favorite tenor. For the others were various gifts: wooden peasant boxes, little steins, queer figures, odd pictures. Jean had a whole German dinner in imitation, sausages, cabbage, cheese, fruit and cakes all set on the tiniest of plates and looking really good enough to eat. The schoolboys sent in a huge box of candies with a ridiculous little piano for Nan, a tiny *dachshund* for Mary Lee, a nest of the funny figures they called the "Spazieren-gehen family" for Jo. An invitation to a Christmas play at the Gärtnerplatz theatre signed by the four boys, fell to Jack's share, while for each, including Mrs. Corner and Miss Helen, were flowers.

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A rap at the door interrupted the chatter. Juliet put in her head. "Come over and see our show as soon as you can," she said. "We don't want to put out the candles till you come." And all the children followed her leaving their elders to extinguish the candles on their own tree.

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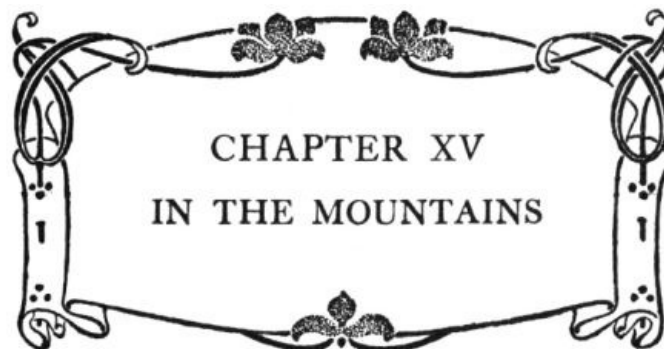
Another tree was lighted in the Hoyts' room, and other gingerbread figures stood prominently forth; the Fräulein had treated the Hoyts as generously as the Corners. More candy and flowers from the boys, a delightfully funny calendar for Juliet and a second nest of Spazieren-gehen figures.

The boys were having a great time over their own gifts. Nan and Mary Lee had set their wits to work upon a square wooden box, in the centre of which they had grouped four tiny Max and Moritz figures. These were securely glued on, and from each corner of the lid was a deeply grooved line burnt in the white wood. The inscription read: "From the four Corners to the four schoolboys." Inside the box were four rolls of the Christmas dainty known as mazapan which the girls had wrapped up in this brown paper to imitate sausages. This special sweet had been lately discovered, and the boys had all expressed a wish to taste it.

"Such clever people," said Henry Olcott. "We're going to toss up for the box and the fellow who gets it will be in luck, so he will have to treat the rest."

By the time the candles had burned down came a summons to the dining-room. Another tree met the sight of the children, and a table set out with cakes and a light punch. Herr Eckler had arrived and pretty soon all were dancing, Jack spinning around with the portly Herr in the roundest of round waltzes to the music pounded out by the Fräulein's brother. Dr. Woods arrived late, but joined in the dance, and later the whole party, except Mrs. Corner and the twins, went to the solemn and beautiful service at the Frauenkirche, a fitting close to a German Christmas Eve.

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CHAPTER XV IN THE MOUNTAINS

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"I LIKE my opera-glasses and bag better than anything, and my lovely chain next," said Nan sitting up in bed to examine her presents. Mrs. Corner and Miss Helen always breakfasted in their own rooms, and on this occasion the girls concluded to do the same, since cocoa and rolls were not difficult to dispose of before the gifts were unwrapped.

"I like my fairy-tale book," came a small voice from the next room.

"What do you like, you Jo Keyes over there?" Nan called out.

No reply came from the head buried in the pillow.

"Here, you Josephine Schlüssel, are you asleep? Why don't you speak up?" Nan picked up a worsted slipper and threw it across the room. The slipper landed on Jo's head and she responded by raising rather a teary face.

"You've all been so perfectly lovely to me," she said, "so much lovelier than they ever are at home. Instead of just giving me fifty *pfennige* presents as you ought to have done, you've treated me just as if I were one of you."

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"Well, you needn't cry about it," said Nan roughly, herself quite overcome by this evidence of feeling on Jo's part. "You are one of us, of course. Tell what you like best, old girl, or I'll throw this other slipper at you, and then I can't get up to-day, for I am never going to set my feet on these cold boards."

"Oh, my kodak, of course," returned Jo. "It was so dear of your Aunt Helen to give it to me, and it is such a beauty. I have always so longed for one. Then that dear chain, Nan, you—"

"Time to hear from you, Mary Lee," cried Nan interrupting further remarks from Jo. "What's your particular vanity?"

Mary Lee hesitated a moment. "I think I like the picture of Miss Dolores in her *manta de Manila*."

"I knew you'd say that," responded Nan. "I was just waiting to hear. Hallo, Jack, in there, why don't you let us hear from you?"

"I'm coming in to tell you." The answer was prompt, and presently Jack in red wrapper and slippers appeared, stocking in hand. "I'll tell you, Nan, but I won't tell any one else," she said. She came close to the bed and whispered something in Nan's ear. Nan laughed. It was her own present to her little sister which was the one preferred. It was a cunning figure of an owl which Nan had marked: "The moping owl doth to the moon complain." It was like Jack to prefer this. The owl was of the porcelain ware for which Bavaria is well known, and when the head was removed Jack discovered the owl was filled with chocolates, though it was not this fact which made her favor it above the rest of her gifts.

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"Come in here with me," said Nan. "There is room enough for two, if we cuddle." She moved

over that Jack might snuggle down by her side.

"I think you're mean to leave me," came a plaintive voice from the next room.

"Come get in with me," called Mary Lee; "though you won't have long to stay for we must get up soon if we are going to church."

Jean pattered across the floor and crept in with Mary Lee, to turn out the contents of her stocking for her sister's inspection.

"Did you know you were going to get the chain, Nan?" asked Jack.

"No, indeed, and it is the very one I liked so much. I don't see how Aunt Helen knew."

"She asked Jo; didn't she, Jo?"

"She mought and then again she moughtn't," returned Jo non-committally.

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"What did Dr. Paul give you?" Jack asked.

"Oh, didn't you see that lovely great book?" said Nan. "It is called 'Werkes Altes Meister,' and is full of illustrations of all the finest pictures. It is perfectly splendid, but I am afraid he spent more for it than he ought."

"Is he very poor?" asked Jack. "He doesn't look like it."

"Oh, he's not a pauper. Old Dr. Woods is quite well off, but it is expensive for Dr. Paul to take this course over here, and naturally he is not earning anything, and has a proper pride about not calling upon his father for more than is necessary."

"Will he be rich some day?"

"I don't know. I hope he will always have enough, but he is too generous to be very rich."

"I think Carter will have plenty for both of us, don't you?" said Jack innocently. "I wonder if they have Christmas trees in California."

"You silly-billy," replied Nan laughing. "It is time to get up, goosey-lucy, owly-powly. We shall have to hurry or we won't get to church to-day. 'A hitch of your heel and a hitch of your toe' and out you go." She gave Jack a swing out on the floor, and herself sprang from bed. The three elder girls occupied the largest room in which were three beds, while the two younger had a little room next.

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They found Mrs. Corner and Miss Helen ready for church when the five appeared in hats and coats. "We've been making holiday plans," said Miss Helen, "and we'll talk about them on the way. What do you all say to a few days in the mountains to look at the winter sports and get a bit more sunshine than we do here?"

"Fine!" exclaimed the Corners, Jo looking a little dubious.

"It's not far to Partenkirchen," Mrs. Corner told them, "and a change will do us all good. Mrs. Hoyt has just stopped in to say that she and her youngsters have decided to go, and some of the boys will go with them. We had some talk about it last night, but hadn't come to any definite decision then. I think a little play won't hurt you, and you will get back to work in season."

"But, Mrs. Corner," said Jo, "could I possibly afford it?"

"Oh, yes, I think you could; the larger the party the better terms we shall be able to make, and it will not be very expensive for a few days. I really think you ought to go, for you might want to write a theme upon the winter sports of Germany, and it might give you a scholarship at Smith College."

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Jo smiled. She longed to be one of the party, but could not be sure that she ought. Miss Helen took her arm when they reached the street and the two walked off talking in low tones. By the time they reached the church Jo looked back at Nan and her mother. "I'm going," she said.

It was when they returned from church that they found a row of little Pfeffers, headed by Bertha Metzger, standing waiting for them. Each one following Bertha's example—having been evidently well drilled—bobbed a curtesy and kissed, one after another, the hands of the "*gnädiges fräulein*" wishing them *Froliche Weihnacht*, and murmuring a blessing in chorus. This proceeding so amused the twins that they giggled outright, but the others, though embarrassed, took the matter more seriously. Jack would fain have carried off Bertha to see their own tree, but the watchful guardian of the Pfeffers could not be induced to leave her charges for a second, and after answering the questions put to her, marshaled her cousins in order, according to size, and marched them off with a distinct feeling that they had admirably performed their duty. They all looked very comfortable in their new outfits, and were apparently very proud of themselves.

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It was a merry crowd which boarded the train the next day for Partenkirchen, and it required the combined efforts of the elder ladies to keep the young people in order. There was much talk of *ski-ing* and *rodeling*, and all the young folks were very enthusiastic about trying these amusements.

"*Skis* are rather expensive," remarked Jo, "and I, for one, shan't buy any, that's certain."

"You can hire them," Nan told her, "and that is what we are all going to do, for who can tell whether we shall like the sport or not? As we are to be over here for only one winter it will not be worth while to tote those great long things all over creation with us."

They had left Munich in a gray mist which shut out all suggestion of sunlight, but when they reached the pretty mountain town of Partenkirchen, at the foot of the Zugspitze, the skies were as blue as summer and the sun was shining brilliantly on the snowy mountainsides. The ride through the Bavarian Highlands had been beautiful indeed, and the spirits of the party, far from lessening, became wilder as they approached the greater heights, so it was a laughing, excited crowd which finally left the train to go to the small hotel where they had engaged board. [298]

Many had arrived before them, and were already testing the toboggan runs, or were flitting along, like birds, upon their *skis*.

The boys, naturally, were eager to try these new sports, and were soon equipped, to receive many a humiliating tumble before they could become adepts. Juliet was scarcely less ambitious than the boys and was not long in persuading Mary Lee and Jo to fasten on the long *skis* in order to make a first venture. Nan and the twins contented themselves with sleds upon safe inclines at first, but were so exhilarated by the keen air that they were soon trying longer slopes. Even Mrs. Hoyt came out to join them leaving Mrs. Corner and Miss Helen to enjoy the bright sunlight streaming in at their windows.

In a few days Nan had become as enthusiastic an advocate of *ski-ing* as the rest. "It is like flying," she declared. "I wish we could do it at home."

"It seems such an impossible and dangerous thing to me," said Miss Helen who had been persuaded to come out to watch the sport.

"It isn't when you know how," replied Nan as she flitted off.

It was a gay company at the little hotel. The mountain air exhilarated every one and though the unusual exercise tired them out, after a hearty supper they were ready for any kind of fun. On New Year's Eve came the climax when the peasants arrived to show their dances and to ask the guests to join in. Jo was nothing loth to accept the young son of mine host as partner, and as he, in embroidered velvet breeches, short Tyrolean jacket and red tie, led off, she was quick enough to imitate the others and made a better dancer than might have been expected in such a wild and rollicking dance as it was. Once she was fairly lifted off her feet, whirled around and set down again before she knew what was happening to her. With the snowy mountains looking down upon them they welcomed in the new year and slept the last sleep they should have at Partenkirchen, for the morrow would take them back to Munich. [299]

Dr. Paul made his appearance the evening of their return. He had been to Dresden for a week, looking into hospital work there and staying with a friend. He was welcomed joyfully and was given an enthusiastic account of winter in the mountains of Bavaria.

"You'd better have gone with us," Mrs. Corner told him. "I am sure it would have done you more good than doing extra work."

"It wasn't all work," returned the doctor, "and besides being deeply interested in what I was doing, I was glad to be with my friend Bob Morgan. He is an old pal of mine, and we have had many a run together. By the way, Nan," he turned toward this person, "I think I may have a clue to your Hans Metzger." [300]

Every one looked interested. "Tell us about it," said Nan.

"Of course it is by no means an unusual name," the doctor went on, "and there may be dozens of them in the community, but as I was in Bob's room at the hospital one day, I picked up a German book, rather a curious old volume on husbandry which was lying on the table. In it I saw the name, Hans Metzger. 'Hallo,' I said, 'where did you get that?'"

"'It was left by one of the patients,' said Bob, 'a nice sort of young German whom I attended. I was looking at the book one day, and spoke of its being something of a curiosity because of its age, so when he was discharged he presented it to me out of gratitude.' 'Was his name Hans Metzger?' I asked.

"'Yes,' Bob told me. 'Where was he from?' 'From his dialect I should say he was a Bavarian.'"

"That looks like a proof," said Nan eagerly.

"So I thought. Bob promised to learn what he could of the man and to let me know. I told him of our search and he was much interested." [301]

"Wouldn't it be the queerest thing if your going to Dresden should be the means of finding him?" said Nan.

"When do you think you will hear, Dr. Paul?" asked Jack.

"I'm afraid I can't tell you that. It was only day before yesterday that I saw the book."

"Did you get a description of the man?" asked Miss Helen.

"Yes." The doctor took out his note-book. "He was rather tall, dark, had a scar on his left

cheek."

"We must go to-morrow and interview Frau Pfeffer," said Nan. "She can tell if that answers to the description of her brother. I am surprised, Dr. Paul, to see how many Germans are dark. I have always thought of them as a fair-haired, blue-eyed race."

"You will find a great many quite the opposite in this part of Germany particularly. It is so near Italy that there are many intermarriages with the darker race, just as you find in Venice and other parts of Italy that intermarriages with the Austrians and Germans have produced fair-haired Italians."

The interview with Frau Pfeffer the next day seemed to establish the fact of Hans Metzger's identity with the patient of the Dresden hospital, as the description tallied exactly with that of Frau Pfeffer's brother. [302]

"Do you know anything about the old book?" Nan asked.

Frau Pfeffer did not know, but it was like her brother to have such. He was fond of reading, of husbandry, of outdoor life, and he could very well have come into possession of such a volume.

A few days later Dr. Paul had another report to make. "I've heard from Bob Morgan," he said. "The man Hans Metzger has gone to America."

"To America!" All looked at one another quite taken aback.

"Do you think, Dr. Paul, that he has then deserted his little daughter?" asked Miss Helen.

"I can tell better when we get particulars. Bob Morgan had only time for a line. This is what he writes: 'Have followed up the Hans Metzger matter. Find the man sailed for America from Bremen on Dec. 10. Will write details later.'"

"It's as good as a Sherlock Holmes story," said Nan. "I wonder if your Dr. Morgan saw Hans' footprint on the gangplank or the print of his thumb in a booking-office, or what." [303]

"It does become rather exciting," admitted the doctor, "and I am curious myself to learn particulars."

"You'll be sure to let us know as soon as you find out, won't you?" begged the girls.

"I'll fly to you on the wings of the morning or evening, whichever comes handiest," promised the doctor.

A few days later the expected letter came from Dr. Morgan. He wrote: "I took up the Metzger case as soon as you left. Inquired if any of the patients knew him. Found a man from Augsburg who had been here for some time and had made friends with Metzger, as both were Bavarians. Metzger had come to see Augsburg man before leaving the city. Had a good position promised him with an American who was going home and wanted an overseer for a place in New York, so Augsburg man said, though you can't tell about the last. They think New York covers half the U. S., and is synonymous. Later happened upon Dr. Streit who gave me further particulars. Streit is a Munich man and took an interest in Metzger. It was through him Metzger found place with American. No doubt your man will write to his people as soon as he gets settled, for I think it is pretty clear he is your man." [304]

"Do you think we may really count upon his being the right man?" said Miss Helen.

"I think there is every chance of his being. He may have written to his sister, but as you say she left the village soon after he last saw her, it is quite possible the letter never reached her. These peasants are very stupid sometimes, and very likely the letter never was forwarded."

"*Dumm* is such a good, expressive German word," remarked Nan, "and just fits the case."

"Exactly," returned the doctor, "and we know if our own country postmasters are so often stupid what must some of these Germans be? Bob says he will try to get the address of the man with whom Metzger went, so his sister can write and make sure we are on the right track."

"I think your Dr. Morgan is very good to take so much trouble," said Nan.

"Oh, he is glad to do it. He is a Virginia boy, too, Nan, and you know he is not going to think it any trouble to help out in a case of this kind. Beyond this, he has a personal interest in Metzger, and wants to do all he can on that account."

In due course of time the address came and Frau Pfeffer sent off a letter. So there was nothing to do but to wait for a reply which would decide conclusively whether it were really Bertha's father whom they were following up. [305]

About this time the Carnival season began, and although the family saw little of the gaieties which entertained so many of the Münchenerers, the girls did so far participate in them as to go to a mask party which Dr. Mann gave for his boys, and as it was their first experience of this kind they were in a great state of excitement. Of course the twins were not included in the party, but the three older girls and Juliet had many conferences as to costumes.

"We can't be expected to carry fancy costumes all over Europe with us," said Nan, "and we shall have to think up something that we can wear afterward, or which we shall not mind leaving

behind, it seems to me."

"We could take them with us, Nan," said Mary Lee, "and they would do to wear when we get home."

"If we haven't outgrown them by that time," returned Nan.

"We couldn't outgrow all the things."

"Well, I know this child spends no fortune on costumes," put in Jo. "Cheap and easy is my motto for this occasion."

"Mamma tried to hire something for us," said Juliet, "but everything we saw that would fit was so mussy and soiled that it wouldn't do at all. We did manage to rig out Maurice, but I am still looking." [306]

"Mary Lee would make a perfect little Dresden shepherdess," said Jo, "and I don't think it would be a hard costume to get up. She could copy some of the figures we have seen and it would be lovely."

"Good!" cried Nan. "I approve of that myself. Although it is not strictly original it will be very becoming and just suit my fair sister's style."

"I am going to talk to mother about it," said Mary Lee leaving the group.

"I'd like to know what a long, lanky thing like me can wear," said Nan. "I might go as a bean-pole, and twine a vine up my length."

"You may be long but you're not what I should call lanky," corrected Jo.

"I think Nan would look fine in one of those costumes on those quaint post-cards we all liked so much at Christmas time," said Juliet. "I have one of the prettiest left. I'll go get it and you might copy that." She ran off, presently returning with the card which all examined with much interest.

"The dress wouldn't be hard," Nan decided, "and I have the scarf. I would need something different from anything in the combined wardrobes of the family to make the bonnet of." [307]

Juliet was busy thinking. "Mother has just the thing, I do believe," she said after a moment: "a big Leghorn hat that can be bent into any shape. She will be delighted to lend it to you. I think you will look dear in such a bonnet, Nan, with bunches of pink roses against your dark hair."

"I can easily make a little bag like that to carry on my arm," decided Nan. "I think it is a costume of the period of 1812 as nearly as I remember."

"One of the boys is to have a costume that will match it," said Juliet. "I shall not tell which one, but I know he will look dandy in it. The boys sometimes spend a lot on these costumes, and come in such magnificence as you wouldn't believe. Of course some are much better off than others, and some of the girls will be gotten up regardless, but I think the main thing is to look picturesque and to wear something which will be becoming when we unmask. When the boys don't want to spend much they go as Pierrots. There will be several in that character, I can promise you."

"I might go as a switch-tender, and borrow Frau Pfeffer's get-up," remarked Jo.

"How you would look," cried Nan, "and what would she do that day, pray?" [308]

"She could go to bed early," said Jo calmly.

It was finally decided that Jo should go in Spanish dress, the girls suddenly remembering what they had brought from Spain with them, which supplemented would do very well to represent an *aldeana* costume. Juliet eventually went as a peacock, a spreading tail of feathers adorning the back of a greenish gold frock, and upon her head a clever arrangement of feathers and beak to represent the bird's head. Her bodice was of peacock blue and the whole effect was quite dazzling, and strange to say very becoming. Of the four girls it must be said that Mary Lee looked the best, her fair skin, blue eyes and neat features being exactly as they should be for a Dresden shepherdess. A fluffy white wig and a coquettish hat made the finishing touches to her dress, and she was very much pleased with herself as well she might be. Nan, though not so striking, was a quaint figure. Her bonnet was a great success, trimmed outside with long white plumes and some old-fashioned apple-green ribbons, and inside with bunches of pink roses which lay against the clusters of curls in which she had arranged her dark hair. The dress was a green silk with little bunches of pink flowers upon it, and her pink scarf drooping negligently was of the color of the roses in her bonnet. The whole party set off in an automobile and had that kind of good time which youth and high spirits can generally give us on such occasions. That they did not lack in partners for either games or dances goes without saying, and that it was an event long after referred to can be taken for granted. [309]

After this there were not any great merry-makings, the gatherings in Mrs. Hoyt's sitting-room being quite sufficient for ordinary fun, and all worked hard between times. January did not bring anything but dark and sunless weather, so Mrs. Corner felt that she must pitch her tent elsewhere as she was feeling the effects of the lack of sunshine. She therefore decided to go to the Riviera for a couple of months.

"I shall not be so very far away," she said to Nan, who always felt the separation more than any of the others. "It is scarcely more than a day's journey, and if I am needed I can fly to you in less time than it would take to go to Boston from Virginia."

"Will Aunt Helen go with you?" asked Nan.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Corner. "Things didn't go altogether happily with you last winter, Nan, dear, and I hate to leave you in a foreign city with the responsibility of your younger sisters upon you. Mrs. Hoyt has very kindly offered to chaperon you and the Fräulein is quite to be relied upon, but still I do not like to go off and leave you to be the acting head of the family."

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"It is quite different from last year," Nan told her, "for this is not a boarding-school, and you will not be the other side of the ocean as you were then. For my part, *motherdel*—that is a newly coined south German diminutive. I am your *mädel*; you are my *motherdel* instead of *mutterchin*—as I was saying, for my part, I would much rather Aunt Helen should be with you. We shall be perfectly comfortable, and I can't bear the idea of your going off alone. If you should be ill——"

"There are always good doctors and nurses to be had," her mother hastened to say.

"But not to have any of one's very own. No, *mutterdel*, Aunt Helen must go, too, and we will behave like the best of Cornelia's jewels."

"I am not afraid of you older girls, except in your case when you sacrifice yourself for Jack."

"Oh, but Jack is much more sensible. She is developing a better sense of proportion, and of right and wrong. She is terribly impetuous, but she does mean all right at heart."

"I am sure of that. She couldn't be her father's child and be lacking in principle."

"She couldn't be her mother's child and not turn out a dear, good woman," said Nan, fondling her mother's hand. "I'll promise you, mother, I'll not do anything rash. If any problems arise I will suspend action till I can hear from you, and if it is something in which I have to act at once I will take the case to Mrs. Hoyt."

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"There might be cases that you wouldn't want to consult even Mrs. Hoyt about," said Mrs. Corner thoughtfully.

"Then I'll pour out my woes to Dr. Paul."

Mrs. Corner nodded. "Yes, you can trust him, for he has known you all since you were babies. With him as well as Mrs. Hoyt I think I can feel safe about you. All right, Nan. I'll talk it over with Helen."



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CHAPTER XVI HERR GREEN-CAP

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ALTHOUGH Nan's responsibilities did seem heavier after the departure of her mother and aunt, the fact that they were shared in a measure by Mrs. Hoyt and Fräulein Bauer as well as by Dr. Paul, made them seem less. To Dr. Paul Nan poured out her confidences in the most artless manner, and he responded as any considerate older brother might have done. There was plenty of work for all to do, for beyond the demand of music, Nan had her German and other studies in which Mary Lee shared. Jo, though doing well in most directions, floundered terribly when it came to German accent and pronunciation. Fortunately Fräulein Bauer was herself North German, and so was the teacher under whom Jo studied, so she did not fall into a very pronounced dialect, and she comforted herself by saying: "My exams will be written and not spoken, so I think I shall pass all right." Jack cheerfully plunged in with a reckless disregard of anything but making herself understood, and consequently gained a large vocabulary, while Jean, more timid and self-conscious, depended upon her twin when it came to an emergency.

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Jo, who had been the life of Miss Barnes's boarding-school, was much more subdued here in

Germany. It seemed to be borne in upon her that this was the opportunity of her life, and she must make the most of it. She had never studied very hard before, but being naturally bright, had depended upon a good memory and sudden inspiration to cope with the occasion.

The girls had received Christmas letters from all their late schoolmates, telling of the little events which they knew would interest them on the other side of the water. Charlotte Loring's was the longest; Daniella's the most vividly interesting, for the latter had a picturesque way of presenting things, born of her early free life in the Virginia mountains. There had been, too, letters from home, from Cousin Polly Lewis, telling of her approaching marriage, from Gordon and his brother, from Phil, and last of all from Aunt Sarah, giving the intimate details of home life which brought the brown house and its inmates very distinctly before them.

And now there were three months of hard study before them, interspersed with such pleasures as skating in the Englischer Garten, visits to some specially interesting place, like the great foundry where had been cast such famous works as the great doors of the Capitol at Washington, and numerous world-renowned statues. For Nan there were always opera and concerts as often as practicable, and if Fräulein Bauer could not go with her, Mrs. Hoyt was generally ready. Failing her, Dr. Paul would be called up, and it was seldom that he could not set aside all else in order to act as escort. There were merry doings, too, in Mrs. Hoyt's sitting-room, walks on the Parada to hear the band, expeditions to the Isarthal, or the beautiful Starnberger See when a brisk walk over snowy paths brought them all back ready to attack a supper which, even when *wurst* appeared as its principal dish, seldom failed to satisfy. [317]

Strange to say, it was not Jack nor Jean about whom Nan finally felt a certain anxiety, but it was Jo. Had it been one of her own sisters, if she could not have laid the matter before Mrs. Hoyt, Nan could have consulted Dr. Paul, but she felt a certain hesitancy in discussing Jo with any one but Mary Lee who was the first to discover that all was not right and who came to her sister in great perplexity.

"Nan," she said, "I think we ought to do something about Jo."

Nan, who was puzzling out a difficult passage in her translation, stopped short. "What do you mean, Mary Lee?" she said. [318]

"Where are the twinnies?" asked Mary Lee, looking around.

"Gone with Mrs. Hoyt to the Englischer Garten. Jo isn't here either."

"I know that well enough. She is skating at another place with that horrid boy."

"What horrid boy?" Nan looked amazed.

"Some one she met on the ice last week one day when you weren't there. He is a student, and he came up and asked Jo to skate with him. You know how free and easy she is. He is a good skater, waltzes on the ice and does that sort of thing, so off Jo went before I could say a word. Ever since then he has been trying to get chances to meet her. He followed her home and found out where she lived. Jo is the most unconventional girl in the world, and she didn't hesitate to tell him her name, so he wrote to her and asked her to meet him on the ice the next day. We all went together, all but you, and in that crowd Mrs. Hoyt couldn't keep track of us all. Jo has skated with him every day since, but often they go to another skating pond. She has been answering his notes and all that. He speaks English and says he is the son of a countess."

"Dear me, I wonder if that is so, but, even if it is, that amounts to nothing. There are plenty of disreputable counts and countesses over here and we don't know a thing about him. It is too bad that my music lesson comes in the afternoon, or I would go oftener with you all. I really don't have time to go more than twice a week, and opera nights I can't go at all." [319]

"Do you think we ought to tell Mrs. Hoyt?"

Nan considered the question for a moment. "Oh, I don't know," she replied, presently. "It seems mean to tattle—yet—I'll tell you, Mary Lee, we'll see if we can't get her to stop, and if she won't we'll think of what is best to do."

"She won't stop. She thinks it is the greatest piece of fun, and can't, or won't see that there is any harm in it."

"Why couldn't she be satisfied with the nice boys she already knows?"

"That's what I asked her, and she said that none of them was a count and that it was much more of a lark to carry on with a foreigner. She could know all the Americans she wanted at home. You know how Jo talks."

"Did the other boys see her skating with this fellow?"

"Yes, and she told them he was a friend of hers. I suppose Mrs. Hoyt thinks so, too, now that she has seen the two together. He is rather nice-looking, and I have no doubt Mrs. Hoyt thinks we know all about him and that it is all right. She doesn't know that when Jo isn't with us she is off skating at some other place." [320]

"I'll try talking to her," said Nan, "though it may not do any good. Probably she thinks I am not old enough to give advice. Of course we are not exactly responsible for her in one way, but she is of our party and that does give us some rights. If mother were here she would soon settle it in the

nicest sort of way. I will try talking and if that does no good I will write to mother and get her advice. Jo is very fond of both mother and Aunt Helen and would hate to displease them or lose their respect."

"I feel differently about Jo than about most girls," said Mary Lee, "for you know she hasn't had much comfort at home, and as she says, has 'tumbled up.' Before her father married a second time she was left to the care of servants, and now there are all those little children, she is out of it. All the training she has ever had has been at Miss Barnes's. She really doesn't realize, Nan, for out West where she has always lived they are much more ready to make friends with every one than we are. You know how full of fun and nonsense she is. The boys all like her and I suppose this one never met a girl like her before."

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"I hope he doesn't think all American girls are ready to make chance acquaintances in that way. All you say is quite true, Mary Lee, and for that very reason I don't want to discuss it with any one but mother or Aunt Helen. They know all about Jo and can make allowances. I will write to-night."

"I thought you had a lot of work to do and that was why you couldn't go this afternoon with us."

Nan sighed. "Yes, I have a lot, but I can get up early and finish it."

"It is pitch dark till nearly eight in the morning."

"I can get a lamp and go into the sitting-room."

Mary Lee was so used to leaving such matters to her elder sister that she didn't at once think of protesting. Moreover she was not quite so unselfish as Nan; she did love her morning nap and was not ready to give up an evening's fun with the Hoyts. But at last she said, a little reluctantly: "Couldn't I write the letter, Nan?"

"No, thanks, I reckon I'd better do it," said Nan lightly, and Mary Lee felt relieved not only that she had made the offer but that it had not been accepted.

But after all, Nan did not have to write the letter that evening, for Dr. Paul came in early. He generally stopped for a few minutes every day to see that all was right with his wards, as he called the girls. Jo had come home late, when the others were already seated at the supper table. She gave Mary Lee a top-loftical glance but carried on a conversation principally with Juliet and Maurice.

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"She doesn't like it because I wouldn't stay with her and meet that creature," Mary Lee whispered to Nan as they left the dining-room.

"I'm glad you had the good sense not to," said Nan. "Did he come home with her?"

"I suppose so, though I don't know any more about it than you do."

Jo had not tarried with the girls, but had gone directly to the Hoyts' room, to which Mary Lee declared her intention of going also.

"That letter has got to be written, I plainly see," said Nan.

She was about to settle herself to her task, the others having congregated around Mrs. Hoyt, when Dr. Paul came in. Nan greeted him in a preoccupied way.

"Am I interrupting some important study?" he asked.

"No," replied Nan. "I was just beginning a letter to mother; that was all."

"Everything all right?"

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"Ye-es." She spoke a little doubtfully, the shadow of Jo's affair still upon her.

Dr. Paul looked at her fixedly, his keen eye noticing the trouble in her face. "Look here, Nan," he said. "I don't believe everything is all right."

Nan recovered herself and smiled. "Oh, yes, it is. You'll not find a Corner who hasn't a clear conscience and a clean bill of health."

"That's good. Then I've no prescriptions to write, no advice to give you this time?"

Nan shook her head. "No, you'll have to look out for other patients."

"Then I'll not keep you from that letter. I know how precious time is just now. Where are the rest?"

"Where they generally are; over in Mrs. Hoyt's room 'ca'y'in on' as Mitty would say."

The doctor picked up his hat. "After all, it was only that the girl was thinking about her work," he told himself. He knew she was practicing for a musicale which was to be given by Frau Burg-Schmidt's pupils, and that she had much to do. He was about to go when he turned back. "Listen, Nan," he said. "Who is the German youth with the green cap I saw skating with your friend Jo, this afternoon?"

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"Were you out there? Oh, he is a friend of Jo's." She tried to speak lightly.

"Do you know him?"

Nan was silent, but the question was too direct to avoid. "No," she answered truthfully, then hurriedly, "Why do you ask?"

"Because I don't believe he is the kind you all want to know."

"What makes you think so?"

"Well, I'll tell you the whole thing. I was standing with a fellow student watching the skaters when Miss Jo swung along with Green-Cap. She saw me and I bowed. I don't think she saw my friend who was just behind me. 'Who is that?' said he. 'A young compatriot of ours,' I told him. 'Nice girl.' 'Humph!' he said. 'I wonder where she picked up that fellow.' 'What's the matter with him?' I asked. 'He is a bad lot,' said my friend. 'I shouldn't like a sister of mine to be seen with him.' Later on I happened to be coming home directly behind the couple. They were laughing and talking in great shape. I noticed that none of you were along, and I wondered; that's all."

Nan stood leaning on the back of a chair, listening thoughtfully. "Sit down, Dr. Paul," she said. "I don't believe I shall have to write that letter to-night, for you happen to bring up the very subject I was going to write about. No, we don't know that young man. He is a chance acquaintance whom Jo has picked up without realizing it was anything out of the way. He asked if he might skate with her, and she, thinking it the custom, accepted his invitation. Mary Lee, whom you know is always a most proper and discreet young person, came away and left Jo. Mrs. Hoyt believing him to be a friend of ours hasn't inquired about him. She is an awfully jolly sort of somebody, and is really particular, but I think she doesn't want to appear fussy, and of course doesn't dream but that we all know this person. So, Jo has been going her own gait, and I am awfully bothered about it. I don't want to tell tales to Mrs. Hoyt, and have her annoyed with Jo. I don't want to tell Fräulein Bauer, for fear she would say Jo could not stay here, for the Fräulein is a great stickler of proprieties, and I could see nothing to do but to write to mother, though I hate to bother her."

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The doctor looked down at her with a sympathetic expression in his dark eyes. "You are always shouldering somebody's burdens, Nan," he said. "I haven't forgotten last year."

"Oh, that was quite a different thing."

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"If I remember right, Miss Jo was mixed up in that."

"Yes, in a way," Nan admitted. "Though she hadn't the least idea that she was, and as soon as she found out, you know she went straight to Miss Barnes and told her all about it."

"And this time she is going into an affair with her eyes open."

"Not exactly. You know she is a Western girl who has not had much care at home. Her mother died before Jo was big enough to remember her, and though the stepmother is a kind enough sort of person, she has no thought beyond her family of little children and Jo has had to hoe her own row always. Her father is away from home a good deal and absorbed in business so Jo has not had much chance."

"I see, and you think that all the more she should be warned. Have you said anything to her on the subject?"

"No, but Mary Lee has, and she thinks she is prudish."

"Well, I tell you you are not to think of this any more. I will settle it. You must leave it all to me."

"But you will not——" Nan began in alarm.

The doctor smiled. "I am not going to do anything rash, and Miss Jo shall not know that I know anything about her cuttings up. I have a scheme which I hope will work out all right and rid you all of the undesirable acquaintance. Do you trust me?"

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"Indeed I do. You are always such a rock of defense, Dr. Paul," said Nan gratefully. "I don't know what I should do without you."

"I'd be a pretty sort of cad if I didn't look out for you," he said vehemently. "I'd like to bring young Bingham with me to call, if I may. He is a nice fellow, I can assure you. Your Fräulein will not object?"

"Oh, no, though she is a very good watchdog. So long as he comes with you he will be admitted. I am not so sure but that she would growl and show her teeth if he came alone."

"All right, I will stop in or will telephone to-morrow and tell you when to expect us. Now, remember, no more anxiety over Miss Jo and Herr Green-Cap. You promise?"

"I promise." Nan held out her hand, and as the door closed after the doctor she felt a distinct sense of relief that he should have taken her burden on his own shoulders. She could not resist going over to call Mary Lee out into the hall for a whispered conversation before going back to her studies, for which, after all, she would not have to rise before daylight.

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Just what the doctor meant to do the girls could not imagine, and they were very curious to discover. True to his word, he called Nan up over the telephone the next day and said that he and

Mr. Bingham would call that evening, if convenient.

"I'll ask the Fräulein," said Nan, and presently that lady herself came to the 'phone. Of course any friend of the Herr doctor would be acceptable. Yes, she would be pleased to receive them. Therefore when evening came she was established in the place of honor, the sofa, some time before the two visitors arrived. The Hoyts were out, the twins had gone to bed, therefore there was no excuse for Jo not to be present. She had rather avoided being alone with the girls, and was relieved when company came. She felt the unspoken disapproval in the manner of both Mary Lee and Nan, and resented it, though, in her heart of hearts, she could not help knowing there was reason for it.

Mr. Bingham was a pleasant, ruddy-faced young man, who, as he hailed from the West, was looked upon with favor by Jo. As was natural the talk fell upon student life. Mr. Bingham, being a university man, was good authority, for he had been in Munich two years.

"Do you know many of the students?" he asked Nan.

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"Not one," she replied, "unless you can call Dr. Woods a student. We know a number of Dr. Mann's schoolboys, but you're the first real student we have met. I am glad you haven't let them slash your face."

"There is a law against dueling," Mr. Bingham told her. "But in some way the men manage to avoid it."

"They are very proud of their scars, I am told," remarked Jo.

"Yes, one of the men just out of the hospital told me proudly this morning that he had forty scars."

"Silly creature!" said Mary Lee scornfully.

"I never saw so many colored caps in all my life, but I suppose you don't sport one of those either," said Jo.

"No, I'm not a German, you see, and I don't join any of the societies which are strictly local affairs."

"Do you make friends with many of the German students?" asked Mary Lee; "and are they nice?"

"I know a number of very nice fellows. Of course there are all sorts, and as is the case everywhere there are some the better men don't care to know. Some of them are a pretty tough set. There is one in particular I happen to know about, who is sure to be sent up if he doesn't look out."

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"Sent up where? This is interesting," said Jo.

"Well, you see there are certain rules, and if a man breaks them and gets found out he is liable to imprisonment for ten days. The university attends to all its own cases without recourse to the police."

"Oh, dear! Tell us some more. Do you know the man? Is he very wicked?" Mary Lee asked.

"He is simply a worthless, reckless nobody. He calls himself the son of a countess, and likes people to believe he will inherit a title himself. His mother did marry a count for her second husband, though her first husband, this fellow's father, was little more than a peasant. She herself is a mere adventuress from whom the count parted years ago, having found out her character. She is a handsome woman, they say, and quite fascinating; the son resembles her, I am told, not only in looks but in character."

The Corner girls did not dare to look at Jo, whose face was scarlet. All three were listening intently.

"Go on," said Nan with more than usual eagerness. "Tell us some more about him. It is quite like a story-book."

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"His mother managed to get him into the university," Mr. Bingham went on, "but I imagine he has about run his career, for his escapades are becoming known to the faculty, and, moreover, his reputation has become such that none of the decent fellows want to be seen with him. He is tricky at cards and has done a number of shady things."

"I suppose you couldn't tell his name," said Nan. "We want to avoid him, you see," she added with a slight laugh.

"Oh, every one knows him. I am divulging no secret," replied Mr. Bingham. "His name is Karl Hofer."

Dr. Paul's scheme had worked well so far as Jo was concerned. She went from red to white and sat looking straight ahead. A sudden silence fell, broken presently by Dr. Paul, who had been talking to Fräulein Bauer and who now joined the others. "Have you dared to sit on a sofa lately?" he asked Nan. He turned to Mr. Bingham. "Miss Nan made the fatal error of taking her place on a sofa the very first time she called on a German household."

"Yes," said Nan glad of the change of subject, "and you should have seen the awful glance an old German dowager gave me. She came in just behind me. It was her proper place, of course. She quite forgave me, however, when she learned that I was a barbarous American and didn't know the customs. Since that time I have always taken the most unassuming chair in the room. But come, let's get Fräulein Bauer to tell us some German tales. She is very entertaining, really, Mr. Bingham, and she looks quite out in the cold sitting over there by herself with her knitting. She doesn't speak English, you know, but we can all understand enough German to get on all right."

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They moved the chairs nearer the seat of state and the subject of students was left behind.

But after the visitors had departed and the girls were in bed with the lights all out from the corner where Jo's bed stood came a voice: "Girls, I have been making a perfectly silly ass of myself, but I've had my lesson. Please never mention green caps to me again, and do say that you do not utterly despise me."

"Of course we don't, Jo," came promptly from the other beds. And there the matter ended so far as Jo was concerned, though Nan had a word with the doctor later.

"Oh, you sly boots," she said. "How well you managed, and Jo never suspected. There you sat talking so sweetly to Fräulein and all the time——"

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They both laughed. "Bingham and I thought it was worth a little manœuvring," said the doctor, "even at the risk of offending Miss Jo, but she took it just as we hoped she would, and no one is the wiser except ourselves. Bingham is the soul of honor and as chivalrous as an American gentleman should be, so our secret is safe."



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CHAPTER XVII GOOD-BYE MUNICH

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FOR the rest of the time things went smoothly enough, the greatest excitement being the letter which was finally received from Hans Metzger. Frau Pfeffer gave Nan the news one day when she stopped to make inquiries of the switch-tender. The man had written to his sister before leaving the country, had told her of his illness in Dresden, but this letter Frau Pfeffer had never received. Now he wrote that he had a good place, better than he had ever dared think he could have, and would soon be able to send for his family.

"His family," exclaimed Mary Lee when Nan told her. "Is the whole outfit going? Frau Pfeffer and all those children?"

"I imagine so. Frau Pfeffer could not remember the name of the place where he is, but she says she will send the letter to us to read."

Bertha appeared the next day, her little thin face beaming. She looked very neat and clean, her cheeks fairly shining from soap and water, and her light hair drawn tightly back in two braids. The gracious ladies would please read the letter and she would wait to take it back again, for it was very precious.

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Nan and Mary Lee sat down, their heads together. Nan was more proficient in deciphering German script than her sister and was the first to recognize a certain name which was prominent on the page. She gave a little scream of surprise. "Of all things! Mary Lee, do see."

"What?" Mary Lee did not quite take in what was meant.

"Why, look here, the man with whom Hans went over to America is Mr. Pinckney's superintendent, Mr. Wheeler. You know he came over to consult Mr. Pinckney on business matters and it is Mr. Pinckney's big place in New Jersey that Hans has gone to. Did you ever know anything so strange?"

"I truly never did. Are you sure, Nan, that it is the same?"

"Why of course it is. There is the name of the place at the head of the paper." She turned over the sheet and pointed out the heading. "I didn't think to look at it at first. Mr. St. Nick's place is named 'The Cedars' and there is the same post-office address. I know perfectly well, for we wrote to Miss Dolores when she was there one time. I should think you would remember that, Mary Lee."

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"I do remember, of course, only I couldn't make out the name in that queer writing. It can't help being the same place. We must write to Mr. St. Nick and tell him all about it. He will be so interested, and I shouldn't wonder but he would ship the whole family right off; you know how he did about Christine and her grandfather. Let's tell Bertha."

They explained as well as they could, telling the little girl that her father was in a fine place and that they would all meet in America. As they had expected, Mr. Pinckney was greatly interested and there came a day not long after when Frau Pfeffer turned her last switch, discarded her green hat, picked up her feather bed and with her children set sail for America to the great satisfaction of the Corners, Jack and Jean being specially pleased that they had a hand in the matter.

A last walk in the Englischer Garten, a last look in the windows of the toy shops, a final farewell to the pigeons on the Odeonsplatz, one more promenade on the Parada and they said good-bye to Munich, to kind Fräulein Bauer, to the Hoyts, to the flock of schoolboys with whom they had had so many jolly times. Dr. Paul took the five damsels as far as Innsbruck and there delivered them into the hands of Miss Helen, who came thus far to meet them. Mrs. Corner had gone on to Verona, where they would make their next stop. The Hoyts, with a perfect phalanx of boys, stood on the platform to see them off, the boys sending a wild mountain cry after them to the scandal of the gatekeeper who frowned at the savage Americans.

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Innsbruck was a fascinating enough place to call for a stop of twenty-four hours and Dr. Paul lingered with them during that time.

"I don't know how we are going to get along without you," declared Nan when he had put them all on the train for Verona and the time had come to part. "Aunt Helen, he has been such a comfort; just like a nice big brother, he is always looking out for us. We shall certainly miss you, Dr. Paul."

"Perhaps you don't think I shall miss you all," he said, "but I shall keep telling myself that it will not be so very long before we all shall meet again. Why couldn't we be fellow passengers across the sea? I shall be sailing from Genoa and you from Naples about the same time. Have you taken passage yet, Miss Helen?"

"Yes, we sail from Naples on the first of June by the North German Lloyd. Our steamer is the *König Albert*, I believe."

"I'll look up my own passage then and see if I can book for the same trip, and we'll call this simply *auf wiedersehen*." So they parted, he to return to Munich, which would seem sadly empty now, and they to go on to the delights of Italy.

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At the hotel in Verona there was a glad meeting with their *mutter*, from whom they had been separated for all these weeks. There was so much to tell, that at first there was no desire to go out sightseeing, but the second day they began to wake up to the fact that the city held sights for them, and then they went forth to behold them.

"What is there to see here, Miss Helen?" Jo asked.

"A number of things. The Piazza delle Erbe, where used to be the old forum, is one of the most picturesque squares in Italy. You know that it was this city which received Dante after he was banished from Florence. You will see here many of the pictures of Pablo Caltari, the last really great master of the Venetian school; you all will know him better as Paul Veronese. And of course you know this was the home of Romeo and Juliet. A tomb is shown which is said to be Juliet's, though it is doubtful if it really is, and the house of her parents is pointed out."

"Were they real people? I never knew that," said Jo.

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"The play is said to be founded on fact, and we are told that it was in the fourteenth century that the two lovers lived and died. It may not be absolutely true, but tradition says that there were actual happenings in Verona which resembled those of which Shakespeare wrote. I think we can spend a couple of days here very pleasantly, for it is a handsome city as well as an interesting one."

"And then for San Marco and the gondolas," cried Nan.

"Where shall we go in Venice, to a hotel or a *pension*?" Mary Lee asked.

"We are going to a pleasant place on the Riva degli Schiavoni where we shall have rooms and breakfast with whatever other meals we choose to have served. We shall sometimes be at too great a distance to get back promptly to meals, so we can always have our midday meal, at least, wherever we choose."

"I like that way of doing things," declared Jo. "One doesn't have to break one's neck in order to

get back in time and there is a sort of excitement in the uncertainty of what you are going to get and the kind of place you will strike."

For two days they wandered about Verona, looking at the old painted houses, the palaces, the churches, and then the expectant hearts of at least three of the girls beat high as they neared Venice.

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"I see a red sail," cried Mary Lee, looking from the car window.

"And there is a yellow one," announced Jean. "Oh, look, there are lots and lots of boats and more colored sails."

"Are we going in a gondola first thing?" asked Jack. "If the streets are all water we shall have to, shan't we?"

"Yes," her mother told her. "The gondolas are the cabs of Venice and will take us anywhere we want to go."

"I'm just crivering," said Jean as they stepped aboard the black craft which Mrs. Corner had selected.

"Sit down with your crivers," directed Nan. "Isn't it too delicious for anything? I foresee where all my spending money goes; hiring gondolas and just drifting up and down between these old palaces."

"But you must buy beads. You promised half a dozen girls to bring them some," Mary Lee reminded her.

"Don't talk to me of beads yet. Look at that red cloth hanging out from that balcony, Jo. Now I know we are in Venice. It looks exactly like the pictures. I am sure that church we are coming to is the Santa Maria della Salute."

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"Where are the pigeons?" asked Jean.

"They are on the Piazza San Marco; we haven't come to that yet," Nan told her. "Do we turn off here? What is that place over there, Aunt Helen?"

"That is the little island and church of San Giorgio Maggiore, and next to it across that broad canal is the island of Giudecca. The canal has the same name; the church is called the Redentore."

The gondola turned out of the Grand Canal into the canal of San Marco and soon its passengers alighted in front of a house on the Riva degli Schiavoni where they were expected and where they found letters waiting for them.

"When can we go to the glass factory? When can we go to the bead shop? How soon are you going to take us to feed the pigeons? When shall we be ready for another ride in a gondola?" were the questions showered on Miss Helen by her nieces as soon as they had looked their rooms over and had decided where they would put their belongings.

"We can't do all those things at once, you badgering youngsters. Let me see what time it is. No bead shop and no glass factory, anyhow, to-day. If it isn't too late we will walk over to the Piazza and if the pigeons are there they shall be fed. As for the gondola, we'll see about that later."

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The light had not left the sky when they stood on the Piazza San Marco. The rich mosaics of the beautiful church caught the rays of the setting sun, the pigeons were wheeling about overhead, and settling down in crowds upon the pavement.

"It beats anything I have ever seen yet," said Jo admiringly. "Just look at those great horses over the church door. Where did they come from? Tell us, Miss Helen."

Miss Helen turned over the leaves of her Baedeker. "They are five feet high and are among the finest of ancient bronzes. They probably once adorned the triumphal arch of Nero and after of Trajan. Constantine sent them to Constantinople. The Doge Dandolo brought them to Venice in 1204. In 1797 Napoleon carried them to Paris where later they adorned the triumphal arch in the Place du Carousel. In 1815 they were restored to Venice and set up where you now see them."

The older girls listened attentively while the younger ones were absorbed in watching the pigeons who had not yet gone to roost under the arches of the church.

"I am glad they were brought back here," said Nan, "and I hope they will never be taken away again. They give such an air to the church, a triumphal note, and are quite a different decoration from those you usually see on churches. Are we going inside, Aunt Helen?"

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"I think we'd better wait till morning to do that. We shall probably want to come here many times. Just now we will enjoy the outside of the church and the Piazza, for it is the centre of interest here, and there is always something to see."

"I should think there was," said Jack, whose attention had been drawn from the pigeons to the clock tower where the two bronze giants were preparing to strike the hours. Jean with a pigeon on each shoulder and one pecking at the peas in her hand was perfectly happy, but at Jack's words turned her eyes toward the tower at which they were all looking.

"There do seem to be a lot of people here," said Jo when the last stroke of the giants' hammers had ceased. "But I thought the Rialto was the great meeting-place. Don't you know the common expression, 'I'll meet you on the Rialto'?" Then after a pause, "What is the Rialto, anyhow, Miss Helen?"

"What we mean by the Rialto now is the great bridge which for many years was the only connecting one between the east and west sections of the city. Formerly it meant the section of the city where ancient Venice was built, and Baedeker says it was this section and not the bridge which is referred to in 'The Merchant of Venice,' and the expression to which you just referred is from the play."

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"Dear me," said Jo, "when you get at the core of things how much more interesting they are."

"Of course we shall go to the Rialto," said Nan. "How do you get there, Aunt Helen?"

"From where we are we can go under the clock tower and walk up the Merceria, which is the principal business street of Venice, and has a number of good shops on it."

"Is it a real street? Do we have to go from shop to shop in a gondola?" Jo asked.

"No, indeed, we walk along comfortably on dry ground."

"But I thought Venice was all water."

"There is a part of it which is quite like any other city, and where you will find no suggestion of water for quite a distance. This part is where the ancient city was founded, and is an island which was known as Rivoalto. You will read about it in a history of Venice."

"Then I suppose Rialto is a contraction of the name of the island, Rivoalto," remarked Nan.

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"Exactly. Over by the bridge there is a market which you will like to see, for you will find many Venetian types there, and moreover can buy excellent fruit. There are some odd sorts of shops, too, that are interesting to look into."

"Well," said Jo after a pause, "I am flabbergasted. I had such a very different idea of the city. I thought it was all like the Grand Canal, and that what shops there were must be reached by skipping over bridges, unless one went in a gondola. I am quite curious to see that part you speak of."

"We shall go there more than once before we get through, and you will find that there will be some little bridges to cross even in that part of the city. You will want to go to Santa Maria Formosa to see the St. Barbara, which is one of Nan's favorites. She has always admired the photograph which I have of it and now she can see the original."

Nan beamed. "Oh, I am so glad I am here. I believe, now I think of it, that I have always wanted to see Venice more than any other place, and I am actually here."

"What is the matter with Jean?" said Mary Lee, for Jean had given a sudden cry of pleasure, had scattered her dried peas to right and left and had flown off in the direction of the clock tower.

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All turned to look and were surprised to see Mary Lee, too, following Jean's example.

"If it isn't Mr. St. Nick and Miss Dolores," cried Nan, who being the tallest had first caught sight of the couple toward whom the other two were making their way.

All hurried forward to greet these good friends. "When did you come? and where are you staying, and why didn't you let us know?" The questions came thick and fast.

It turned out that the Pinckneys had been in Venice for two days, were stopping at a hotel near the Palace of the Doges. They had written to the Corners, but the letter had probably arrived in Munich after the girls had left.

"Well, well, this is more fun than a barrel of monkeys!" Mr. Pinckney's jolly laugh rang out. "Just stay long enough on the Piazza and you're sure to meet every one you know, I was just saying to Dolores. Now, what's on for this evening? It is going to be a glorious night. Why can't we all go out and take it easy in a gondola or so? It is plenty warm enough and will be no exertion, either, that's what pleases me. There'll be music; we can listen to it when we choose and when we don't choose we can talk. What do you all say?"

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"Please, please, please," came a chorus of entreaty from the girls.

"I think it is a lovely plan," agreed Miss Helen. "What do you say, Mary?"

Mrs. Corner did not object. There would be nothing wearisome about it but quite the contrary. So they parted to meet later at the steps of the Ducal palace.

It was the softest of spring nights with a faint afterglow in the sky and a rising moon when they set out. Long beams of light trembled on the dark waters, light from the windows of palaces, from prows of gondolas, from the moonlit skies. The party divided since they were too many for one gondola. Mary Lee and Jean elected to go with Mrs. Corner and Miss Dolores; the others chose Miss Helen and Mr. Pinckney as companions. It was a new and exciting experience but to none more than to Nan and Jo. Mary Lee was absorbed in Miss Dolores; Jack in chatting to Mr.

Pinckney.

"Isn't it wonderful?" Nan whispered to her aunt. "I feel as if I were living a hundred years ago, and that these old palaces were not melancholy places given over for *pensions* and tourists."

"They're not all that, Nan."

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"No, of course not, but the old glory has passed. Yet, how beautiful it still is here."

"It is beautiful under any circumstances, and what a history the place has had. With how many different nations has Venice been connected, and what changes she has seen!"

"When was she at the height of her glory?"

"In the fifteenth century, and a great republic she was then, but her magnificence began to wane in the sixteenth century. She has since twice belonged to Austria, has belonged to Italy, has been a republic, and at last was again united to Italy."

"I don't like to think of her as anything but Italian."

"She has had many Oriental influences which are still very evident and make her different from other Italian cities. She used to be the centre where the traffic of both the East and West met and under her Doges held many Eastern possessions. We must get some books, Nan, and read up so you will become better acquainted with the past of the queen of the Adriatic."

"Indeed, I do want to do that. I should love to have seen that ceremony of wedding her to the sea."

"We live in too late an age for all the old romances and poetry except what still lingers through association and imagination. So quiet, Jo? It isn't like you not to have a word to say."

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"I'm listening, Miss Helen, and am having such a good time that I am hugging myself for want of a better way to express my delight. I do love all this so much better than I expected to. I'm afraid I hadn't given much thought to the places over here till I actually came. They were names that I ticked off something like this: Paris—gay streets and shops; good place to get smart clothes. London—fogs, omnibuses, Dickens' stories; Munich—beer, picture-galleries. Venice—gondolas; all water."

Miss Helen laughed. "That is the way those places appear in the minds of a good many persons, I'm afraid. You are glad you came, Jo, aren't you? I remember Nan said you were not very enthusiastic at first."

"You bet I'm glad." Jo spoke with more force than elegance. "I could bat my head against the wall when I think of what a goose I was about coming. What an ignoramus I was not to study up more before I came. Nan enjoys things and gets so excited over them lots of times when I don't know what in the world she is driving at. Then by the time I have learned a little history and stuff it is time to leave, and there is not any chance for my enthusiasm to break out. I can't imagine how Daniella kept up with her party. You all are way ahead of me when it comes to literature and pictures and things, and what must she have been?"

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"At least she got a taste of the sweets," said Miss Helen, "and I have not a doubt but that it will awaken her ambition as nothing else could do."

"She always had plenty of ambition," said Nan, "but she knew scarcely anything of what was outside a very small world."

"And the way she will work to keep up with her new self will be a caution," said Jo. "Dear me," she sighed, "there's the trouble; when you don't know and haven't seen you feel twice as complacent. You have a few rather nice ideas and some little knowledge, Jo Keyes, I patted myself on the head and said, but now, gracious! I feel as if I didn't know as much as one of the San Marco pigeons."

"So much the better," Miss Helen told her. "There is nothing so hopeless as self-complacency. You will forge ahead now, Jo, with twice the ardor you did before."

Just then a sudden hail from a passing gondola startled them all. Some one was standing up waving his hat violently. "Hallo, Nan Corner! Hallo, Jack!" came a voice as the gondola swung alongside.

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Jack peered into the neighboring bark and cried out, "Carter! It's Carter, Nan. I know it is."

"Is that you, Carter Barnwell?" asked Nan leaning forward. "Of all things!"

"That's just who," was the reply; "and another friend of yours."

"Who?" Nan again leaned forward.

"Howdy, Miss Nan," came a second greeting.

"It's Harold Kirk, my cousin, you know," Carter said.

"Well, I declare! Aunt Helen, it is Carter and Mr. Kirk."

"I wish there were room in here for you boys," said Miss Helen.

"Can't we divide up?" asked Carter. "One of us will get in there with you and some of you can come in here with us."

"Rather a difficult proceeding," said Miss Helen laughing.

"I didn't mean that exactly," said Carter laughing, too. "Who all are in there?"

"Nan, Miss Jo Keys and Jack, besides Mr. Pinckney and myself," Miss Helen told him. Mr. Pinckney had given but a word of formal greeting. [355]

"Suppose I get in," proposed Carter, with a look at his companion. "Who will change with me?"

"I'm willing to," Nan offered, "if Aunt Helen will come with me." So it was arranged. The gondolas were brought together and the exchange made.

The third gondola was lagging a considerable distance in the rear of the others, so that its occupants were not yet seen. As Mr. Pinckney and his party were about to start ahead, Mr. Pinckney peremptorily ordered the gondolier to take second place, so it was Mr. Kirk and his friends who led the way.



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CHAPTER XVIII JACK AS CHAMPION

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MISS HELEN had not met Mr. Kirk before, but she had heard all about him, of how he had come upon Jean in the lobby of a theatre in New York when she was looking for her friends—she had escaped from them in order to visit the fairy queen of a little play to which Mr. Pinckney had taken the Corner girls—of how Jean had been taken under the young man's wing, and how she had dined with him and had finally been brought back safely to Mr. Pinckney's house. Because of all this Mr. Pinckney had invited the young man to Christmas dinner and so his acquaintance with them all began. Miss Helen did not know, however, neither did the Corners, that it was partly on account of this young Marylander that Mr. Pinckney had brought his granddaughter abroad, and that it was because of his presence that he had kept the first and third gondolas apart. For, kind-hearted though he was, and devoted though he might be to his granddaughter, when it became apparent that young Harold Kirk had more than a passing interest in the lovely Dolores, Mr. Pinckney straightway bore her off to Europe, hoping that it would be "out of sight, out of mind" on both sides. [360]

To be sure he was only carrying out a plan which he had determined upon some time before, when he took his granddaughter abroad, and he hoped she would not discover any other than the original intention. He meant to stay long enough to "put a stop to any foolishness," so he told himself. Some day in the indefinite future she might marry, but not yet. He had no special objection to Harold Kirk, in fact he rather liked him, but he wanted no man to step in to take his place in the affections of the granddaughter he had lately discovered. When, therefore, the young man made his appearance upon the scene, Mr. Pinckney was annoyed, to say the least. He had promised himself a good time here in Venice with the Corner children, of whom he was very fond, but now all his plans were upset. He would leave at once.

So he sat silently meditating upon the turn of affairs while the gondolas slipped through the water, and Jack and Jo chatted to Carter Barnwell. Jack adored Carter, and she was a great favorite of his. They had been fast comrades in California and were ready to resume the comradeship on the old footing. After the first few questions which Mr. Pinckney put to Carter about Mrs. Roberts, Mr. Pinckney's daughter, with whom Carter had been making his home, the old gentleman let the young people have it all their own way, seldom making a remark unless in answer to some question put directly to him. [361]

Meanwhile those in the gondola, which was in the lead, were talking of many things. Harold Kirk put a few polite questions about the movements of the party, but at first made no reference to the Pinckneys. Miss Helen was a stranger to him, and his own affairs were to be set aside

while he entertained the two with him.

"What I want to know," said Nan after a while, "is how you happened to come across Carter. You know his mother is an old school friend of Aunt Helen's, and we met him in California. He and Jack are the greatest cronies."

"He has talked to me a great deal about Jack. He is a cousin of mine, you know."

"I didn't know. Oh, you must be his Cousin Hal we have heard him speak of. I didn't recognize the abbreviation." Nan was just at the age when she rather liked to use big words.

"His mother and mine are sisters." Mr. Kirk gave the information.

"Then you are Byrd Carter's son," exclaimed Miss Helen. "I have met her, for you know your aunt, Mrs. Barnwell, is a great friend of mine." [362]

This put them all on a closer footing. There were questions to ask and to answer about families and friends, and at last Nan came back to the original subject of how he and Carter happened to come over together.

"Carter looked me up in New York," Mr. Kirk told them. "His father has given him this trip, and the doctor said he was so much better that it would do him no harm, so long as he avoided harsh climates. He will get back home before the November winds become too much for him. I think in time the boy will outgrow that early tendency to lung trouble which took him to California. Yet he likes it out there, and will probably settle down for good. Well, he urged me to come with him, said he hated to make the trip alone, said he would meet the Corner family somewhere—and—well, the temptation was too great, so I came to spend my summer holiday here instead of going to Maine or the Catskills."

"Had you met the Pinckneys here in Venice before you came across us?" asked Nan innocently.

"No."

"Why, we are all together, you know. Mr. Pinckney is in that next gondola, and Miss Dolores is with mother and Mary Lee in the one behind that." [363]

Mr. Kirk was silent for a moment. "Do you know how long they are going to stay?" he asked after a moment.

"Oh, for some time." Nan was positive. "As long as we do and we shall be here at least a week or ten days, shan't we, Aunt Helen?"

Miss Helen assured her that they would stay not less time than that.

"Then we shall all have jolly times together," said Nan delightedly. "Now, don't you want to see mother and Miss Dolores and Jean? Suppose we tell our gondolier to turn back and go alongside, shall we, Mr. Kirk?"

The young man agreed very readily. There were many gondolas out upon the canal, and in the process of turning others came between them and the one in which Mr. Pinckney sat, so he did not observe but that Mr. Kirk's was still in the lead, and was not in the least aware that Mr. Kirk had greeted Miss Dolores and the rest of the way was sitting by her side while Nan and her aunt drifted on solely in each other's company.

"Where is Hal?" asked Carter as the gondola in which he was at last stopped at the Riva della Schiavoni to discharge its passengers. "I thought he was just ahead," he added looking around. [364]

Mr. Pinckney frowned, for no gondola was near, but after a few minutes up came two. From the first stepped Mr. Kirk who helped Mrs. Corner ashore, then Jean, then Miss Dolores. Mr. Pinckney's frown grew deeper, and it was quite light enough for Jack to catch the expression.

"Oh, how cross you look," she cried. "I never saw you look so cross. Don't you like the gondolier, Mr. St. Nick? Did he cheat you?"

"No," growled Mr. Pinckney, "but some one else did."

Jack wondered who it could be. Maybe it was one of the old men they called "Rampini," who drew the gondolas ashore with his iron hook. It was clearly her duty to put Mr. St. Nick in a good humor. She had deserted him for Carter and maybe he didn't like it. So she caught hold of his hand and smiled up into his face.

"I think you are awfully nice, even when you frown, Mr. St. Nick," she said, "and I should like Carter to look just like you when he grows old."

"You should, should you?" Mr. Pinckney had to look a little more pleasant for Miss Dolores was walking with Mary Lee and Carter, while Mr. Kirk was escorting Miss Helen and Mrs. Corner. "Then I suppose you expect to see him around then just as you do now." [365]

"Of course," replied Jack. "I am going to marry him, you know."

"You are? Well, all I have to say is that you are looking pretty far ahead."

"I like to look ahead," Jack informed him. "I like to think of next Christmas and of my birthday and of our getting back home and all the nice things. Don't you like to look ahead, Mr. St. Nick?"

"No, I can't say that I do. I prefer to enjoy the present moment."

"Are you enjoying the present moment?"

"You little outrageous coquette! here you've been talking to that boy all the evening, and now you're trying to make up with me. I see through your wiles."

Jack looked very serious. "But you see," she began by way of excuse, "I hadn't seen Carter for such a long while; not since we were in California, you know. He has written to me lots of times, but that isn't like seeing a person. Let's talk about what we're going to do to-morrow," she said after a moment, and setting aside what was a uselessly unpleasant subject. "I think we shall have a lovely time to-morrow. Will you go with us to feed the pigeons the first thing?"

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Mr. Pinckney was silent for a little. "We shall probably not be here," he said presently.

"Not be here?" Jack dropped his hand in her surprise. "Why, Mr. St. Nick, I think that is awfully mean when we have just come. Where are you going?"

"I am not prepared to say exactly."

Jack looked up at him earnestly. She was a shrewd little body, strong in her intuitions. Early in the evening there had been plenty of plans discussed. What should suddenly decide Mr. St. Nick to go? At all events she would do her best to persuade him to stay. "But you're not going right after breakfast, are you?" she asked.

"Probably."

"And you won't do any of the things you said you would? You won't take us to the bead shop nor the glass factory nor anywhere?" This was the more astonishing that Mr. St. Nick was the one who always delighted in doing anything and everything he could for the children's entertainment.

But there was no time for a reply just then as they had reached their lodgings and the good-nights must be said. Jack noticed that neither Carter nor Mr. Kirk accompanied Mr. Pinckney and Miss Dolores, but that Mr. St. Nick hurried Miss Dolores away, leaving the young people still making their farewells. She kept her counsel, however, until she and her sisters were in their rooms; then she whispered to Nan, "I want to tell you something. May I get in bed with you?"

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Nan consented and for half an hour there was much whispering going on, then Jack crept into the other bed where Jean was already sound asleep. It was all very puzzling and provoking, but perhaps Mr. St. Nick would change his mind before the next day.

Nan and the twins occupied one room, Mary Lee and Jo the other adjoining, but Mary Lee and Nan were talking earnestly in the larger room when Jack opened her eyes the following morning. They were talking about Miss Dolores, she soon ascertained.

"I think it is a shame," said Mary Lee. "I know she likes him and I know he came over because she was here, and did you see how cross he looked?"

Jack wondered who these various hes could be. Who was it that had come on Miss Dolores' account? She knew well enough who it was who had looked cross, and Mary Lee had noticed the frown, too.

"And don't you think it is horrid for him to jerk her away just as he has come?" said Nan. "He told Jack they were going to-day, and didn't say where."

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"He did?" More hes and hers and a puzzling mix up of pronouns. Jack listened more eagerly. Of course she could easily make out that it was Mr. St. Nick who had told of going away.

"I don't see what makes him act so," Mary Lee went on. "He never was like this before in all the time we have known him. I'm sure Mr. Kirk is just as nice as can be, and in the beginning he treated him so cordially and now just because he and Miss Dolores are in love with each other you would suppose the poor fellow had committed a crime."

So that was it; Miss Dolores and Mr. Kirk were in love with each other and Mr. St. Nick was cross about it. Why couldn't he let them marry and all of them live together? Jack was sure it was a beautiful plan, and one that he had probably never thought of. He was supposing that Mr. Kirk would want to take Miss Dolores away. There wasn't the slightest need of that she could tell him and so she would. She decided not to delay the matter. Jack always wanted to rush a thing through as soon as an idea came into her head. She jumped up, not noticing the "Sh!" with which Nan warned Mary Lee that she was not to continue the subject, and was not long in making herself ready for the day.

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The hotel where the Pinckneys were stopping was not far away, and to it Jack hastened, not staying to notice the effect of the morning light upon the water, the sun-touched buildings on the islands opposite, nor the boatmen out early. She was bent upon her errand. It was a direct way along the Riva della Schiavoni, as Jack well remembered, for her bump of locality did not often lead her astray. As at all large hotels over the Continent, English was spoken, the little girl was nothing daunted when she walked in and asked for Mr. Pinckney. She knew the señorita preferred to take her chocolate and rolls in her own room, but that Mr. Pinckney had not taken kindly to this habit, and would follow the custom of going to the breakfast-room. She would be asked to join him, no doubt, and it was with some pleasure that she considered the prospect. She would take an orange, jam for her bread, and some weak, very much sweetened coffee, also a

very hard-boiled egg.

She did not have to wait long before the old gentleman came trotting into the room where she was waiting, fresh and rosy from his toilet. He was always immaculate, and since the discovery of his granddaughter he was more than ever particular about his personal appearance; his beard was more closely trimmed, his neckties and waistcoats more carefully chosen.

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"Well, well, well!" he exclaimed, "this is a surprise. Come to have breakfast with me? Let's go right in. This is an attention I didn't expect."

"You see," began Jack diplomatically, "I thought if you were going away to-day I shouldn't have any time at all to see you if I didn't come early."

Mr. Pinckney seated himself and began drumming thoughtfully on the table while the waiter stood expectant. Presently the old gentleman smiled across at Jack. "Now, what will you have?" he asked. "This is nice, to be sure. Instead of eating a solitary breakfast, I have one of my best friends to join me."

Jack's mind was already made up so she did not hesitate long in giving her order. Mr. Pinckney added his and the waiter went off.

"By the way," said Mr. Pinckney, "did you happen to leave word where you had gone so early? I know your way of skipping off, and I am not going to have the family set by the ears, or have them lose their appetites on my account. I can send some one to telephone them where you are if they don't know."

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"Oh, they know," said Jack calmly. "I wrote a note to Nan."

"What did you say?" There was a little twinkle in Mr. Pinckney's eye. He knew Jack well.

"I said: 'I am going to see Mr. St. Nick. You know why. Don't come for me.'"

Mr. Pinckney looked puzzled and glanced at Jack's plate by the side of which the waiter was just setting the dishes she had ordered. He wondered if she had craftily desired some special dainty which her own boarding place did not furnish, and if she had taken this way of getting it, but Jack's order was a modest one, he perceived, so she could not have come merely because of the breakfast. "She knew why?" he said, "and what is the why?"

Jack added a fourth lump of sugar to her coffee and looked at him gravely. "You know I said if you were going away this morning I shouldn't have any time to see you if I didn't come early, and I had something very particular to say to you."

"You had? Out with it." Mr. Pinckney was amused. Jack always entertained him.

"Well," said Jack, covering a small piece of bread with a large amount of jam, "I s'pose you're thinking that Mr. Kirk is in love with Miss Dolores, and that he will want to take her off somewhere away from you, and that is why you looked so cross last night."

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Mr. Pinckney laid down his knife and fork and looked at the child, amazed that she should put her finger with such directness upon the point of his annoyance. "Cæsar's ghost!" he exclaimed, "what a youngster."

"Yes," Jack went on, "I think that is just it. Now, I don't suppose it ever came into your head to think how awfully nice it would be for them to get married and live with you. Lots and lots of times I've heard you say that if you only had a son or a grandson he would be such a comfort and help, and here when there is one standing around just dying to be your grandson you get cross about it. I don't want to hurt your feelings, Mr. St. Nick, when you are having your breakfast, because there isn't anything that makes you not enjoy your breakfast and dinner like hurt feelings, I know because I've had them often, but you know—your son—Miss Dolores' father—you know about his getting married when you didn't want him too, and how awfully——"

She stopped short, for Mr. Pinckney was looking at her so sternly now that she hastily gulped a large mouthful of coffee before she went on. "Don't you love Miss Dolores?" she asked.

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"Mercy, child," her friend murmured, "of course I do. Life has been a different matter since I found her."

"Then don't you want her to be happy? Mother and Aunt Helen and Nan and Mary Lee always tell us that if we love a person very much we will do the things to make them happy, and not the things to make them unhappy." Jack had a little severe air quite like Mary Lee when she was lecturing her younger sisters.

Mr. Pinckney looked actually confused, picked up his napkin, wiped his mouth, took a sip of coffee, looked at his chop but did not touch it. Then he frowned. "It seems to me," he said, "that you're talking about something you don't know anything about."

"If I don't know anything about it," said Jack, "won't you please tell me? Isn't Mr. Kirk an awfully nice young man, or what is the matter? If he is poor that won't make any difference when you have so much money, though I don't think he can be so very poor, for he is Carter's cousin, and Carter has plenty, enough to buy a house with; he told me so."

Mr. Pinckney stirred his coffee silently. "Oh, I suppose he is nice enough," he said presently,

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"but little girls like you don't know anything about such things."

"I don't suppose we do very much," returned Jack nothing daunted, "but you always tell me about things I don't know about, when no one else will." This was quite true, and Mr. Pinckney was aware that he had encouraged Jack to talk as freely to him as she would to one of her own age, but he had not expected such results to come from the encouragement.

Jack still persisted, though she received no answer to her last remark. "Won't you tell me, please, just why you want to take Miss Dolores away, and why you don't want her to see Mr. Kirk, if it isn't because you're afraid he will marry her?"

"Heavens!" ejaculated Mr. Pinckney, "am I on the witness stand or not?" Yet he felt uncomfortable under Jack's cross-questioning. This came of allowing her to ply him with questions on any subject. He had always scorned the old saw that children should be seen and not heard, but at this present moment, he heartily wished he had been less indulgent. Jack had fixed innocent questioning eyes upon him and presently he blurted out, "No, I don't want her to marry him."

"Why not?" persisted Jack.

"Because I don't want to lose her just as I've found her."

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"But didn't I tell you it would be awfully nice to have them both live with you?"

"Perhaps I don't think it would."

"But you like Mr. Kirk. You did at first. You kept saying he was fine, and you invited him to your house, and used to have him take lunch with you at your club and all that. What made you get mad with him? Was it because he liked Miss Dolores so much?"

"That may be one reason."

"But don't you want her to be happy?"

"Of course, of course, but I don't want another man to be taking up all her time and attention, and absorbing all the interest and affection I have just won."

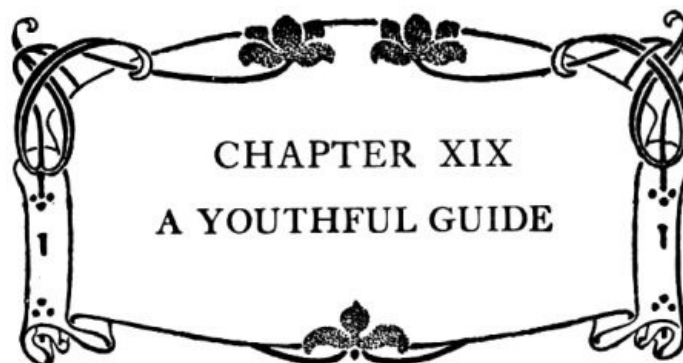
"But he wouldn't be taking up all her time; he couldn't when he has to be at his office all day. Do you mean that you think she couldn't love you both? Why, I love Nan and Jean bushels and bushels, but I love mother most. There was Nan, too, she has always loved mother and has loved me more than anything, yet when Aunt Helen came all of a sudden, she loved her awfully hard, and it didn't make a bit of difference about her loving us first. Are you afraid Miss Dolores hasn't enough love to go around?"

"Dear me, child, I never knew such heart-searching questions. You ought to have been a lawyer or a Methodist exhorter. Now, I will ask you something. How do you know this Mr. Kirk wants to marry my granddaughter? Has he ever told you so?"

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"No," returned Jack doubtfully. "Of course he wouldn't tell a little girl like me, but if he doesn't, then what in the world is the use of your going off in such a hurry as soon as he comes when you meant to stay here just as long as we do?"

Then Mr. Pinckney laughed. "Child," he said, "you're too much for me. There haven't been generations of lawyers in your family for nothing. I think, after all, we won't go to-day." And he fell to eating his breakfast without noticing that it was nearly cold.



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CHAPTER XIX A YOUTHFUL GUIDE

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As the days passed Mr. Pinckney seemed to have forgotten entirely his original intention of

deserting his friends in Venice, and of bearing Miss Dolores away beyond the attentions of Harold Kirk. He was his old jolly, generous self, so that every one had the best of times in consequence of his enthusiasm and eagerness for fun. Sometimes he would take the twins off for a frolic leaving the others to follow some fancy of their own; again he would have the whole party to dinner at some pleasant outdoor restaurant, where queer Italian dishes were served. There were excursions to Murano to see the glass-works, to Burano to see the lace-makers, to Torcello, to Chioggia on a feast day, and oftener than anywhere to the Lido, a place which the younger girls adored.

There seemed to be good feeling on the part of Mr. Pinckney toward both Carter and his cousin, and there were no more frowns, though once or twice when Mr. Pinckney caught Jack looking at him speculatively, he gave her a quizzical glance in return, but he never allowed the subject they had discussed at the breakfast table to be brought up again. [380]

At last came a day when Miss Helen and Mrs. Corner decided that they must leave Venice if they were to see anything of other places. So again they packed up in order to start for Florence. This decision of theirs was the signal for the rest to make a move and all traveled in company.

"If I only had my motor car here we could get another, and go through Italy in that way," said Carter. "What jolly good times we had in California traveling around together."

"We'll do it again some time," Miss Helen assured him. "It is too delightful a thing not to make a separate and distinct tour of. Now you have started, Carter, no doubt you will come over often."

"Maybe," he said, "though one mustn't do too much junketing, once he is settled down to the real business of life. Dad thought I had been pretty diligent in some ways, and he said I deserved a bit of a change, though if Mr. and Mrs. Roberts hadn't made up their minds to have a houseful of company this summer, I doubt if I should have left them."

"But you did want to see us, didn't you, Carter?" asked Jack who was never far away when Carter was on hand.

"Of course I did, and that is precisely why I came, though under different circumstances I might have felt that I ought to stay behind. We often can't do the things we want to, Jack, my honey, and often we must do things we don't like to." [381]

Jack did not apply this quite as it was intended as was apparent by what followed, for she nodded to Mr. Pinckney and said: "Do you hear that, Mr. St. Nick?"

"What's that?" he asked looking up from his time-table.

Jack repeated what Carter had said, and Mr. Pinckney's jolly laugh followed. "Oh, but you are a rogue," he said. "Come over here." Jack obeyed. "Look over there," said Mr. Pinckney, "and say if I am not a devoted and long-suffering grandfather."

Jack looked to see Miss Dolores and Mr. Kirk slowly walking together, evidently absorbed in a deeply interesting conversation. They were all at the moment making a last visit to the Lido and the next day would start for Florence.

To this city Nan had looked forward with great expectancy, and though at first she was disappointed, after being possessed with the beauty of Venice, in a day or two she was quite satisfied that Florence held its own delights which were even more satisfying to her than those of Venice. Its galleries, its churches, its history, its environs opened, one after another, a series of interests which appealed to the girl strongly. She did not despise its lighter charms either, for she reveled in the gay shops along the Lungarno, and the displays of the goldsmiths on the Ponte Vecchio. The Cascine, the Boboli Gardens and the gardens of San Miniato were places for which the twins clamored to be taken often, and there was generally some one in the party to indulge them; if not Miss Helen or Mrs. Corner, then Mr. Pinckney or Carter would offer escort. So while the others prowled around picture galleries and discussed churches the twins were off on some excursion which better pleased their youthful tastes. [382]

All this while Miss Dolores seemed unconscious of the interest her love affair was exciting. She knew very well, however, that her grandfather did not approve of it in the beginning, but feeling that she owed everything to him she had docilely accepted his decisions. She realized that it would be hard to part from Mr. Kirk, and she knew the separation might mean the giving up of her lover entirely, but whatever she felt she kept within her own heart. So it was a surprise to her when her grandfather suddenly accepted Mr. Kirk as a member of the happy party and included him in invitations and plans which she shared. [383]

It was intended to spend Easter at Rome, but at the last moment the grown-ups decided to remain in Florence because Rome was so crowded that good rooms for so large a number of persons would be difficult to get, and because the children would enjoy *Lo Scoppio del Carro* quite as much as anything they might see in Rome where the Carnival had lost many of its pleasant features.

"You don't want our girls in that rabble on the Corso," said Mr. Pinckney. "We'd better stay here and see the Columbina."

So stay they did, and on the Saturday before Easter gathered with the rest of the crowd before the cathedral, their carriages joining the line of others, to watch for the great car filled with

fireworks. Hundreds of country people had assembled, for this was a great occasion to them, much depending, in their superstitious minds, upon the voyage of the dove.

Jack and Jean, as interested as the Italian spectators, craned their necks to see the famous Columбина. "What does it look like?" asked Jean. "Is it a real dove?"

"No," her Aunt Helen told her, "it is only a contrivance in the shape of one."

"How does it get here?"

"It is lighted at the high altar during the Gloria and is run along a string or wire to the car."

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This was not so very mysterious, but was sufficiently interesting to be looked for eagerly, and its progress to and from the altar became a more exciting thing to watch than the fireworks themselves.

At last the fireworks ceased. There was a movement in the crowd. Something else was to follow. "Oh, see the white oxen," cried Jack.

Every one looked to see the mild-eyed creatures who, with slow tread, dragged the car to the Via del Proconsolo.

The Corner party followed, their driver taking a short cut so they would be in time to see the arrival of the car, and to watch the remainder of the fireworks which were set off at the Canto de' Pazzi.

As they drove home they stopped at the flower market in the arcades of the Uffizi, and bore home their Easter flowers. "Such a lot of them and so cheap," said Mary Lee. "No wonder they call the city Florence, for what could be more flowery at this time of year?"

The carriages were dismissed at the flower market and all walked along the Lungarno to their hotel, stopping once in a while to look in the shop-windows or to interchange remarks.

"We shall go to the Boboli Garden to-morrow," announced the twins. "Mr. St. Nick is going to take us. We think it is the prettiest thing in Florence."

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"What do you like best, Nan?" Jack asked.

"Oh, the galleries, the Uffizi and the Pitti, of course."

"What do you like best, Jo?" Jack continued her inquiries.

Jo confessed to a weakness for the shops on the Ponte Vecchio; Mary Lee liked the Foundling Hospital with its medallions by Della Robbia; Carter admired the cathedral. What Mr. Kirk and Miss Dolores liked best in Florence Jack did not ask. She whispered to Nan to know if she should put the question to them.

Nan glanced at the two who were standing absorbed in something of mutual interest. "I can tell you what they like," she whispered back.

"What?" again in a whisper.

"Each other," returned Nan. Jack's giggle showed that she appreciated the answer.

Easter Sunday with all the pomp and ceremony of a celebration at the cathedral. Easter Monday, a last visit to the gardens, to the shops, and they were off again, this time for Rome.

Nan and Carter sat poring over the latter's Baedeker during the journey. "Dear me, it would take a lifetime, wouldn't it, Carter?" said Nan. "How can we see it all?"

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"We can't," he replied. "We shall have to begin by picking out the most important things. I say the Forum first."

"Oh, dear, yes, and then St. Peter's."

"Of course again—and—"

"St. Peter's includes the Vatican."

"Which means days of looking if we are to see all."

"We must drive out the Appian way."

"And see the Catacombs."

"Yes, that comes in with the drive. We must go up the Capitoline hill to the Museum."

"And the Pincio."

"And, oh, Carter, of all things, we have forgotten the Coliseum."

"So we have, and naturally that is one of the most important things."

"I am quite dizzy over it already. Don't let's write down any more till after we have seen these. Isn't it overpowering? London is nowhere. Paris is a mere nothing. I am perfectly wild with anticipation. It's Rome we are to see, that wonderful, wonderful city. The more I read about it the

more enthusiastically bewildered I get. Hallo, Jo, what do you think of it? Do you know where we are going?"

"Don't speak to me," said Jo from the other end of the seat. "I am goose-flesh from top to toe. From this time out I expect to go about with my mouth agape and my eyes popping out. Oh, Nan, what would Frances Powers give to have this chance?" [387]

"Poor Frances," returned Nan with a sigh.

"You always say that, and yet you are the one who has least reason to be sorry for her."

"Maybe that is just it," replied Nan. "I have so much reason to feel the other way that the pendulum has swung back. She has the worst of it."

"The girls are all home for the Easter holidays now," said Jo reflectively. "I think it will be rather good fun to go back there after all, and after this year's travel. Think what a sensation I shall make and what an authority I shall be, yet it will be rather hard to get into the traces again, and to subsist on the everlasting baked apples and baked beans."

"Our holiday has been a tremendously long one," said Nan, "for though we have done some studying, there is much of the time we have taken our mental nourishment in other ways than from books. I am glad Miss Barnes agreed that travel would count as study and that we should not lose by giving up school-books for part of the time. Who was Caracalla, Carter? I see something about the Thermæ of Caracalla here in the book." [388]

"He was a Roman emperor of about 212 B. C."

"That's enough," cried Jo. "Anything B. C. gets beyond my assimilation. I can't digest it till I have taken a course of treatment, fish or brain food of some kind. I think while I am in Rome I must consult a physician and get him to recommend a diet that will increase my supply of gray matter."

"You certainly do talk funny, Jo Keyes," said Mary Lee. "You are always trying to make out that you haven't any brains, and yet you are always the one who rises to the occasion and who comes up smiling whatever the rest of us do. When Nan and I get completely snowed under by dates and chronological events you glibly reel them off and tell us that so-and-so was the daughter of King This-and-That, and that Emperor XYZ married Princess Tutti-Frutti. Why even that mixy up Bavarian history you had all smoothed out fine before we came away."

Jo blew Mary Lee a kiss from the tips of her fingers. "Thanks for the bouquets," she said. "Just because I know a little arithmetic you think I am smart. When it comes to real literature I am floored." She began to gather up her traps for they were approaching the station and soon their feet would be treading the streets of the Eternal City. [389]

A few moments in the station, a swift drive to their hotel and they were established in Rome.

There was such a variety of wishes displayed the next morning that the party split up into three sections. Mr. Pinckney, Miss Dolores, Mary Lee and Mr. Kirk, as a matter of course, yearned to see St. Peter's. Nan, Carter and Jo voted for the Forum, so Miss Helen agreed to join them. This left Mrs. Corner and the twins to decide upon what they should see. Jack was divided between a desire to be of the party with Carter and to go to the Coliseum, a place upon which Jean had set her heart. At last Jean's references to the early martyrs and to the dens and chambers for the wild beasts so fired Jack's imagination that she concluded to go with her mother and Jean.

"It is too large a party anyhow," declared Miss Helen. "We shall all get along much more comfortably this way."

"Of course Mary Lee would go with Miss Dolores," remarked Nan, "and of course Jean and Jack wanted to be harrowed by a view of the spot where the early Christians were martyred. I suppose Jack will be in tears over it while Jean will be interested in seeing where they used to keep the lions and tigers, and will placidly tell Jack that it all happened so long ago that there is no use in one's feeling badly about it." This described the temperaments of the two so well that all laughed. [390]

"Will there be a moon?" asked Nan abruptly just before they reached the car which would take them to their destination.

Miss Helen laughed. "Are you dreaming, Nan? It isn't night."

Nan laughed, too. "I was thinking of the Coliseum. The guide-book says it is best seen at moonlight, and I was wondering if we would have a chance to do that."

"I think we shall, but not till the latter part of our stay."

"As long as we get it in, that will be all right."

Arriving at the point from which the Forum could be best viewed from above, the four stood looking toward it silently, each impressed by the sight of the historic columns, the triumphal arches, the ruined temples.

"To think," murmured Miss Helen, "that it is comparatively but a short time ago that all this was buried under rubbish, that it was a spot which for a long time was practically hidden from

view until the nineteenth century."

"Why was that, Miss Helen?" asked Jo.

"Because in warring against paganism the temples were destroyed, the stones were carried away to build into churches and castles, and the very name Forum was forgotten. You can read all about it in Baedeker, my dear," said Miss Helen with a smile at Jo's look of admiration at her knowledge. [391]

"Let's read up, Nan, as soon as we get home," said Jo enthusiastically.

Their talk was at this moment broken in upon by a queer little figure which approached. A little fellow of about twelve or thirteen was taking as long strides as he was capable of toward them. He was dressed in manly attire, long trousers, sack coat and Derby hat. "Want a guide?" he asked. "I show you alla, evrasing, verra sheep."

The four looked at one another and grinned. His was such a comical appearance, for he was small for his age, and had such a serious air. Even Miss Helen smiled.

"I spika Engglis," continued the boy. He struck an attitude. "Frienda Roma, contra-manna. I coma bury Cæsar," he began.

The three younger ones of the party turned away their heads, and broke into suppressed giggles. The boy was so ridiculous with his little pompous manner.

Miss Helen bit her lip, but managed to ask, "What do you know about being a guide, a little boy like you?" [392]

"I know alla as big manna. He sharge molto, mucha, me, no. Me, verra clever." He smote his breast with an air of assured self-importance.

"Do let's have him," whispered Nan to her aunt. "Even if he isn't any good he is so funny."

"What is your charge?" asked Miss Helen, turning to the boy.

He named a moderate enough price with all the gravity possible.

"It's worth it," murmured Carter, "just to see the little rat and his airs."

"Very well," agreed Miss Helen, "you may come with us. I don't suppose he knows a thing or will do anything right," she said to the others, "but I have my Baedeker with me, and he is funny."

The boy strode ahead, taking as mighty steps as his short legs would permit, and presently began his lecture, waving a small hand in the direction of the Temple of Saturn, and naming the buildings correctly enough. When he thought his party had exhausted the resources above he turned abruptly. "Come along," he said peremptorily, and with long strides marched ahead.

"He takes the Cook guides for his pattern," laughed Miss Helen. The boy did not hear, but with the same air of importance led his party over the ground. At the slightest word of appreciation, he would smite his breast and say, "Me verra clever." Before he had finished with them he had taken them to the Capitoline Hill, had procured them post-cards at a figure less than that usually charged, had marched them to the church of Santa Maria in Arcoeli that they might view the wonder-working bambino laden with jewels, and in his queer jargon of broken English told them many things with such an air of gravity as convulsed them. Jo once in a while managed to reach the boy in him, and his merry laugh, in strong contrast to his costume and his general manner, was the more contagious. [393]

He had really fulfilled his promise so well, and as Carter said, was "such an amusing little rat" that the others of the party employed him later and as a matter of course Jack brought him out wonderfully, and was able to learn more from him than any one else.

At the close of the first day, each was so enthusiastic about what he or she had seen that the different parties followed the example of one another the next day, a sort of ladies' change, Jo said, though after this they divided up in various ways. Sometimes it was Mr. Pinckney who carried off all four Corners; again it would be two of these who would go in one direction and two in another. At another time the whole company of eleven would take carriages for an afternoon's drive or sightseeing, finally having supper at some out-of-door restaurant, and coming home through the lighted streets, happy though tired. [394]

Nan had her sight of the Coliseum by moonlight, and was stirred to the depths by the grandeur and solemnity of the scene. It was an evening not to be forgotten by any of them, and it may be remarked in passing that it was a specially happy one to Miss Dolores and Mr. Kirk.

So day after day passed until one morning Mrs. Corner remarked, "If we expect to reach Naples before it is too hot, we shall have to think of getting there, for May is passing."

"Leave Rome?" exclaimed the girls.

"Don't you want to see Naples?"

"Of course, but why can't we——" began Mary Lee.

"Do what?"

"I don't know. Make time stand still, I suppose."

"Rome will remain, dear child, and you can come back some day."

"I know, and of course we have been here over two weeks now. Well, mother, I suppose we shall have to go." [395]

"Don't say it so mournfully, my child. You will be delighted with Naples, with Sorrento, Amalfi, Capri, Pompeii."

"Oh, I know it. This earth has more in it than one can well see in a short lifetime. I can't understand how people can ever be bored."

"Like that awful Mrs. Ritchie on the steamer," said Nan; "she didn't know what places there were left to visit for she and her daughter had been everywhere. Shall you ever forget her blasé look and set smile?"

"Her name just suited her," declared Jo. "She was just rich and nothing else. I was so pleased when Miss Helen drew her out, and found that she had been only to the big cities and that she didn't know anything but shops, theatres and restaurants."

"There is no danger of this crowd ever getting bored," remarked Nan. "The trouble is we are too enthusiastic, for we like the little simple things as much as the big ones, and when we have exhausted our vocabularies over some small matter we have no words left to express what we feel for the great ones. Is go the word, mother?"

"Yes, I think it must be if we are to see anything of southern Italy before we sail for——" [396]

"Home, home, sweet home," broke in a chorus of voices.

"And that is another thing to be enthusiastic about," said Nan at the close of the outburst. "There is the getting back and the seeing all the dear old places and the darling people."



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CHAPTER XX TOWARD THE TOE

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"HEEL and toe, and away we go," sang Jack on the morning they were to start for Naples. "We've come down all through the boot leg, Jean, and now we're going toward the toe."

"It isn't really the toe when we stop," returned Jean. "Aunt Helen showed me on the map, and it isn't any further down than the ankle."

"Well, but it's toward the toe."

"Yes," admitted Jack. "There are more donkeys there than anywhere we have been," she went on, "and there are goats that walk up-stairs to be milked."

"We saw them milk goats in the streets of Paris. Don't you remember the man who used to come by early in the morning playing on the pipes, and how we used to get up and look out of the window to see him milk the goats?"

"Yes, but those goats didn't walk up-stairs. Carter told me about the ones in Naples and I am going to look out for them."

"Carter told me a lot of things, too," returned Jack, not to be outdone. "He told me more than he did you. He said there was a cave that was bright blue inside, and that we should go there, and he said there was a great big aquarium, the finest in the world, and—that we'd see the smoke coming out of Vesuvius, and we'd eat oranges off the trees just as we did in California." [400]

"I don't care," said Jean. "I reckon he told me just as much, only I don't remember it all."

"Here, here, you children, stop your bickering," cried Nan, "and look around to see if you have left nothing behind. We must start pretty soon."

"I'm all ready," declared Jean.

"So am I," echoed Jack. But at the last moment there was discovered a hair ribbon and a handkerchief of hers which had to be poked into her mother's bag.

"To think this is the end of our travels, and that the next thing will be to take the steamer for home," said Jo in a woebegone voice when they were settled in the train. "What next, I wonder."

"There is a great deal of talk over all of us," said Nan, "but no one seems exactly to know about next year."

"I think mother and Aunt Helen intend to give themselves up to the subject on the steamer," remarked Mary Lee.

"They're saving it up to keep them from getting seasick," said Nan. "It will be so absorbing, you see, that they won't be able to think of anything else." [401]

"Well," said Jo, "there is one thing; I hope wherever you go that I can go, too."

"Even if it is back to the Wadsworth school?" said Mary Lee.

"Sure." Jo still clung to her slang on occasions. "The Wadsworth school might be worse, and without Frances is much better, so Charley writes."

"Daniella says it would be much better still if we were all there," remarked Nan.

"*Natürlich*," returned Jo calmly.

"What are you girls talking about?" asked Carter sauntering up to the door of the compartment.

"Of how extremely desirable we are as companions," replied Nan.

"I found that out long ago," answered Carter. "Why don't you talk about something not quite so obvious as that?"

"Bah!" exclaimed Nan. "Don't hand us out any more bouquets, Carter, we have not places to put them when we are traveling. What are they all doing next door?" The train being rather crowded, the party had to divide, Carter and Mr. Kirk finding place in another carriage, the twins with their mother, Miss Helen and the Pinckneys being next to the three older girls, who were established on a seat opposite three quiet German women. [402]

"The twins are eating chocolate, I believe," Carter said, "at least Jean was. Your mother is talking to Mr. Pinckney and your aunt to Miss Dolores. Hal and I have had a smoke, and I left Hal scribbling things in his note-book with a far-away look in his eyes; so, seeing I was not of any special use, I wandered here to cast myself on your tender mercies. What shall I do when you all leave me? I've half a mind to go back, too."

"And not go to Sicily and Greece? Oh, Carter," Nan protested.

"Well, I am a sociable beast and can't see much fun in traveling alone. If I can find a decent fellow to travel with me, well and good. Hal can't stay. He took his holiday early that he might come with me. I don't see why you all have to leave so soon when you could spend the summer over here as well as not. You don't have to get back before school begins, do you?"

"Yes, we shall have to. At least, so far as we are concerned, it wouldn't matter, but mother wants to go back to see about things on the place, and we don't want her to go without us. She is too precious to be parted from. We had enough of that business last year. Now we all, mother included, have made up our minds that we are not going to be parted unless it is absolutely necessary. We shall trot around together from this on." [403]

"Suppose you were in my shoes, and had to live away from your mother and family," said Carter soberly.

"We'd have to do as you do; grin and bear it."

Carter looked a little wistful, for his life was spent apart from his people, as his health did not permit him to live in Richmond where his parents were. "I wish you would all come out to California again," he said.

"Perhaps we shall, some time, but I don't think it will be next winter. Mother may go to Florida or Asheville after Christmas to bridge over the worst of the year, but the rest of us have got to buckle down to hard study."

Here Mr. Kirk sauntered down the corridor to join his cousin, and they stood talking for a few minutes before returning to their places. A little later they appeared again. "It will soon be time to get our first glimpse of Vesuvius," said Carter, "so don't miss it."

From this time on the girls were wildly enthusiastic. First Vesuvius' "misty rim" appeared, and not long after they were all driving through the picturesque, if dirty streets of the city. Exclamations of delight accented the drive. It was, "Oh, look at that!" and "Oh, see there!" all the [404]

way to the very door of the hotel, and then as they stood looking off at the magnificent sweep of bay before them, with Capri and Ischia in the distance, no one made a movement to go in but stood murmuring, "How beautiful!"

With natural youthful energy, the young people were not to be persuaded from starting off at once to explore, and that very evening did indeed climb as far as the villa Floridiana, from which they could look down upon the town with its beautiful surroundings. The climb served as an outlet to superfluous energies, and they came back ready to make plans while they had dinner.

They all trooped to the Aquarium first thing the next morning where Jean and Jack were so entertained they could hardly be dragged away.

"It's like being really in the waters under the earth," said Jack. "I think the octopus is so horrible." She stood regarding it with fascinated eyes.

"If you think it is so horrible what makes you stand and gaze at it?" asked Mary Lee.

"Because I can't help it," returned Jack transfixed.

"It's a place I'd like to come to every day," admitted Mary Lee. "Everything is so wonderfully arranged, and as Jack says you feel as if you were really in a room under the water. I love the living coral." [405]

"And those creer, creer crabs are so interesting," put in Jean.

"Creer, creer crabs does sound rather interesting," said Mr. Kirk laughing.

"Did you ever see such wonderfully colored creatures as some of these are?" said Nan, peering through the glass into the watery home of some of the beautiful Mediterranean fish. "What's Jo doing, Carter?"

"She is amusing herself with the electric fish. She seems to find it more alluring than some of these beauties."

"Shocking!" exclaimed Nan, "though it's hard to shock Jo," she went on with an attempt at a pun.

Carter groaned. "If that's the way it's going to affect you we'd better get out as soon as possible."

"Come over here and see these lovely medusæ," said Miss Helen.

"It's a great place, isn't it?" said Carter joining her. "I'd no idea it would be so tremendously interesting."

"It is the greatest place of its kind in the world, I suppose. Its equipments are very complete, and it is resorted to for study by marine biologists all over the world. The Mediterranean is a marvelous source of supply, and the specimens are constantly being added to." [406]

"Wouldn't have missed it for a good deal," remarked Mr. Pinckney trotting up. "We'll have to come here often, youngsters," he nodded to the twins. "When the others are off looking at their old churches and dried up specimens we'll come here and see these fine wet ones, won't we?" And the twins were only too ready to agree to this.

The young men were possessed with a desire to see the castles of San Martino and St. Elmo that afternoon, but started off alone, while the others took carriages and drove about the city, watching the life in the narrow little streets where gay colored flowers on the balconies, and bits of scarlet or blue clothing, hung from the windows, added to the charm of color.

"I think the cool way in which they carry on their household affairs, their trades or anything at all in the streets, is too funny for words," said Jo. "Do look at that old woman cooking macaroni over a handful of charcoal, Nan. Doesn't she remind you of one of the witches in Macbeth?"

"And see that baby with scarce a stitch to cover his dear fat little brown body. And oh, the flowers, the flowers!" [407]

"Nan, Nan, see there's a street with steps all the way up the middle and the donkeys are going up the steps just as easy," cried Jack. "I see a man mending shoes right out on the pavement."

"And a girl with something to sell, something to eat," said Jean. "I wonder what it is."

"Nothing you would like, probably," Nan told her. "Oh, there is a funeral procession. What a queer looking lot of people, and what a gorgeous coffin."

"It is probably empty," Miss Helen told her. "They seldom bear the body in procession, for it is generally taken to the cemetery beforehand."

"Who are the men wearing the white things with holes for their eyes? It looks like a sheet and pillow-case party," declared Jo.

"Those are probably members of the brotherhood to which the dead man belonged," Miss Helen returned.

"It is certainly a great show, like some of the old pictures you see in the galleries," said Nan.

They watched the curious procession move on and then turned their attention to such passing scenes as a man with a tray of selected cigar ends which he had picked up in the streets and which he was offering to buyers, or to a row of booths where fish, meat and macaroni were being cooked and finding a ready sale. In between the moving through the patient panniered donkeys threaded their way, those laden with vegetables of different hues adding more color to the scene. It was a lively show, sometimes amusing, sometimes pathetic, always interesting, as every one declared.

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A morning at the Museum, an afternoon prowling around the shops, looking up souvenirs, a tour of the principal churches for some of the party while the others went again to the Aquarium, took them to their third day which was set apart for an excursion to Pompeii.

"The education I am receiving!" remarked Jo to Nan when they passed in through the entrance of the ancient city. "I have always had a very hazy idea of what Pompeii was like, though I have lately learned when it existed. In fact I was hazy about so many things that are now clear facts in my mind, that I expect to overpower my family completely when I get back. I hope my father won't consider that I have completed my education entirely. Perhaps I'd better refrain from showing off, or he may jerk me out of school for the rest of time. Isn't it fun to get your history lessons in this way?"

"Don't mention it," returned Nan. "Our history lessons are so full of illustrations that we'd be idiots if we didn't absorb facts with every breath. Let me see, how long was the place covered up?"

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"Oh, for a mere matter of fifteen centuries I believe. It was first mentioned in history in 310 B. C., so Baedeker says. Nice old place, eh?"

"Don't speak of it in that flippant way," returned Nan. "See, Jo, we are going to have that nice-looking guide. Keep your ears open and don't break in upon my efforts to gain fresh knowledge."

For the rest of the morning the party followed their intelligent guide, a young man who spoke English well, and who informed them that he was from Sorrento, but had been in America for several years.

"It's the most uncanny thing to be walking through these streets and go poking into the houses of a dead city," remarked Nan to her aunt. "I'm glad you told us to be sure to read 'The Last Days of Pompeii,' for I can see it all in my mind's eye much more vividly. I fancy Nydia feeling her way through these places and I can imagine just what went on in these houses now I have read Bulwer's descriptions."

"Impressive, very impressive," asserted Mr. Pinckney gazing at the great amphitheatre. "One doesn't feel in the least old, my dear Mrs. Corner, when he is brought face to face with such antiquity. Why, I am a mere infant compared to it." He chuckled mirthfully.

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Jean and Jack amused themselves by skipping back and forth over the stepping-stones set across some of the narrow streets, and were charmed with the little lizards which darted out from between the old stones, the sole residents of that ancient and populous town. Mary Lee looked down at the ruts made by the chariot wheels and remarked, "Just think of all the poor animals that must have perished in that dreadful time."

"As for the rest," as Jo said, "they were walking exclamation points. To come upon a town buried for centuries, and then to walk into its kitchens to see its pots and pans, to come upon those great baths and to go poking around the carefully retired courts and bedrooms, dear me, it does set one to conjecturing and exclaiming."

"I love the color, the decorations, the statues and all that," said Nan. "I'm glad they had tried to make it look something as it used to, and have reestablished gardens so as to give you an idea of what it was like in the long ago."

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Believing that the luncheon hour would not find them ready to leave the ruins they had provided themselves with lunch so they could stay as late as they cared to, the evening light giving an added fascination to the silent city.

"It's been a great day," said Carter as they started for the railway station.

"Haven't we had a good time?" said Jack cordially. "What are you going to do this evening, Carter?"

"Don't know, Jaquita. I may go to the opera, if we get back in time. I know very well what you will do."

"What?"

"Tumble into your little bed and go to sleep in about two minutes," returned Carter laughing.

They were all so tired that opera was not to be thought of, and it was decided to put off that pleasure till the next evening when all went except Mrs. Corner and the twins.

"I suppose Nan will be snippy and will say it's not worth listening to because the music is not Wagner's," said Mary Lee as they started out through the gay streets.

"Indeed I shall not," returned Nan indignantly. "I like Wagner best, of course, but I can enjoy

anything good, I hope."

"I've never reached the place where I can appreciate Wagner," confessed Jo.

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"You're not studying music," Nan explained. "If you were you would feel differently. I didn't care so much for it either till Frau Burg-Schmidt introduced me to the mysteries. Now that I can understand it I think it is the greatest ever."

"Old Rossini and Donizetti and those fellows are good enough for me," declared Carter.

Nan had her own ideas, but she only whispered to her aunt, "He has never heard Knote sing Siegfried or Tannhauser." She was not going to spoil the evening by futile argument.

It was by no means spoiled, however, for the great opera house of San Carlo provided them with a fine caste for the light music they heard. It was a very different and less attentive audience from that with which Nan had grown so familiar in Munich, but as she gravely explained, "The character of the music is so very different," a remark which caused Miss Helen to smile and Jo to laugh outright, so very superior was Nan's tone.

A flood of sunshine, blue Italian skies, dancing blue waters in the lovely bay greeted them the next morning. "This is the day that was made for our trip to Capri and the Blue Grotto," announced Miss Helen when they were taking breakfast. "So get ready, girls. Pack your bags, for we shall stop off at Sorrento for a few days."

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Off flew the girls, for there was but a short time before the steamer would start on its daily trip. There was bustle enough for the next fifteen minutes, and then one after another appeared, ready to go.

"This will be the best of all," said Mary Lee. "I feel it."

"What do you do when you get there?" asked Jean.

"Get where?"

"To wherever we are going. I don't know exactly where it is. One of you says Capri, another talks about Sorrento, and Jack declares it is the Blue Grotto."

"It is all three," Mary Lee told her. "We stop at the Blue Grotto first, then we go to Capri and have our lunch, and after that we go to Sorrento."

"Oh!" Jean understood. She was somewhat fearful of the Blue Grotto, and was rather scared when the little boat shot into the small opening, and the wonderful blue cave was before her. She buried her face in her mother's lap and would not look up at first, but a call from Jack, who was in the next boat with Carter, caused her to be braver. "I wasn't scared a bit, was I, Carter?" sang out Jack.

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This part of the trip was soon over and they went on to Capri, where they were ready to linger longer than the time allowed. "Capri is too charming for words. Must we leave it?" the girls said to their elders.

"My dears, if we stopped at all the charming places we should never get home," Mrs. Corner told them. "You will have to be satisfied with a little stop at Sorrento this time."

"Capri will be here for ages yet," said Carter, "and when we get to be tottering old people, Jack, we will come here to celebrate our golden wedding."

"Silly!" was all the answer Jack vouchsafed.

A babble of clamoring voices surrounded their steamer which suddenly came to a standstill. "What in the world is the matter?" said Mary Lee jumping up.

"Come along, girls," Mr. Pinckney called to them, and they found they must leave the steamer for one of the small rowboats rocking on the water alongside. The clamor of voices calling out the names of the various hotels of Sorrento issued from these. Mr. Pinckney shouted out the name of the one they had selected, and one after another descended to reëmbark and to be rowed shoreward to an ancient pier at the foot of the lofty crags.

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"Now," said Jean settling herself, "we are going to eat oranges for three whole days."

Not only oranges, but all manner of good things did their hotel afford. Roses rioted in its gardens, beautiful views were seen from their windows, a fair orange grove became their happy retreat. Their three days in this loveliest of spots seemed all too short, so, throwing all other plans aside, they lingered too happy and content to care for anything further.

If it was a glad time to the Corners, to at least two of the party it seemed a Paradise, the world forgot. It was Jack who first learned what every one else suspected. She had been walking with Mr. Pinckney in the orange grove the last evening of their stay at Sorrento. They stopped to sit down on one of the old stone seats from which they could look out at the glorious view of Naples, Vesuvius, Capri and Ischia which was spread out before them.

Presently Mr. Pinckney gave a long sigh. "Are you sighing because it is so beautiful?" asked Jack solicitously, "or because you ate too much supper?"

In spite of himself Mr. Pinckney could not help from laughing, his jolly old chuckle, but almost immediately became serious again. "It is something else, Jack," he said. "I'm going to lose my little girl."

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"You don't mean me, do you?" said Jack after a moment's pause. She could not imagine any other whom he would call his little girl.

"No, not you. I hope we shall not lose you for a great many years. I mean, my dear, that I am doing as you told me to do there in Venice. I am trying not to be a selfish old fellow and am consenting to give up Miss Dolores because it will make her happy."

Jack's arms went around his neck and she imprinted a hearty kiss upon his cheek. "You darling!" she exclaimed. "I think you are too sweet for words."

This was too much for him and he again broke into a laugh. "I'm glad you approve," he said, "but while you are so glad for that granddaughter of mine, you haven't a word of sympathy for me. What is to become of me?"

"Why, of course you will be happy, too. Aren't they going to live with you?"

"Yes, that dear Dolly of mine wouldn't say yes otherwise."

"Of course she wouldn't. Well, then, won't you have her and Mr. Kirk both, and Nan and Mary Lee and Jean and me besides?" Another mighty hug and kiss.

"Bless your heart, when I get to feeling down-hearted I'll send for you. I'll make a bargain with your mother this very night."

[417]

"I think sometimes you might come and see us where we are," returned Jack, "though, of course, I shall always like to go to see you," she added hastily.

"It's a bargain," he said. "When you can't come to me then I will go to you, whenever I feel that I am in the way at home."

"Oh, but you were never in the way," Jack hastened to assure him, then she added mirthfully, "except that first time I saw you when I ran into you."

The recollection of this put Mr. Pinckney into a happier humor, and the two went up to the house to tell their news to the family.

And so when, a week later, they all turned away from the beautiful land where they had enjoyed so many good times, to set out upon the journey home, it was not only to school and their native town that they looked forward, but to the Christmas wedding of their dear and lovely friend Miss Dolores, when for the first time each of the four Corners would perform the office of bridesmaid.

Transcriber's Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

Page 222, "Joe" changed to "Jo" twice (Jo asked Nan that) (and Jo were very fond of)

Page 270, illustration caption, "Kippen" changed to "Krippen" (Delight at The Krippen)

Page 397, "Fraunces" changed to "Frances" (Nan, what would Frances)

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FOUR CORNERS ABROAD ***

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