The Project Gutenberg eBook of The Walcott Twins, by Lucile Lovell

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

Title: The Walcott Twins

Author: Lucile Lovell
Illustrator: Ida Waugh

Release date: May 27, 2015 [EBook #49060]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by MWS and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at http://www.pgdp.net (This file was produced from images generously made available by The Internet Archive/Canadian Libraries)

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE WALCOTT TWINS ***

THE WALCOTT TWINS

BY

LUCILE LOVELL

ILLUSTRATED BY IDA WAUGH

THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA MCM

COPYRIGHT 1900 BY THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	Gay and May	5
II	The First Separation	11
III	Just for Fun	16
IV	A Remarkable Household	23
V	More Confusion	30
VI	Being a Boy	37
VII	Being a Girl	44
VIII	A Scene at Rose Cottage	49
IX	Saw and Axe	56
X	A Course of Training	62
XI	The Training Begins	68
XII	A Silver-haired Lady	75
XIII	A Plan that Failed	82
XIV	The Boy Predominates	89
XV	Gay's Popularity Begins	97
XVI	A Squad of One	106
XVII	Concerning Philip	114
XVIII	Dark Days	122
XIX	The Event of the Season	130
XX	The Belle of Hazelnook	141

XXI	The Sky Brightens	151
XXII	The Dearest Girl	162
XXIII	A Great Game	172
XXIV	The Idol Totters	181
XXV	The Girls make Peace	189
XXVI	All's Right Again	194
XXVII	Happy People	199

THE WALCOTT TWINS

[5]

CHAPTER I
GAY AND MAY

The Mistress of the house lay among her pillows, her brows drawn into the nearest semblance of a frown that her gentle countenance could assume. Nurse—bearing a tiny, moving bundle of muslin and flannel—and the father were at the bedside.

The father's forehead wore an unmistakable frown. It was evident that something displeased him, but who would have dreamed that it was the gurgling mite in the flannel blanket? Yet he pointed in that direction as he said,—

"Take him away. He has made trouble enough."

"H'indeed, Mr. Walcott," cried nurse, "'E's the best baby h'I' ave ever seen h'in this 'ouse! 'E's never cried before."

"Take him away!" repeated the father, still frowning. "He may be the best baby in the world—a future President of the United States, even,—but he can't stay in this room another minute. Do you understand?"

[6]

"Certainly, sir," nurse replied somewhat tartly.

Nurse thought the father a great bear. Of course she could not tell him so, but she could and she did show him that an imported English nurse chooses her own rate of speed. She moved slowly toward the door, holding her head with its imposing white cap well up in the air, and looking at Baby as though he were a Crown Prince, instead of the youngest nursling in an American flock of five. While the door was open for nurse and her precious burden to pass through, sounds of boisterous mirth floated into the quiet chamber. It was only the twins, Gay and May, and little Ned—Alice was in the country—at play in the nursery, but one would have said that half the children in New York city were shouting together. The invalid tried to stifle a sigh which did not escape the father's ear.

"Those torments must go, Elinor!" he exclaimed. "That is the only way to ensure your recovery."

"Oh, Edward, how can I live without my dear little ones!" murmured the gentle mother.

Mr. Walcott took his wife's transparent hands in his own and caressed them tenderly. "Do you want our children's mother to have nerves as much out of tune as a cracked bell?" said he.

"No."

"Then they must go to-morrow."

[7]

"Not Ned—he is too young to be sent away from me."

"Very well; Ned shall stay—three servants may be able to keep him in order! Now let me see those letters."

Mrs. Walcott drew two letters from beneath her pillow and passed them to her husband. "Read them aloud," said she; "I half-read them."

Mr. Walcott drew from one of the envelopes a single sheet of blue thin paper covered with small precise characters traced in the blackest of ink, with the bluntest of quills. As he moved it a gritty shower fell, showing the writer to be of the old school which prefers sand to blotting paper.

> "My Dear Nephew," Mr. Walcott began, "It gives me great pain to learn that your dear wife remains ill. Now, I have a proposition to make; send Gay up here for a fortnight. His presence will be inexpressibly grateful to me, and his absence may be a relief to you at this time. Wire me your decision. My compliments to Elinor, and believe me to be,
>
> "Yours truly,
> "Harold S. Haines."
>
> [8]
>
> "P. S. You may think it singular that I have not included May in my invitation, but, candidly, a woman child under my roof would be sufficient excuse for me to leave it altogether, so I trust you will understand and pardon my omission. Tell Elinor that Sarah will take the best of care of the young rascal.
>
> "H. S. H."

"Cedarville, N. Y. Aug. 6, 19——."

"A characteristic postscript," laughed Mr. Walcott. "Uncle Harold's antipathy to 'a petticoat', as he is fond of calling one of your sex, dear, seems to increase."

"His antipathy is quite out of proportion to our little daughter's half-yard petticoat," responded the Mistress, smiling faintly. "But go on, please, with Auntie's letter."

The second letter was quite unlike the first; it was penned in the most delicate handwriting, on fine white paper, ornamented with a silver crest, and as Mr. Walcott unfolded it a faint odor of that old-fashioned scent, lavender, was shed on the air. "A gentlewoman's letter," one would have said at once.

"Dear Niece Elinor," read Mr. Walcott. "We were deeply grieved to hear of your protracted illness, and we are sure that if you were to be relieved of the care of one of the children your recovery would be rapid. Will you not send May to us for a fortnight? You need give yourself no uneasiness about the dear child's welfare; it will be Celia's and my pleasure to take the best care of her. Let us know by telegram when she will leave New York and we will make arrangements for her to come from the railway station by the stage that passes our door—the driver is a most reliable person. With best wishes for your speedy return to health, and with kind remembrances to Edward, in which Celia joins, I am, my dear niece, [9]

"Your affectionate aunt,
"Beulah Linn."

"P. S. Celia suggests that you may think it odd that we have not included Gay in our invitation, but the truth is, we should not know what to do with a lively, noisy boy. We shall enjoy May very much if she is like Alice, wholly without those failings of modern childhood—a pert tongue, boisterous manners, and slang.

"B. L."

"Hazelnook, N. Y., Aug. 6, 19——."

"It is rather strange, isn't it, Edward, that the aunts will have none of Gay, while the uncle disdains May? It will break their hearts to separate them."

"It is better so, my dear. Doting father that I am I cannot deny that Gay and May make a team that gentle maiden ladies or a quiet old bachelor would find difficult to manage! Shall I go out now and wire our good relatives that they may expect the children to-morrow?" [10]

"Yes," the Mistress replied, with a sigh of resignation. "And send Gay and May to me, please—they will receive their sentence of banishment best from my lips."

CHAPTER II [11]
THE FIRST SEPARATION

They stole across the nursery floor and through the hall on tiptoe; because they had promised father to be "as still as mice."

So far so good! Not the slyest nibbler of cheese in the house could have moved more softly than Gay and May. It was the quietest procession that ever marched until it reached the threshold of the Mistress's chamber when it fell into wild confusion; Gay, in his desire to catch the first glimpse of mother, stepped on May's heel and that made May scream. It wasn't a loud scream, to be sure, but it was louder than the most frantic mouse could squeak, and quite loud enough to rouse the mother from the light slumber into which she had fallen. She opened her eyes, then closed them again as she lay there on her couch so motionless that her children crept to her side and touched her to see if she slept. Then she opened her eyes once more and smiled; not her old joyous smile, but one so faint that Gay's eyes filled with tears. Taking his mother's pale, beautiful face between his hands he kissed it gently—not very gently, perhaps, for a boy's kiss is rarely as light as a fairy's, although his heart is quite as tender—and this won for him a kiss in return. [12]

"We meant to be very quiet, mother," said Gay, with another penitent kiss. "But something always happens."

"Yes, something always happens," said May, who invariably echoed Gay's sentiments and followed his example, as became a twin sister.

"Mother understands, my darlings," the Mistress softly murmured.

"It was one of our mishaps," continued Gay. "You know we can't keep out of them, mother. When we don't go to them they just follow right round after us, as if they were alive!"

In truth, it seemed as if this were so. Their eleven years had been crowded with adventures; not particularly stirring nor remarkable, but harmless and ludicrous adventures such as seem to come to some children unsought. It must be owned, however, in their case, that had not the adventure appeared promptly on the scene they would have gone in search of it, Gay leading and May a close second. As they apparently led a charmed life, emerging unscathed from their scrapes, no one was disposed to criticise them severely. Alice once said:

"Gay and May are just like cats; no matter how badly they may be placed, when they jump they always land on their feet!" And the entire family regarded this as a figurative, but correct, estimate of the luck that constantly attended the twins. [13]

Of past pranks little need be said, since it is the purpose of this story to relate the greatest escapade of their lives, but it may as well be stated that many of their mishaps were due to the remarkable resemblance existing between them.

Gay and May were much more alike than two peas; they were as identical as two perfectly symmetrical beads. Cover knickerbockers and jacket, skirt and bodice, and no one could tell which closely-cropped head was May's,—which Gay's! In height they did not vary a hair's breadth. In step and movement they were precisely the same. In voice no musician could detect the difference of an infinitesimal part of a tone. Not a ray of light sparkled in one pair of hazel eyes that was not reflected in the other. Even in the wild rose of their cheeks Dame Nature was careful to preserve the same tint. Not a dimple, not a smile; not a look, nor a gesture in one that was not repeated in the other. If there were mental or moral differences, these were not noticeable when they were together; both were healthy, daring, and honest, with hearts for any fate, providing there was fun enough in it. It is not singular, therefore, that such striking similarity in character and appearance produced many complications.

[14] In their babyhood, Gay wore a pink, and May a blue ribbon for identification, but, if by chance these distinguishing marks became displaced, it often followed that Gay was kissed and coddled for a girl; while poor May was bounced and tossed and trotted for a boy. When they were put in short frocks the same mistakes were made.

"There'll be no such confusion when Gay puts on trousers," prophesied a sage relative of the family. Alas! for prophet; when Gay became a real boy in knickerbockers, the work of confusion still went on. Indeed, after knickerbockers began to play their part, it was worse than ever, for the twins were then old enough to understand the value of their resemblance in solid fun.

No truthful chronicler of their tricks would undertake to tell how many times the burden of Gay's misdoing was accepted by May, who lay demurely in bed, in broad daylight, in that young worthy's place, while he escaped to the park, there to sport in freedom. Nor how Gay took May's dose of castor oil, the medicine of all others most abhorred by her; nor how more than once he bore the ten strokes of the rattan designed for her palm, on his own, both remedies being administered by nurse, and received by the culprit or patient, as the case might be, in a pinafore donned for the occasion. [15] Gay and May were not model children, but they possessed one splendid trait in common; they shared alike the pleasure and pain that fell to their lot, for their hearts were both loyal and generous.

Now let us return to the chamber of the Mistress. While Gay and May sat at her bedside, trying to "make her well" by kisses and petting, you may be sure the mother thought some time of the approaching separation before mentioning it, but at length she told them of the invitations they had received and of their father's wishes.

They heard her through in open-eyed amazement. Gay looked at May, and May returned the glance; then they clasped each other and cried together:

"Separate us, mother? It can't be done!"

---

[16]

CHAPTER III
JUST FOR FUN

The twins were in the nursery the next morning, when Jane told them that their father had gone away at an early hour, on business.

"Thomas will take you to the station," said Jane.

"What dreadful luck!" sighed Gay.

"Perfectly dreadful!" echoed May.

Not that they disliked Thomas. On the contrary, they liked him very well, but they had anticipated much pleasure in going to the station in their father's company; to be deprived of this was to have their cup of sorrow filled to overflowing.

"You must dress yourselves this morning," continued Jane. "Nurse is busy with your mother and I must take care of baby. I've laid out your clothes; when you are dressed go right down to breakfast; you've no time to play. Mary has baked some little muffins for you, and you can have orange marmalade and raspberry jam, both. Now, make haste." And busy Jane hurried away.

"Muffins! Does Jane think muffins will make us happy?" cried Gay, scornfully.

[17] "It was good of Mary to bake them for us," said May, secretly thinking that hot muffins and marmalade were sovereign aids to happiness, though she did not dare to say so to Gay.

"Well, let's hurry up," said Gay, darting, with the swiftness of a swallow, into his room.

May was more deliberate in her movements, or, rather, her method of making her toilet differed somewhat from her brother's. With May, a bath was a preliminary operation; with Gay, it came last and could scarcely be called a bath at all, since he simply dipped his face and hands in the

basin, and ignored the tub altogether, except upon such occasions as Jane enforced a thorough scrubbing. Family statistics show this dislike to soap and water to be a chronic ailment among boys from seven to fourteen years of age, but Gay always explained it by saying he was "rushed for time."

May was just pattering in from the bath-room when Gay emerged from his room fully dressed—more fully dressed, in fact, than he had been for a number of years.

"Why, Gay Walcott, you've got on my clothes!" May cried.

"I know it," replied Gay, piroueting airily around the room. "Jane must be crazy; she put your clothes in my room."

May ran into her room. "And yours in here," said she. "Come and get them, and give me mine." [18]

"Try on mine—just for fun," urged Gay. "We'll see if Jane can tell the difference—which is which."

"There isn't time," objected May, rather faintly.

"There's lots of time," said Gay, who was never "rushed" when there was a chance for a prank.

When May came out of her room wearing Gay's clothes they stared at each other an instant, then ran to the mirror and stood before it, side by side, and stared at their reflections there.

"Oh!" cried May, "I am not sure that I am I!"

"You are not you," Gay answered, "you are I, and I am you. I hear Jane coming! What do you suppose she'll say?"

"Dear, dear!" cried Jane, bustling into the room. "Don't stand there looking into the glass. Why won't you hurry? You should have been half through breakfast by this time. Why, how clean your hands and face are, Master Gay—and I declare, you've actually brushed your hair!"

Jane looked from one to the other in unfeigned amazement. May giggled, but neither spoke.

"I'm surprised," Jane began, giving May a reproving glance. "Your sash isn't straight, Miss May. Turn around."

The sash was somewhat awry, for Gay, unaccustomed to such fripperies, had tied it under his left shoulder blade. He turned round and Jane fixed it, then giving his borrowed skirt several twitches, she said: "Seems to me you don't look quite as well as usual, Miss May. If you get untidy while your ma's sick she'll feel awful bad. But run along, now, to breakfast." [19]

The twins exchanged significant glances: Jane had not detected them, May was about to exonerate herself from the charge of untidiness when Gay whispered: "Don't tell till we've tried it on Thomas and Mary."

"But——" May commenced.

"Let the goats butt; don't you try it, May!" said frolicsome Gay, pulling her after him out of the nursery.

In the dining-room Thomas and breakfast awaited them.

"Good morning, Thomas," said the mock May, very glibly.

"Good morning, Miss," responded unsuspicious Thomas. "Good morning, Master Gay."

"Good morning," replied the mock boy, not less glibly than the other conspirator.

"How do you think we look, Thomas," Gay continued; "as well as usual?"

"You look fine, Miss, fine," Thomas answered. "As for Master Gay there, I've never seen him look so neat." [20]

This evidence of Thomas's mystification delighted the twins almost beyond concealment. They would have betrayed themselves had not Mary, the cook, appeared upon the scene. She carried two pasteboard boxes and she gave one to each of the children, saying, "Yer luncheon, dharlin', for ye'll be afther gettin' hungry on the cars. There's rolls, an' ham, an' fowl, an' harrd biled eggs, an'——"

"And little cakes!" interrupted May, with a scream of delight.

"Yes,—wid icin'," Mary replied, with a broad smile, for the twins were her especial pets. "But I niver knew that ye liked cake; I t'ought it was Miss May what had the swate toot!"

Gay and May smiled appreciatively at Mary's mistake. They were trying to explain to her that their gastronomical tastes were similar when nurse sailed majestically into the room.

"Mary," said she, "h'I'll see you h'in the kitchen. Thomas, 'urry hup; you must go h'in ten minutes. Children, Jane wants you h'in the 'all."

Before coming to America, nurse had been under-nurse-maid in an aristocratic English family, but from her deportment one would have supposed her to have been nurse to the Queen's own children. So majestic, pompous, and domineering was she that no one ventured to oppose or question her control. Therefore, when she ordered the group in the dining-room to separate they promptly separated without murmur or ado! [21]

"They never suspected anything!" chuckled Gay, as he left the room with May. "We really must try it on mother, then we'll tell."

But Jane's first words when they reached the hall destroyed all hope of testing the mother.

"You mustn't fuss," Jane began, "you must be good and not make any trouble, but the doctor says you can't see your ma before you go."

"Why not?" the twins demanded in one voice.

"Because the doctor says if she gets as nervous to-day as she did yesterday that he won't answer for the consequences. She must be kept perfectly quiet."

"If it's for mother's good——" Gay began.

"It is for her good," Jane said.

"Then we won't fuss," sighed May.

"That's a good fellow," cried Jane, patting the mock boy's head.

May made up her mouth to tell Jane the truth, when nurse and Thomas joined them; Thomas, with Ned on his shoulder, and nurse carrying wraps, hats, and the lunch-boxes.

"Mercy hun h'us!" nurse exclaimed, "you h'ought to be h'off now."

As she spoke she seized the real May, and, before the child could speak, buttoned her into a jacket and set a tarpaulin sailor on her head. [22]

The real Gay had his turn next. Nurse shook him into a light ulster and fastened a straw hat, trimmed with daisies, on his head by an elastic band which snapped under his chin with a loud noise.

All this time the twins had been struggling to speak. "But, nurse," they began, impetuously, for this was carrying the joke too far, "we——"

"You can say good-by to Ned when you come 'ome," said nurse, who thought they wanted to waste valuable time in farewells. "H'off with you!"

The real May was a picture of distress, but her more volatile brother seized her by the hand and whispered: "Never mind; it's only keeping up the lark; I've got the worst of it, too, in these horrid skirts."

CHAPTER IV [23]

A REMARKABLE HOUSEHOLD

Everybody in Cedarville knew and respected General Haines. His ancestors for four generations had lived and died in the fine old mansion which he now occupied. The General was commonly considered a "character." He was dignified in appearance and irascible in temper; a perfect martinet on the subject of deportment in the rising generation; a stern enemy to cowardice and untruthfulness, while in many other matters he was as impracticable as a babe and as timorous as an old lady. His face was bearded and stern; his voice terrible. Whenever he lost his temper, which was every other minute, he shouted as though he had been at the head of an army. His heart was tender withal, and altogether he was as remarkable a gentleman as one often meets.

He was unmarried because he had never known a woman the equal of his mother, whose memory he adored. He had lived, since his mother's death, a life of comparative isolation in the old Haines' mansion, which was conducted as nearly as possible after the fashion of the last century, [24] for the General hated innovations. He rarely left home, and he had not seen the Walcott twins since their babyhood.

In his housekeeper, Sarah, General Haines had a counterpart to the full as eccentric as himself. Warm-hearted, quick-tempered, and sharp-tongued, Sarah was the only person for whom the General felt wholesome awe. She ruled him completely; strangely enough she considered him the reverse of forbidding. This is not so singular, perhaps, in the light of the fact that the General seldom made a move without first consulting Sarah; when he did he generally regretted it!

His letter to Mr. Walcott was an instance where he had acted without orders, and when his nephew telegraphed that Gay would arrive on the noon train from New York, on the 8th of August, the doughty General realized what he had done. He had bidden a guest, possibly a troublesome one, to his house without Sarah's knowledge. No wonder he trembled and carried Mr. Walcott's telegram crumpled in his pocket two hours before he mentioned it!

On the eventful evening that May and Gay received their sentence of banishment, and at about the same hour, General Haines paced back and forth on the broad porch of his house, with the terrible telegram in his pocket. As he walked, he called himself a coward, and declared over and [25] over again that he would be master in his own house!

This device for promoting courage he repeated several times, but it would not work. At the end of a half hour he was no better prepared to face Sarah than he had been in the beginning. Just as he was repeating for the fiftieth time the dreadful fib that he would be master in his own house or he would know the reason why, Sarah passed the porch. She wore a white dimity sunbonnet, although the sun had gone down in the west, and carried a small watering-pot. She had been giving her asters a shower-bath by way of encouraging them to flower early. She did not appear to notice General Haines.

"Sarah," said the General.

The sunbonneted head turned in his direction, but there was no other evidence of interest.

"Sarah, let us take tea in the library, this evening," the General continued, in what he believed to be a persuasive tone.

"Very well," came from the depths of the sunbonnet.

The General had intended to speak of the telegram, but there was something ominous in the movements of that hidden head, and he decided to temporize. "Ahem!" he began, "I shall have something to say to you, then."

Thus ended the dialogue between the General and the sunbonnet, for Sarah passed on without replying. [26]

"I wonder what mischief he's in, now?" she said to herself, a minute later. "Something, I'll be bound!"

One would have said that she spoke of a child of tender years, instead of an old gentleman of sixty, with a temper so peppery that no one in the village dared oppose it.

Little maid Phyllis, whose life Sarah made a burden by perpetual instruction in housewifery, brought the tea into the library, just as the General entered. Sarah was already there, seated at the tea-table, brushing imaginary shreds of lint off the burnished surface of the copper tea-kettle.

"Phyllis, you should never wipe this kettle with a cloth that is the least mite damp," Sarah said.

"Yes'm," Phyllis answered.

"You may go," Sarah added.

"Yes'm," and the door closed after Phyllis. Phyllis' vocabulary was reduced to the single word "Yes'm;" it was the only word that did not give offense to her mistress, who had her own views concerning humility in serving maids.

Sarah at the tea-table made an exceedingly pleasing picture. Her comely figure was clad in a remarkable flowered brilliant, of a style so ancient, as to suggest the thought that she had robbed [27] the cedar chest of an old-time gentlewoman to procure it. A fine lawn kerchief and an apron of the same material completed an attire as picturesque as that of *Mistress This* or *Dame That* in some old comedy.

Nor was General Haines' appearance less picturesque than that of his housekeeper. He prided himself upon being and looking "a gentleman of the old school." His attire was modeled after that of his great-grandfather, a redoubtable general of Washington's time. He wore knee breeches, satin waistcoat, black silk hose, and low shoes with handsome buckles. He even went so far in his imitation of the "old school" as to carry a snuff-box of fine workmanship, but he was too modern in his taste to use the snuff.

Picturesque and comely as were these figures at the tea-table, one at least, was as uncomfortable as it would be possible for any one to be in clothes of the latest mode. After three cups of tea General Haines had not acquired sufficient courage to produce the telegram that fairly burned in his pocket. He had hoped that Sarah might be curious enough to ask what he desired to say to her, but this was precisely what she did not intend to do. She had measured lances with the General a good many times, and knew the transparent tricks he employed to get the better of [28] her. "If he's got anything to say let him say it, not try to make me commit myself before he has opened his head!" her thoughts ran.

At length he had to "say it," and he began,—

"I—expect—I expect a—a—boy on the noon train to-morrow!" He tried to speak carelessly, just as if he had been in daily receipt of boys by the noon train for years!—but his attempt was not a success, and he knew it.

"So that's what he's been up to!" thought Sarah. She said, "We don't need a boy; we've help enough on the place."

"He isn't help, he's a visitor."

"Oh!"

"My grand nephew."

"Oh!"

"His mother is the lady whose portrait hangs in my study."

"Oh!"

It was plain that Sarah was deeply offended. She rose and swept toward the door like a tragedy queen, and the General did not venture to ask her to remain.

"I should think," she said, pausing on the threshold, "that you would know by this time—deep emphasis on "this time,"—"that I am not always ready for a great houseful of company."

"Great houseful of company!" shouted the General, who had kept his temper as long as he was able. "One small boy is not 'a houseful of company,' madam!" [29]

"He is worse!" retorted Sarah, "one small boy is worse than a barrel of monkeys!—you will see!"

She went out, closing the door after her with considerable unnecessary force—it would have been a genuine slam in one of less mature years—leaving the General wiping his brow with his flowered silk handkerchief.

CHAPTER V
MORE CONFUSION

[30]

Notwithstanding their somewhat tragic departure the twins did not remain depressed; their spirits soon rose until they forgot their *rôles* and addressed one another by the right name, much to the confusion of Thomas, who finally asked, "What ailed their tongues?"

"We forgot to change them this morning when we changed our clothes," answered audacious Gay.

"I believe ye, Miss," said Thomas, not at all realizing what he was saying.

At the railway station, however, their spirits fell again, and while Thomas bought their tickets Gay and May reviewed the situation.

"We must just brave it out," said Gay, gloomily, for the prospect was less pleasing than at first. "It wouldn't do to go home and disturb mother and she'd be sure to hear of it; then what would the doctor say?"

"If we were only going together!" sighed May. "But just fancy me at Cedarville and Uncle Harold thinking I'm a boy!"

"Fancy me," said Gay, "trying to be lady-like and the aunties not knowing that I'm a boy!" [31]

"You can't be lady-like," laughed May.

"You can't be manly!" retorted Gay.

"Oh, I wish we were ourselves again!" May said.

"The train is ready, Master Gay," said Thomas, returning with the tickets and checks.

The real boy sprang to his feet, then sat down in confusion, remembering that he had no outward claim to the name of Gay.

"You may go, too, Miss May," said innocent Thomas; "your train leaves on the next track."

They went on board the train together and Gay chose a seat for May near the center of the car and back of one occupied by a boy of their age.

"He'll be company for you," whispered Gay.

Just then the conductor came along and Thomas spoke to him.

"This is Master Gay Walcott, who is going to Cedarville; will you be kind enough to look out for him, sir?"

"Certainly," replied the conductor, nodding pleasantly and walking away.

Both children returned the conductor's bow; the real Gay because he again forgot, and the mock Gay because she meant to be gentlemanly. It was a little mortifying, therefore, to have the real [32] Gay whisper,—

"You mustn't forget to take off your hat, next time."

"I thought you might like a book, Master Gay," said Thomas, taking a bright-colored volume from his pocket.

Both children made a dive for it.

"Not so fast!" said Thomas. "This is Master Gay's."

The real Gay drew back with a giggle. He had made one more mistake.

"Thank you!" the mock Gay cried, giving Thomas a kiss, quite forgetting that a genuine boy never kisses when he is pleased!

"This is yours, Miss May," Thomas said, taking another book from his pocket.

"Thank you," said the mock May.

"What, no kiss for me, Miss?" said Thomas. Then the boy in the petticoats had to kiss Thomas, though it went against the grain to do it.

A low laugh attracted their attention. It fell from the widely parted lips of the boy in front of them; he was much amused at what was going on.

"You won't like him," said Gay promptly. "He's a frightful cad, I'm sure; it shows through on the outside. Let's get another seat."

[33] But a brakeman shouted "All aboard" just then, and the change of seats was not made. The twins embraced hastily; May with tears in her eyes.

"Don't cry!" whispered mischievous Gay. "Boys never cry; remember that."

"Good bye, master Gay," said Thomas. "Be a gentleman."

"I'll try," answered the mock boy, dragging off the tarpaulin sailor hat right gallantly.

Then they were gone, and no sooner was the masquerader left to her fate than the boy in front commenced to make talk,—

"My name is Philip Guy Brentwood,—what is yours?"

"Miss Walcott," May answered with great dignity and entire forgetfulness of her part.

"'Miss' Walcott? That's a queer name for a boy! Where are you going, Miss Walcott?"

"To Cedarville."

"I may see you there, although I don't associate with everybody in Cedarville. My grandpapa, Dr. Brentwood, is the biggest man there."

"How big is he?" May asked, with eager interest. "As big as a dime museum man?"

"I don't mean that kind of big; he's the richest man in Cedarville."

"He is a cad," thought May.

"Are you going to board in Cedarville?" questioned inquisitive Philip Guy.

"I shall visit my uncle, General Haines." [34]

"He's a queer duck. You won't have any fun there. Who were those people with you?"

"My brother and our man-servant, Thomas."

Philip laughed. "Your brother?" he repeated. "Is that pretty little girl your brother?"

"That's another mistake!" thought May. "It's getting worse and worse!"

"I say," Philip continued. "You kissed that man; you must be an awful sissy to kiss men."

Truly, it was getting "worse and worse!" A real boy would have known how to put an end to this inquisition, but May was merely an unsuccessful imitation of a boy. A desire to be courteous and a determination not to be bullied by Philip strove for ascendency in May's mind; the latter undoubtedly would have won had not the conductor passed along just then.

"Conductor!" cried May. "Will you take me into another car, please?"

"Certainly, Master Walcott," the conductor replied.

Then, much to Philip's astonishment, May followed the conductor into the next car. Neither child scored a victory, but May was not beaten, thanks to the girl's quick brain under the boy's hat.

The conductor proved a more agreeable traveling companion than Philip, and the ride to Cedarville, which was not long, was a pleasant one. [35]

General Haines' man-servant was awaiting Gay's arrival, and as they were about to drive away from the station, Philip came up to the carriage.

"You ran away because you were afraid!" he cried, mockingly.

"Yes," May replied, "I was 'afraid' that I should have to talk to you."

Philip did not appear to be offended at this plain speaking. "You're not such a slow sort, after all," said he, patronizingly.

"Thank you."

Philip asked another question:

"Is Miss—your name—the short for Mississippi?

"No, the short for Mischief!" retorted May, by way of a parting shot.

No one was visible when they reached the General's, but the man told May to "go in." The outside door was open and a tall man, dressed in what May thought to be livery, was in the hall. Toward this person she advanced boldly, despite his forbidding aspect.

"Butler," said May, "will you tell General Haines that Ma—Gay Walcott is here?"

"Butler!" thundered the General, for of course it was he. "You young scapegrace, what do you mean by such impudence?" [36]

"It was a mistake. I beg your pardon, sir."

This apology, made in May's most deferential manner, did not appease the General's wrath. He immediately detected a fresh cause for offense.

"Where is your hat?" he demanded, with a fierce frown. "Bless me! A Walcott to keep on his hat in the presence of a superior!"

May pulled off the offending tarpaulin and made a prim little bow, but the General ignored this tardy evidence of breeding and walked away, leaving his abashed young visitor alone in the great oak hall.

CHAPTER VI [37]

BEING A BOY

Sarah and Phyllis were in the dining-room when the General burst in.

"He's here!" he announced, in much the tone of voice he might have used in speaking of the

advent of a formidable enemy.

"Who's here? Oh, that boy! Where is he?" asked Sarah.

"In the hall—he will be a great disappointment to you."

"He won't be a disappointment to me. I never took any stock in him at any time."

"He is wholly without manners. Kept on his hat, and took me for a butler!"

Sarah laughed outright. "What a droll little lad!" she said.

"Do you think it 'droll' for a young jackanapes to insult me?"

"No insult about it," replied Sarah, whose feelings toward the visitor seemed to have taken a sudden change. "Natural mistake—your outlandish clothes——" [38]

"'Outlandish clothes!'" gasped the General.

"That is what I said," answered Sarah, composedly.

"Outlandish—!" The General did not complete the sentence; his emotions overcame him and he left the room.

"Phyllis, see where that boy is!" commanded Sarah.

"Yes'm."

"Make him comfortable till I come."

"Yes'm."

May was sitting on the stairs, waiting to learn her fate in this strange household, when Phyllis appeared.

"Poor little fellow!" thought Phyllis, moved by the picture of woe May unconsciously made. Aloud, she asked,—

"Are you General Haines' nephew?"

"I suppose I am at present."

"Miss Sarah will be along in a minute," said Phyllis, thinking that May's peculiar remark was due to confusion.

"Who is Miss Sarah?" May asked, in alarm. "Is she—another?"

Phyllis' eyes twinkled. "Yes," said she. "Miss Sarah is another!"

"Is she like the General?" May ventured to ask. [39]

"The General is a baby beside her."

"Oh, what shall I do?" And May clasped her hands and gazed entreatingly into her companion's kind face.

"She'll like you fast enough, if the General doesn't," Phyllis said, consolingly. "That's her way—what he likes she doesn't; what he doesn't like she thinks a heap of."

"What very queer people," May said.

"I guess you'd think so, if you worked for 'em!" Then reflecting that it was neither loyal nor politic to speak so freely of her employers, Phyllis added, "Not that they are not nice in their way."

"I don't think I'd like their way," May said, with a decided shake of her head.

"What would you like to do?" Phyllis inquired, mindful of Sarah's injunction to make the boy comfortable.

"I'd like to go home, but I suppose I shall have to stay till mother's better," May replied, dolefully.

"Come, now, don't look so sober," said Phyllis, pleasantly. "I know a real nice place in the orchard, and we'll go there. I go by myself whenever I can get my work done. That isn't often," with a sigh. "Miss Sarah is one o' the kind that doesn't believe in getting work done; she keeps me doing it."

"How dreadful!" cried May, who didn't know that Phyllis' comment on Sarah's disposition would apply perfectly to many another notable housewife. [40]

"Here she comes," said Phyllis, softly.

May followed the direction of Phyllis' gaze with eager interest, and when she saw an attractive figure in wonderful attire advancing toward them, she cried, unwarily,—

"What a lovely, lovely dress! I wish I had one like it."

While Phyllis was pondering this extraordinary feminine remark May sprang forward to meet Sarah, who was so favorably impressed with this impulsive movement that she shook hands with the General's young relative very cordially, saying, pleasantly,—

"I am glad to see you, Gay. I hope you will enjoy your visit here."

"Thank you, I'm sure I shall if I may stay with you and Phyllis a good deal," May responded, with a bright smile.

Sarah smiled also; she knew that the boy was too polite to add, "and not with the General!"

"You may go with Phyllis now," said Sarah. "Phyllis, lay the table for lunch—and mind, no wrinkles in the under cloth."

"Yes'm."

"May I help?" begged May. "Thomas often lets me. My brother puts on knives and forks as well as Thomas can, and I can do everything—side table and all. But that isn't so strange for me as it would be for a boy." [41]

"For a boy?" Sarah looked dazed. "What are you but a boy?"

May's head dropped. "I don't really know—I'm not much of a boy," she faltered.

"You are enough of one not to be allowed to meddle with my china," laughed Sarah.

This evidence that Sarah did not suspect the truth was so gratifying that May, much to Sarah's surprise, clasped her affectionately around the waist and put up her face to be kissed. This embrace was witnessed with horror by Phyllis, who could not imagine any one safely taking such liberties with her mistress; her horror changed to astonishment when Sarah returned the caress.

"The world must be coming to an end," thought Phyllis, as she went into the dining room, with May at her heels. "I never saw Miss Sarah so melted—like—somebody will have to pay for it! She's like a pair of scales: when one is up in her opinion somebody else is way down."

When the young people were gone the General appeared at the library door; curiosity had conquered outraged dignity.

"What do you think of him?" he asked.

"He's a very nice boy," Sarah said.

"Manners of a clown!" growled the General. [42]

"Very pretty manners," chirped Sarah, "modest and affectionate."

"What business has a boy with affectionate manners? A boy should have the manners of a gentleman."

"Of the 'old school?'" inquired Sarah, saucily.

"Certainly not of the modern school, Madam!"

When General Haines addressed Sarah as Madam he was very indignant indeed, and Sarah rarely replied, but upon this occasion silence was not what the General wanted.

"What did the young savage say to you?" the General questioned.

"He asked if he might help lay the table."

"Help lay the table?" the General roared. "He is a molly-cott, Madam, as well as a clown! To think a boy with a single drop of Haines blood in his veins should want to lay a table!—But he shall not do it!—he shall not ape the ways of a petticoat while under my roof."

"Miss Sarah," cried May, "I came to tell you that cook let me put the potatoes in the kettle—I hope you don't object to that!"

May stood in the dining-room door, a white apron pinned over jacket and knickerbockers, and the sight of the badge of feminine neatness exasperated the General anew.

"Take off that rag!" he shouted. [43]

"Run out and take off the apron, as the General bids you," Sarah said.

And May ran.

"I didn't tell him to go out and change that cloth."

"I did."

"I must remind you, Madam, that he is my nephew and I shall not permit him to go about dressed like a girl in my house."

"And I must remind you that the boy is your guest, at your invitation, and I shall not permit you to terrify and oppress him."

The General glared at Sarah and Sarah returned his look. Then Sarah nodded her head emphatically and the General did the same. There was no more said, but it looked as if the masquerader's position in the Haines household was likely to be one of no little importance.

---

[44]

CHAPTER VII
BEING A GIRL

"It is perfectly horrid to be a girl," Gay said to himself, as the train steamed away toward Hazelnook. "I always thought that the first time I traveled alone I'd ask to ride on the engine; now I can't do it because I've got on these old skirts! I hope May won't suffer so being a boy. I——"

Gay's reverie was interrupted by an exclamation,

"Why, that must be little May Walcott!"

"She's taken in, too. Here's some fun, perhaps," thought naughty Gay, turning in the direction whence the voice had come. In the seat behind were two ladies; a pretty matron and a young girl, toward whom Gay was instantly attracted.

"Don't you remember Mrs. Dayton, who visits your mamma?" said the matron.

Gay sprang up, dragged the daisy-trimmed hat off and bowed, then instead of returning the hat to his head he held it in his hand, with his small thumb curved over the brim. It was an absurd position for a girl, but neither lady noticed it.

"This is Miss Maud Berkeley," said Mrs. Dayton. "You may have heard your Uncle George speak of her." [45]

"He never said a word to me about Miss Berkeley." Gay looked aggrieved. It was unkind of Uncle George—a favorite uncle—not to have mentioned such a lovely lady.

"You have not told us how your mamma is?" continued Mrs. Dayton.

"She is very sick. That's why we were sent away—my twin sister and I."

"Sister?" exclaimed Mrs. Dayton. "I didn't know you were both girls: I thought one was a boy."

"One is a boy," Gay admitted.

Mrs. Dayton trod no further on this delicate ground, much to Gay's relief. The conductor passed along and she hailed him.

"Will you turn this seat over, please?" said she. "Now, May, you can sit with us."

Gay rose rather reluctantly. "It's awful," thought the little fraud. "I know she'll find it all out, but father always says, 'Be polite to ladies, no matter what it costs,' and I'm not going to forget to be polite just because I'm playing be a girl."

Then Gay slipped into the proffered seat, hat in hand, just as father did when he joined ladies!

"Her manners are just like a boy's," murmured Mrs. Dayton, in the perfectly audible tone that grown people often employ in the presence of children—just as though they must be deaf because they are young. [46]

"She is a dear," returned Miss Maud. "George often speaks of her."

At the mention of Uncle George's name Gay asked,—

"Isn't my Uncle George a rattling good fellow?"

"Yes," concurred Miss Maud, with a pretty blush.

"He's the jolliest fellow! He gave me boxing gloves, a baseball bat and Indian clubs for Christmas."

"What strange gifts to a girl!" Mrs. Dayton remarked.

"He gave my sister the same as he gave me—all except the bat. He didn't give her one, although

she's a tip-top player, because he thinks baseball isn't a game for girls."

"But he gave you a bat," said Mrs. Dayton, in a puzzled tone.

"Y—es," faltered Gay, in great confusion. Here a bright idea flashed through the little rogue's brain. "He may be partial to me. I may give the bat to baby; he's going to be a splendid fellow. Nurse says his muscle is as fine now as little Lord Roslyn's was when he was six months old. Lord Roslyn was the little nobleman that lived with nurse in her castle in England. We're going to name baby, George—that ought to help make him a jolly little kid, don't you think so?" [47]

"Miss Maud thinks so," said Mrs. Dayton, quizzically.

"Does my Uncle George know that you like him so well, Miss Maud? If he doesn't I'll tell him, if you like."

"He—knows it," faltered Miss Berkeley.

"Some day, perhaps, your Uncle George will give you Miss Maud for an auntie," said Mrs. Dayton, who evidently enjoyed teasing her friend.

"Did he say so?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Dayton.

"Are you sure he wasn't fooling?—Uncle George is awfully full of fun."

"Do you think he was fooling, dear?" inquired Mrs. Dayton.

"Will you have a wedding, Miss Maud?" Gay asked, anxiously.

"Yes," Miss Berkeley admitted, with a charming blush.

"I hope it won't be till I'm grown up, and perhaps Uncle George will ask me to be an usher."

"You queer little chicken!" cried Mrs. Dayton. "You mean bridesmaid; girls are never ushers."

"Oh!" said Gay.

After this the ladies talked together until the train reached Hazelnook. When Gay was preparing to leave the car Miss Berkeley said,— [48]

"Will you not kiss me good-by?"

Gay hesitated. "Uncle George mightn't like it," he said. "He's awfully particular about the things that belong to him." Then the masquerader dropped his mask altogether, and a soft kiss fell on the lady's ungloved hand. "That makes me your knight—I'm mother's too."

"I accept your allegiance," said Miss Berkeley, simply; but there was such a strange expression in her eyes that guilty Gay made a sudden rush for the door.

"She suspects me!" thought the culprit. "She's too much of a brick to tell, though, so I'm safe."

An instant later Gay regretted this rash assertion. In jumping off the car-steps the horrid skirts caught and he fell into Uncle George's arms just as that young gentleman was about to board the train.

"Hello!" said Uncle George, staring slightly, "what are you doing here?"

CHAPTER VIII [49]

A SCENE AT ROSE COTTAGE

"Where are you going? Have you lost your tongue, Brownie?"

"Brownie" was Uncle George's name for the real May, and the mock May heard it with great pleasure, for it proved that there was no danger of discovery.

"I am going to visit Aunt Linn till mother is better," Gay answered.

"Where is Gay?"

"He was invited to Cedarville," said the unblushing young rogue. "What are you doing up here?"

"Business, Brownie."

"Did you expect to find it on the train, Uncle George?" said audacious Gay, "and is the first letter of its name M? Miss Maud is awfully sweet, isn't she?—and almost as pretty as mother."

"Thank you," said Uncle George, with great gravity. "By the way," he added, "you may need a little extra money while you are here," and he dropped some silver in Gay's outstretched palm, and jumped on the last car as the train moved out of the station, and nodded his farewell from the platform. [50]

"Thanks, awfully," shouted Gay. If this was Uncle George's way of showing his appreciation of the compliment to Miss Berkeley, it was an exceedingly agreeable way, and one to be recommended to all uncles in love.

"Fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety cents!" counted Gay. "If I stay two weeks I can spend—let me see, twelve—for there'll be two Sundays when I can't spend anything—twelve in ninety goes seven times and a fraction. That's almost eight cents a day!"

Then he pulled up his skirt, but the pocket wasn't there!

"My!" he exclaimed, looking around to see if anybody had noticed his mistake. "How a fellow does forget that he isn't a boy when he's trying to be a girl!"

"Goin' to Miss Linn's?" drawled a voice at Gay's elbow.

A tall, lank man, on whose hatchet-like face an expression of good humor rested as if it belonged there, was standing near, leaning lazily on his whip-handle.

"Yes, I'm going there; I had nearly forgotten it."

"I shouldn't a-let you forget it long. I'm the driver of the stage and I don't let passengers forget to ride with me; that wouldn't be business. Besides, Miss Linn she asked me to look out for you—and I guess you need it—you look lively for a girl." [51]

Gay smiled at this sally. This man was jolly enough to be in a book! If there were others like him a visit to Hazelnook wouldn't be so dull.

"Ready?" asked the driver.

"Yes. That's my box down there—the leather one, and here's the check. I'll help you with the box—I've great muscle."

"Wall! Wall! I ruther guess you're the queerest young lady I ever see! 'Great muscle' have ye? Wall, come along."

Miss Linn's guest helped the driver carry the leather box to the stage. The sight would not have delighted the refined old lady's eyes, but Gay was very well pleased to be of so much assistance, and insisted upon rendering further service in lifting other luggage.

"Will you get in, miss?" said the driver, when the last box was placed.

"I'll get up, if you please."

"Shall I give you a leg up, miss?"

"Thank you, no!" laughed Gay, scrambling up and sitting down in triumph beside the other passenger, a solemn-faced man, who looked like a prig and was one.

"You help yourself pretty well," said the driver, as he took the vacant place at Gay's side. [52]

"A fellow soon gets used to helping himself," replied Gay, carelessly, though inwardly well pleased at the driver's compliment.

"Fellow!" repeated the driver, greatly amused at such boyish manners. "You're a gay one—and you're as spry as they come."

"I'm the best performer on the horizontal bar at my gymnasium."

"I shouldn't wonder if you was."

"I'm going to pitch for our nine when I go back home. I tell you the fellows don't get on to my curves without some study."

"My boy Lyman's crazy over ball. I can't get a stroke of work out of him. So you play ball, do you?"

"Yes, and football, too," said Gay, carried out of all remembrance of the behavior entailed by skirts and a Gainsborough hat trimmed with daisies. "I generally play half-back," he added.

This was more than the prig could bear in silence. "I have a little girl at home," said he; "she is about your age, but she doesn't kick football, nor play ball, nor swing on the horizontal bar."

"Is she sick—or a cripple?" asked Gay, with polite interest.

"She is a lady," the prig answered.

"She must be like our Alice," said Gay, ignoring the prig's sarcasm. "Alice is so quiet and nice that mother often allows her in the drawing-room when there's a tea or anything. Alice is pretty; her hair is long and the color of molasses candy, and Jane braids it for her and ties it with ribbons. And she has little feet, and little, cunning hands, and she wears kid gloves all the time. But my twin sister is the dandy; Alice isn't a patch on her. She'll stand anything without a whimper. Sand! well, I should say so. She'll face the hottest ball without a wink. She's a boss sprinter—you ought to see her take her three hundred yards!—and she never did a mean thing in her life." [53]

The prig was dumb with amazement when Gay finished this remarkable speech; he could only congratulate himself that his little daughter was not there to hear it.

"I wish I might drive," said Gay, with a wistful glance at the reins.

"So ye can," returned the driver. "It's a straight piece, now, clean to Miss Linn's."

"Thank you," said Gay, gathering up the reins in small brown hands as steady as the driver's own. He drove with many a loud, exultant crack of the whip, guiding the horses with more flourishes than a veteran member of a coaching club, over the smooth country road, past the village shops and the post-office, at a smart trot, and up the lane that led to the prig's house as fast as the horses could trot. [54] The prig climbed down over the side of the coach and paid his fare with ill-concealed reluctance; he had been bounced and jolted by the objectionable young romp on the box until his bones and his temper were alike affected. He said "Good afternoon," as if he had been speaking an eternal farewell, and one that gave him considerable satisfaction.

"Now how much further is it?" Gay inquired, as the door closed behind the prig.

"That's Rose Cottage, your aunt's place, down yonder," the driver replied, pointing to a house not far distant.

"So near!" sighed Gay. "If I had known it I would have pulled up the horses a little and pieced out the drive."

In summer everybody in Hazelnook receives callers on the porch, and Miss Linn and Miss Celia were entertaining the judge's mother, the doctor's wife, and the minister on the vine-embowered porch of Rose Cottage when the stage drove up, Gay still handling the reins.

"Auntie! See me!" Gay cried. "I've driven half the way. It is awfully jolly to sit up here and the driver let me use the whip—use it, not just crack it—twice!"

[55] Miss Linn looked at Miss Celia, Miss Celia looked at the judge's mother, the judge's mother looked at the doctor's wife, and she looked in her turn at the minister, who was too much astonished to look at any one!

Finally, Miss Celia said,—

"Aren't you going to get down, my dear?"

Gay rose rather reluctantly; he had hoped to be permitted to drive the horses to the stable, which was a good half-mile back on the road. "Good-by," he said, grasping the driver's hand; "I hope I shall see you soon, and Lyman, too. I'll come round to your stable and see the Holstein cattle you told me about—they must be immense, particularly the yearling. I never had such a good drive in my life."

After this cordial farewell Gay dropped like a ripe plum off the side of the coach to the ground. Off came the daisy-wreathed hat, then he drew his heels well together and bowed profoundly. It was a salute that would have delighted General Haines' military soul, but it did not please the group on the porch. Miss Linn, Miss Celia, the judge's mother, the doctor's wife and the minister rose and stood in a row, like dahlias,—*but no one spoke a word*!

---

[56]

CHAPTER IX

SAW AND AXE.

"Celia," said Miss Linn, the next day, "I understand it perfectly; Elinor has been sick so much that the younger children have been left with the servants and this is the result. Now we must make May over."

Miss Linn and Miss Celia were sewing in their morning room. They were old-fashioned gentlewomen, not altogether in touch with modern habits and they held to their needlework of a forenoon as religiously as though it had been a practise ordained by a bishop, and when Miss Linn said, "We must make May over," she spoke as though the petticoated fraud was a misfit garment.

Now Miss Celia never opposed the will or wishes of her elder sister. Contradiction was not a weapon to be used with stately Miss Linn, who was, in the phrase of their servant, Margery, "terrible sot in her way!" But Miss Celia did venture to say,—

"May is a trifle hoydenish, perhaps, but time will remove that blemish from her bearing without our assistance, sister."

[57] "She is incorrigible!" sighed Miss Linn. "I saw her this morning jumping over the fence—the front fence! Of course I stopped that, but when I asked her if she wasn't ashamed, she said, 'No'm, that's the best standing jump I ever made!' I admit I can't understand how Elinor's daughter can be such a tomboy!"

"We have left youth far behind us, Beulah; you must remember that. We can't realize just what it is to be young and full of life."

"I like a girl to have some sense of propriety. May is entirely without any. I saw her not an hour ago with her arm around Patsy Dunn's neck. I called her into the house at once and told her that it was highly improper for her to be so familiar with boys. What do you think she said?"

"I can't imagine."

"'Patsy is a dandy, auntie! I'd like to put on the gloves with him!' I didn't understand what she meant, but I took her desire for gloves to be a favorable omen and I told her I hoped she would put on gloves and keep them on all the time when she was out of doors. But I doubt if she will do it—she only laughed and said she hadn't 'quite sand enough for that'—whatever that means."

Miss Celia groped for the meaning of this speech and failing to grasp it said nothing, but sewed on diligently.

[58] "My mind is made up," continued Miss Linn. "That girl shall be made over before she goes home to Elinor. I have planned it all out. I never closed my eyes last night!—and I shall begin at once."

"What is your plan?"

"You will see," said Miss Linn, mysteriously. She laid her sewing aside and rang a small silver

bell, peremptorily.

A moment later old Margery appeared at the door. "Did you ring, mem?"

"Where is Miss May?"

"In the back yard, mem," answered Margery with reluctance that did not escape Miss Linn's keen eyes.

"What is she doing?"

Margery hesitated. Tale-bearing was against her principles, but no one hesitated long before replying to Miss Linn, and the old servant answered, "She's helping John saw wood, mem."

If a bombshell had exploded in that quiet room the effect upon the Misses Linn could not have been more startling.

"Do you hear that, Celia? Is that merely a little hoydenish? Margery, send Miss May to me."

"Yes, mem," answered Margery, wishing with all her heart that she had not heard Miss Linn's bell.

When Gay flashed into the room a moment later both aunts were sewing composedly and neither looked up immediately. Wasting time in the house when the outside world was flooded with August sunshine was not to Gay's taste, but politeness demanded it, so he shifted from one foot to the other like an uneasy chicken, until Miss Linn said,— [59]

"Won't you sit down?"

"I will," said Gay, with emphasis that said, "I will but I don't want to."

"What have you been doing?" questioned Miss Linn.

"Sawing wood," Gay replied, animatedly. "I can saw a stick quite straight. Did you ever try to saw wood, Aunt Beulah?"

Miss Linn did not answer at once; such a question deprived her of speech, but at length she said,—

"Most assuredly not."

"I think you'd like it," said Gay, with increasing animation. "First you put your saw on the stick and it wobbles all around before you can make it stay anywhere. Then, when you have made a little place for the saw, the saw sticks right in it and you pull and up comes the stick and your foot flies off it! Then you begin again and work a little way into the stick and everything goes beautifully till you strike a knot or something and the old saw won't budge an inch! So you lift it out of the hole and begin again—sawing wood is all beginning again; that's the way it's done and pretty, soon away goes the saw, squealing and creaking, and you are so excited at that time that you work away like mad, and, then, all of a sudden the saw goes through, with a sort of surprise and you go on top of it, the stick falls apart—and there you are!" [60]

As Gay illustrated his description as he gave it, using a Venetian dagger for a saw, a Swiss paper-cutter for a stick of wood and a Fayal foot-stool for a saw-horse, the ladies were clearly instructed in the mysteries of wood sawing.

"My dear niece," said Miss Linn, slowly and impressively, "sawing wood is not a fitting employment for a little girl who wants to be a lady when she grows up. I suppose that is what you aspire to be, isn't it?"

Gay's eyes twinkled in appreciation of the situation, as he said,—

"I don't think I care anything about it; and I don't think I could be a lady if I tried."

"But you are willing to try?"

"Yes, I'll try," said Gay, still dimpling.

Poor Miss Linn was so agitated by this brief encounter with her supposed niece that she resolved to postpone the "making over," so she said,—

"You may go out again, but you must not saw any more wood."

"Not just one stick?" [61]

"Not one."

"Very well, Aunt Beulah."

When Gay left the room Miss Linn said, meekly,—

"I really don't know where to begin with her!"

"She has one excellent trait, Beulah; she obeys without question or rebellion."

"I must think about it," said Miss Linn, referring, of course, to "making May over."

But the good lady did not have an opportunity to think about it then; a loud shriek ran through the house, and Margery ran into the room, crying,—

"She's cut off her foot! She's cut off her foot!"

The ladies followed Margery through the house into the back yard, where they saw Gay dancing wildly around on one foot, holding the other up with both hands.

"May, didn't you promise me not to saw wood?"

"I didn't saw it; I chopped it."

"There is no difference," said Miss Linn, meaning in the spirit of the offense.

"Oh, yes, there is; you do one with a saw and the other with an ax!"

Then the hopping ceased suddenly; Gay sank to the ground and there was a great flurry. John ran for the doctor, and Margery bore Gay up-stairs, into the little, white guest-chamber, and laid him on the bed.

CHAPTER X [62]

A COURSE OF TRAINING

May was watering Sarah's asters when Phyllis joined her.

"Phyllis!" cried the delighted young gardener, "I am going to take the whole care of the asters. Think of that! Oh, I like living here ever so much."

"The General wants you right away," said Phyllis.

All the light died out of May's face at these words.

"What can he want of me, Phyllis?"

"I don't know what he wants," said Phyllis, not very encouragingly. "But you must be a little man and meet him like one."

May's face was sad as she said,—

"I shall never be a man and I wish I had never tried to be a boy."

"As long as you are a boy you ought to try to be a manly one," said Phyllis, who played the mentor excellently. "You don't want your brothers and sisters to be ashamed of you."

This was the right chord to touch. [63]

"I won't be a coward if I can help it. My brother always said I had as much pluck as he had, but it has all leaked out somewhere since I've seen Uncle Harold," May said, dolefully.

"The General isn't very terrible—you must just face him right down," replied Phyllis.

This was like telling a mouse to go right up to an elephant and scare him, but it buoyed up May's spirits considerably. She stopped, however, as often as possible in going to the house to make the way seem longer, and at the hall door she made a long pause.

"It isn't that I'm really a coward," the poor child thought. "But I'm not used to being treated as if I had done something awful. And when he shouts at me I forget all about acting like a boy I'm so frightened. But there's no use in putting it off; I've got to go in and take it."

The General was pacing up and down the hall. He appeared to be in an excellent humor; his face beamed with smiles and he rubbed his hands together as if in expectation of some good fortune.

"You sent for me, Uncle Harold," said May, quite bravely.

The General bent his head and went into the library, followed by May, who was beginning to feel apprehensive of the character of the interview.

"Sit down, my boy," said the General, graciously, sitting down himself as he spoke. [64]

May sat down; clasped her hands; tried to look unconcerned and succeeded in looking both uncomfortable and unhappy.

"I will not deny that you have been a great disappointment to me, Gay. From the promise of your babyhood I was led to believe that you would be a gentleman."

The General's manner, as well as his words, seemed to cast a reflection upon somebody, and May was prompt to resent both.

"Father and mother are gentlemen," she said. "That is, father is a gentleman, and it is not their fault if I'm not one."

The General stared slightly. He was not prepared for so spirited an answer, albeit it was rather ludicrous.

"You are come of a family of gentlemen including, of course, your father," the General said, with the air of one who means to keep his temper, no matter what happens. "But I can't retract my statement regarding the disappointment you are to me."

"I do not ask you to, sir," said May, very distinctly.

The General's face grew very red when this cool response met his ears, but he controlled himself, and said,—

"I have said that I perceive defects in your deportment that are lamentable from my point of view; it is my purpose to remedy them." [65]

"How?" May inquired, simply.

"By a course of training," replied the General, with a bland smile.

"Have you written to my father about it?"

"No," answered the General, looking dazed.

"You'd better ask his permission, first."

"Ask his permission," echoed the General, with rising color that boded ill for May. "What do you mean?"

"I don't think my father sent me up here to be trained; I think he thought I was invited to visit here."

"You impudent young jackanapes! Do you refuse to have your bad manners mended?"

"I'm sorry you don't like them, but if they need mending I think my father ought to know it before you begin."

"I am obliged to you, sir, for telling me what I should do, but it is not necessary for a person of your age to dictate to me."

"I did not mean to dictate to you," said May. Then she raised her small brown head proudly and flashed her hazel eyes upon the astonished General, and said,—

"But I couldn't let even you insult my father and mother." [66]

"Insult!" roared the General, springing to his feet.

May rose and faced him. "Yes, sir, insult. You said my manners were bad when you knew father and mother taught me them."

"This is too much!" gasped the General. "Leave the room, sir!"

May obeyed, but no sooner was the threshold crossed than her courageous mien changed to one of sadness, and she walked away with bent head and eyes that would fill with tears in spite of every effort to restrain them.

"What is the matter?" said Sarah, coming upon May suddenly and noticing her tears.

May hid her face in Sarah's spotless lawn apron and cried quietly.

"I don't mean to cry—but I can't help it," she sobbed.

"Cry if you want to; there's no law against it," Sarah said, with characteristic crispness of speech, which somehow did not sound unsympathetic.

Sarah saw the General coming, but of course May did not, for her head was still buried in Sarah's apron, and it was a surprise when he cried with terrible scorn,—

"You have been crying, sir!"

"I have been crying," May admitted, from the folds of the apron, "but I haven't told Miss Sarah how disagreeable you were to me." [67]

Sarah turned her head away to hide the smile this ingenious defense provoked; the General saw the smile and it irritated him.

"Unless you can apologize handsomely, sir," said he, with his grandest air, "you may spend the rest of the day in your room."

May walked away in silence that was more expressive than speech.

"He is the most stubborn boy in the world!" said the General. "He deserved a week in the guard-house."

"You don't understand him," said Sarah. "But you'll find there'll be a tug of war unless you change your tactics."

"His discipline shall begin from this hour," said the General, sternly. "I will not be defied in my own house. Sarah, you will send him nothing but bread and water to-day."

"General," Sarah replied, coolly, "you govern the guard-house but I manage the kitchen! I shall send that boy just what we have to eat, and I may make ice-cream for him, beside."

CHAPTER XI [68]

THE TRAINING BEGINS

It was very early, but May was in the garden. The sun was just rising and the morning glories on the back porch turned their purple and rose and white cups to catch the welcome light. The sky was full of rosy clouds; dew glittered on the waving grass and dancing flowers, and the birds were singing as they only sing at dawn.

"What a lovely world this is!" cried May aloud. "If my uncle liked me I should be almost too happy this morning."

"He doesn't dislike you, dear," said Sarah, who had come up softly behind May and had thus overheard her words. May grasped her kind friend by the hand and said, earnestly,—

"I thought that I wouldn't apologize. I have changed my mind, or the dark changed it for me. I

think it is perfectly wonderful, how the dark, so still and black, will make you willing to do things that you've said ever so many times in the daytime that you wouldn't do! I am going to apologize because I'm ashamed of myself. Not because he shut me up in my room—I hope he will understand that. I got up early to get braced up for it by the air, and the flowers and the morning." [69]

Sarah understood the feeling that prompted May's early rising; the hours just after dawn have more of inspiration in them than a whole library of books about right living and thinking.

"The General is in the library; why don't you go now?" asked Sarah, brightly.

"I will; and I will be as full of good humor as father and as gentle as mother."

This was undertaking a good deal, but May was in earnest; and to be in earnest is to be armed against almost any enemy.

Much to her own surprise Sarah bent and kissed the mock boy. "Now scamper!" said she. "And come and tell me how well you have kept your word."

The General was reading. A hundred lines of Greek before breakfast was his daily appetizer and he had just completed fifty when May slid into the room.

"Good morning, Uncle Harold!" said she.

"Good morning, my young sir," said the General, with a smile, for "the dark" had worked its marvels with him as well as with May.

The smile settled it!—as a smile will often settle trifling differences if it be allowed—May did not wait for further advances, but sprang into the General's arms and promptly kissed him! The General was amazed, and showed it. He had never been kissed by a child, and his sensations when May's fresh, dewy lips were laid on his were bewildering in their variety. He was embarrassed, of course, for old bachelors are not used to kisses; he was saddened, too, but he was not displeased, and May knew it. [70]

Suddenly a sense of the difference between his life as it was, with its calm, but narrow routine of pleasures, its moments of dulness unbrightened by the companionship of wife and the warm lips and clinging arms of children, and the life that might have been his had he not allowed his youth to slip past him, awoke in him a sting of disgust, of self-pity.

"I hope you are not offended," May said, timidly, for the General's silence was oppressive. "We always kiss mother and father good morning—and—I thought you might like to be treated as well."

"I do like being 'treated as well,'" said the General, heartily.

"I didn't come in for just that; I came to tell you that I am sorry I was so rude to you yesterday. I hope you will excuse me."

"Certainly I will."

"I remembered last night that mother once said something about what people ought to do when they were guests in anybody's house. She said it to Alice, not to me, but it was something like this: 'No matter how disagreeable people are when you are visiting them you must always bear it and never resent or mention it to anybody'—and I don't mean to again." [71]

This ingenuous statement amused the General vastly. "That is excellent advice and worthy of your good mother," said he.

"Mother's advice is always excellent," said May, proudly. "When it is hard to take, the way she says it—so calm and sweet—takes the sting out. I don't think we need to learn much except what mother tells us."

"Always think so, my boy," said the General, brokenly.

"Your mother must have been like mine," hazarded May. "How much you must have loved her!"

To speak of his beloved mother was to make a short cut to the General's heart, and at that moment May could have demanded and received any boon of him.

"You were reading when I came in," said May, after a brief pause. "I hope I am not interrupting you."

"Not at all; I learned my lesson fifty years ago and I have not forgotten it." [72]

"What were you reading?" asked May, who was a sad chatterbox when at ease.

"I was reading a classic—do you know what that means?"

"Oh, yes; a classic is a book in a leather binding. Alice studies in them, and I think there must be something very sad inside for I've often seen her crying over them."

"Classics are touching tales to youth. What would you think, Gay, of a goddess who corrected her children with a thunderbolt?"

"I should think that must have been worse than nurse's slipper. What was the goddess' name?"

"Juno."

"Did Juno call her thunderbolt a 'persuader'? That's what nurse called her slipper. Mother wouldn't let nurse use it and nurse didn't like it very well. She said it had been used on little Lord Roslyn and I guess she really thought it was too good to use on us because we haven't titles. But

mother didn't believe in a persuader, even if it had persuaded a little English lord, and I'm sure we didn't!"

"I should say not!"

"Oh, Uncle Harold, I came near forgetting to tell you that my training can begin any time you like. I think father will be delighted if I go home with all my defects remedied."

"We will begin right after breakfast," said the General, delighted with this acquiescence. [73]

"Breakfast is ready, sir," said Phyllis at the door.

"Phyllis," cried May in delight, "my uncle has forgiven me, and we are friends—great friends, aren't we, Uncle Harold?"

"Yes, my boy."

"Well," said Phyllis to herself, "it does beat the Dutch how that boy twists round a body's heart!"

"I'm a little hungry, aren't you?" suggested May, with a smile.

Extraordinary spell of a child's face—of its candid smile! The General forgot his dignity, his rigid ideas of deportment; he bent and kissed May's brow, then he said, "Come, dear."

These were strange words for him to speak; he had never said "dear" in his life except as he had coupled it with mother, and he said it under his breath.

May got down from the General's knees and took his hand. "We will go this way to show Miss Sarah that we are friends—I told her that I thought you didn't like me."

As they went along, hand in hand, the General felt awkward. It was the simplest thing in the world to make an excuse for withdrawing his hand, but like many simple things this was hard to do. May's fingers clung to his, and they seemed to have some mysterious connection with May's kiss; both were seals of the new bond between them. [74]

"Miss Sarah!" cried May at the dining-room door, "look at us! You wouldn't think we were the enemies of yesterday, would you? Well, we are not. We are true friends, now—and the training is going to begin right after breakfast."

The training had already begun on both sides.

---

[75]

CHAPTER XII

A SILVER-HAIRED LADY

"The package will keep—though I'm dying to know what is in it—but I must read this letter from my darling G——May, if you will excuse me." And May broke the seal of the dearly-loved brother's letter and began to read before the General could say a word.

It was a characteristic letter; as she read May seemed to see the writer dancing around the room like a will-o'-the-wisp, and speaking the written words without waiting for answer or comment.

> "Dear Brownie," the letter began, "It is very Hard to be a girl. I try, but I forget and act just like a boy. But noBody seems to know—isn't it Queer? I hope you are getting along better, but it is real easy to act like a Boy; all you have to do is to Act Natcherul. I cut my foot chopping wood. Margery, a very nice woman that lives here made me a little wee peach dumpling and I had all the saurse I wanted. I can have coffee for breakfast if I want it—can you? Aunt Beulah has little white curls and they bob up and down when she talks. I would like to pull one to see if it would [76] come off like nurse's braid. You always think you've done something wrong when Aunt Beulah looks at you—at least I do, but I've been doing it ever since I came, doing wrong for a girl, I mean, not for a boy, for I've only acted like myself. John is a very nice man. He was in the War. He is one of the nicest men I Have ever Met. He has a scar on his cheek, a soldier did it for him in the War. He has a splendid nephew Patsey and I have seen him. His Muscle is immense. John lets me feed the cows and to-morrow if I am well I shall feed the pigs, but I may have the lockjaw. People do that are wounded. There is a pond here. I have not seen it, but my friend John says so. There are lilies in it and a boy, they think, for he never came up. I open my mouth often to see if it will work, and I haven't the Lockjaw yet. Aunt Celia gave me a photograph for you and one for me. I mailed yours. She is a lovely woman, all smiles and a soft voice. I liker best. She isn't so Terryfying. I haven't seen a Boy, but there are some here, for John says they come to hook the pears. They are not vagrums, he says, only mischievus. If I catch them they'll wish They Hadn't Come. They can have all the pears they want if they ask, but they are 'Pirates,' John says. Your affectionate Gay."

"Oh!" sighed May, "Brown's foot is cut with an ax; he may have lockjaw." [77]

"Who's Brown?"

"My twin bro—my twin, I mean. Uncle George calls him Brown and me Brownie because we're both brown, do you see?"

"Perfectly," remarked the General, who couldn't see at all.

"This," said May, undoing the package, "is Aunt Celia's photograph. She gave it to me. Brown says she's lovely—and so she is. She doesn't look a bit 'terrifying,' does she?"

"Not in the least," answered the General, who really knew nothing about it, for May had monopolized the photograph and he had not had as much as a glance at it.

"She looks like a little fairy godmother, doesn't she?" said May, passing the photograph to her uncle.

The General put on his glasses and looked at the photograph.

"What a resemblance!" he cried.

"To whom?" May asked, running to his side.

"To my mother."

"It is our Aunt Celia Linn who lives at Hazelnook where Ga—where Brown is."

The General became reflective. "I think I met Miss Celia Linn in my youth," he said, at length, "when she was a young girl, but I didn't notice the resemblance then and I cannot recall her face." [78]

This was not strange; the General in his youth had studiously avoided looking at young girls long enough to impress their features upon his memory.

"Wouldn't you like to have her on your desk? She is so pretty and looks so much like your mother," said May, thinking her suggestion would please the General.

"I shall be very happy," said the General, bowing to the photograph, as though it was Miss Celia herself who had expressed a desire to occupy his desk. May gave the photograph a good position on the desk, and with a bird-like tip of her head which should have revealed to the dull General that his guest was of the gentler sex, she looked first at the photograph, then at the portraits on the wall, saying,—

"Isn't it nice to have an alive woman in the room, Uncle Harold? All the portrait people are dead, aren't they? They look so."

"Yes, all are dead."

"There ought to be a frame for it," said May, with true feminine instinct. "A pretty silver frame for such a pretty silver-haired lady. We might put a little vase of flowers beside it—some roses and mignonette."

"Very appropriate, indeed," said the General, to whom a rose by the name of hollyhock or petunia would have smelled quite as sweet. [79]

"I will get them now," cried May, rushing out of the room.

The General, left alone, wrote a brief note to a New York firm, ordering a silver frame of the handsomest design (for "a silver-haired lady"), and he fancied all the time that he was doing this to please his supposed nephew, and perhaps he was.

"I've picked some roses, Miss Sarah," cried May through the kitchen window, "for a bouquet to put beside the loveliest lady. Her photograph is on Uncle Harold's desk and he likes it ever so much."

"Where did it come from?"

"Hazelnook. Wouldn't you like to see it?"

"No," said Sarah, shortly.

"There!" said May on her return to the library, "isn't that pretty?"

"Very," said the General, looking critically at the flowers held up for his inspection. "Where did you learn to put posies together so neatly?"

"I didn't learn," said May, blithely. "Such things are natural to girls, didn't you know that?"

"So I supposed; but I didn't know boys shared that faculty."

"Oh, Uncle Harold," cried the young culprit with a desperate attempt to change the subject, "when does my training begin?" [80]

"At once, my boy, at once!" replied the delighted disciplinarian.

May began to feel sorry that she had mentioned the training, surrounded as it was by mystery, but it was too late to recall her words.

The General said, "Come," and they left the house together.

No sooner had they gone when Sarah sought the library.

"I should like to see the woman that has the brass to send her photograph to him," her thoughts ran. Despite the General's sixty-six years and his distaste for feminine society Sarah was constantly apprehensive lest he fall a victim to some wily woman's charms. "I've had trouble enough with him," she was wont to say, as though she had helped him through love-affairs innumerable!

It was with anything but agreeable emotions, therefore, that she took Miss Celia's photograph

between her thumb and finger, holding it as if she expected something to rub off, and looked at it earnestly.

"Um," said Sarah, when her inspection was over, and she left the room without further comment. A little later she added, "It's his mother over again!"

"Where are we going, Uncle Harold?" May asked, as they walked briskly through the grounds. [81]

"To the stables."

"What is he going to do to me?" May thought, ruefully.

When they reached the stable the General went to a glass case which held—horrors to relate!—a fine collection of fire-arms. Selecting two rifles, the General, with an inviting smile, extended one towards May. If there was anything that our little heroine in the hero's guise was really afraid of it was a rifle, or, indeed, arms of any kind, and her involuntary shrinking did not escape the General's eye.

"Why don't you take it?" he asked, with the nearest approach to sharpness that he had displayed since they had become "friends."

"I—don't want to," said May, huddling herself in a small bunch against the side of the barn.

The General did not lose his temper; fortunately, too, for had he done so May would have turned and fled, but his voice was stern, as he said,—

"Take that rifle and do as I bid you!"

---

[82]

CHAPTER XIII
A PLAN THAT FAILED

When the doctor was gone, after saying that Gay would be all right in a day or two, Miss Celia took her place at the bedside of the sufferer, prepared to play the nurse; Miss Linn and Margery returned to their household duties; John resumed his wood-chopping and Peace spread her downy wing once more over Rose Cottage.

During the rest of the day Gay spoke so gently, looked so pensive and behaved so like an angel that Miss Linn wondered how she could have dreamed of calling her mock niece a hoyden.

"She is perfectly angelic," Miss Linn confided to her sister. "I don't know how I ever thought her otherwise."

"The dear lamb," said Margery, after seeing Gay among the pillows successfully playing the rôle of angel, "she's no more like the tomboy as was flying around the back-yard this forenoon than nothing in the world. It looks," added Margery, who had had what she called "an expe'runce" and was qualified to judge, "it looks like a real change of heart."

Miss Celia said nothing at first, but as day waned into night and Gay did not relapse into his former graceless conduct she added her meed of praise. [83]

The next morning Gay was better—and Gay on a couch of pain and Gay in health were two different persons. Long before anybody else was astir he was standing and stepping—gingerly at first, then boldly—on the injured foot "to see if it would hurt!" As it did not he began to dress, selecting, with the recklessness of a boy, the first frock that came to hand; one of May's best ones, a pretty brown China silk, with smocked yoke, puffed-sleeves and a quaint little chatelaine pocket. It was not an easy frock to get into, and Gay tugged and toiled, thinking regretfully of knickerbockers and cambric blouse-waist.

"Goodness," he panted, "I wonder who would be a girl if it could be helped."

The chatelaine pocket belonged on the side, but in Gay's hands it swung in front.

"It will be handy for pears and things," said Gay to himself.

The hooks and eyes on the bodice showed the utmost aversion for one another, refusing to meet until forced to, but at length they were as securely joined as man and wife, and Gay popped his head out of the window to cool his brow. Making a girl's toilet was serious and heating work.

"Good morning, little invalid!" cried a pleasant voice. It was Miss Celia standing in the trim garden below. [84]

Then Gay, obeying one of those extraordinary impulses that govern boys when there is a chance to court disaster, climbed through the window, swung off, caught a sturdy trumpet vine and slid to the ground, scattering leaves and flowers before him as he went. Rose Cottage was a low, irregular building and the distance from the window to the ground was not great, but such a descent was not without danger, and it certainly was one which the average wearer of petticoats would not have essayed. Poor, frightened Miss Celia permitted Gay to upset her ideas of maidenly propriety without a word of censure; she had scarcely strength to say,—

"May, how could you do that?"

"I had to, auntie; I felt so full! After I have stayed in the house a whole day I have to do something to let off steam. Don't you?"

Miss Celia disclaimed all acquaintance with this mental condition, but she didn't scold a bit, and Gay, realizing that he was not playing his part with great skill, appreciated her forbearance.

"What did they know about girls?" Miss Celia silently argued. "Two old maids whose youth was passed? The ways of modern childhood were a sealed book to them."

Not so lenient were Miss Linn's judgments. She, also, had seen Gay's descent, and having recovered from her fright she began to be indignant; to think that it was time something; was done to curb such high animal spirits. It might be her guest's taste to leave the house by a second story window; it was not hers! [85]

So after breakfast she demanded Gay's presence in the morning room.

"Did you bring any work with you?" she asked.

"What kind of work do you mean?" said Gay, looking puzzled.

"Sewing."

"Sewing! I can't sew."

"Can't sew!" cried Miss Linn, in horror. "Have you never learned?"

"Not I," said Gay, thinking this would end the matter.

This was a mistake. Miss Linn immediately produced, from the depths of a work-basket, a number of small squares of bright-colored calico and white cotton cloth, and spread them on a table.

"Is that a game?" asked Gay, curiously.

"It is patchwork," Miss Linn replied, amazed at such ignorance.

"What is it for?" questioned Gay, who had no acquaintance with those monuments to feminine industry, known as quilts and "comforters."

"For you to make a pretty little quilt for your bed," said Miss Linn, in a persuasive tone. "Wouldn't you like to have it?" [86]

"No, I thank you. A blanket is good enough for me!" said naughty Gay.

"But this would be your own work!" said Miss Linn, trying to arouse the housewifely instinct in the fraud's breast. "See, it would look so." And Miss Linn arranged the squares of calico in the right relations with the squares of cloth.

"Yes—like a checker-board," said Gay, not very enthusiastically.

"Don't you think it is very nice?" said Miss Linn.

"It wouldn't be half bad for camping; and it might do for a sail if a fellow was hard up, though I guess the wind would rip it to smithereens in a little while."

Miss Linn was in despair. Was there ever such a girl? Or one who used such peculiar expressions? The poor lady was not quite certain that she was listening to slang, but she had a suspicion that she was. "Rip" and "Smithereens" sounded like it.

"The doctor's wife is on the porch, mem," announced Margery at the door.

"Say that I will be right out," said Miss Linn.

"Good," thought Gay. "I shall get out of this mess!"

GAY DROVE THE NEEDLE INTO HIS THUMB

But his exultation was premature! [87]

"May," said Miss Linn, "here are squares already sewed. I want you to put the other pieces together in the same way. Yes, you can do it," she added, for she saw signs of rebellion in Gay's face. "Here are needles, thread and a thimble that Aunt Celia used when she was a little girl. You must do it somehow," and Miss Linn left the room.

"Sew!" muttered Gay, distracted at this fresh calamity. "I won't do it; I'll tell her that I'm a boy and be sent home!" And disturb the mother whose recovery to health depended upon freedom from agitation? No; that would not do. There was nothing to do but submit to this indignity, and Gay picked up a square, pondered a moment as if trying to recall some knowledge of the art of sewing, grasped the threaded needle and drove it through the cloth into his thumb!

"Christopher Columbus!" cried Gay. "I'd rather take a flogging than try to manage this old needle!"

Then he began again; by pushing the needle half way through one side of the square, then turning the square over and pulling the needle and thread through on that side, several uneven stitches were taken, but a knot put an end to this. Gay pulled and jerked the thread until it broke, then a new dilemma presented itself; the end of the thread slipped through the cloth in spite of [88] his efforts to keep it where it belonged.

Suddenly a bright idea struck him. "I hope there's some here," he said, to himself. There was "some" in a crystal jar, on Miss Celia's davenport, and Gay went manfully to work to join the squares together with mucilage. This was his bright idea! In order to facilitate matters he used his lap for a table.

In a little while he dashed out on the porch where his aunts were entertaining their caller. "Here it is, all done!" he cried.

Miss Linn's astonished gaze traveled from the silk frock where the mucilage was trickling down the front breadths in little streams, to the patchwork with the wet rim round each square. "I told you to sew it," she said, reproachfully.

"Excuse me," said Gay, with exasperating politeness, "you said get it together somehow—and isn't gluing it, 'somehow'?"

"May," said Miss Linn, flushing with mortification, "go to your room and stay until I come."

Gay turned away, muttering something not intended for anybody's ears, but Miss Linn heard it.

"What did you say?" she asked.

"I said that if I had known that visiting was like going to a reform school I wouldn't have come," replied Gay, the incorrigible.

---

[89]

CHAPTER XIV

THE BOY PREDOMINATES

After Gay had sulked a little in his room, and indulged in rather violent criticism of Miss Linn, the aspect of matters changed somewhat. What was the use of spending the rest of the day in the dumps? There must be some fun to be had even in the quiet guest-room. It occurred to him that it would be sport to lean out of the window as far as possible and try to look in the dining-room window, which was just below, with his head upside down.

This was dangerous, of course, for a fall would have shaken up the performer a trifle, but the danger was the fun and Gay hung out till his head nearly touched the window below. While he was enjoying himself in this way Margery passed through the garden and saw him.

"Goodness gracious," she cried. "You mustn't do that, Miss May."

"Why mustn't I?" asked Gay, not moving at all.

"You'll break your neck," answered Margery.

"Oh, no, I shan't," replied Gay, a good deal flattered by this interest. "I could lean out still farther."

"May!" shrieked Margery, covering her head with her apron. [90]

"Don't you like it?"

"Mercy, no. Are ye in yet?" said Margery, without uncovering her head.

"Yes, I'm in."

Margery uncovered her face and looked first on the ground to see if Gay was there in fragments, then up at the window where he was now sitting astride of the window-sill, swinging one foot on the outside.

"Oh!" shrieked Margery, when she saw this dreadful position. "Do get in, miss; you'll get dizzy and fall out."

"I'm not allowed to do anything in this house!" sulked Gay. A moment later he added, "Shall I have my dinner up here?"

"I guess so."

"Well, if you will give me some stout string and that little tray in the kitchen with open work places on the ends, I'll rig something to hoist my dinner up from the dining-room and let down the dishes afterwards. It will save you lots of bother."

"I'll think about it," said Margery discreetly, hurrying away.

Gay sat quietly on the window for a moment, looking out over the garden to the street beyond in search of something diverting. A boy, carrying a large tin pail, was passing, and Gay recognized him. [91]

"Hullo, Patsey!" he shouted. "Come into the yard, won't you?"

Patsey saw Gay at once and answered,—

"I can't now, miss; I'm carryin' ther dinner ter me mother's boarders."

"All right," returned Gay, who wouldn't have been guilty of interfering with business. "Stop when you come back, then."

"I will, miss," Patsey replied, with a grin of delight. The democratic manner of the visitor at Rose Cottage was quite to Patsey's mind; he appreciated the good fellowship with which "Miss May" treated him.

"She's a darlin'," he thought, admiringly. "She's me notion of a lady—speakin' to a b'y as if he was a human bein'."

Patsey's "notion of a lady" was a fairly good one, albeit he was somewhat deceived in the specimen of which he spoke.

When Patsey was out of sight Gay remembered, with a pang of regret, that he had an engagement with John at the noon hour. "I will write a note to Aunt Beulah," thought he.

There were pen, ink and paper in the room, and after various trials Gay wrote this note:—

"I write to ask you to Comute my Sentence. I have an Important ingagement at twelve. I'll go back to prison when I've kept it, if you will let me come down." [92]

Gay did not know how to spell "commute" nor did he understand the precise meaning of his first sentence, but he had heard his father, who was a lawyer, use it in connection with prisoners, and he thought it calculated to impress his aunts. He lowered the note by a string and bobbed it up and down in front of the dining-room window until Margery saw it and took it in.

"For Aunt Beulah, with my compliments," said Gay, with great courtesy.

A moment after Margery thrust her head out of the lower window. "You can come down," she said.

"Hurrah!" shouted Gay, dashing out of the room, jumping down three stairs at one jump and completing the descent by sliding down the bannisters.

There was quite a group on the porch—the doctor's wife, who had been "persuaded" to spend the day; the minister, who was willing to be persuaded, so agreeable did he find Miss Celia's companionship, and the doctor—who was not the doctor's wife's husband, by the way. They were

all laughing when Gay appeared.

"Your engagement must be very important, Miss May," said the doctor.

"It is," said Gay brightly, for he liked the big, bluff, jolly doctor, "I'm going to feed the pigs for John." [93]

This simple assertion was not received with favor by the feminine portion of the group, but the doctor laughed heartily.

"I think pigs very interesting animals; so contented and fat and jolly—Jane says contentment is better than wealth," Gay said.

"I have been told so," remarked the doctor, pleasantly.

"I mean to be a farmer when I grow up," continued unwary Gay. "I used to think I'd be a lawyer, like father, but I've changed my mind."

"A lawyer!" Miss Linn exclaimed.

"I have heard," observed the minister, "that one of the results of the popular movement for the higher education of women is to cause even baby girls to select professions."

"Heaven forbid!" sighed the doctor's wife, who was reared in the good old time when music, manners and morals were the only accomplishments in which girls were instructed.

"Are you in favor of suffrage?" asked the doctor.

"Suffrage!" repeated Gay, for the word was not a familiar one.

"You will vote, won't you?"

"Yes," said Gay, on safe ground now, "when I'm twenty-one." [94]

"How terrible!" gasped poor Miss Linn. "What is the world coming to? The ballot and a profession! And to think such heresy is alive in Elinor Walcott's household!"

"But you will go to balls and parties when you grow up, won't you?" asked the doctor's wife, hoping this remark would elicit a fitting reply.

"Not much!" said Gay, scornfully. "My father says we want fewer leaders of the cotillon and more leaders of opinion in this country. I mean to make mother proud of me."

"I think you'll do it, little girl," said the doctor. "Your parents have exemplified in your training the advice of the eminent divine—'make all your sons virtuous and all your daughters brave.'"

The minister opened his mouth to reply, but as the first word trembled on his lips, Gay gave a whoop, cleared the stoop with one bound and ran toward the pear orchard.

"What is it now?" said Miss Linn, plaintively.

The company rose with one accord and sought the lawn, where they had a view of Gay, then in the midst of a group of boys, dealing blows right and left.

"Is she fighting?" groaned Miss Linn.

"Oh, she will be hurt!" cried Miss Celia. "May, my dear child, come here." [95]

"What does it mean?" gasped the doctor's wife.

"Let her alone; she's a scientific boxer," the doctor cried, after a hasty glance.

"A scientific boxer!" cried Miss Linn, clinging to Celia's arm for support. "Elinor's daughter that!"

"I dare say it's so," said the doctor's wife. "I have heard that the best families in New York are making athletes of their girls."

"Very sensibly, too," replied the doctor. "There goes the Carver boy end over end."

"Somebody must separate them! What are we thinking of!" said Miss Celia.

"Shall I go?" asked the minister, who secretly thought the young Arab could take care of herself, but who was anxious to do Miss Celia's bidding.

"There goes the last boy over the fence," said the doctor. "Bravo! Miss May," he added, as Gay, in tattered frock, joined them, "victory all along the line, wasn't it?"

"I could have downed a dozen like them," gasped the victor. "They were hardly worth tackling; they know about as much about boxing as hens, but I guess they'll let the pears alone for a while."

"A girl," began Miss Linn, in awful tones, "a girl of refinement would not fight with a vulgar rabble of boys; she would not notice them." [96]

"Do I look like a girl of refinement?" asked Gay, with an audacious smile.

CHAPTER XV [97]

GAY'S POPULARITY BEGINS

When Gay's challenge, "Do I look like a girl of refinement?" was flung back at Miss Linn,

following as it did one of the most extraordinary scenes of which a girl was ever the heroine, it was indeed marvelous that it did not reveal him in his true colors. But everybody seemed to be blind, unreasoning, stupid. It was a mystery that the prowess of the valiant disposer of the boyish robbers was not speedily traced to its real origin, that of sex. Gay's conversation, liberally interspersed as it was with slang, was enough in itself to proclaim him a lively, wide-awake boy. Speech, actions, and bearing all pointed in one direction, but Gay's audience permitted their vision to be obscured by—petticoats.

It was not strange that the gentle, unworldly occupants of Rose Cottage were, at first, misled. They had invited a girl; and a girl, as far as outward garb could make one, had arrived. At Cedarville a similar misconception had occurred. With a single exception no one dreamed that the twins had exchanged roles and clothes. Miss Maud Berkeley, alone, regarded Gay with suspicion. [98]

As a matter of fact, after exchanging clothes each acted his or her part with freedom from disguise that made their success the more marked. Gay and May had ceased to regard their position as enviable; it was no longer a "lark" to masquerade in each other's clothes, but trained from infancy to self-reliance and self-restraint, they were capable of much endurance, even in a mistaken cause. Already they were looking forward to their release; the delicate girl not more eagerly than the strong boy.

After Gay's reply to his aunt, a council of war, at which he was not present, was held in the drawing-room at Rose Cottage. The minister confined his efforts to indorsing Miss Celia's sentiments, notwithstanding the fact that that lady, whose heart was with the culprit, but whose judgment was with the council, contradicted herself constantly. It was the doctor's wife who suggested surrounding Gay with girls as a means of conventionalizing him!

"Invite girls of her own age here; it is the only thing that will do any good," said she positively.

"I'll do it," said Miss Linn. "I will give a party at once to introduce May to the girls here."

Then, with the minuteness of detail that characterizes the discussions of persons who lead uneventful lives, these good people planned the festivity that was formally to introduce the young rogue to the Hazelnook girls. [99]

The next event of the day following the skirmish under the pear tree was Gay's receipt of a letter from his father. It was written, of course, to the real May, and while reading it, the mock May experienced a sharp twinge of conscience. It was so unconsciously condemnatory in its entire confidence that it made Gay really unhappy—for a moment.

The letter was brief.

> "My dear little Daughter,—
>
> "Three days have passed since you left us, and I am glad to be able to tell you that your mother is better—a few days more and her poor nerves will have begun to strengthen, then for a holiday for us all somewhere in the lovely country. Ned is a good boy, and nurse is very proud of Baby, who grows to look, so she says, more and more like the sixth Earl of Roslyn. What a comical, pink, squirming little earl he must have been, mustn't he? Alice is enjoying herself very much; she has won a prize in a tennis tournament at Lake Hopatcong, and has been to three parties. You can see what you have to look forward to when you are a young lady of fifteen! Your dear mother sends love and kisses, and says, 'Tell my little girl to be gentle and good.' And I add, try to do as your aunts wish in everything; even though their way may differ from your mother's way. Different people, different ways, you know, dear. With love to our little girl, and compliments to the aunties, I am, [100]
>
> "Your loving father,
>
> "Edward Walcott."
>
> "New York, Aug. 10, 1900."

"It doesn't seem right for father to think he is writing to one when he's writing to the other!" thought Gay. "Still, we're really the same as one, and now that mother is better we can soon tell and then it will be all right. I'm tired of it and I'm ashamed to have father and mother and everybody trusting me when I'm a fraud, besides, I'm tearing May's clothes all to pieces and I shall have to tell pretty soon, or go to bed."

The letter had a good effect, however, for Gay really tried to be "gentle and good." He behaved with such propriety that the poor deluded aunts were in raptures.

"She can be charming when she likes," Miss Linn said.

"I don't condemn her conduct yesterday; it was incomprehensible, but what a brave little thing she is! I'm sure the doctor admires her," Miss Celia said proudly.

"The minister doesn't admire her," Miss Linn said significantly. [101]

Miss Celia's face flushed a delicate rose. "That does not interest me," she said.

"Why, Celia!" exclaimed her sister.

And Miss Celia, for some mysterious reason, looked confused.

After dinner Gay wrote a letter to May and asked permission to post it, which was granted. A small group of boys, among whom were the robbers, stood in front of the post-office. They were

talking earnestly.

"There wasn't any science about it. What are you giving us?" one was saying.

"Here she is now," another boy cried, as he saw Gay.

"Nice girl! Nice girlie to fight with boys!" a third boy said.

"You don't want any more, do you?" said Gay, forgetting his feminine apparel and his resolution to be "gentle and good."

A saucy fellow came up to Gay with a gibe on his tongue and made a move as if to disarrange Gay's frock, when down in the dust he went on his face.

"If you can be civil we'll call it square; if you can't I'll show you how to be," said Gay, calmly.

"We'll call it square," said the first speaker with a smile that was pleasant despite its width. "You're made of the real stuff, if you are a girl." [102]

"Much obliged for your good opinion," replied Gay with an answering smile.

"I'll get even with you!" said the boy who had been tripped up.

"Go ahead," said Gay, coolly.

"You talk big because you're a girl and you think I daren't touch you!" growled the boy.

"I didn't stop to talk big yesterday, did I?" asked Gay, with rising color.

"No, you didn't; you hit like a good one. I'll take it all back about big talk," said the boy, heartily.

"Let's shake hands on that," said Gay, forgetting that girls do not commonly display so much cordiality toward comparative strangers, it being a boy's privilege to be "hail fellow well met" with all.

After a general handshaking, which was accompanied by some embarrassment on the part of the boys, who were unaccustomed to the society of girls and did not know that their new acquaintance was a very poor imitation of one, they told Gay their names and such portions of their history as seemed to fit the occasion.

"You'd better call me Brown Walcott," said Gay. "That's what the fellows in New York call me—my twin sister is called Brownie."

The boys looked at one another sheepishly; they didn't know what to say. [103]

"Well, we will call you Miss—Brown," faltered Lyman Carver at length.

"Drop the Miss," said Gay.

"All right, we will. We can drop her easier than we can beat her in any other way!" said Will Babbitt.

This speech which everybody applauded—save Gay, who refrained through a delicate sense of modesty—immediately established a feeling of good fellowship.

"I promised to come right back," said Gay. "Walk along with me, won't you? It seems mighty good to see some fellows once more."

The boys stared. This was the most extraordinary girl! There was no resisting her pleasant manner, however, and they were soon walking along together, all talking merrily.

"Oh," cried Gay, suddenly, when they were outside the gate at Rose Cottage, "I'm going to have some kind of a time to-morrow afternoon at five o'clock; my aunt said so to-day. I wish you'd come."

This was another embarrassing moment! The boys were not generally included among aristocratic Miss Linn's young guests.

"I don't believe we should know anybody there except by sight," said Robert Clark at length.

"It will be a good chance to get acquainted with everybody, then," Gay replied. [104]

"I don't think we can go, anyway, because we've got a game to-morrow afternoon," said Lyman.

"Ball?" questioned Gay.

"Yes," Lyman answered.

"Put it off till day after to-morrow and I'll come," said Gay.

"Do you know anything about ball?" asked Fred Brown, wondering secretly if there was anything that this wonderful girl wasn't up to.

"If you can get on to my curves I'll give you the dandiest bat you ever held in your hands," Gay said, with great enthusiasm.

The boys were literally overcome by this challenge, but Lyman succeeded in saying,

"We'll take you up on that some day, Brown."

"It can't be too soon to suit me," laughed Gay. Then he threw one arm across Lyman's shoulders, the other across Will's and added, persuasively, "Promise you will come to-morrow."

"You see," said Will, "we don't belong to that set and when they meet us at church affairs they generally treat us as if we were heathen. They are not like you, Brown."

"I'd like to see anybody treat my guests that way!" said Gay, defiantly. "If you come I guess you'll see that my party isn't a church show."

When Gay went into the house the minister was there; his nearest approach to a week-day occupation was visiting Miss Celia. "Who were those boys, Miss May?" he asked, with a desire to be agreeable. [105]

"Hazelnook boys; splendid fellows. Don't you know them?"

"I think not, though their parents may be my parishioners. All boys of that age look alike."

"Aunt Celia," said Gay that evening, when they were alone, "I don't think much of that minister."

"Why not, dear?" Miss Celia asked with considerable interest.

"Because ministers say they want to be like Jesus, but He wouldn't have said about the boys, 'They all look alike,' just as if He didn't care how they looked and didn't want to know them! I'm sure He knew all the boys wherever He went."

"Thank you, dear, for making something clear to me," Miss Celia said, softly.

And Gay wondered in vain what Miss Celia meant.

CHAPTER XVI

A SQUAD OF ONE

[106]

"It is necessary that we understand one another before we begin," said the General. "Do you know what the position of the soldier is?"

"I don't know much about it," May answered, "but it must be an awfully hard one—having to carry a gun, and go into battle and kill other soldiers and stay out doors all night in the dark, and not see his family and—oh, it must be a very hard position!"

"I didn't mean precisely that," the General said, "I meant this." And he assumed the soldier's position, arms at a carry. "Now do you understand?"

"Yes," said May. "It makes me think of a dog when you say 'Head up, sir, and tail erect.'"

"I should not have described it in just those terms, but perhaps you have caught the idea," said the General, whose sense of humor, as it may have been observed, was not abnormally developed. "Take the position yourself."

May laid the rifle on the barn floor, preparatory to obeying.

"Keep your piece," the General commanded. [107]

"Piece—of what?" asked May, looking puzzled. "I haven't a piece of anything."

"Piece, arm, rifle and musket are synonymous terms," explained the General. "Do you know what synonymous means?"

"One just as bad as the other," May promptly replied.

The General smiled, but he was not to be diverted from his purpose by absurd replies.

"You may leave your piece where it is for the present," said he, "and you are to do as I bid you. Stand where you are. Now, heels well together, feet out—yes, that is good—body erect, chest out—that is excel——"

"Oh, I go to a gymnasium!" interrupted May, "and I know one mustn't mistake one's stomach for one's chest, for they are not the same, whatever some people may think."

This knowledge of one of the primary lessons in physical culture impressed the General very favorably.

"Good!" said he. "I shall make a soldier of you yet. I shall have you at West Point before you know it, my boy!"

"You'll have to get me there that way if you get me there at all!" said May, with a wry face, which the General did not see. "I'll never go there if I do know it," she added, under her breath.

"Shoulders square," resumed the General. "Arms at the side, elbows near the body—no, not——" [108]

"Don't you want me to dig my elbows into my ribs?" asked May. "They stay better that way."

"No, there must be no stiffness or constraint in these positions," the General said.

"I don't see what else you can get in them," May said. "I feel as if there was a stick running right down my back, and I'm sure I shall never be able to move my feet again."

"Yet I think I understood you to say you go to the gymnasium," said the General.

"Yes, but the gymnasium is no more like this than—than a Christmas party is like a Sunday-school," May replied.

"Attention!" commanded the General.

"All right, sir," May responded, cheerfully.

"You need not reply; the soldier says nothing; he obeys," said the General.

"Oh, I suppose the officers do all the talking," said May, in direct defiance of the General's last remark. "But can't the soldier answer back at all?"

"No, not during drill," said the General.

"They must make it up when they're not drilling!" said May.

[109] "Attention!" the General shouted. "Palms of the hands front, little fingers behind the seam of the trousers, chin drawn in, eyes front—eyes front, I say."

"Dear me, Uncle Harold, how can I keep my eyes front and see how my hands and fingers and feet are at the same time?" grumbled May.

"By practise; we will try it again," said the General.

And try it again they did, without, and then with arms, until May was ready to drop with fatigue. She was a plucky little recruit, but the Springfield Cadet rifle; weight over eight pounds, with bayonet nearly nine pounds, was not exactly a plaything. At length the General saw that she was tired and commanded,

"Squad, rest!"

May knew what rest meant and sat down on the stable floor without ceremony.

"Am I a squad?" she inquired. "What does it mean?"

"A squad is a number of armed men," the General replied. "The term slipped out before I was aware of it—I have never drilled a single recruit."

While they were at a rest the General deemed it wise to continue her instructions by defining various terms, such as columns, rank, file, front, rear, etc., and then he said,—

"There are three kinds of commands——"

[110] "I think I know what they are," said May quickly.

"Indeed!" said the General.

"The command that you obey, the kind you don't obey and the kind you half obey," said May.

The General laughed heartily at this. The recruit certainly had very droll ideas of tactics, but the instructor saw fit to enlighten him more precisely as to the meaning of military commands. After explaining more motions than May could have mastered in a month, the General cried,—

"Attention!"

"I'm looking," said May.

"Fall in," commanded the General.

"What shall I fall into?" demanded May, not offering to rise.

"Gay!" the General cried, dropping the military formality of a drill master and speaking as an annoyed relative, "I explained that to you only a moment ago! What do you think it means?"

"That you want me to get up, I suppose," May replied, rising and assuming the soldier's position, with a smothered sigh.

"Couldn't you put it in better form than that?" asked the General, patiently but reproachfully.

"I don't know," said May, rather listlessly. "You were just telling me about 'fatigue' things—my answer was a 'fatigue' answer!"

[111] But although the General laughed, thinking May vastly diverting, he ignored her hint and began to instruct her in the mysteries of Present arms, Right shoulder arms, Order arms, Parade rest—and nobody knows what else, looking at the execution of her movements with the enthusiasm of a veteran. He seemed to be animated with the spirit of a dozen generals, and roared and thundered his commands as though he had been drilling a large squad instead of one weary little girl in borrowed uniform. They had just gone through for the sixth time, Left, reverse—an exceedingly tiresome position as all cadets know—when, without a word of warning to the General, May slipped to the ground and lay there in a motionless heap.

"What is the matter? What is it?" cried the General. "Can't you speak, my boy?"

May did not reply, and the General, now thoroughly alarmed, picked her up and bore her in his arms to Sarah.

"What have you been doing to him?" Sarah demanded, as she took May in her arms.

"I've been instructing him——" began the General.

"You'd better instruct yourself!" Sarah interrupted, indignantly. "Drilling this poor boy till he faints! Phyllis, the smelling salts, and some water."

[112] When May recovered from her swoon the General asked,—

"Why didn't you tell me you were tired?"

"You said the good soldier obeyed without speaking," May said, with a wan smile. "I was trying to learn how."

"Bless my heart, what a boy you are!" the General exclaimed, actually kissing the "boy's" cheek. "This shall not happen again; you shall have a fine light rifle for your own as soon as possible."

"Oh, thank you, but I really don't care for one!" said May, secretly alarmed at the thought of having to harbor such a dangerous possession.

"Is there anything else that you can think of that you would like to have?" questioned the General, anxiously, for he wanted to make amends for his late thoughtlessness.

"Oh, yes!" cried May. "If I could have one of those big dolls with a phonograph inside—almost a human inside, talk and a laugh all there, I should be perfectly happy!"

"A doll!" said the General, with a frown.

"Yes, I know a girl that would like it!" May said quickly, fearing that she had betrayed herself.

"A rifle will be a more appropriate gift," replied the General.

He gave May some silver, however, that burned so in her pocket that as soon as she could she went to the village to spend it. She bought a doll's hat, one admirably suited to Maud Madeleine's waxen features, and on leaving the store she encountered Philip Guy Brentwood. He was not alone; two boys, whether of the same species or not May could not determine, were with him. [113]

"I saw you buying a doll's bonnet," said Philip, disagreeably. "What a sissy! Bah, you make me tired!"

"Are you sure you weren't born so?" May asked, good-humoredly.

"I'll have that hat to pay you for insulting me!" cried Philip.

He made a dash for the hat; May thrust out her foot suddenly and Philip measured his length in the dust.

The boys shouted for more, but May, who was "no fighter," walked quickly away.

"I'll be even with you, yet," Philip muttered angrily.

But it might have been observed that he made no effort to overtake May.

---

[114]

CHAPTER XVII
CONCERNING PHILIP

May sat on a pile of hay in the lower barn, trimming the doll's hat she had bought in the village, singing as she worked. Three days had passed since she made the purchase and this was the first opportunity to add a beautiful feather found in the barn yard and a bow of ribbon to Maud Madeleine's new head gear. She had drilled every morning with greater success than had attended her maiden effort, thanks to the General's increased solicitude and a little device of her own which enabled her to handle her rifle without fear of instant death.

With feminine strategy she had induced James to take her rifle apart, then telling him that she would put it together she filled the breech and the barrel with cotton wool and threw the cartridge under the barn! As the piece was a safety notch, the subsequent military movements were executed with a light heart; the General's command to "fall in" was received with as light a heart as an invitation to "take a chair."

But a problem to the full as interesting as present arms was absorbing May's thoughts as she sewed: Philip, and how to square accounts with him. [115]

Philip now made daily visits to the Haines' mansion, and it often seemed to May that he came solely to bully and tease her. Philip thought the girl in knickerbockers a very timorous lad; he, therefore, put forth all his talent for jeering and sneering, with unhappy result.

"He's spoiling for a fight," May said to herself, with unerring accuracy. "But I should be ashamed to come to blows with a boy, although I know he's so much of a coward that he would be more scared than I if we did have a little set-to. I wonder what Gay would do? But I know; he'd take some of Philip's swagger out of him. Still, I'm not Gay, if I am wearing his clothes."

Now, as it may be seen, May was not an Amazon nor a miniature virago. She knew a little about boxing; she had been a pupil of Uncle George, who had been a student at Harvard College, where he had learned a great deal about sports, and it is probable that had she overcome her dislike to fighting she would have taught Philip a wholesome lesson. She was to teach him one in another and a better way, but she did not know it, and as she sewed she wrestled with her problem and could not solve it.

While May sat there on the fragrant hay, the afternoon sunshine streaming in upon her, Philip made his appearance, and so unexpectedly that she had not time to whisk the hat out of sight. [116]

"Are you sewing?" cried Philip, with a loud laugh.

"Yes," May answered, with a deep blush.

"What an awful sissy you are, anyway! You kiss people; you don't dare to fight, and you sew! You ought to go into a dime museum!"

"You forgot to mention one other thing."

"What is that?"

"I don't dare to be as rude and disagreeable as a savage."

"Never mind about that; you're a freak without it!"

May laughed; Philip's answer was rather bright and she showed her appreciation of it.

"You got one on me that time, Philip."

"Where did you learn to sew?" asked Philip, who wanted more fun on this subject.

"At a kindergarten—you didn't think I was born clever enough to sew, did you?" said May, pleasantly.

"I once knew another boy that sewed. He died, and he deserved to!"

"Perhaps it may have been just the sewing that made him good enough to die," May said, laughingly, determined not to lose her temper or show Philip that he annoyed her. [117]

"I brought over some cigarettes," said Philip, with sudden change of base. "I'll bet you don't dare to smoke one."

"I dare to but I don't want to. Nasty things!"

"You needn't pretend that you think they're nasty; you're afraid to take even a whiff."

"I'd be ashamed to take a whiff."

"Why don't you own up that you're a sissy and are afraid it will make you sick?"

May did not reply. "He isn't worth answering," she thought. "I wish I wasn't a girl—or if Gay were here, he'd give it to him!"

"I'm going to smoke one. And you've got to, whether you want to or not." Here Philip thrust a cigarette and a match into May's hand. "Now light it," he added.

May's reply was to tear the cigarette to pieces and to put the match in her blouse pocket.

"Will you light this one?" Philip cried, angrily, pressing a second cigarette into May's hand.

"No!" said May, throwing the cigarette down and setting her heel on it.

"If you are a coward and a girl-boy, why, I can't help it, but I'm going to smoke."

"If you are a tough and ill-bred, why I can't help it, but I'm not going to smoke."

After this interchange of opinions Philip lit a match, touched it to the end of the cigarette with the air of knowing just how it was done, then threw the blazing match down carelessly on the hay. [118]

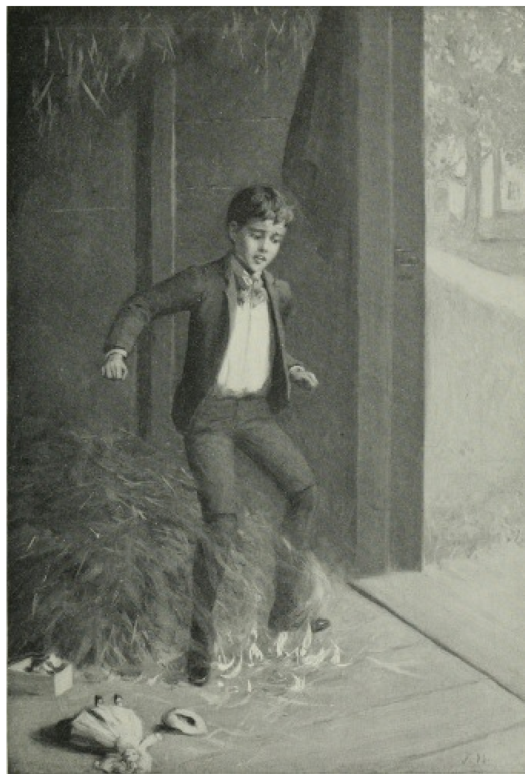
"You mustn't be so careless; you might set the barn afire," said May, jumping up and stamping out the match and a few wisps of blazing hay.

"What a fuss cat!" cried Philip, lighting a card of matches and throwing them recklessly down.

He meant only to arouse May's resentment, and threw them, as he supposed, far enough away from the hay, but his estimate of the distance was incorrect, and the matches fell into a depression in the hay, and before May could snatch them out little tongues of fire were darting in every direction.

"Help me, Philip!" she cried, trampling on the flames as she talked. "We must put it out or the barn will burn. It is full of hay and there is no water here."

Philip looked at the rapidly spreading flames with frightened eyes, then he ran out of the barn shouting "Fire!" at the top of his lungs. The barn was at some distance from the house and no one heard him, so he kept on running until he reached the house, when he entered the General's library without ceremony, crying, "Come, quick, Gay's set the barn on fire!"



MAY FOUGHT THE FIRE HEROICALLY

"Sarah! call the men; the lower barn is on fire!" shouted the General. [119]

Then he ran out of the house, Philip after him, while Sarah, followed by Phyllis blowing lustily on the horn that summoned the men-servants from the fields, brought up the rear.

In the meantime May, with pale cheeks and terrified eyes, was fighting fire, stamping, trampling and jumping and saying the while, "Why doesn't somebody come! Why doesn't somebody come!"

A light breeze blowing through the barn fanned the flames until they were fast getting beyond her control, when she spied some rubber squares for protecting hay from dew and rain, and seizing one she threw it over the fire, jumping and even rolling on it until every spark was extinguished. When the little band headed by the General reached the barn she was looking ruefully at singed stockings and knickerbockers.

"It's out, Uncle Harold!" May cried. "I guess there's not much damage done."

"Never mind about the damage, my boy," replied the General.

"Did you get burnt?" Sarah asked, anxiously.

"Not much," said May.

The General was pondering Philip's cry, "Come quick! Gay's set the barn afire!"

"How did it happen?" questioned the General.

May and Philip were silent: Philip because he didn't want to tell what he had done; May from a sense of loyalty to Philip; she didn't want to tell of him. [120]

"How did it happen?" the General repeated.

The children looked at one another; May expecting Philip to speak; Philip wondering how he could get out of it.

"Gay, why don't you answer me?" said the General, sternly.

"I can't tell you, sir," May answered, meaning that Philip should understand that it was for him to speak.

Then Philip, prompted by one of those evil impulses that sometimes assail nobler natures than his, whispered to the General, and very softly too, for no one else heard him, "He's got a match in his blouse pocket, now."

The General, as we know, was a man of quick temper; when Philip's whisper reached his ear he strode forward and thrust his hand in May's blouse pocket, hoping, it is true, that the match would not be there. Alas! it was there, and the General drew it forth and held it up before everybody.

"What do you mean, sir, by refusing to tell me who set the fire when you did it yourself!" thundered the General. "Why didn't you own up like a man!"

May threw an appealing glance at Philip, but that young man did not appear to see it. [121]

"I could have forgiven you your mischief but not your cowardice," said the General.

"Uncle Harold," said May, "I didn't set——"

"Silence, sir," shouted the General. "Don't criminate yourself further by falsehood."

CHAPTER XVIII

DARK DAYS

[122]

Three days passed and still the General refused to see May.

"When he will tell me the truth then will I see him and not before," the General said in reply to Sarah's solicitation in her favorite's behalf.

"He has told the truth," Sarah answered.

"The evidence is against him; he looked guilty; he refused to speak; the match was found in his pocket and the hay could not ignite itself," the General said stubbornly.

"Evidence is nothing!" Sarah cried, with a woman's disdain for hard facts. "He says he didn't do it; that's enough for me and it ought to be for you."

"There was the match——"

"Can't you get your mind off that one little match?" interrupted Sarah, with scorn in her eyes and in her voice. "A man will cling to a thing like that and allow it to stifle his reason and instinct—no, not that, for a man hasn't the instinct of a June bug!"

"I was correct in my first estimate of his character; he is a coward." [123]

"Estimate!" sniffed Sarah. "I wouldn't give much for an 'estimate' that makes a coward of a boy who drilled till he dropped, put out a fire that might have terrified a grown person, and bore all those burns on his poor little hands and legs without a whimper!" and she left the General to his own thoughts.

The General's thoughts were not pleasant. He had no doubt of his supposed nephew's guilt, and it gave him great pain to reflect upon the duplicity and cowardice that he thought he detected in the child he already loved. Singularly enough he did not think of Philip in connection with the fire. The nature of Philip's communication—"Gay has set the barn afire!" was calculated to mislead; the General would have scorned to question Philip further. He wanted Gay's confession, not Philip's accusation, and in his morning calls at Dr. Brentwood's he avoided Philip as carefully as that young man avoided him.

Sarah was equally unsuspicious of Philip. Phyllis was the only one who took a sensible view of the matter; she believed that he knew more about the fire than he was willing to tell. One day she so far forgot her deference for her mistress as to depart from her rule of monosyllables and say,—

"That Brentwood boy knows more about the fire than he tells. Perhaps he set it and Master Gay didn't tell on him—expecting he'd tell himself—and he saw his chance and kept quiet. That's what I think." [124]

"You had much better not think at all if you can't think of something sensible!" Sarah replied. "What makes you think so?" she added, a moment later, not without curiosity.

"I don't know, ma'am, but I do think so."

"I have my opinion of persons who don't know why they think a thing. It all comes of your stuffing your head with romantic nonsense instead of doing something useful. You've read silly romances till you've lost what little reasoning power nature gave you."

"Yes'm," said Phyllis, meekly, but without altering her opinion.

Sarah had once found a novel in Phyllis's room, and from that time forth all of Phyllis's shortcomings, from careless dusting to forgetfulness of the thirty-nine articles of the Episcopalian faith, had been ascribed by Sarah to the pernicious influence of the romance!

Phyllis not only held to her opinion of May's innocence but she did what she could to comfort and cheer her. She could not, however, with all her loving companionship, save May from many sad hours. At first May thought Philip would speak, but as time went on and he remained silent she resigned this hope. The General's refusal to take her word closed her lips; not even to sympathetic Phyllis and loyal Sarah did she mention her disgrace. At times she thought of writing to her father, telling all and allowing him to establish her innocence, but the fear of annoying her sick mother, an independent disposition to bear her own burdens and the feeling that Philip must some time realize the injustice of his conduct, and make amends for it, withheld her. May's greatest comfort was found in writing in her diary; there the whole story was told, fully and accurately. She did not write any letters at this time, she shrank from disclosing the unhappy condition of affairs to the other conspirator, whose daily letters were filled with glowing descriptions of new friends and good times. Gay was riding on the top wave of success and popularity while she was wretched and in disgrace; it was not strange, therefore, that the thought sometimes obtruded itself, "Those good times might have been mine if Gay had not persisted in keeping on my clothes." [125]

It must not be supposed that Philip was satisfied with himself; but he was a coward, and he not only succeeded in dodging his conscience, but he was even weak and wicked enough to take further advantage of May.

It was the afternoon of the fourth day after the fire and the General was in his library when Dr. Brentwood came in, looking disturbed and even angry. [126]

"General," said he, "do you know what kind of boy that nephew of yours is?"

The General grew red in the face; criticism of any one "with Haines blood in their veins," to use his frequent expression, was distasteful to him.

"As he is my nephew I presume he is, on the whole, a very good kind of boy," he said, at length.

"He is a very bad kind of boy, indeed," the doctor replied. "He is a dangerous boy."

"What has he done? Can't you speak out?" roared the General.

"He gave Philip both cigarettes and tobacco, threatening him with some form of torture if he did not smoke them. We found the tobacco on Philip's premises and forced him into a full confession of your nephew's culpability."

"This explains the match and the fire," thought the General. He said aloud, "I will question Gay about the matter."

"He will deny it; Philip said he would, and the poor boy begged me, with tears in his eyes, not to tell you of it. I thought you ought to know it, for, from what Philip says, Gay must be a hard case," the doctor said.

The General rang the bell and Phyllis answered it. [127]

"Send Gay here," commanded the General.

"Yes, sir," said Phyllis, hurrying away, for she surmised that the doctor's presence might be of benefit to the unhappy child.

"Run, Gay," she said to May, when she found her, "Dr. Brentwood is in the library, and they want you."

"Philip has told," May thought, with delight.

She went quickly to the library and stood before the General with a lighter heart than she had carried since she had been in disgrace. "I'm all right, now," thought she.

"Gay," said the General, sternly, "the doctor tells me that you have given tobacco to Philip, threatening him if he did not use it at your bidding. What have you to say?"

Poor May! Her hope died away at those words. For an instant she was tempted to cast aside her disguise, to say, "I am a girl," and stand forth in her true colors. No one would believe that a girl had given a boy tobacco.

"Well," said the General, impatiently, "what have you to say for yourself?"

"That it is not true," said May.

"I told you he would deny it," said the doctor.

"It is useless to deny it; Philip has said that you did it," said the General.

"Philip has said what is not true," May said. [128]

"Do you question Philip's word?" blustered the doctor.

"There is no question about it, sir; Philip doesn't know how to speak the truth," May replied.

"Gay," said the General, in his most decided manner, "I insist that you take back the words you have spoken to Dr. Brentwood, and that you promise to apologize to Philip."

"I can't take back what I have said, because it is true. And I shall not apologize to Philip," May answered, unflinchingly.

"Leave the room, sir!" shouted the General, looking very red and angry.

Then when May had left the room to weep bitter tears in the arms of the faithful Phyllis, the General said,—

"Doctor, you see what a stubborn boy he is! But he shall apologize handsomely to you and to Philip before the week has passed."

And with this assurance the doctor went away.

When the doctor was gone the General summoned Sarah and related the events that had just occurred.

"Now," said he, with an ominous flash in his deep-set eyes, "we will see what bread and water and solitary confinement will do for the young rebel."

"Who will play jailer?" Sarah asked, with eyes that flashed as brightly as the General's. "I certainly shall not." [129]

"Then I will," said the General, with decision.

"You will be alone in the jail, for I shall not keep house for a jailer," said Sarah with equal decision. "Remember that!"

CHAPTER XIX
THE EVENT OF THE SEASON.

Giving a tea-party at Rose Cottage was a serious business. Miss Linn, Miss Celia, Margery and even John were as busy as ants all the morning. There were snow puddings, ices, cakes and custards to be made, and nobody knows what these old-time housewives and fosterers of dyspepsia did not deem necessary for Gay's spread.

It was great fun at first to watch the work going on; to have "tastes" of this or that offered for one's verdict, and to eat all the little cakes that refused to turn out of their tins as well-regulated little cakes should. But even this position of taster-in-ordinary grew monotonous, and the incessant noise of the egg-beaters working in merry unison seemed to whisk the thoughts out of Gay's head, and he was glad to retire at an early hour from the kitchen to the welcome quiet of his own room. It cannot be said that his absence was regretted by the cooks; in trying "to help" he had upset a freshly-iced cake; dropped a glass dish of custard; spilled a pitcher of milk; broken six eggs; and scalded his hand in lifting an open vessel of water off the stove; not to mention his [131] being a good deal in the way.

Gay had a reason for seeking his chamber; he wished to look through poor May's depleted wardrobe and see if there was a whole dress to wear to the party. There were two; one a dainty white muslin, the other a plain white lawn, both to be worn, much to his disgust, with a sash. He instantly rejected the dainty frock, which would have been the real May's choice, because of bows of blue ribbon on the shoulders and sleeves.

"None of that in mine!" he said, disdainfully, rolling his sister's best frock in a wad and thrusting it back into the trunk.

To wear with the plainer lawn dress he selected a black sash, since he must wear one, as being more quiet and gentleman-like. In honor of the occasion he took some pains with his hands, but forgot to take off his tennis shoes until Margery reminded him of it.

"You must put on better shoes, Miss May," Margery said, who had been invited up-stairs to tie the black sash. "And why don't you put on one of those pretty bright sashes?"

"It isn't the thing to dress better than one's guests," said sly Gay, with a wise air. "You wouldn't want me to knock spots out of the girls, would you?"

[132] "Mercy, no; you mustn't knock spots out o' them girls. They are the nicest in town, Miss May. No fighting with them, I beg of you. It was well enough, perhaps, to take hold of them boys, for they have tormented us to pieces all summer, but you mustn't think of knocking spots out of them fine young ladies."

"Oh, Margery, to knock spots out of anybody doesn't mean to fight them!"

"Doesn't it? Well, I'm glad of it," said Margery, with a sigh of relief.

When Gay was left alone he planned his campaign; he meant to distinguish himself and make his aunts proud of him, and to do this without thought was beyond his ability. "I'll say something to each one. That's the way mother does. I'll act just like Alice! That's a bang-up idea! And I mustn't forget that I'm a girl," thought he.

Having planned his line of conduct Gay went down into the drawing-room, where Miss Linn and Miss Celia sat in state, with a smiling decorum that would have reflected credit upon the sweetest little girl that ever lived—upon May, for example.

Very soon the guests, pretty, quiet little girls, with correct and agreeable manners, as became the descendants of Hazelnook's best families, began to arrive. Gay met them with the best imitation of Alice's manner that could be assumed at short notice; greeting them cordially and [133] with such easy grace that anxious Miss Linn was delighted.

"I must begin to say something to each one," thought Gay. "It looks easy when mother does it, but I can't seem to get it in before they get out of the way!"

"May, this is Ethel Payne," said Miss Celia, who presented the girls to Gay.

"How do you do, Ethel?" Gay said, shaking Ethel's hand warmly. "Do—ah—do—you play ball?"

"No," answered astonished Ethel. "But my brother Ned does."

"Does he? When is he coming?" asked Gay, eagerly.

"He is not coming to-day; only girls are invited, you know."

"Only girls! phew!" exclaimed Gay. Then realizing that this was scarcely courteous, he added, "How beautiful!"

"Yes, you seem to think so," laughed Ethel, as she moved away.

"This is Mabel Bryant."

"I'm glad to see you, Mabel," said Gay. "What shall I say to her?" he thought. "Have you"—he jerked out,—"have you been in swimming much this summer?"

Mabel stared. "No," she said, rather primly.

[134] "And here is Sadie Carver, May."

Gay turned delightedly to the new-comer. "I'm awfully glad you came," he cried, seizing Sadie's

hand. "Is Lyman coming? You've a brother named Lyman, haven't you?"

"I have no brothers," said Sadie, looking very much affronted, though Gay couldn't imagine why.

"That's a pity. Lyman is such a rattling good fellow. He's captain of the Blue Stockings, and his father who drives the stage is more fun than—a tied goat."

Sadie's face grew very red. "Those Carvers are no relation to us; they are a very common family," said she.

"I thought they were quite un-common, but I may be mistaken," replied Gay, thinking that he shouldn't like Sadie at all.

"May, this is Julia Paige, the doctor's daughter."

"I'm glad to see you," said Gay.

"Thank you," Julia replied.

"Do you like living in Hazelnook?"

"Yes, I like living here," Julia answered, looking somewhat surprised, perhaps at the question.

"Better—than in Russia, do you think?"

Julia's expression of surprise deepened. "I don't know about Russia," she said.

"You might like Greece better?" hazarded Gay. "Or, perhaps, Dakota?"

Julia's reply to these remarkable questions was not given, for just then a peal of the door bell caused everybody to jump and to look through the open door into the hall. Margery opened the door and there stood Lyman, Robert, Will, Fred, Joe and Herb. [135]

"Excuse me!" cried Gay to astonished Miss Celia. Then with a bound he was in the hall, saying, "Come right in, fellows. I'm mighty glad to see you."

By this time Miss Celia and Miss Linn were ready to welcome the unexpected guests. After the introductions were gone through with, the boys drew a little apart and this gave Gay a chance to say,—

"I invited them yesterday. I don't know how I happened to forget to tell you. I suppose there are ices enough, aren't there?"

"Yes," said agitated Miss Linn.

Miss Celia watched the scene with interest; she was anxious to see how the fusion of the antagonistic elements was to be accomplished. She was not kept long in suspense. Taking Lyman's arm Gay led him round the room, introducing him to each prim lassie, with contagious ease of manner. After Lyman it was Robert's turn, then Will's, and thus it went until all the boys had been introduced.

Five terrible minutes followed. The boys huddled together, looking as if they might leave at any moment en masse, like a flock of frightened sheep! The girls drew apart, looking as austere as merry maidens of twelve summers can look. This would never do! A bright idea seized Gay. [136]

"Ethel, do the girls know how to play 'Going to Jerusalem'?" he asked, anxiously.

"Yes," she replied, "but I don't believe those boys do."

"Boys can play any game naturally; they don't need to know how," laughed Gay.

"How do you know so much about boys?" asked Ethel, quizzically.

"By instinct," replied Gay, soberly, but with laughing eyes.

It may not have been just the thing, but Gay electrified the company by exclaiming,—

"Please take partners for 'Going to Jerusalem'!"

There was a hush over the room for an instant, then Gay whispered to Lyman,—

"Brace up and ask Miss Ethel."

Lyman obeyed and that set the ball rolling.

"I will play," said Miss Celia.

"And, auntie, will you call?" said Gay.

"I will call," said Miss Linn, taking her place by the piano.

Miss Celia struck the first chord and the game began. There were plenty of mistakes at first but they only served to break the ice of conventionality. The boys behaved admirably; so, strangely enough, did Gay; while the girls, led by Julia and Ethel, soon became gracious and natural. When they tired of the game Miss Linn undertook to initiate them into the mysteries of some old-fashioned games she had played in her youth, and with intervals for rest, the fun continued with increased enjoyment until they went out into the dining-room. [137]

White frock and sash entitled Gay to a seat; but having played the active part of a boy for eleven years it was hard for him to relapse into the passive condition of a girl; to sit down and be waited upon. So he threw conventionality to the winds and flew about, serving the girls and helping the boys do their duty.

"Auntie," Gay said to Miss Celia, when everybody was chattering and laughing, and when even austere Sadie was actually eating a bon-bon with a member of the "common" Carver family, "I

think they are having a good time, don't you?"

"Yes," said Aunt Celia, "you make a nice hostess, dear."

"Mother always says try to make everybody glad they came, and that is all there is to entertaining. So I tried. Nice boys, aren't they? And the girls are nice, too; particularly Ethel and Julia. I think they felt a little snubby at first, but they never showed their inside feelings a bit, and that's pretty hard for a girl, for when she feels snubby inside her nose goes up on the outside." [138]

After supper there were more games and Dumb Crambo formed an edifying feature of the entertainment, but the party came to an end at length as all good things must in time. Everybody went away in high spirits. The boys expressed their pleasure in unqualified terms.

"It is the nicest time we ever had in Hazelnook," said Lyman, as the spokesman for the party. "Nobody else ever treated us as square as Brown has, and we are much obliged to her for it."

This was not an elegant adieu, perhaps, but it was sincere.

"Lyman," whispered the unblushing recipient of this praise, "don't forget to let me know about the ball game to-morrow; I'll get out, some way."

When the last guests were gone Gay and the aunts went into the drawing-room to talk it over.

"Pretty jolly time, wasn't it?" asked Gay, with a smile of satisfaction.

"The best of it is that it will do both the boys and the girls good to be brought together," said Miss Celia, "and I doubt if it would have been done if you had not come to Hazelnook."

"Well, you see," said Gay, earnestly, "I can't see any sense in putting one kind of people in one lump and another in another and having them think that they're different kind of folks, because they aren't at all, as you can tell easily enough if you take one out of each lump and change them about?" [139]

"You were a niece to be proud of to-day, May," said Miss Linn, who was gratified at her young relation's social success, and not disposed to discuss the laws governing society in general.

"I don't think I'm much of a niece," said Gay, with a wicked grin, "but I'm glad if you are pleased with me. I meant to make them have a whooping old time."

And the two gentle aunts heard this outburst of slang without changing color, and in silence, so rapid had been their educational progress since the advent of their supposed niece.

A little later when Gay was taking off frock and sash in his room, his self-satisfaction was disturbed by an unpleasant thought, and he ran to the banisters and called,

"Aunt Celia, isn't it a shame; I forgot to ask Patsey. He's a splendid boy—I hope he won't feel hurt."

The aunts exchanged glances.

"She's hopeless!" sighed Miss Linn.

"A little lacking in social instinct, perhaps," faltered Miss Celia, as bewildered by this remark as her sister, but determined not to own it. "I've no doubt," she said, with unexpected inspiration, "that she will grow up to be a very elegant woman; such harum-scarums often do." [140]

CHAPTER XX [141]

THE BELLE OF HAZELNOOK

Gay awoke the next morning, feeling that something delightful was in prospect.

"What is it, I wonder?" questioned the sleeper, just summoned from dreamland. "Oh, I know, it's the ball-game!"

Gay sprang out of bed and ran to the window to see if the weather was clear. Yes; the sun was up, smiling his most charming welcome, and Gay began to dress with the reckless haste of one who must be up and away. Such haste was unnecessary; the ball-game was not to be played until afternoon, but having something to look forward to adds impetus to one's movements.

"I must put on a strong waist; I don't want my clothes to fall apart on the diamond!" said Gay to himself. "That's the worst of being a girl; it's such a bother to keep picking out dresses. Yesterday I wore this white dress, but I can't put it on to-day. No, I have to hunt through the closet for something else. This flannel blazer will be just the thing to wear with this flannel skirt; it's ripped a little but I guess it will hold. I don't dare to say anything about it for fear Aunt Beulah will make me mend it! I wonder if I can run in skirts. I guess I'll take a turn in the back yard and find out!" [142]

No one was astir but Margery, who was at work in the kitchen when Gay came in.

"Good morning, Margery."

"What are ye up so early for? Ain't ye tired after your party?"

"Not a bit. Nice party, wasn't it, and aren't those splendid boys, particularly Lyman?"

"Ye-es, they ain't bad boys for common folks, but there are ever so many nicer boys in the village, Miss May; real, little fine gentlemen, an' their fathers and grandfathers before them were

gentlemen."

"They are not anything but boys, are they?"

"No, I suppose not; but they are different from that stuff that was here last night."

"Boys are boys, that's all they are. There are two kinds, perhaps; cads, cowards, tell-tales and mean boys are one kind; the splendid fellows are the other kind. There are poor cads and rich cads; rich splendid fellows and poor splendid fellows; white cowards and black cowards, and white mean fellows and black mean fellows. You see, Margery, you can't tell a bit by a fellow's father what he'll be; you've got to judge by the fellow himself. If he is all right he is and that's the end of it. If he isn't right, why, that's the end of it, too, for everybody jumps the cad or the coward just as quick as he shows his colors." [143]

"It's a mystery how you know so much about boys, Miss May."

"I play with boys all the time."

"I shouldn't think your ma and pa would like that."

"They do like it."

"Well, it's a mystery! It's all along o' them higher edication notions, Miss Linn says, but I don't understand it. Times have changed since your ma was brought up fifteen or twenty years ago. I don't know what they'll be twenty years from now when maybe you'll be a ma yourself."

"And maybe not!" laughed Gay, leaving the kitchen and going out into the shady backyard, for his morning practise. Exercises were about to commence when Lyman came into the yard.

"Game's off, Brown," said he.

"What's up?" asked Gay, anxiously.

"We were going to play the Plainvilles but their captain is off his base and we'll have to put it off till Saturday or maybe Monday. We'll let you know of course if you still think you'd like to come."

"Well, I should smile!"

Lyman laughed when this slang cameo fell from Gay's lips. "You are the greatest girl I ever saw!" said he. [144]

"I dare say I am," said Gay.

"And the nicest," said Lyman, thinking his first remark not very complimentary. "You're not a bit like other girls; you're so square and such sport. Are there any more like you in New York?"

"Lots," said Gay, thinking what fun it would be when Lyman found out the truth. "I've a sister—we call her Brownie—she's twice as good as I am. She is as square as a brick and full of fun. She isn't quite as handy with her fists as I am, but she's quick, I can tell you! She can swim like a fish, she can play a fine game of tennis, and she's just the best girl going. You can't put her anywhere that she doesn't come to time."

"She must be a daisy! How old is she?"

"About my age; I hope you'll see Brownie some day—you'd like her. She——" Gay paused abruptly. How was it faring with that absent sister? Well or ill? Well, of course, he reasoned, it was so easy to be a boy!

Easy for a boy, certainly, but at that very moment the little girl in Cedarville was finding it exceedingly difficult to be a boy. While Gay was the heroine of Hazelnook May was the hero of Cedarville, but with what varying degrees of success and pleasure were their positions attended. Gay was popular and happy; May was unhappy and in disgrace. Their even exchange had not worked evenly. [145]

"I must be off; I've got to work haying to-day," said Lyman.

"I'd love to work in a hay-field—to ride on a big rake, or do you use the little ones with long handles?" asked Gay, with eager interest.

"Both; little and big horse rakes. They wouldn't let you come, would they?" said Lyman, meaning the aunts by "they."

"I suppose not."

"If you can come I'll tell you the way. Keep right on past the post office till you come to a big meadow—you'll see me there."

"I'll show up if I can."

"Some of the other fellows will be there and they will be glad to see you. I'll tell you what it is, Brown, there isn't one of us but would do anything for you, for there isn't another swell young miss in the place that would have acted as you have right along."

"Drop the swell, can't you? There's only one kind of a swell worth mentioning—the square one—and I'm not that. You wouldn't think so if you knew me."

"You can deny it," said Lyman earnestly, "but you'd feel as we do if you had lived in a country town all your life and no one looked at you except they wanted some work done at Christmas or Easter or a Sunday-school picnic, and then somebody that people thought a swell should come and take you by the hand and treat you like—anybody. That's what you did." [146]

"I took you under the ear, first," remarked Gay.

This unfeminine, if playful, rejoinder did not disconcert Lyman. "Well, wasn't that treating me like an equal?" he asked, triumphantly.

"I think I understand it. All the talk about being equal is bosh, I think, but it is enough to make one act like sin to be treated as if one was of no account. But you boys ought to brace up and show what you call swells that you are better than they are. That's the way to get even with such people; be really nicer than they are."

Lyman looked admiringly at Gay. "You'd make anybody try," said he, "I never heard the minister say anything half as brightening-up like."

"What minister? The one that hangs out here all the time?"

"Yes."

"Of course he never said anything but his prayers! And I'll bet he says them looking in the glass. Why, he doesn't know the boys in his congregation—what kind of a father would a man be if he didn't know the children in his family? And a congregation is just a large family, that's all." [147]

"But people say he's going to marry your Aunt Celia."

"That milk and water—mostly water—man? Not much, my boy! Aunt Celia's head is too level for that."

When Lyman was gone away Gay wondered if the gossip about his aunt and the minister was true. "If it is," he said to himself, "I'll never call him uncle; not even to please Aunt Celia. When they ask me I'll say—politely, of course, but so they'll know I mean it—'Do you think I'll call him uncle? Not much!'"

It was not until afternoon that Gay had an opportunity to join his friends in the hay-field. Once there he soon became the centre of attraction; the boys clustered round and were so delightfully cordial in their manners—Lyman had duly reported the conversation of the morning—that Gay was quite overcome and felt like telling the truth and having some kind of a real boy's game to knock the edge off their compliments. He did so far forget himself as to suggest leap frog, but the boys declined the honor, possibly from a sense of propriety. The boys were occasionally surprised by the freedom of Gay's manner, but as Robert said, later, when the subject was under discussion, "It isn't altogether Brown's manners that we're stuck on; it's her friendliness and because we know she is true blue." [148]

Gay was introduced to the men in the fields, who showed their appreciation of the supposed "she" by inviting her to ride on the load of hay. Gay not only accepted the invitation but helped put the hay in the stable-driver's barn. It was a charming afternoon and the youthful haymakers enjoyed it.

"Making hay knocks spots out of parties!" said Gay. "I never had such fun in my life."

Ethel Payne, her brother Ned, and the minister, of course, were on the porch when Gay came home.

"Where have you been?" said Miss Linn. "We have looked everywhere for you, dear."

"I've been helping Mr. Carver get his hay in. It was fun. I drank molasses and water out of a stone jug and I got almost all of it in my mouth; a little of it went down my neck, but not much."

The minister tried not to look disgusted; jolly Ethel tried not to laugh; Ned tried not to stare; the aunts tried not to look displeased—and all did precisely what they tried not to do.

"But you didn't ask permission, dear," said Miss Celia, reproachfully. This sudden relapse into evil ways after the excellent behavior of yesterday was mortifying to the lady.

"I know it, auntie," said Gay, stealing his arm around Miss Celia's neck. "If I had asked permission you wouldn't have let me go." [149]

Miss Celia smiled at this reasoning, and Ned and Ethel laughed.

"It must have been fun on the hay," said Ethel. "Mustn't it, Ned?"

"Yes, I'd have liked it myself," said Ned, graciously.

"Come with me to-morrow morning, won't you?" asked Gay. "Mr. Carver has another load to get in and the boys would be glad to see you."

"I'm not sure of that," said Ned. "They are always firing stones at us Academy fellows."

"What did you Academy boys do first? Something, I'll bet."

"May, you must try not to use slang," murmured Miss Linn.

"Uncle George says slang is picturesque English," laughed mischievous Gay. "I try not to use it, for mother says she doesn't like too much of it, but it slips in. It's such handy stuff, you always find it when you want it, and sometimes when you don't, and that's more than you can say of proper words. But, Ned, what have the Academy fellows done?"

"We may have called them a name or two," admitted Ned.

"And they answered with a stone about as hard as your name. Well, I don't see much to choose between stones and names," said Gay. [150]

"Perhaps not," said Ned. He was not insensible to Gay's reasoning, but he was not quite ready to admit its truth.

"I fear, Miss May," began the minister, endeavoring to speak pleasantly, although feeling an un-Christian desire to shake this terrible child, "I fear that your parents would not approve of your intimacy with these boys; they are uncultivated and otherwise undesirable acquaintances."

"Excuse me, sir," said Gay, with exasperating politeness, "you said you didn't know the boys; if you don't how do you know that they are uncultivated and undesirable?"

"I know the class they represent," explained the minister, not without impatience, for he did not like to be argued with by a child.

"If they are uncultivated I should think a good way to keep them so would be for cultivated people to avoid knowing them," Gay said, slowly.

"I fear you are a hopeless radical, Miss May," the minister said with a desire to bring the conversation to an end.

"Radical" was a new word to Gay, but he grasped its meaning after a moment's thought. "I am afraid I am," said he, "if radical means somebody who thinks one person should be treated as well as another."

CHAPTER XXI

[151]

THE SKY BRIGHTENS

The General must have thought his housekeeper too valuable to lose, for May was neither placed under lock and key nor condemned to prison fare of bread and water. In one way this order of severity would have been easier to bear than daily meetings with the silent General. Only a child of coarse calibre can stand out against the silent condemnation of an elder; to May, who had lived in an atmosphere of sunshine, the General's demeanor was well-nigh unbearable. Confession trembled on her lips more than once, but was repressed.

"What good will it do to tell?" she argued with herself. "Uncle Harold will not believe what I say until something happens to change his opinion of me."

The last accusation, that of sowing the seeds of tobacco-using, did not trouble May greatly. That would be easily disposed of when it was known that she was a girl; no one, then, would believe that she had given a boy tobacco. But a girl might fire a heap of hay and tell a fib about it afterwards, both acts being within a girl's province of wickedness. [152] And if Philip never told, and if her uncle continued to disbelieve her, might not everybody, Gay, father, mother, all, believe her guilty? This thought brought May to the verge of despair.

Every morning a message was brought to May, "Will you apologize?" And to this message the unvarying reply was returned, "No, sir."

This exchange of semi-hostilities was the only intercourse between May and her uncle. The General began to feel some respect for a nature that could hold out against the enemy and refuse to yield even under continuous siege. "He's a naughty boy, but I believe he has the making of a soldier," thought the old man.

One day the uncle and the mock nephew encountered one another on the porch.

"Well, boy," said the uncle sitting down as if to make ready for a confession.

"Oh, Uncle Harold, if you would only believe me!" cried May, overcome by this unwonted gentleness.

"I will when you tell the truth; take back your words to the doctor and apologize to Philip," the General replied.

"Can't you see that I'm telling the truth and that I can't apologize to Philip?" May exclaimed, earnestly, clasping her hands on the General's arm and looking into his eyes. [153]

The General rose, and put aside the clinging hands. He wanted to take the childish figure in his arms and forgive all that had passed, but the determination to conquer the stubborn will opposed to his own withheld him.

"I shall say no more about the matter. When you have anything to tell me you can seek me," he said, and then he walked away to hide his feelings.

"Philip did it!" May's lips formed these words, but no sound came from them. "Tell him," an inward voice whispered. May looked after the retreating figure; its outline was so stern that her courage faded and she turned hopelessly away in the other direction. "What is the use; he wouldn't believe me," she said to herself.

This encounter bore good fruit, however. It helped May to make an effort to lift the heavy cloud of suspicion that rested upon her. In the afternoon she asked Phyllis to walk over to the village with her.

"If Miss Sarah is willing," said Phyllis.

Sarah was willing, but when Phyllis said, "He's going to make that Brentwood boy speak out," she said, "Haven't you got that idea out of your head yet?"

"No, Miss Sarah," Phyllis replied, "I'm surer of it than ever since Dr. Brentwood said Gay had [154]

given Philip tobacco—the idea of it! That Philip is a little scamp; you see if I am not right."

This decided expression of opinion from her meek serving-maid so surprised Sarah that she allowed Phyllis to depart without saying a word!

It was indeed May's intention to see Philip, but when Dr. Brentwood's was reached they were told that Philip had gone, with a companion, to play near the lake. "But the doctor is in his office," said the maid, looking significantly at May.

It was plain that she knew the whole story, and thought the young caller had come to make the expected apology, and so, also, thought the doctor, who was looking through the window and trying to persuade himself not to be too severe with the corrupter of Philip's morals.

"I don't care to see the doctor," May replied, with rising color. Then she added, "I am going to the lake, Phyllis."

"Very well," said Phyllis, now more than ever convinced of the insight of her conjectures.

Philip and his friend were in a boat a short distance from the shore. They were not rowing but drifting, and rocking the boat from side to side.

"I want to see you, Philip; come ashore, please."

The rocking ceased. "I don't want to see you," Philip answered, telling the truth, in its deepest significance, unintentionally. "I shall not come ashore." And the rocking was resumed. [155]

"You will have to come ashore some time; I will wait for you," May answered. "Sit down, Phyllis; I shall wait for him if I stay all night."

They sat down on the grass-fringed edge of the lake. Philip and his companion rocked, and jumped, and shouted noisily. They were too far distant for May or Phyllis to hear how it began, but presently they began to dispute and to push each other, and then, somehow—for no one ever knows how such accidents occur—they made a false movement, the boat tipped over on one side, and they went into the water with a great splash. The boat righted itself and swung idly on the little waves.

"They will drown!" shouted Phyllis, springing to her feet.

"No, they won't," said May. "They will get a good wetting, that's all. The water can't be deep; besides, Philip told me he could swim."

"They are not swimming," said Phyllis. "We'd better go for somebody."

"Help!" shouted one of the boys, coming to the surface.

At this cry May threw her hat on the bank and walked into the water without a word.

"Come back!" cried Phyllis, in alarm.

But May kept on. By this time the water was on a level with her chest, and she struck out boldly. She was a fearless swimmer and the distance was short, but as she swam along she could not help thinking, uneasily, "I wonder if I can manage both!" [156]

When she reached them Philip was doing his utmost, in his fright, to drown himself and his companion, and must have succeeded in doing so if May had not arrived. She grasped him by the back, and they rose to the surface, where she made him understand that he must loose his hold of his companion. This he did and clung to May instead, plunging, struggling, and screaming, but she was equal to him, and by scolding, persuading and even threatening him she kept him afloat until the other boy, who could swim very well, recovered his breath, then together they got Philip ashore.

"I couldn't have held him a minute longer," gasped the boy, when they were on land again. "Philip hung hold of me so—why, I should think he must have been as strong as ten men—and he grabbed me every time I tried to swim a stroke and pulled me down. Oh, it was awful!"

"I thought you could swim," said May, "else I'd have been there sooner."

She didn't say "Philip told me he could swim," and for the first time since their acquaintance began, Philip appreciated May's forbearance and realized that the "girl-boy," "coward," and "sissy," had returned his evil conduct with good. His shame would have increased had he known that he was indebted to a girl for his safety. [157]

"You're a good swimmer," said Philip's companion.

"I ought to be," said May, beginning to wring blouse and knickerbocker to get rid of the water. "Father taught my brother and me to swim when we were four years old, and he says we took to the water as naturally as Newfoundland puppies. How do you feel, Philip?" May added, with an anxious glance at Philip, who had not spoken, and who stood at her side, shivering, and looking blue and pinched about his nose and mouth.

"Queer," Philip replied, faintly.

"You must move around," May said, taking Philip's hands and chafing them smartly. "The best thing to do is to start for home. Wring yourself out a little, Philip; then we'll go."

But Philip protested that he was dying and couldn't walk a step, and that somebody must go for his grandfather's carriage.

"I'll go," said Philip's friend.

"No," said May, decidedly, "Philip must keep moving or he'll take cold. Come, Philip, take my

arm, and your friend——"

"My name is Rob Lawrence," interrupted the boy. [158]

"And Rob will take your other arm, and you can get along nicely," May continued.

Philip took the proffered arms very meekly and the procession moved; Philip, Rob and May abreast, and Phyllis in the next rank, carrying May's hat and weeping quietly from sheer excitement. When they reached the Brentwood's, they helped exhausted Philip in at a side door. "I want you to come in with me," he said.

"I can't, I'm so wet," said May; "I'll come down by and by."

"I want you to come in now; I may be dead by and by," said Philip, tragically.

So they went in, Rob, May, and Phyllis, the latter privately convinced that some new infliction was in store for her favorite. This was an unnecessary suspicion, as she soon learned.

The maid preceded them into the drawing-room, crying,—

"Oh, docther, docther, Master Philip is drownded, and the Gineral's boy pulled him out alive!"

Then there was a great flurry! Grandmamma Brentwood tried to faint and the General, who was making an afternoon call, supplied her with water, and a bouquet of roses, from a handy vase! The water and indignation brought the old lady out of her swoon, and just then Philip and May and Rob, all dripping like half-wrung clothes, came in, followed by faithful Phyllis. [159]

"Grandpapa!" said Philip, and oh, how hard the words came! "when I was drowning—I threw the matches in the hay. I didn't really mean to do it—I was ashamed when I was being pulled ashore—that tobacco and stuff was mine—and—Gay told the truth and I—didn't!"

This was incoherent, but everybody understood it. The General opened his arms to May, then and there, and she nestled within them and nobody as much as thought of the damage her water-soaked clothing might do to the General's "old-school" finery. Doctor and Mrs. Brentwood looked sadly at their shame-faced grandchild. As for Phyllis, it was the happiest moment of her life—not only was her pet completely vindicated, but now she could prove to her mistress that her reasoning powers had not been injured by excess of romance reading.

The doctor was ashamed of the part his belief in Philip had caused him to play. "Gay," said he, "why didn't you tell in the first place that Philip set the hay afire?"

"I thought Philip would tell," May replied. "And he has told and that is all there is about it." May glanced at Philip with a forgiving smile, and he smiled in return, with full appreciation of her magnanimity.

"No, that is not all," said the doctor, sternly. "You shall say what punishment shall be Philip's." [160]

"Punishment!" echoed May in astonishment. "I should think he'd had enough already! with doing what he was ashamed of, and half drowning besides."

"He'd have been wholly drowned if it hadn't been for you. And so would I," Rob ventured to say.

"What shall we do to him?" persisted the doctor. "He made you suffer; it is only justice that you should select his punishment."

"I shouldn't call that justice," said May decidedly. "I should call it paying him back, and father won't let us think of doing such things. If you please, Doctor Brentwood, I think we'll call it square as it is." She turned to Philip and added, earnestly, "You won't be so hateful again, will you?"

"No," Philip replied, so soberly that May did not doubt his sincerity.

Then somebody was wise enough to realize that the children were courting lung fever and rheumatism. May scampered for home, and was dressed in a dry suit before the General and Phyllis got there, and before Sarah knew anything about it.

When Sarah heard the story she expressed no surprise. "Phyllis and I have thought for some time that Philip knew more about it than he chose to tell," she said.

This cool assertion naturally surprised Phyllis, but a little later she received a second shock of surprise beside which the first faded into insignificance. Sarah gave her a bunch of keys, saying,— [161]

"The keys of the small storeroom. Hereafter you will deal out the stores to the farm hands. Anybody that ferreted out Philip's mischief deserves to have the control of keys." Then, because Phyllis didn't know what to say, she added, "Take them; don't stand there looking as if you hadn't an idea in your head."

"Yes'm," said Phyllis, accepting the keys without another word.

As for the General, he held May on his knees all the evening, so proud, so happy, and so contrite was he. May would hear no reproaches, but the General silently vowed never again to doubt his "little soldier."

But bless you, he did! Within twenty-four hours the unfortunate "little soldier" was once more in disgrace.

CHAPTER XXII
THE DEAREST GIRL

[162]

The next morning Dr. Brentwood drove over to the General's with a message from Philip; he was sick in bed; would Gay come and see him?

"Why, of course I'll go," said sympathetic May. "And I'll stay as long as he wants me."

This answer seemed so broad-minded, viewed in the light of the recent events, that the General saw May drive away with the doctor with feelings of pride and pleasure.

"He's the finest boy I have ever known!" the General said to Sarah.

"I told you so, but you called him a 'molly cott' and a 'girl boy.'"

"I admit my error. Fancy my calling that manly little fellow such names! A boy of the best type, Sarah; an out-and-out boy."

"Anybody can see that. I don't take any credit to myself for seeing just what kind of a boy he is, for honesty, sincerity and loveableness shine right out on his bright little face, bless him!"

[163]

"That is true, Sarah. Still, I believe that the first day he came you said you didn't take any stock in him—how is that?"

"Quite a different thing. But I can't waste my time here; I've something to do elsewhere," and Sarah hurried away, leaving the General smiling broadly.

Once in awhile, as often as a very wicked man has a good impulse, let us say, the General enjoyed a quiet laugh at the expense of his housekeeper, and it made him feel at peace with all mankind. It was in a very agreeable frame of mind, therefore, that he sought his library and picked up what he believed to be a book of the Æneid, opened it at random, and at a passage that was worse than Greek to him. It was:

"*Wednesday*—I wish I had never tried to be a Boy. I drilled this morning with Uncle Harold and a dreadful rifle. I blistered my hands, carrying the gun that wanted to explode and kill everybody, and my heels marching front rank obleek."

"Bless me!" exclaimed the General; then he read the next entry.

"*Thursday.*—I don't mind drilling with a rifle that has cotton wool in it. I wish Gay was here and I was in Hazelnook. I don't like to deceve. Uncle H. half-and-half likes me; Sarah and Fillis like me. I wish I could have a dress like Fillises and Miss Sarah's. When I am a girl again I shall ask mother if I may have one, and wear a little apron and a kerchief, and have a bunch of kees. I have two kees of my own, and Gay might let me have the kee to his tool chest; then he would know where it was. I don't think my uncle is very hospityable; but, maybe, that is my punishment for letting him think I am a boy. They got punished in Bible times, for things they did—grasshoppers like a cloud and lots more; and I think people get punished now—not grasshoppers, perhaps, because there aren't enough now to go round. There is a tiny, wee chest in the attic filled with a little girl's clothes. I put them all on. It seemed good and very natcheral, too, although the dresses must be a hundred and seventy-five years old, at least. I like knickerbockers. I rode bareback on old Kate, the roan mare, yesterday, and climbed to the top of the tree in the corner of the garden, and I did it a great deal easier than I could in skirts.

[164]

"P. S.—I musn't forget the officer's salute."

"*In the afternoon.*—We are friends! Now I feel worse than I did before, because I am deseving somebody that likes me."

"What does this mean?" thought the General, when he had read these remarkable disclosures. "Is Gay a girl? Is he my nephew or my niece, or somebody else altogether! If he—she—has been cheating me all this time I shall never forgive him—her, I mean."

[165]

Then, stifling his conscience by saying that he was not spying, but looking into something that needed to be looked into—I am not sure that he did not say, "For the good of the commonwealth!"—the General finished reading the poor little journal, all blotted as it was with ink and tears. As he read, his emotions ranged from pity to anger; from anger back to pity again. He pitied the suffering of the child; he was angry at the deceit that had been practised upon him.

"Sarah!" he called, when he had read the last entry made that morning in his own library, and possibly interrupted by the arrival of the doctor, for a sentence was left unfinished. "Sarah, come here!"

"What is it?" said Sarah, appearing at the door.

"Come in," said the General.

Sarah entered the room, and seated herself with an ill-concealed air of indifference in the most uncomfortable chair in the room. She never sat in a comfortable chair during an interview with the General; it seemed as if she feared being led into a state of amiable receptivity if her body were at ease; it was her way of delivering herself from temptation to be acquiescent.

[166]

"An unexpected complication," the General began. "A most unexpec——"

"What is it?" demanded Sarah, cutting him short.

"Read this and see for yourself," the General replied, extending May's journal.

Sarah took the leather-bound book and read it through without comment.

"Well," said the General, impatiently, "what do you think of it? Have you ever known such duplicity?"

"No duplicity about it," Sarah said, contrary-minded, as usual. "These children went into it for a 'lark,' as Gay—May, I mean—says here. Just think of that dear little girl drilling, putting out fires, keeping up during that Brentwood scrape, and pulling that boy out of the pond! I declare, when I think of that Philip, I'd like to shake him. If our child is a girl, she is the pluckiest one I have ever seen!"

"Sarah!" said the General, weakly, "you are the most inconsistent woman I have ever known."

"You haven't known women enough to be able to judge of my inconsistency," Sarah rejoined, dryly.

"I shall write to their father and to Hazelnook to-night," said the General, glad to change the subject.

"If you've a grain of sense you'll do nothing of the sort," Sarah exclaimed. "Those children kept quiet that their mother might not be troubled, and you mustn't break up all their plans." [167]

"I will take Gay, or May, or whichever it is, down to Hazelnook to-morrow, and straighten out matters there," said the General.

"It would be a good idea to stop this masquerading just where it is," Sarah admitted. "You had better bring Gay—May—back with you, unless you prefer the boy, and let her finish her visit here in her own clothes."

"I don't think I prefer the boy," the General said rather sheepishly. "Still——"

"You know you love that child better than you could love fifty boys!" cried Sarah. "We don't want a noisy boy in the house."

"What? Not a boy whose 'honesty, sincerity and lovableness shine right out on his dear little face?'" laughed the General.

"No, nor 'an out and out boy!'" Sarah retorted. "I'm afraid you can't go until after to-morrow," she added. "May writes: 'Gay has spoiled all my pretty summer dresses,' in one of her entries, and we shall have to make her some sort of a frock before she can go, for that boy hasn't left her a rag, and you may be sure he'll want his jackets and trousers when he sees them again."

The General laughed. [168]

"What a pair of madcaps they must be when they are together!" he said.

"Bring them both back with you," said Sarah, heartily. "It is cruel to separate them any longer."

"It would suit me perfectly," said the General. "But do you want two children in the house?"

"Certainly," Sarah replied. "There is room enough for a dozen, and it will brighten up this dull old house a bit." She turned to the General and demanded, defiantly, "Did you ever hear me say I didn't like children?"

"I don't know that I ever did," replied the General, meekly.

"Well!" said Sarah.

And that ended their conversation.

When May came home late in the afternoon, the General, Sarah and Phyllis were on the porch.

"How is Philip?" asked the General.

"Lots and lots better," said May. "I played checkers and read and sung and told stories about our children at home, and made him forget his cold—and what he did. Philip is all right, I think; getting into the water seemed to wash the naughty all out of him."

"You are a genuine reformer, little *girl*!" said the General.

His emphasis was so marked that May looked at him an instant, then threw herself into his arms, crying: [169]

"Oh, who told you? Has Gay told the aunties? Does mother know?"

"Your journal told," said Sarah, smiling pleasantly.

"I'm glad it did," cried May, emphatically. "I was never so tired of being myself as I am of being somebody else!"

She ran up to Sarah and kissed her rapturously; then to Phyllis and kissed her three, four, yes, six, times. With her arms around Phyllis's neck, May said,—

"You couldn't have been kinder to me when I was unhappy if you had been my own sister. You just believed in me without question, and that's true friendship."

Phyllis was too happy at this praise even to answer, but May knew the reason of her silence and saved her the trouble of replying, saying,—

"Will you all excuse me a minute, please?" Then she darted into the house before they could speak.

They excused her five, ten, fifteen minutes, and then she returned. Knickerbockers and blouse

were gone, and in their place was a quaint white frock, with low, short waist and elaborate full sleeves covered with exquisite embroidery.

"Katherine's dress!" exclaimed Sarah, looking at the General. [170]

"I found it in the little cedar chest in the attic," said May, looking at her waist and sleeves with admiring eyes. "Doesn't it fit well? May I wear these clothes while I stay, Miss Sarah? They fit, for I tried them on a week ago and they look just like my dresses, only mine are not so much like silk. May I wear them? I won't hurt them a bit!"

Sarah looked at the General, who nodded his head vigorously.

"Yes, you may wear them," Sarah said. "They belonged to your little great-aunt, Katherine Haines, who died sixty years ago."

"Poor little great-aunt," said May, looking sad and touching the fine India muslin frock reverently.

But May's pensive mood did not last. Seizing the General's walking stick she took the soldier's position, arms at a carry, and in an excellent imitation of the General's manner, shouted,——

"Fire as by single rank. Ready, aim, fire!"

These commands she executed with great spirit amid applause from the audience. Then the General put her through several motions and when drill was over she paused before him, and asked,—

"Which way do you like me best, Uncle Harold—as a boy or a girl?"

The General opened his arms and May leaped into them. Then the hater of petticoats laid his bearded cheek against May's soft, young face and said,— [171]

"I wouldn't exchange my little girl for all the boys in the world!"

CHAPTER XXIII [172]
A GREAT GAME

A grand stand was not an accomplished fact at Hazelnook, but for all practical purposes the upper rail of the fence surrounding Farmer Clarke's field was as good a position for the enthusiasts as seats on the bleaching boards. The spectators, therefore, that were gathered together to witness the game between the Plainvilles and the home team sat on the fence like a row of birds on a telegraph wire, and among them were Ned Payne and a large party from Plainville. Gay was not there; he was on the diamond in close conversation with Captain Carver.

"You know about what I can do," Gay was saying, at the very moment the game was advertised to begin.

Lyman was silent; his sense of propriety was not largely developed, and since he had known Gay he had lost all prejudice against the presence of the gentler sex in the field of sport, but he was not certain that all those present would share his views.

"They may think it odd to see a girl play," he said at length. [173]

"No matter about that," Gay said, carelessly. "I don't think they'll say much about it!"

"Play ball, can't you?" shouted the boys on the fence.

"Fellows!" shouted Captain Carver, in response to this cry, "one of our men has gone back on us. It is not exactly his fault; his stepmother's baby died this morning, and they won't let Will out, although the youngster is only his half-sister, and they are not going to bury her this afternoon, and Will isn't really needed at home, but——"

Here Lyman shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say that the ways of some people were beyond his comprehension; then he continued, "But I've got a substitute: Brown Walcott, of New York."

The Hazelnook boys cheered lustily when Lyman ceased speaking, for Gay was now the heroine, or hero, as the reader prefers, of the village; his treatment of his guests at the memorable party, and his reply to the minister, declaring himself "a radical," having now given him that distinction. In recognition of this evidence of his popularity Gay stepped forward, and with a radiant and comprehensive smile, said:

"How are you, fellows?"

The boys expected a speech, and the hum and din of the field immediately ceased, but Gay did not go on, and the Plainville faction soon recovered its voice. [174]

"No girls in mine!" shouted one of its members.

Then a succession of derisive remarks were shot off like a bunch of fire-crackers, one after another:

"Make her a short-stop; she can't stop long!"

"Her petticoats will be out on a fly, if she isn't!"

"Put her in the box!"

"She'll get in a box, fast enough!"

"Send her out in the field—to grass!"

"Don't do that; she's the same color, and it would mix everybody up!"

This was more than high-spirited Gay could bear in silence, and he shouted:

"When you get over your bad attack of mouth I'll show you my real color! Unless you're color-blind you won't call it green!"

This quick and truly unfeminine reply so amazed the Plainville boys that they ceased to jeer, and Ned Payne took the time to say:

"I've seen her play."

This quiet remark was more convincing than a long description of Gay's good points. "I've seen her play" hinted at remarkable achievements. There were a few more comments, the reverse of complimentary or chivalrous, but they were promptly frowned down, and cries of "Play ball!" once more rent the air. [175]

Gay was placed, and he was the first to go to the bat.

The pitcher smiled, as if to say, "Fair, high, or low ball, it will be just the same to a girl, I guess."

Gay saw the smile and it increased his determination to do his best and to help win the game for the home team.

"Play!" called the umpire, and the game commenced.

The pitcher, thinking he had nothing to fear, began by putting the ball right on the bat. Gay astonished him by driving it well towards the right field and taking two bases.

This hit delighted Gay's admirers. "Take the third, Brown," one of them shouted.

"What's the color of the grass, now?" cried another.

"The color of two bases," answered a third.

"A two-bagger the first hit!" Ned remarked, casting a triumphant glance at his Plainville neighbors.

"Don't crow too soon," one of them advised. "One hit doesn't make an inning. When Jones goes to the bat he'll beat her pace."

Jones was the crack player of the Plainvilles, and the one that the home team feared most. But this did not seem to Ned to be any reason why he should not say "Oh, Jones!" with a rising inflection that made his companion's face flush. [176]

Gay's successor at the bat helped him to third base and a fumbled ball of centre's sent him over the home base. This led to an exchange of compliments.

"The green grass doesn't grow under her feet, does it?" Ned demanded with an exasperating smile as Gay touched the plate.

"She can't keep it up," replied his companion stoutly. "That's the beauty of Jones; he'd be good for nine times nine innings."

At the same time Captain Carver was offering good advice to Jones's rival. "Take it easy, Brown," he said, quietly, "Don't let them work you up."

Gay sat down on the ground, drew his knees up under his chin and watched the game intently. Lyman threw a jacket over Gay's shoulders and stood by his side, measuring the ability of his own and the rival team. Gay made every error of the Plainvilles an excuse to say something to his late deriders—I said in the beginning that Gay was not a model boy!

The home team went out in order and Jones went to the bat amid considerable applause. It was evident that he was away up in the opinion of his team. He swung the bat from one hand to the other, made a strike or two against the air, exchanged that bat for another and whirled that around till it sung, rejected it for a third, which seemed to suit, for he tapped the plate smartly as much as to say, "This bat'll do; I'm ready now to wipe out the Hazelnooks." [177]

"Jonsey'll do!" was the audible comment after this by-play with the bat.

"Play ball!" shouted an impatient urchin.

Jones smiled invitingly at the pitcher, who replied with a swift ball. Jones put out a short fly; second base, centre and right field went for it, the ball dropping between them, and that sent Jones to second base, from whence he gradually worked home. His slow, safe playing was in direct contrast to Gay's dash and vim and did much to advance the latter in popular favor in which it seemed to be understood the two players were rivals.

Gay's work when the Plainvilles were at bat was good, but not such as to excite envy. When he again took his place at the plate he hit splendidly and came all the way on a ball that centre field started for and misjudged badly.

Then a shout arose from the Hazelnook boys, to which the Plainvilles did not enjoy listening, although they continued by way of encouragement to flatter their own boys and slander their opponents after the manner of players of greater skill. Their spirits rose when Jones was next at bat, and hit heavily and got third base with ease; but when he was put out in trying to get home, their spirits dropped again. The fact was Jones was not playing nearly as well as the rest of the [178]

Plainville boys, and he knew it, which was, of course, in Gay's favor.

When Gay went to bat the third time he hit fairly, but took his bases easily, stealing second, and getting third by a walk-over, while the ball sent up by muscular Robert was trying to kiss the sky, and making home by a clever sprint.

"Good for you, Brown!" shouted Ned from the fence, and the rest of the boys echoed his cry. As for Captain Carver, his enthusiasm knew no bounds.

"Brown," said he, in an earnest aside, "I always thought before I knew you that girls were a pretty slow lot, but you—you beat any boy I've seen, and give him an hour's start, too."

Gay was silent. There were times when praise made him uncomfortable. It didn't seem fair that Lyman and the other boys should be deceived as to the true reason for his skill and strength, but what was he to do? Confess the truth? "Not yet!" he always said to himself in answer to these silent questionings.

"Don't be too sure of my doing much to-day," he said to Lyman. "The game is too close; a little stupid playing will give it to them." [179]

The game went on, and in the ninth inning, when the score was twelve to eleven in the home team's favor, the pitcher began by tossing a ball over the plate that a baby might have hit, and Gay sent it, for the second time, almost to the right field fence, and took first base.

"Come home!" shouted the boys; "you can do it."

Gay took second base with caution, and third with a dash, and still the fielders were after the ball.

"Come home!" his friends shouted. "Come, for all you're worth!"

And Gay came.

"Look out for your skirt!" somebody shouted; "it's slipping down."

Gay reached frantically for the unloosened skirt, but it dropped below his grasp, caught him at the knees, and tripped him while he was at full speed. He fell heavily on his right side, and lay there motionless.

"Get up!" the boys shouted. "They're sending the ball home."

"Home! home!" cried centre, clapping his hands encouragingly.

By this time Gay was on his feet, and the dress skirt was on the ground. [180]

"Here," centre cried, continuing to clap his hands; "we'll put her out as easy as rolling off a log!"

The ball came whizzing through the air; Gay made a dash forward; centre made a bad fumble, and Gay touched the plate, but his face was strangely white.

"Play the game, boys," he said, faintly, "and don't—tell—mother! My—arm—I——"

Then he fell like a log.

"She's got a fit!" cried the pitcher.

"I'm afraid it's worse than that," said Lyman, a moment later. "I think her arm is broken!"

CHAPTER XXIV [181]

THE IDOL TOTTERS

Gay was sent home in an improvised ambulance, a farm wagon filled with hay. His arm was broken, and it proved to be an ugly fracture. But when it was set the doctor said,—

"You bore it bravely, Miss May—better than most boys."

The doctor's praise was sweet to Gay and he smiled faintly in reply; he was too weak to answer with his usual animation.

The Hazelnooks and even the Plainville boys and Ethel and Julia followed Gay to Rose Cottage and were waiting on the porch for the doctor, and when they saw him they cried in one voice,—

"How is she?"

"Weak, but she bore it like a hero, boys!" replied the jolly doctor. "You will have to stand on your own merits next time; May won't play ball again this summer—the little Amazon!"

"We want to see her, doctor, please," said Lyman.

"I don't please—not for two days," said the doctor. [182]

They murmured loudly against this. "Just let us see her!" they pleaded. "Just a peep!"

"Not a peep!" answered the doctor, firmly. Then the big, bluff man looked grave. "It is for your friend's good," he added.

And they said no more about it, but went away quietly and with sober faces. It was during these two days that the Hazelnook boys and girls found out how well they liked their friend.

"She's so honest and square," said Robert.

"And so full of fun and pluck," said Will.

"So bright and pretty," said Julia.

"Not a frill," said Ned.

"The jolliest girl I've ever seen," said Ethel.

"The finest girl living," said Fred.

"As deep as they make them," said Lyman. "Who else would have said about the Radical to the minister?"

Thus they spoke of the prankish boy with vast admiration and affection, and "May's" remarks and "May's" performances were reported by these young people to their elders and these, also, began to discuss "May Walcott" and to regard her as a clever, if unconventional girl. Even the judge's mother, who, since Gay's descent from the coach, had prophesied gloomily that "Miss Linn's niece would mortify her to death" suddenly changed her tune and declared that she had always [183] liked the fresh, breezy ways of the child, and that she had known from the first that "May" was destined to be popular.

"Young people nowadays," quoth the judge's mother to the doctor's wife, "like somebody that has some life."

"She certainly has made those rough village boys quite gentlemanly," admitted the doctor's wife.

These rumors and rumors of rumors reached the ears of the Misses Linn and had much influence in reconciling them to their supposed niece's accident on the ball-field. They may have thought that it would not do to criticise such a popular young person, at all events they uttered no word of reproach, but devoted themselves lovingly to the care of the invalid.

The doctor came every day, and upon more than one occasion he found his patient—alas for romance—decidedly cross.

"Oh, Doctor, if I might just sit on the porch and see the boys!" pleaded Gay, the second day after the accident.

"Will you promise to keep quiet and not try to do any left-handed acts?"

"Not an act—if you'll only let me go."

"Well, look out for your arm!" said the doctor, warningly, for Gay ran out of the room with a cry [184] of delight, without waiting for further instructions.

No sooner was Gay seated on the porch than visitors sprang up as if by magic from all sides. The truth was, Lyman was watching outside the gate to get the first word from the doctor, and when Gay appeared Lyman notified Will, who told Robert, who told Ned, who in his turn imparted the knowledge to Ethel, who informed Julia, and at length all his friends in Hazelnook were clustered around the invalid.

Then what a hubbub there was! Everybody talked at once. Everybody laughed at once. There was so much rejoicing that at length they became quiet from sheer exhaustion, and the air about was as silent as it is when a noisy machine suddenly ceases its motion.

"I'm cold!" announced Gay, suddenly.

"Then you must go right into the house," said Miss Celia, greatly agitated. "You can find something in there to amuse your friends."

The young people went in, leaving the aunts on the porch, and soon the sound of lively music was heard.

"I hope May will be careful of her arm," said Miss Celia, anxiously.

"Celia, who is that coming up the drive?" said Miss Linn, without heeding her sister's remark. [185]

"I don't know," Miss Celia answered. Then, for the first time in her life she took the initiative; impelled by an impulse she could not have explained, she left the porch and went to meet the persons who were rapidly approaching.

The unknown visitors presented an extremely picturesque appearance as they advanced. The General, for of course it was he, in holiday attire, was leading May, who wore one of the "little great-aunt's" frocks, which looked for all the world, so faithfully does Fashion repeat herself, as though it had been designed by a modern artist.

"Madam," said the General, bowing profoundly, "have I the honor to address Miss Celia Linn?"

"Yes," murmured Miss Celia.

"I am General Haines, of Cedarville," began the General.

"Don't you know Aunt Celia? I'm May," interrupted May.

"May!" repeated Miss Celia, looking closely at the young visitor for the first time.

"May Walcott," May answered, with a smile, that was strangely familiar to Miss Celia.

"We have one May Walcott with us now," said Miss Celia, visibly dazed.

"Allow me to explain," said the General.

But there was no time for explanations. At that time Gay, followed by the boys and girls agape with curiosity, came running forward as fast as his disabled condition would permit, and kissed May warmly. [186]

Then the twins stood side by side, and everybody exclaimed at the resemblance.

"Could you tell them apart?"

"Except for the arm."

"And the dress."

"The same eyes!"

"Mouth!"

"Hair!"

"I cannot understand it," said Miss Celia; "these are certainly Elinor's twins, but how does it happen that both are girls?"

"I'll tell you——" Gay began.

"Let us go in the house," said Miss Celia, taking the real May by the hand and giving the General, who still held May's other hand, a smile that made him feel that life was as fair as the dawn of spring.

Miss Linn met them at the hall door, but no one thought to introduce her, and she followed them into the drawing-room, where Gay told the story of the masquerade with which we are already familiar.

"What!" they cried, when he was finished, "are you a boy?"

"Yes—thank goodness!" said Gay, piously.

GAY CAME RUNNING FORWARD

"I'm glad that you are a boy," said Miss Linn, with a sigh of relief; "it explains a good many things." [187]

"My actions?" said Gay. "Oh, it was awful, I can tell you. It is just like waiting to sneeze in church when you know all the time you mustn't, to try to be a girl when you are really a boy!"

There was a general laugh at Gay's comparison, in which it might have been noticed the Hazelnook young people joined very faintly. After a slight pause Lyman arose; his companions rose, also, for by some mysterious method of communication they knew that they were in sympathy with what he was about to say.

"I think," he said, slowly, but with suppressed feeling, "that it was a pretty crooked thing to deceive us deliberately by making us think that you were a fine girl. It can't help making a difference in our opinion of you, and I guess we'd better say good-by."

Lyman bowed to the company, the others did the same, then, like icicles under the noonday heat of the sun, they melted away out of the room.

When the little maid, in the quaint old-time frock, saw the favorite thus stripped of favor she put her arms about his neck and whispered—

"You have me, no matter what happens. Don't fuss," she added, for she had learned the lesson of patience. "If they really like you it will come out all right." [188]

"I don't know about it," said Gay, gloomily. "I'm afraid I'm frozen out altogether."

And not until that moment did Gay realize how highly he valued his popularity.

---

[189]

CHAPTER XXV

THE GIRLS MAKE PEACE

It would be difficult to decide which position was the more enviable, the fallen idol's or that of his erstwhile worshipers. The latter left Rose Cottage swayed by two emotions, disappointment and indignation; in twelve hours disappointment alone was left; in twenty-four hours disappointment was succeeded by a desire to talk the matter over. Not that they were weakening, far from it, but they wanted to look at the case squarely—and they met at Ethel's to look at it!

"I think you are rather hard upon May—I mean Gay," said Ethel. "After praising him to the skies you suddenly turn round and drag him through the dust. He never said he wasn't a boy; all he did was to put on skirts, answer to his sister's name, and act like a boy all the time. We deceived ourselves."

"He did it all under false colors," Lyman said stoutly.

"Didn't you go into the orchard under false colors?" retorted Ethel. "But when you met Gay he overlooked that and made friends with you, and you, at the first chance, desert him." [190]

"You don't understand it, Ethel," began Ned. "It really wasn't the thing, you know."

"I understand it as well as you do," replied Ned's sister. "And you don't always do the right thing."

"None of us do the right thing all the time," said Will, "but——"

"There isn't any but about it," cried Ethel. "If you won't accept a but in Gay's case you have no right to offer one in your own."

"Think how he bore the pain of his broken arm," said Julia. "And you said yourselves that he won the ball game for you. And you boys wouldn't have been treated so well by us if it hadn't been for Gay's splendid manners the day of the party."

The boys were somewhat affected by this argument, but not greatly.

"He put up a job on us," said Lyman, stubbornly.

"We find it hard to forgive Gay because we thought he couldn't do wrong," said slow Robert. "We thought he was immense, and when we found out that he was a little worse than most of us it was like a crack side of the head."

"Did he ever do anything that wasn't splendid except to fool you about being a girl?" Ethel asked.

"His aunts forgave him," urged Julia gently. [191]

"And General Haines forgave Gay's sister, and he had as much right to be unforgiving as you have," Ethel said.

"Nobody is unforgiving," muttered Lyman. "But I thought that he was twice as good as the minister or anybody, and——"

"He always behaved like a gentleman," interrupted Ned.

"Yes, that's where the laugh comes in," Will said.

"You may be as hateful as you like," announced impetuous Ethel. "Julia and I have made up our minds to go to Rose Cottage and try to make it up with Gay."

There was some little controversy. Robert was on the girls' side and the others soon followed his lead. Lyman, who had been fondest of the youthful impostor, was the last to forgive him, but in the end he signified his willingness to accompany the girls. They went on their way with some feeling of shyness, which increased as they approached the house, and deepened still further when they failed to descry either May or Gay on the porch.

"Suppose he is stand-offish," said Ethel gloomily.

"I really can't go up there and ring the bell," said Will, whose courage was beginning to ooze away.

There was no need to ring the bell; Gay and May had seen them coming, and together they went to meet the approaching regiment, wondering if it came with peaceful or hostile intent. [192]

"How do you do?" said Gay, determined to do his share of the peacemaking.

"How do you do?" the group answered in one voice.

Then there was an awkward pause.

"We have come——" began Robert, "to——"

"Oh, Gay, we are so sorry!" interrupted warm-hearted Ethel.

"So am I, and ashamed, too," Gay replied, soberly. "May and I talked it over last night and we decided that although we didn't mean to we had done a lot of deceiving. It might have been worse, I suppose, still my sister went through a great deal, and here is my broken arm and all on account of our masquerading. If you can excuse me for being a fraud I'm sure I can excuse you for being mad about it when you found it out. I was ashamed very often, although I tried to think it was a lark. I am the one to ask pardon."

What generous words these seemed to the boys and girls! They had never made any real mistake; Gay was worthy of their admiration.

"Boy or girl; Gay or May, you're a brick," cried Lyman. And he voiced the sentiment of all.

"I knew if you really liked Gay it would come out all right," May said, with a bright smile. [193]

"We really like him, and you, too," Ethel said, warmly.

"If you like me you must like her for we are just the same as one," said Gay, whose good spirits had returned.

Just then Aunt Celia, who surmised that a treaty of peace had been arranged, invited them all in to have lemonade and little Queen's cakes. She knew, wise aunt that she was, that nothing cements a treaty like good cheer, and that many a controversy has been buried out of sight in a harmless merry-making. After much laughter and lively talk the boys and girls went away, satisfied with themselves and with Gay. When they were alone May said, soberly,—

"It hasn't been all harm. I have learned to depend upon myself and I should not have done so if I had had you to depend upon."

"I have learned never again to try to be a girl, even in fun!" said Gay, looking ruefully at his arm.

"There is one thing that troubles me, Gay; just what mother will think of us," said May.

For once Gay said nothing in reply. "What would mother think?" It was a question that he could not answer.

CHAPTER XXVI [194]

ALL'S RIGHT AGAIN

The aunts, the uncle and the minister were in the flower-perfumed drawing-room the next morning when Mr. Walcott's letter came. The mother was so far advanced towards health that the doctor had ordered her away from the city.

"We shall collect our children and go to Lake Hopatcong," wrote Mr. Walcott.

"Lake Hopatcong, indeed!" growled the General. "Cedarville will do Edward's wife more good than that breezy place. I shall telegraph Edward to that effect. When do they start?"

"To-morrow," said Miss Celia, to whom all the General's questions were addressed by design. "The children will take your message to the telegraph office."

"An admirable suggestion!" gallantly responded the General. "The longer I live the greater is my amazement that I have ever dreamed of governing myself without the assistance of the feminine mind." He had forgotten Sarah's frequent "assistance!" "My little girl taught me this," he added, thinking that this explanation completely disguised the odor of the implied compliment to Miss Celia. [195]

"Will you not write your telegram at Celia's davenport?" asked Miss Linn.

"With pleasure, madam," responded the General, rising with unnecessary alacrity. To sit at "Celia's davenport" was a privilege for gods—not men!

While he was writing the twins came in.

"Listen, little girl," said the General. "I am going to beg your father and mother, the children, your good aunts, and Mr. Livermore here, and Gay—the rascal! to go back with us to Cedarville; entreat them for me."

"Oh, you will come, won't you?" said May, by way of entreaty.

Much to everybody's surprise, the minister was the first to accept the invitation. Miss Linn declined, but said that Celia might go. Involuntarily the General's eyes sought those of Miss Celia, and in them he fancied he read a desire to go to Cedarville. For an instant—his heart beat so—he could not speak, but finally he said, in a low voice:

"You will favor me with your presence, Miss Celia?"

"Thank you—for a few days—until my sister needs me," said Miss Celia, with a faint blush that the General thought adorable. [196]

"You've forgotten something," said Gay.

"What is it, sir?" demanded the General.

"You haven't invited Uncle George Walcott and Miss Maud Berkeley. They are lovers—and you want two of every kind in your party, like there was in the Ark, don't you?" said Gay.

The General added something to his telegram to Mr. Walcott.

"I have remedied that defect," he said; "have you any further suggestions?"

"Invite the boys and Ethel and Julia to go with us," said Gay; "that would be immense."

"You may invite them," said the General; "you and my little girl."

"Thank you," said Gay, heartily. "It's some fun to have an uncle like you."

"Thank you," said the General, much pleased with this flattery.

"Wouldn't it be a good thing to telegraph to Sarah?" said May, thoughtfully.

"I think it would," the General said, dryly.

Miss Linn left the room when the twins did, leaving the two gentlemen to feast their eyes upon the pretty picture of domesticity made by Miss Celia at her needlework.

On the way to the telegraph office May said:

"The minister likes Aunt Celia almost as well as Uncle Harold does." [197]

"The boys say he's going to marry her," said Gay, coolly.

"Uncle Harold will feel dreadfully! He wants to marry her himself," May asserted, so boldly, that one would have said she was in the General's confidence.

"Then he shall have her," said Gay, with decision, "and we'll help him along; he's an old bachelor, and he won't know what to do."

"He must have read in books. You know in Jane's novel Rudolph de Montmorenci says to Lady Arabella, 'Angel of my life, fly with me!'"

"That wouldn't help Uncle Harold any. Aunt Celia can't fly, and he doesn't look as if he could! No, May; he'll never do it by himself. We must help him."

"I guess anybody as big as Uncle Harold can manage a little woman like Aunt Celia by himself."

"I don't know about that. Aunt Celia is little, but she's 'kinder skittish,' for Margery says so. But it isn't her as much as the minister we've got to look out for. It is my opinion, May, that he is just going to Cedarville to get ahead of Uncle Harold. Oh, you needn't smile! A minister is only a man, and hates to be done out of a thing as much as anybody. But he'll be done out of Aunt Celia—I can tell him that!" [198]

"How? who will do it, Gay?"

"Wait and see!" was the mysterious response.

---

[199]

CHAPTER XXVII

HAPPY PEOPLE

"Phyllis, listen to this," and Sarah unfolded the General's telegram from Hazelnook, and read:

> "Expect the family and two more by 11.30 train to-morrow morning. Prepare as for garden party.
>
> "Harold S. Haines."

"That's a definite telegram!" Sarah said, indignantly. "'Expect the family!' What family? How do I know how many there are in a family I don't know anything about? The 'two more' are of no consequence, but there may be three, two, ten, six or one in that 'family.' The General certainly needs a keeper if any man ever did."

"He knows you are equal to entertaining fifty at a few hours' notice, Miss Sarah," Phyllis said, soothingly.

"I don't know about that!" Sarah replied, somewhat mollified by Phyllis' appreciative remark. "But if nobody-knows-how-many-and-two-more are to be dropped down upon me at a moment's notice, I certainly do not intend to disgrace myself. Phyllis, we shall have to work!" [200]

"Yes'm," said Phyllis, dropping easily into the old monosyllable.

As may be imagined, the old mansion was in perfect order the next morning. Flowers were everywhere, and the August sunshine flooded the stately rooms, for every blind and shutter was wide open. In the great oak dining-room the table was already spread with crystal and silver and china and damask, the united rich possessions of many generations of Haines' housemothers. Fruit and flowers were not lacking, and these had been arranged by Phyllis' deft and willing fingers. In the kitchen the banquet—a bountiful one, you may be sure, for who could say how many hungry mouths that mysterious "family" might contain?—was well under way. And Sarah—oh, Sarah was everywhere!—planning, ordering, executing, and, of course, scolding in her whimsical way, but in splendid humor, withal, for she gloried in an occasion where there was encouragement to put forth her best abilities.

Sarah was on the porch when the guests came, a line of maids, with Phyllis at their head, behind her, and her face was a study when she saw one carriage after another drive up, and a stream of

people pour out as water flows from an inverted pitcher. All the General's carriages, and a roomy buckboard, containing as many boys and girls as could crowd in, made an impressive show. There were Mr. and Mrs. Walcott, Miss Celia and the minister, the General and May, Miss Maud Berkeley and Uncle George, nurse and baby, Ned and Jane, and Gay, Ethel, Julia, Ned Payne, Lyman, Robert, Will, Fred, Herb, and even Philip and Rob Lawrence, who had been picked up in the village at May's request. [201]

"Mercy me!" thought Sarah. "If all but 'two' belong in her family no wonder Mrs. Walcott has nervous prostration! 'She,'" with a glance at Miss Celia, "is one of the 'two.' She is prettier than her picture and the image of his mother. Those two young people are lovers. How alike those twins are! No wonder they fooled everybody. Our child is a little sweeter than the boy. Who under the sun is that lank man with her? Another admirer, I should say. Well, such a figure as that can have no show beside the General, who is a fine-looking man, barring his outlandish clothes. Not much, Mr. Long-Legs! I'm glad I had that second lot of ice-cream made, with all those children there won't be a bit too much!"

During this soliloquy Sarah was welcoming everybody; directing the maids as to the disposal of the guests and looking so amiable the while that the General was in a tremor of delight. He had not been without misgivings as to her appreciation of this large house party, for, as we know, he had neglected to inform her of his invitation to the Hazelnook boys and girls. When the last guest was disposed of, the General followed Sarah into the library, and looked expectantly at her. [202]

"I gave her your mother's room," said Sarah, abruptly.

There was no need to ask whom Sarah meant; the General knew instinctively that it was Miss Celia.

"How did you know?" he said.

"How did I know where to put her?" said perverse Sarah, for she knew quite well what he meant. "I ought to know where to put guests in this house if anybody does."

"How did you know that nothing could be more gratifying to me than to have Miss Celia Linn in mother's room?" the General asked, earnestly.

"To tell the truth I didn't do it to gratify you; I thought she belonged there; she's the image of your mother."

The General actually grasped Sarah's hands. "Have I your consent?" said he; "I mean do you approve?"

"Yes,—have you hers?" replied Sarah, with a droll smile.

"I dare not hope, but I shall try my fate," the General answered, soberly. [203]

"I am glad if you begin to realize your duty," said this inconsistent woman. "You ought to have married years ago; not waited till your wife will have to share you with old age and rheumatism."

"It was never time until now," the General declared, with youthful ardor. "Could any woman save Miss Celia Linn fitly reign here?—I ask you that, Sarah."

"You'd better ask her about reigning, not me," said Sarah, laughingly, and with this parting shot she left the room.

In the hall she encountered the twins deep in conversation.

"Miss Sarah, Gay says that you won't like him as well as you do me!" cried May.

"If he's as good as you are I shall like him," Sarah replied.

"I can't be half as good as she's been lately," Gay said. "I would have thumped Philip into next week if he had tried that game on me! But May won't be as good now I am here. We need to be together to show just what we are."

"Don't you think Gay might forgive Philip?" May asked! "He says he won't."

"I don't mind what people do to me; but to you, that's another thing," Gay said, stoutly.

"I like to have you speak so about me!" May said, with a gratified smile. "But suppose the boys and Ethel and Julia wouldn't have forgiven you?" [204]

"I'm sick of so much forgiving!" cried Gay. "It's nothing but forgive or be forgiven all the time."

"To forgive and be forgiven—that is life, my son," said a soft voice behind them. "Learn to forgive as freely as you would be forgiven and you will need no other lesson."

It was the gentle mother who spoke, pale and fragile still, but happy to have her children around her once more.

"Your little girl knows what it is to forgive," said Sarah, with a fond glance at May.

"And I know what it is to be forgiven!" said irrepressible Gay. "That evens things up. May and I are one, and sometimes she's the one and sometimes I'm the one, but between us we've learned mother's lesson of life."

"You see Miss Maud and Uncle George under the trees in the garden, don't you?" Gay broke out abruptly, a moment later. "They've been there since we came. They don't know that they are dusty and need dusting just as much as any of us, because they are lovers and don't know things like other people!"

"The garden looks cool and shady enough to tempt any one into it," remarked the mistress, with a [205]

longing glance through the open door.

Then Gay offered his arm to his mother and they went into the garden whither everybody drifted after awhile—even nurse, who paced up and down the walks, not looking to the right or left, the peer of the sixth earl of Roslyn gurgling in her arms. Miss Celia was the last guest to appear, and she came leaning on the General's arm. They had been detained by a little dialogue which took place in the library. "Hurrah!" cried Gay on their approach. "We've got two more of Uncle George's and Miss Maud's kind in our ark now!"

All eyes were immediately turned upon the pair, and the General was moved to say something upon this joyous occasion.

"I can't understand it——" he began.

"I can!" shouted audacious Gay. "Auntie's awfully charitable—Aunt Beulah says she never knew of her refusing anything to a beggar in all her life!"

A shout of laughter, in which everybody but the minister joined, greeted this remark, and the General decided to abandon speech-making.

"You'll have to take care, auntie, or he'll make you drill!" said May, who was on the other side of the General, and held his hand.

[206] "If he should persist in making you a soldier, Miss Celia, let me suggest that you follow your grand-niece's example—take out the cartridge and fill the cartridge chamber with cotton," said Mr. Walcott, gravely.

"Oh, father," said May, "I didn't think you would tell!"

"If Uncle Harold values his life he will not encourage Miss Linn in the use of fire-arms—a woman's shot 'may turn out a song or it may turn out a sermon'; that is, it may hit the bull's eye or it may hit somebody behind her," said Uncle George.

"Miss Maud hit pretty near the bull's eye when you were the target, and she's a woman," cried May.

"May!" said the mother in a tone of gentle remonstrance.

"Miss Maud doesn't mind, mother, she isn't even blushing," said Gay.

Miss Berkeley certainly was blushing at these unexpected sallies, and so rosily that Sarah, thinking to divert the attention of the younger members of the company from her, demanded, briskly,—

"What's the matter with you boys and girls; why don't you play some game? You need a little exercise before lunch. Come, scamper!"

[207] Miss Berkeley, Mr. Walcott and Uncle George joined the children and the fun began. They played tag, run across, and other lively games until they were tired. While they rested Sarah brought forth a minstrel—James, who handled a violin as skilfully as he handled the General's horses.

The banquet was the crowning glory of the day. It began at two; it ended at twilight. Not that they were at table all that time; there were other interesting exercises beside that of feasting on the delicacies housewife Sarah had provided. When the children ceased to demand ices, the General rose and said, with a dignified smile,—

"A toast!"

"Toast after this!" May exclaimed, with a droll smile.

"You don't mean dry toast, do you, Uncle Harold?" demanded Gay.

Then everybody laughed—it is astonishing how little it takes to excite the risibilities of light-hearted people, young or old!

"Uncle Harold was right," said Gay, "it is the proper thing to toast everybody."

"Brown on both sides!" interrupted May.

"And he must be the toaster," concluded Gay.

"Uncle Harold, you are invited to be the 'toaster' upon this delightful occasion," said Mr. Walcott. "You will find the duties attendant upon the position similar to those of the ordinary toastmaster, not of the cook!" The General held his glass of lemonade high as he said,— [208]

"To Miss Celia Linn! The——"

"Uncle Harold thinks it's cream toast!" interrupted saucy Gay.

The General did not finish the toast and Miss Celia's health was drunk amid merry laughter.

"To mother!" cried Gay, leaving his place at table to run to his mother's side to kiss her before drinking her health.

This put an end to formality; they toasted everybody, Phyllis among others, for all knew her loyalty and affection in May's hours of trial.

"Who would have thought that anybody like me would have been toasted by ladies and gentlemen!" said Phyllis, when her health was proposed.

"We never know what may happen to us. We may all be roasted next!" said May, quaintly.

"I don't believe I could hold another drop of lemonade, not even if the president of the United

States came in and begged to be toasted!" Gay said, despairingly.

"Wouldn't speeches be easier to swallow than toasts?" asked May, with a sigh that matched Gay's in depth and length.

"What, just plain, dry speeches, without anything to make them slip down easily?" asked Gay.

"Yes," May answered. [209]

"Speech! speech!" cried Mr. Walcott, who was enjoying the fun as hugely as Lyman or Robert or any of the boys there—and the Hazelnook boys were enjoying themselves, albeit they had less to say than the lively twins.

"Let Lyman make the first speech. He's scarcely spoken a word," said Gay.

But Lyman declined the honor, saying he was born to listen not to talk.

"Why do you think so?" Gay demanded.

"Because I've one mouth and two ears," Lyman responded promptly.

"And the majority rules, doesn't it, Lyman?" said May, quickly.

"Say something yourself, Gay," Will urged.

"Yes, do," said the young people, who thought this was their day and that the General's newly-found happiness and the mother's improved health were merely side issues.

"Yes, Gay; rise and shine," laughed May. "I never knew before just what that meant. It means to get up after a time like this and say something bright, doesn't it, father?"

"Yes, that's the philosophy of after-dinner remarks in a nutshell," Mr. Walcott replied.

"It is easy to rise!" said Gay, suiting the action to the word, "but it's not so easy to shine. It seems to me that after remarks ought to come before! A fellow would feel more like it, wouldn't he, [210] May? (Nod from May.) You can't even get a dog to 'speak for it' worth a cent when he's had all the bones he wants. I mean that you're really fuller when you're empty—oh, dear! what I want to say I can't say; and what I say I don't want to say. But I hope everybody has had a rattling good time—(We have! we have! from the boys in chorus.) So have I," continued the speaker, "and I hope we shall soon repeat this—this—some kind of an occasion—I can't think of the word—bang-up time will do. We couldn't have had it anywhere else in such—such immense shape, and—somebody else must put a P. S. on and thank Uncle Harold and Miss Sarah. I'm tired of shining."

And Gay sat down amid shouts of laughter.

Then somebody proposed singing Auld Lang Syne. Not that anybody specially cared to sing it, but because Auld Lang Syne ends a good time most appropriately, as the benediction closes service.

It was time for candles when they ceased singing—and there is not much more to tell. All the happy, tired children soon were stowed away for the night—no one but Sarah could have arranged such a mosaic of small cots.

Gay and May were not far apart, but they were too sleepy to congratulate themselves upon the pleasant termination of their "lark." They wandered awhile on the borders of dreamland, then the [211] great curtain of sleep fell upon them and upon all the house party. We will leave them to their peaceful repose, nor wait to greet them when the sun shall ring up the curtain on another day.

Transcriber's Note

Minor punctuation and printer errors repaired.

Two instances where "May" has been written where "Gay" is intended:
p118 "Come, quick, May's set the barn on fire!" replaced with
"Come, quick, Gay's set the barn on fire!"
p120 "May, why don't you answer me?" replaced with
"Gay, why don't you answer me?"

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE WALCOTT TWINS ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and

research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase "Project Gutenberg"), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. "Project Gutenberg" is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation ("the Foundation" or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" appears, or with which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

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

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase "Project Gutenberg" associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs

1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability

to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.