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[Illustration: THE "SHOW" WAS A TREMENDOUS SUCCESS]

BETTY WALES, SOPHOMORE A STORY FOR GIRLS

BY MARGARET WARDE

Author of
"Betty Wales, Freshman"
"Betty Wales, Junior"
"Betty Wales, Senior"
"Betty Wales, B.A."

Illustrated by
EVA M. NAGEL

1905

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THE "SHOW" WAS A TREMENDOUS SUCCESS

"DON'T PUT THAT GREEN VASE THERE"

"WELL," SAID MISS FERRIS, "THAT WON'T BE NEW WORK"

"LET US MAKE A FAIR START," HE SAID

THE GREEN LINE WAS SHOUTING ITSELF HOARSE

ELEANOR DID NOT ANSWER

"NEVER MIND THAT NOW," SAID BETTY

INTRODUCTION

Readers who did not make the acquaintance of Betty Wales and her friends while they were freshmen may like to know that there were nine girls in all who spent their first year together at Mrs. Chapin's. Two of them, however, took very little part in the life of the house and left college at the end of the year. Katherine Kittredge, "of Kankakee," was the fly- away of the group, Rachel Morrison its steadiest, strongest member. Shy, sensitive Roberta Lewis found her complement in a volatile little sophomore, the only one in the house, named Mary Brooks. Mary had a talent for practical jokes and original methods of entertainment, and supplied much of the fun and frolic at the Chapin house. It was she who put Betty's picture into the sophomore "grind book," who let out the secret of the Mountain Day mishap, and who frightened not only the Chapin house freshmen but the whole class with an absurd "rumor" of her own invention. Helen Adams, Betty's roommate, was a forlorn, awkward little body, who came to college expecting to study all the time, and was amazed and disappointed at what she considered the frivolity of her companions. Betty Wales, in particular, with her fascinating, merry ways, her love of fun, and her easygoing fashion of getting through her work, was a revelation to Helen. She began by placing her roommate rather scornfully in the category of pretty girls, who, being pretty, can afford to be stupid, and ended by loving her dearly, and fully appreciating what Betty had done to make her more like other girls and so happier in her environment.

In spite of her beauty and cleverness, Eleanor Watson was not a favorite with the Chapin house girls. She was snobbish and overbearing, intent upon making herself prominent in class and college affairs, and utterly regardless of the happiness of other people, as well as of the rules and moral standards of Harding. Betty, who was unreasonably fond of Eleanor, though she recognized her faults, unconsciously exerted a great deal of influence over her. How she finally managed at the instigation of her upper-class friend, Dorothy King, and with the help of Miss Ferris, a very lovable member of the faculty, to extricate Eleanor Watson from an extremely unpleasant position, and finally to make her willing and even eager to finish her course at Harding, is told at length in "Betty Wales, Freshman." There are also recorded many of the good times that she and her house-mates and a few other friends had during the first of their four happy years at Harding College.

The story of what Betty did at Harding and elsewhere will be found continued in "Betty Wales, Junior," "Betty Wales, Senior," and "Betty Wales, B.A."

Margaret Warde.

CHAPTER I

MOVING IN

Betty Wales sat down on the one small bare spot on the floor of her new room at the Belden House, and looked about her with a sigh of mingled relief and weariness.

"Well," she remarked to the little green lizard, who was perched jauntily on a pile of pillows, "anyhow the things are all out of the trunks and boxes, and I suppose after a while they'll get into their right places."

She looked at her watch. Quarter to eight,—that left just about two hours before ten o'clock. Somebody rapped on the door.

"Come in," sang Betty.

It was Eleanor Watson. Betty leaped over a motley collection of cups and saucers, knocked down a Japanese screen—which fortunately landed against a bed, instead of on the cups and saucers—and caught Eleanor in her arms.

"Isn't it great to be back?" she said when she could speak, meanwhile setting up the screen again, and moving trunk-trays so they might sit down on the bed. "Are you settled, Eleanor?"

"A little," said Eleanor, surveying Betty's quarters with amusement. "Quite settled compared to this, I should say. Why do you take everything out at once, Betty?"

"Oh, then they're all right where I can get at them," returned Betty easily. "I hate to keep stopping to fish something out of the bottom of a box that I haven't unpacked."

"I see," laughed Eleanor. "Did you have a lovely summer?"

"Perfectly lovely. I can swim like a fish, Eleanor, and so can Emily
Davis. You don't know her much, do you? But you must. She's lots of fun.
Did you have a good time too?"

"Beautiful," said Eleanor, eagerly. "Father is coming east before long to see Jim and me, and he and Jim are coming on together from Cornell. You'll help me entertain them, won't you, Betty?"

"I should think I would," Betty was saying heartily, when there was another bang on the door and Rachel and Katherine appeared. Then there was more leaping over teacups, more ecstatic greetings, and more readjustment of Betty's belongings to make room for the newcomers.

"Where's Helen?" demanded Rachel, when everybody was seated.

"Coming the first thing to-morrow morning," explained Betty. "You see she lives so near that she can come down at the last minute."

"It's lucky she's not here now," laughed Katherine. "There's no room for her, to say nothing of her things."

"I should think not," agreed Betty, tragically. "Girls, these campus rooms are certainly the smallest places! This isn't half as big as ours at Mrs. Chapin's. And see the closet!" She picked her way across the room, and threw open a door, disclosing a five-by-three cupboard. "I ask you how we're going to get all our clothes into that."

"Helen hasn't many clothes," suggested Katherine, cheerfully.

"She has plenty to put on half those hooks," answered Betty, with finality, closing the door on the subject, and coming back to sit between Eleanor and Rachel.

"Isn't the Chapin house crowd scattered this year?" said Katherine. "Let me see. You and Helen and Mary Brooks are here. Has Mary come yet?"

Betty shook her head. "Her steamer isn't due till to-morrow morning.
Didn't you know she'd been in Ireland all summer?"

"Won't it be fun to hear her tell about it?" put in Rachel.

"You three here," went on Katherine, intent on her census, "and you're at the Hilton, aren't you, Eleanor?"

"Yes," answered Eleanor with a grimace. "I wanted to be here, of course, but Miss Stuart wouldn't manage it. Which house are you in, Rachel?"

"I'm off the campus," answered Rachel, quietly, "at the little white house just outside the gate. It's a

dear, quaint place, and delightfully quiet. Of course, I'd rather have been on the campus, but father couldn't afford it this year."

"Make way, make way for us!" sang a noisy chorus out in the hall. There were shouts and shrieks and bangs and more shrieks, and then the din died away suddenly into an ominous stillness that evidently heralded the approach of some dreaded power.

"It's lucky one of us lives in a quiet place, where the rest of us can take refuge occasionally," said Eleanor.

"Isn't it?" chimed in Katherine. "I'm at the Westcott myself, and I never heard anything like the racket there was, when the girls began to come in from the eight o'clock train."

"Our crowd seems to have been on hand early," said Rachel.

"You know Betty's father doesn't like her to travel alone," jeered Katherine, "especially after dark. Did he telegraph the registrar again this year, Betty?"

"Please don't," begged Betty, blushing prettily. "Weren't we green little freshmen though, at this time last fall?"

"And isn't it fun to be coming back as sophomores?" asked Rachel.

"We haven't quite finished with the residences of the Chapin house girls," said Eleanor. "How about Roberta?"

"She's going to stay on at Mrs. Chapin's, I think," answered Katherine. "She couldn't get in here at the Belden, and she and Mary want to be together."

"And the Riches aren't coming back, I believe," added Rachel. "And now I, for one, must go back and finish unpacking."

Katherine and Eleanor rose too, astonished to find how fast the evening had slipped away, and how little time there was left in which to get ready for the busy "first day" ahead of them. When they had all three gone, Betty lay back on the bed, her head pillowed on her arms, to rest for a moment longer. She was tired. The journey from Rockport had been hot and disagreeable, and some of her box covers had been nailed on with disheartening thoroughness. But besides being tired, she was also very happy—too happy to turn her attention again at once to the trying business of getting settled. In spite of the "perfectly lovely" summer at the seashore, she was glad to be back at Harding. She was passionately fond of the life there. There had been only one little blot to mar her perfect enjoyment of freshman year, and that was Eleanor's unexplainable defection. And now Eleanor had come back, fascinating as ever, but wonderfully softened and sweetened. The old hauteur had not left her face, but it was in the background, veiled, as it were, by a determination to be different,—to meet life in a more friendly spirit, and to make the most of it and of herself. Betty could have hugged her for her cordial greetings to Katherine and Rachel, and for the kindly little speech about Rachel's boarding-place. The other girls had been tactful too, ready to meet Eleanor half-way and to let bygones be bygones. It was all "just lovely."

Betty was picking herself up, intent upon clearing Helen's half of the room at least, before she went to bed, when another tap sounded on the door. "Come in," she called eagerly, expecting to see Roberta, or perhaps Alice Waite, or even Dorothy King. Instead, a tall, stately stranger opened the door, and entering, closed it again after her.

"May I come in and talk to you?" she asked. "I live next door—that is, my trunks aren't here, so I haven't begun living there to any great extent as yet. Don't stop working. I'll sit and watch; or I'll help, if I can. There seems to be plenty doing."

And she sat down calmly in the place that Betty had just vacated.

Betty was not easily embarrassed, but the strange girl's perfect composure and ease of manner disconcerted her. She did not know many upper classmen in the Belden House, and she could not remember ever having seen this one before. And yet she surely was not a freshman.

"Yes, I—I am busy," she stammered. "I mean, I ought to be. But I've had callers all the evening long. Oh, dear! I didn't mean that. I'm truly glad to have you come, and I will keep on working, if you don't mind."

The stranger's eyes twinkled. "Which class are you?" she asked.

"Sophomore," answered Betty promptly. "And you're an upper-class girl, aren't you?"

The stranger shook her head.

"No?" questioned Betty in bewilderment. "Why, I'm sure you're not a sophomore—I know all the girls in my class at least by sight,—and of course you're not a freshman."

"Why not?" demanded the new girl gaily.

Betty laughed. "I know," she said, "but I don't believe I can explain. You seem too much at home, and too sure of yourself somehow. Now, are you a freshman?"

The stranger laughed in her turn. "Technically, yes," she said, "really, no. This is my first year here, but I've passed up all the French and Spanish and Italian that the institution offers, and some of the German. I think myself that I ought to rank as a graduate student, but it seems there are some little preliminaries in the way of Math, and Latin and Logic that I have to take before I can have my sheepskin, and there's also some history and some English literature which the family demand that I take. So I don't know just how long I may hang on here."

"How—how funny!" gasped Betty. "Where do you live?"

"Bohemia, New York," answered the new girl promptly.

Betty looked puzzled.

"Why, you see," explained her mysterious friend, "it's no use saying one lives in New York. Everybody—all sorts and conditions of people—live in New York. So I always add Bohemia."

"Bohemia?" repeated Betty helplessly.

"Yes, Bohemia—the artistic New York. We have a studio and some other rooms up at the top of one of those queer old houses on Washington Square—you know it,—funny, ramshackle old place. Father has afternoons, and mother and I feed the lions and the lesser animals with tea and strawberry jam. It's very good fun, living in Bohemia."

"And how did you learn so many languages?"

"Oh, a little from tutors, but mostly from living abroad. We're not in Bohemia, New York, very much. We have a villa near Sorrento—awfully out- at-elbows, but still a villa; and we've been in Spain a good deal, and once father illustrated a book on Vienna—that was where I learned my German. Let me see—oh, it's French that I haven't accounted for. Well, we have some French relatives. They love to have us visit them at their funny old chateau, because mother mends their moth-eaten tapestries beautifully, and father paints the family portraits."

"And what do you do?" inquired Betty, much impressed.

"I? Oh, I teach the girls American slang. It doesn't amount to much, teaching French girls slang, because they never have any chance to get it off on the men. But they always like it."

"Don't you know any other languages?"

"No—why, yes I do, too. I know Bengali. When Mademoiselle asked me that very question this noon I forgot Bengali. I learned one winter in India. I guess I'll telephone her—or no—I'd rather see her august face when I remind her of my humble linguistic existence. My name is Madeline Ayres. Now it's your turn," ended the new girl suddenly.

"But I haven't anything to tell," objected Betty, "except that I'm Betty Wales, in the sophomore class, and live in Cleveland. Please go on. It sounds exactly like a fairy tale."

Madeline Ayres shook her head. "It may now," she said, "but when you come to think it over, you'll decide that I talk too much. Don't put that green vase there. It belongs on the bookcase. It just litters your desk and spoils the effect of that lovely water-color. Do you mind my telling you?"

It was ten o'clock when Miss Ayres took her departure. Between them, she and Betty had made astonishing progress toward bringing order out of the chaos that had reigned supreme an hour earlier.

"It's so pretty, too," declared Betty, alone once more with the little green lizard. "Whatever she touches goes right into place. I suppose that's because she's always lived with artists. Oh, dear, I wish I could do something interesting!"

There was a tap on the door, and Betty sprang for her light, for she had the new girl's terror of breaking the ten-o'clock rule, which is supposed by outsiders to be kept to the letter on the campus. However, it wasn't the matron, but only Nita Reese, who had a single room on the fourth floor and had come to say that the three B's were spending the night with her, and that they wished Betty to hurry right along and help eat up the food.

[Illustration: "Don't put that green vase there."]

"Lights don't count on the first night, they say," explained Nita, who, like Betty, had spent her freshman year off the campus. "So we've got to make the most of it."

"But what are the B's doing over here?" demanded Betty in perplexity.
"Have they moved away from the Westcott?"

Nita laughed. "No indeed, but the rest of their floor hadn't come, and they felt lonely and came over to see me. They say their matron won't miss them the first night, and I'm sure I hope ours won't find them here. They seem to think it's all right."

Betty pulled on her gray kimono, brushed the hair out of her eyes, and followed Nita through the hall and up-stairs to the fourth floor. There was a wilderness of trunks in the narrow passages. Every girl must have three at least, Betty thought. And their owners appeared to be in no haste about unpacking; the serious business of the hour was conversation. They stopped to talk with their neighbors to greet newcomers, to help or hinder other workers with questions and suggestions. Betty and Nita felt lost and rather friendless in the big house, and were strangely glad to see one familiar face down the corridor and to get a brisk little nod from a senior hurrying past them on the stairs. But on the fourth floor the B's pranced gaily out to meet them.

"Poor little lambs, just come on the campus," sang Babe.

"'Fraid to death of the matron," jeered Bob.

"We've come to cheer you up," ended Babbie.

"Girls," said Betty, when the five-pound box of chocolates that Bob's father had thoughtfully provided was nearly empty, "wouldn't it be dreadful if we didn't know each other or anybody? How did we ever manage last fall?"

"Oh, you can always do what you have to," returned Bob practically.

"One mattress is too narrow for four, though," announced Babbie, somewhat irrelevantly. "I'm going down to sleep with you, Betty. Come along."

Thus ended Betty's first evening on the campus.

CHAPTER II

ELEANOR'S FRESHMAN

It was early in the afternoon of the great day of the sophomore reception that Betty Wales ran up two flights of stairs at the Hilton House, and bursting into Eleanor's "extra-priced" corner single, flung herself, hot and breathless, into Eleanor's Morris chair.

"Oh, but I'm tired," she said, as soon as she could speak. "And dirty," she added, looking ruefully at the green stains on the front of her pink linen suit.

"You also seem to be in a hurry," observed Eleanor, who was always vastly entertained by Betty's impetuous, haphazard methods.

"I am," said Betty. "We're awfully behind with the decorating, and I ought to rush back to the gym. this very minute, but I—" she paused, then finished quickly. "I wanted to see you."

"That was nice of you," said Eleanor absently, sorting over the pages of a theme she had just finished copying. "I helped wind the balcony railings with yellow cheese-cloth all the morning, and I thought I'd better finish this before I went back. I'm bound not to get behind with my work this year."

"Good for you," returned Betty, cheerfully. "But I'm glad you're through now. I was hoping you would be."

"Did the chairman send you after me?" asked Eleanor, fastening her sheets together, and writing her name on the first one.

"Oh, no," said Betty, quickly. "She didn't at all. I wanted to see you myself."

Eleanor was too preoccupied to notice Betty's embarrassment. "Who is it that you're going to take to-night?" she asked. "You told me, but I've forgotten, and I want to put her name on my card."

"I asked Madeline Ayres—" began Betty.

"You lucky thing!" broke in Eleanor. "She's the most interesting girl in her class, I think, and she's going to be terribly popular. She's a class officer already, isn't she?"

"Yes, secretary. I'm glad you like her, because I came over to see if you wouldn't take her, in my place."

"I?" said Eleanor, in perplexity. "Why, I'm going to take Polly Eastman, —Jean's freshman cousin, you know. Do you mean you want me to take Miss Ayres too? Are you sick, Betty?"

"No," said Betty, hastily, "but Polly Eastman is. She's got the mumps or the measles or something. Jean told me about it, and an A.D.T. boy was just leaving a note for you—from Polly, I suppose—when I came up. She's gone to the infirmary."

"Poor child," said Eleanor. "She missed the freshman frolic, and she's been counting on to-night. I had such a lovely card for her, too. Pity it's got to go to waste. Well, she can have her violets all the same. I'll go down and telephone Clarke's to send them to the infirmary. But I don't see yet why you want me to take Miss Ayres, Betty."

"Because," said Betty, "we've just discovered a left-over freshman. She lives way down at the end of Market Street, and she entered late, and somehow her name wasn't put on the official list. But this morning she was talking to a girl in her Math. division, and when the other girl spoke about the reception this one—her name is Dora Carlson—hadn't heard of it. So the other freshmen very sensibly went in and told the registrar about it, and the registrar sent word to the gym. And then Jean said that her cousin was ill, so I came over to see if you'd take Madeline, and let me take Miss Carlson. Now please say 'yes' right off, so that I can go and change my dress and hurry down and ask the poor little thing."

Eleanor got up and came over to sit on the arm of the Morris chair. "Betty Wales," she said, with mock severity, but with an undertone of very real compunction in her voice, "do you think I'd do that? Have I ever been quite so mean as you make me out? Did you really think I'd take Miss Ayres and let you take Miss Carlson? You're absurd, Betty,—you are absurd sometimes, you know."

"Yes, I suppose I am," began Betty, "but—"

"It's perfectly simple," broke in Eleanor. "You go straight back to the gym. and work for the two of us, while I go and invite Miss Carlson to go with me to the reception. Where did you say she lives?"

"Number 50 Market Street. Oh, Eleanor, will you really take her? She's probably—oh, not a bit your kind, you know," ended Betty, doubtfully.

"Trust me to give her the time of her life all the same," said Eleanor, decidedly, putting on her hat.

"Oh, Eleanor, you are a gem," declared Betty, excitedly. "I'll go and get Helen to take your place at the gym. Good-bye." And she was off.

As Eleanor went down the steps of the Hilton House, she looked regretfully over at the gymnasium. They were dumping another load of evergreen boughs at the door. The horse was restless. It took three girls to hold him, and three more, with much shouting and laughter, to unload the boughs. Through one window she could see Rachel and Alice Waite stringing incandescent lights into Japanese lanterns. Katherine Kittredge was standing behind them in her gym suit. She had evidently been hanging lanterns along the rafters. It had been bad enough to stay at home and copy her theme. Now the decorating would be finished and the fun almost over, before she could get back. Eleanor shrugged her shoulders and turned resolutely away, trying to remember whether Market Street was just above or just below the station.

Before she had reached the campus gate, she heard some one calling her name. It was Jean Eastman.

"What's your hurry?" panted Jean. "Did you get Polly's note? And why aren't you at the gym.?"

"Yes, I got the note," answered Eleanor. "I'm more than sorry for Polly, and for myself, too. I shall get back to the gym. as soon as I can, but I have to ask another freshman to the reception first."

"Who?" demanded Jean.

"Miss Carlson," answered Eleanor simply.

"Oh, that! Don't you think, Eleanor, that you're getting a little quixotic in your old age?"

Her scornful tone was very exasperating, and Eleanor straightened haughtily. "I don't think either of us need worry about being too charitable just yet awhile," she began. Then she caught herself up sharply. "Don't let's get to bickering, Jean. You know I ought to ask her, and you know how much I want to. But I'm going to do it, and I expect every girl on my program to help make her have just as good a time as if she were one of us." And Eleanor was off down the hill, leaving Jean gazing amazedly after her.

Jean had no clue to the new Eleanor, whose strange toleration of the world in general annoyed the "Hill girls" (as those who had come from the Hill School were called) more than her high-handed attempts to run her own set, and her eventual wrecking of its influence, had done the year before. But the Hill girls appreciated Eleanor's ability, and they had resolved among themselves to wait a little and see what happened, before declaring open war.

Somebody came to call just before dinner, and Betty was consequently late in dressing for the reception. But in the midst of her frantic efforts to make her own toilette and help Helen with hers, she had time to wonder what Dora Carlson was like and how she and Eleanor would get on together. She knew that Eleanor was equal to any emergency, if she cared to exert herself, but the question was: would Dora Carlson in the concrete arouse the best—or the worst—of her nature? Betty loved Eleanor in spite of everything, but she had to admit to herself that a timid little freshman might infinitely prefer staying at home from the sophomore reception to going in Eleanor's company, if she happened to be in a bad mood. And furthermore, as Betty lost her temper over Helen's girdle, which would go up in front and down behind, completely spoiling the effect of an otherwise pretty evening dress, she was in a position to realize that trying to help is by no means the soul-inspiring thing that it sometimes seems in contemplation.

But she need not have worried about Dora Carlson, who, having lived alone with her father on a farm in the environs of a little village in Ohio, and kept house for him ever since she was twelve years old, was abundantly able to take care of herself. She was not at all timid, though she was not aggressive either, and she had a quaint way of expressing herself that would have interested almost any one. But it was the frank good-nature with which she accepted her eleventh hour invitation that appealed most to Eleanor, newly alive to the charm that lies in courageously making the best of a bad matter. For half an hour Eleanor devoted herself to finding out something about Miss Carlson and to making her feel at ease and happy in her company. Then she went off to order a carriage and twice as many violets as she had sent to Polly Eastman, and to find a maid who would press out her white mull dress,—this in spite of her decision, an hour earlier, that the white mull was much too pretty to waste on a promiscuous crush like the sophomore reception.

As a result of all these preparations, Dora Carlson arrived at the gymnasium in a state of mind that she herself aptly compared to Cinderella's on the night of her first ball. She had a keen appreciation of the beautiful, and she had never seen any one so absolutely lovely as Eleanor in evening dress. It was pleasure enough just to watch her, to hear her talk to other people, and to feel that she—Dora Carlson—had some part and lot in this fascinating being, who had suddenly appeared to her as from another world. But Eleanor had no intention of keeping her freshman in the background. All through the reception that preceded the dancing she took her from group to group, introducing her to sophomores whom she would dance with later and to prominent members of her own class. Eleanor Watson might be considered odd and freakish by the Hill girls, and very snobbish by the rest of the college; but nobody of either persuasion cared to ignore her, when she chose to make advances. And there was, besides, a good deal of curiosity about the short, dark little freshman, with the merry brown eyes, the big, humorous mouth, and the enormous bunch of Parma violets pinned to the front of her much-washed, tight-sleeved muslin. Why in the world had the "snob of snobs" chosen to bring her to the reception? Eleanor knew how to utilize this curiosity for Miss Carlson's advantage. She took pains, too, to turn the conversation to topics in which the child could join. She was determined that, as far as this one evening went, the plucky little freshman from Ohio should have her chance. Afterward her place in the college world would of course depend largely on herself.

"Do you dance?" asked Eleanor, when the music for the first waltz began. And when Miss Carlson answered with a delighted "yes," Eleanor, who always refused to lead, and detested both crowds and "girl dances," resolutely picked up her train and started off.

Betty Wales and Jean Eastman, who had taken their freshmen up into the gallery, where they could look down at the dancers, saw her and exchanged glances.

"More than she's ever done for me," said Jean, resignedly.

"Isn't it nice of her?" returned Betty, with enthusiasm.

And Jean, meditating on the matter later, decided shrewdly that Betty Wales was somehow at the bottom of Eleanor's unexplainable change of heart, and advised the Hill girls to make a determined effort to monopolize Eleanor's time and interest, before she had become hopelessly estranged from their counsels. But to all their attentions Eleanor paid as little heed as she did to the persistent appeals of Paul West, a friend at Winsted College, a few miles away, that she should give up "slaving over something you don't care about and come over to our next dance." To the Hill girls Eleanor gave courteous but firm denials, and she wrote Paul West that once in three weeks was as often as she had time for callers.

"And you really had a good time?" said Eleanor, riding down to Market
Street to see Miss Carlson home.

"Splendid!" said Miss Carlson, heartily. "I'm sorry your first partner was sick, but I guess I enjoyed it fully as much as she would. Your friends were all so nice to me."

"I'm glad of that," said Eleanor, relieved to find that Dora had not apparently noticed Jean Eastman's insolent manner, nor the careless self- absorption of one or two of her other partners. "And now that you've met the girls," she added practically, "you mustn't let them forget you. Making friends is one of the nicest things about college."

"Yes, isn't it?" responded the little freshman, quickly. "I quite agree with you, but I don't expect to make any. I guess it's like other gifts. It doesn't come natural to some people. But," she added, brightening, "I came here to learn Greek and Latin, so that I can teach and support my father in his old age. And the good time I've had to-night is enough to last me for one while, I guess."

Eleanor put out a slim, white hand and caught Miss Carlson's hard, brown one impetuously in hers, "Don't," she said. "That isn't the way things are here. Good times don't have to last, because one always leads to another. Why, I know another that's coming to you very soon. I've had a good deal of company for dinner lately and I can't ask for a place again right away, but the first Sunday that I can arrange it, you're coming up to have dinner with me at the Hilton House. Will you?"

Jean Eastman had a great deal to say about Eleanor's freshman crush, as she called Dora Carlson. It was foolish, she said, and not in good taste, to send a bunch of violets as big as your head to a perfect stranger, whom you never expected to see again. Later, after Dora's appearance at the Hilton for Sunday dinner, Jean declared that it was a shame for Eleanor to invite her up there and make her think she really liked her, when it was only done for effect, and she would drop the poor child like a hot coal the minute she felt inclined to.

Even Betty Wales failed to understand Eleanor's interest in the quaint little freshman, and she and the other Chapin house girls rallied her heartily about Miss Carlson's open and unbounded adoration.

"Please don't encourage the poor thing so," laughed Katherine, one day not long after the reception. "Why, yesterday morning at chapel I looked up in the gallery and there she was in the front row, hanging over the railing as far as she dared, with her eyes glued to you. Some day she'll fall off, and then think how you'll feel, when the president talks about the terrible evils of the crush system, and stares straight at you."

Eleanor took their banter with perfect good-nature, and seemed rather pleased than otherwise at Miss Carlson's devotion.

"I like her," she said stoutly. "That's why I encourage her, as you call it. Now, Helen Adams doesn't interest me at all. She keeps herself to herself too much. But Dora Carlson is so absolutely frank and straightforward, and so competent and quick to see through things. She ought to have been a man. Then she could go west and make her fortune. As it is—" Eleanor shrugged her shoulders, in token that she had no feasible suggestion ready in regard to Dora Carlson's future.

To Betty, in private, she went much further. "You don't know what you did for me, Betty, when you

made me ask that child to the reception. Nobody ever cared for me, or trusted me, as she does—or for the reasons that she does. I hope I can show her that I'm worth it, but it's going to be hard work. And it will be a bad thing for her, and a worse thing for me, if I fail."

CHAPTER III

PARADES AND PARTIES

It was surprising how well the girl from Bohemia fitted into the life at Harding. She had never experienced an examination or even a formal recitation until the beginning of her freshman term. She had seldom lived three months in any one place, and she had grown up absolutely without reference to the rules and regulations and conventions that meant so much to the majority of her fellow-students. But she did not find the recitations frightful, nor the simple routine of life irksome. She was willing to tell everybody who cared to listen what she had seen of French pensions, Italian beggars, or Spanish bullfights. It astonished her to find that her experiences were unique, because she had always accepted them as comparatively commonplace; but her pity for the girls who had never been east of Cape Cod nor west of Harding,—there were two of them at the Belden,—was quite untinged with self-congratulation.

She was very much amused and not a little pleased, by her election to the post of class secretary.

"They did it because I passed up four languages," she explained to Betty. "Somehow it got around—I'm sure I never meant to boast of it—and they seemed to think they ought to show their appreciation. Nice of them, wasn't it? But I fancy I shan't have a large international correspondence. It would have been more to the point if they'd found out whether I can write plainly." And the girl from Bohemia chuckled softly.

"What's the joke?" inquired Betty.

"Nothing," answered Madeline, "only I can't. Miss Felton made me spell off every word of my Spanish examination paper, because she couldn't read it, and I can't read my last theme myself," and she laughed again merrily.

"Let's see it," demanded Betty, reaching for the paper at the top of the pile on Madeline's desk.

"That's next week's," said Madeline. "I thought I'd do them both while I was at it. But this week's is funnier."

"This week's" proved to be an absurd incident founded upon the illegibility of Henry Ward Beecher's handwriting. It was cleverly told, but the cream of its humor lay in the fact that Madeline's writing, if not so bad as Mr. Beecher's, was certainly bad enough.

"Maybe Miss Raymond can make out what he really wrote, but I've forgotten now, and I can't," said Madeline, tossing the theme back on the pile. "And I didn't try to write badly either. It just happened."

Everything "just happened" with Madeline Ayres. Betty had said that things fell into place for her, and people seemed to have a good deal the same pleasant tendency. But if they did not, Madeline seldom exerted herself to make them do her bidding. She admired hard work, and did a good deal of it by fits and starts. But she detested wire-pulling, and took an instant dislike to Eleanor Watson because some injudicious person told her that Eleanor had said she was sure to be popular and prominent at Harding.

"What nonsense!" she said, with a flash of scorn in her slumberous hazel eyes. "How it spoils life to count up the chances like that! How it takes the fun out of everything! The right way is to go ahead and enjoy yourself, and work your prettiest, and take things when they come. They always come—if you give them a little time," she added with a return of her usual serenity.

So it was wholly a matter of chance that Madeline Ayres should have succeeded in turning Helen Chase Adams into an athlete. Helen had come to college with several very definite theories about life, most of which had been shattered at the start. She had promptly revised her idea of a college in conformity with what she found—and loved—at Harding. She had decided, with some reluctance, that she had been mistaken in supposing that all pretty girls were stupid. But she still believed that genius

is an infinite capacity for taking pains—laying no very stringent emphasis on the "infinite"; and she was determined to prove the truth of that bold, if somewhat elusive, assertion, at least to the extent of showing that she, Helen Chase Adams, could make a thoroughgoing success of her college course.

Success may mean anything. To Helen Adams it had meant, ever since the day of the sophomore-freshman basket-ball game, the ability to write something that would interest her classmates. It might be a song that they would care to sing, or a little verse or a story that Miss Raymond would read in her theme class, as she had Mary Brooks's version of the Chapin house freshmen's letters home, and that the girls would listen to and laugh over, and later discuss and compliment her upon. It was not that she wanted the compliments, but they would measure her success.

Helen admired the girl from Bohemia because she could write—Betty had told her about the Henry Ward Beecher theme,—also because she was quick and keen, seldom hurried or worried out of her habitual serenity, and finally because Betty admired her. Madeline Ayres, for her part, thought of Helen chiefly as Betty's roommate, noticed the awkward little forward tilt of her head just as she had noticed the inharmonious arrangement of Betty's green vase, and commented upon the one in exactly the same spirit that she had called attention to the other.

"You ought to go in for gym," she said one afternoon when she had strolled into Betty's room and found only Helen. "It would straighten you up, and make you look like a different person. I'm going in for it myself, hard. I'm hoping that it will cure my slouchy walk, and turn me out 'a marvel of grace and beauty,' as the physical culture advertisements always say. Let's be in the same class, so that we can practice things together at home."

"But I should take sophomore gym and you'd be with the freshmen," objected Helen.

"Why don't you take freshman gym too? You can't do the exercises any too well, can you?"

"No," admitted Helen, frankly. "I cut a lot last year, and I couldn't do them anyway."

"Don't you hate to struggle along when you're not ready to go?" asked the girl from Bohemia.

Helen agreed that she did, and a moment later they were comparing schedules and deciding upon a class which they could both join. It came directly in the middle of the afternoon, and Helen Adams had always considered gym at any hour a flagrant waste of time; but she did not say so. There had been something in Madeline's outspoken reference to her awkward carriage that, without hurting her, had struck home. Helen Chase Adams aspired to literary honors at Harding; to this desire was suddenly added a violent ambition to be what Madeline had termed "a marvel of grace."

Betty was amazed, when she came in a little later, to find Helen trying on her gym suit.

"What in the world are you doing?" she demanded. "Gym doesn't begin for two weeks yet."

"I know it," said Helen, "but the neck of my suit never was right. It's awfully unbecoming. How would you fix it?"

"You frivolous thing!" laughed Betty, squinting at the unbecoming neck for a moment. "It's too high behind, that's all. Rip off the collar and I'll cut it down. And I have an extra blue tie that you can have—it needs a tie. But I thought you'd manage to get an excuse from gym, when you hate it so."

"Perhaps I shan't hate it this year," ventured Helen, and neither then nor later did Betty exactly understand her roommate's sudden devotion to parallel bars, ropes, the running track, and breathing exercises. But in time she did thoroughly appreciate the results of this physical training. Helen Chase Adams was never exactly "a marvel of grace"; but she was erect and supple, with considerable poise and dignity of bearing, when she left Harding.

Another thing that Madeline Ayres "happened upon" was the Republican parade. Presidential elections had been celebrated in various ways at Harding. There had been banners spread to the breeze, songs and bells in the night-watches, mock caucuses and conventions, campaign speeches, and Australian balloting, before election time. But the parade was of Madeline's invention.

It was about eight o'clock on the evening after election day that she appeared in Mary Brooks's door—she had made friends with Mary almost as easily as Betty had.

"I say," she said, dropping off her rain-coat and displaying a suit of manly black beneath, to match the short brown wig above. "Let's have a Republican parade. Who'll be the defeated candidate, in chains?"

Then she smiled broadly, displaying rows of even white teeth, and Mary grasped the situation in a moment.

"I'm with you, Roosevelt," she said. "Nita Reese can be the defeated one.
I'll go and get her."

"And you be leader of the band," said Madeline. "You get combs and I'll get tin pans."

"Let's take up a collection and have ice-cream later," proposed Mary.

"All right. I'll tell Betty to see to that. I've got to lead a strenuous life finding clothes for Fairbanks," and "President Roosevelt" disappeared down the hall.

Promptly at nine the parade assembled on the third floor corridor. The president elect was drawn in an express wagon, except down the stairs between floors. Out of consideration for the weight of his chains the defeated candidate was allowed to ride in a barouche, alias a rocking- chair. But he objected to riding backward, and the barouche would not move the other way round, so he accepted the arm of the leader of the band and walked, chains and all. The vice-president walked from the start. At intervals of five minutes one or both of the successful candidates made speeches. The defeated candidate wished to do likewise, but the other two drowned him out. Between times the band, composed of all the Belden House who could play on combs or who could find tin pans, discoursed sweet music. Those who could not do either formed what Mary Brooks called "a female delegation of the G.O.P. from Colorado," and closed in the rear of the procession in a most imposing manner.

The vice-president elect wanted to make a tour of the campus houses, but the twenty minutes to ten bell rang, and there was only time to eat the ice cream.

The fact that Roberta Lewis, who happened to be in Mary's room when the president made his first call, laughed herself into hysterics over the parade, proves that it was funny. The further fact that she had firmly decided to leave college at Christmas time, but changed her mind after she had seen the parade, shows that even "impromptu stunts" are not always as silly and futile as they seem.

But before the Republican parade came Hallowe'en, and Hallowe'en on the campus is not a thing to pass over lightly. Each house has some sort of party, generally in costume. There is a good deal of rivalry, and as every house wishes to see and judge of the achievements of its neighbors, the most interesting encounters are likely to take place midway between houses, on the journeys from one party to another.

In Betty's sophomore year the Belden had a masquerade ball, under the direction of Mary Brooks and the girl from Bohemia. The Hilton House indulged in an old-fashioned country Hallowe'en, with a spelling match, dancing to "Roger de Coverley" and "Money Musk," apple-bobbing and all the other traditional methods of finding out about your lover on All Saints' Eve. The Westcott gave a "spook" party, one of the other houses a play, still another a goblin dance, to which everybody carried jack-o'-lanterns, and the rest celebrated the holiday in other characteristic and amusing ways. The campus resembled a cross between the midway at a World's Fair and the grand finale of a comic opera; for ghosts consorted there with ballet dancers and Egyptian princesses, spooks and goblins linked arms with pirates in top-boots and rosy farmers' daughters in calico, and nuns and Puritan maidens chatted familiarly with villainous and fascinating gentlemen, who twirled black mustaches and threatened to kiss them.

By nine o'clock everybody had seen everybody else, and congratulations for successful costumes, clever acting, and thrilling ghost stories were nearly all distributed. Toward the end of the evening there were a good many small gatherings, met to talk over the fun in detail and enjoy the numerous "spreads" that had been sent on from home,—for the college girl's family becomes almost as expert in detecting a festival afar off as is the girl herself.

Nan never let the Wales household forget its duty in such matters, and a merry party was assembled in Betty's room to eat the salad, sandwiches, jelly, olives, cake, candy, nuts, and fruit that her mother had provided.

"How time flies," observed Mary Brooks sagely, helping herself to another sandwich. "I suppose you gay young sophomores don't realize it, but it's almost Christmas time."

"And after Christmas, midyears," wailed a freshman from her corner.

"And after midyears what?

"'To be or not to be, that is the question,'" quoted Katherine
Kittredge loudly.

"But for sophomores who survive the midyears," went on Mary, "the next thing of importance is the

society elections."

"That's so," said Betty eagerly. "We can get into your wonderful societies after midyears, if we're brainy enough. I'd forgotten all about them."

"Then I'll wager you're about the only sophomore who hasn't thought of them occasionally this fall," announced Mary. "And now I'm ready for some candy."

"Tell us how to go to work to get into those societies, can't you?" asked
Bob from her place beside the salad bowl.

"Work hard and write themes," said Mary briefly, and the subject was dropped.

Betty thought no more about Mary's remark then, but when she and Helen were alone it came back to her.

"I suppose some girls do think about the societies a lot, and plan and hope to get in," she said.

"I suppose so," returned Helen. "I shan't have to. I am perfectly safe to stay out."

"Oh, so am I, as far as that goes," said Betty carelessly.

Helen, watching her closely, wondered how any popular girl could be as unconscious as Betty seemed. She had overheard a Belden House senior telling Mary Brooks that Betty Wales was sure to go into a society the minute she became eligible. Helen opened her mouth to convey this information to Betty, but stopped just in time.

"For she's not unhappy about it," thought Helen, "and it would be dreadful if they should be mistaken. But they can't be," concluded Helen loyally, watching Betty's face as she read a note that her mother had tucked in among the nuts. Most pretty girls might be stupid, but the best of everything was none too good for Betty Wales, so thought her roommate.

CHAPTER IV

ELEANOR WATSON, AUTHORESS

Eleanor Watson leaned back in her Morris chair, her eyes fixed absently on the opposite wall, her forehead knit in deep thought. "Somehow there isn't enough of me to go round," she reflected. "I don't see why,—the other girls, no quicker or brighter than I, seem to get on all right. I wonder why I can't. I can't give up everything in the way of recreation."

It was easy enough for an outsider to analyze her difficulty. Never before had Eleanor tried to "go round," as she put it. She had always done what she pleased, and let alone the things that did not appeal to her. Now she had suddenly assumed responsibilities. She really wanted to do her college work, all of it, as it deserved to be done, and to do it honestly, without resort to any of the various methods of deception that she had employed almost unconsciously hitherto. She wanted to make life pleasanter for Dora Carlson. She wanted to write the long, newsy letters to Jim and to Judge Watson; letters that brought characteristic replies, confidential from Jim, genially humorous from her father, but both equally appreciative and as different as possible from their cold, formal notes of the year before. On the other hand, she wanted, both for selfish and unselfish reasons, to enter into the social life of the college. She had not lost her worldly ambitions in one summer; and she had not gained, at a bound, the concentration of mind that enabled other girls to get through an amazing amount of work and fun with perfect ease. She knew infinitely less of the value of time than Betty Wales; she had less sense of proportion than Helen Adams; and she was intensely eager to win all sorts of honors.

So it was natural that she should stare at the wall opposite for some little time before she came to the conclusion that sitting empty-handed, thinking about her troubles, while the morning took to itself wings, was not the best way to mend matters. And when she did finally come back to earth, it was only to give an angry little exclamation, pick up a magazine from the table at her elbow, and go to reading it. At the end of half an hour, however, she tossed it aside, and sitting resolutely down at her desk, wrote diligently until lunch time.

"Have you done your theme, Eleanor?" asked Alice Waite, overtaking her on the way down to the

dining-room.

Eleanor nodded curtly. "Did it between twelve and one."

"Really?" Alice's brown eyes grew big with admiration. "Oh, dear, it takes me days to do mine, and when they're done they're nothing, and yours are just fine. I do think it's queer—"

"Nonsense," interrupted Eleanor crossly. "You don't know anything about my themes. You never saw one."

"Oh, but Betty Wales says—" began Alice eagerly.

"Now what does Betty Wales really know about it either?" inquired Eleanor a trifle more amiably.

"Why, I don't know," returned Alice helplessly, "but I'm sure she's right. Is your theme a story?"

"Yes."

"Oh, and is it about a man and a girl? Betty says your man-and-girl stories are great, specially the love parts. Now I could no more write love-making—"

"Well, there's no love-making in this one," interrupted Eleanor crossly, "and it's not great at all. It's so poor that I'm not even sure I shall hand it in. So please don't say any more about it."

All through luncheon Eleanor sat silent, wearing the absent, harassed expression which meant that she was deciding something—something about which her better and her worse selves disagreed.

Just as she was leaving the lunch-table, Christy Mason rushed up to her in great excitement.

"Now, Eleanor," she began, "don't say you can't come, for we simply won't let you off. It's a construction car ride. Meet at the Main Street corner at four—right after Lab., if you have it. It's positively the last ride of the season and an awfully jolly crowd's going,—Betty and Jean and Kate Denise and the three B's, and Katherine Kittredge and Nita Reese,— oh, the whole sophomore push, you know. Now, say you'll come, and give me twenty cents for the supper."

"Give me time to breathe," laughed Eleanor. "Now seriously, Christy, why should I go off on one of those dirty, hard, bumping flat-cars, on a freezing night in November—"

"It's moonlight," interrupted Christy, "and we must have your guitar to help with the singing."

"We shall nickname you dig, if you don't come," declared Bob, who had danced up in the midst of the colloquy. "Now, how will you like that—Dig Watson?"

Eleanor laughed good-naturedly. "Don't be ironical," she said. "I'll come. I hadn't any intention of not coming. I only wanted to know why you will persist in lugging those horrid flat-cars into all your fun."

"Stunty," explained Christy.

"Different," added Bob.

"But since you're coming, we can argue about it to-night," concluded Christy, decidedly. "What I want now is your twenty cents."

It was half past three when Eleanor started over to the main building to deposit her theme in one of the tin boxes which Miss Raymond and her assistants opened at specified hours on specified days,—not, as Mary Brooks explained, because they wanted what was in the boxes, but because they wished to discover what was not in them, in order that they might make life a burden for those whose themes were late.

Just ahead of Eleanor a little freshman walked up to the box and slipped in a stamped envelope.

"Pardon me, but this isn't a mail-box," explained Eleanor.

"Why, it says 'Collections made at 6 P.M. Tuesdays and Thursdays,'" gasped the little freshman. Then she glanced at the heading, "'Themes of Second Class, L to Z.' Oh, I thought of course that said United States Mail."

"Evidently you're fortunate enough not to have elected themes. When you do, remember that the collections are as prompt as the postman's," said Eleanor. "Come back at six, and you can get out your letter."

But the freshman, blushing as red as her scarlet cap, had vanished down the hall.

Then, instead of dropping in her theme and hurrying home, as she had intended, to get into an old skirt and a heavy shirt-waist before four o'clock, Eleanor sat down on the lowest step of the broad stairway, as if she had decided to wait there until six o'clock and rescue the freshman's letter herself. Five—ten—fifteen minutes, she sat there. Girl after girl came through the hall to deposit themes, or consult the bulletin boards. Among them were one or two of the "sophomore push," as Christy had called them.

"Aren't you a lady of leisure, though," called Christy, dashing through the hall at quarter to four. "I have to go ahead and see about the ice cream. Don't you be late, Eleanor."

Eleanor looked after her wistfully; Christy was one of the girls who always "went round." Then she shrugged her shoulders, got up, and dropped her theme into the box.

"What's the odds, anyhow?" she muttered, as it fell with a soft little swish on the top of the pile inside. "It's too late to write another now." And she hurried after Christy down the hill.

The construction car ride was a great success. The night was decidedly balmy for November, and the moon rode, full and glorious, in a cloudless sky. If the car bottom made a hard seat, the passengers' spirits were elastic enough to endure all the bumps and jolts with equanimity. Hatless, though bundled in ulsters and sweaters, they laughed and sang and shouted in the indefatigably light-hearted fashion that is characteristic only of babies and collegians off on a frolic.

Eleanor's story of the absent-minded freshman was the hit of the evening, and the tinkle of her guitar added the crowning touch to the festivity of the occasion. As they rounded the last corner on the homeward stretch, she turned to Betty Wales, her eyes shining softly and her hair blown into distracting waves under her fluffy white tam.

"It is fun, Betty," she said. "Flat-car and all,—though why it should be, I'm sure I don't see, and last year it wasn't—for me."

Then her face grew suddenly sombre, and she settled back in her corner, dropping into a moody silence that lasted until the car had dumped its merry load, and the "sophomore push" was making its way in noisy twos and threes up the hill to the campus.

"Come over for a minute, can't you, Eleanor?" asked Betty, when they reached the Belden House gate.

"Why, yes—no, I can't, either. I'm sorry," said Eleanor, and was starting across the grass toward home, when Jean Eastman overtook her.

"Come over to the Westcott and warm up with coffee," said Jean.

Eleanor repeated her refusal.

"Why not?" demanded Jean with her usual directness.

"Because I want to see Miss Raymond a minute," returned Eleanor, coolly.

"Well, you can't do that to-night," said Jean. "She's entertaining Professor Morris of New York. I don't suppose you care to break into that, do you? She's probably having a select party of faculty stars in for a chafing-dish supper."

"Oh, dear!" There was genuine distress in Eleanor's voice. "Then I'm going home, Jean. You're perfectly certain that she'll be engaged? You're sure this is the night he was coming?"

Having duly assured Eleanor that Professor Morris and Miss Raymond had taken lunch at the Westcott House and that Miss Mills had been invited out to dinner with them, Jean went home to inform her roommate that Eleanor Watson was in more trouble over her English work—that she was rushing around the campus at nine in the evening, trying to find Miss Raymond.

Eleanor, left to herself at last, turned and went slowly back to the
Belden House.

Betty looked up in astonishment when she appeared in the door. "How'd you happen to change your mind?" she asked.

"Fate was against me," said Eleanor shortly. "I wanted to see Miss
Raymond about a theme, but she's busy."

"Won't morning do?" asked Betty, sympathetically.

"Yes, I suppose so, only I wanted to have it off my hands."

"I don't wonder," agreed Betty. "She's none too agreeable about late themes."

"It's not a late theme. I want to get back the one I handed in to-day. It ought never to have gone in."

Betty stared at Eleanor for a moment in speechless amazement, then she danced across the room and pulling Eleanor after her, tumbled back among the couch cushions. "Oh, Eleanor, you are the funniest thing," she said. "Last year you didn't care about anything, and now I believe you're a worse fusser than Helen Chase Adams. The idea of worrying over a theme that is done and copied and in on time! Come and tell Madeline Ayres. She'll appreciate the joke, and she'll give us some of her lovely sweet chocolate that her cousins sent her from Paris."

But Eleanor hung back. "Please don't say anything about it to Miss Ayres. I'd really rather you didn't. It may be a joke to you, but it's a serious matter to me, Betty."

So more people than Eleanor were surprised the next afternoon to find that the clever story which Miss Raymond read with great gusto to her prize theme class, and commented upon as "extraordinary work for an undergraduate," should prove to be Eleanor Watson's.

As early in the morning as she dared Eleanor had gone over to get back her theme "that should never have gone in," and to ask permission to try again. But Miss Raymond had been up betimes, working over her new batch of papers, and she met Eleanor's apologies with amused approval of sophomores, who, contrary to the popular tradition about their cock- sureness, were inclined to underestimate their abilities, and imagine, like freshmen before midyears, that their work was below grade. So there was nothing for Eleanor to do but submit gracefully and leave the theme. It did not occur to her to caution Miss Raymond against reading it to her class.

In spite of hard struggles and little disappointments like Helen Adams's, it really takes very little to make a college reputation. One brilliant recitation may turn an unassuming student into a "prod."; and on the strength of one clever bit of writing another is given the title of "genius." This last distinction was at once bestowed on Eleanor. She was showered with congratulations and compliments. Her old school friends like Lilian Day and Jean Eastman hastened to declare that they had always known Eleanor Watson could write. Solid, dependable students like Dorothy King and Marion Lawrence regarded her with new respect; awed little freshmen pointed her out to one another as "that awfully pretty Miss Watson, who is a perfect star in themes, you know"; and her own class, who had cordially disliked her the year before, and not known what to think of her recent friendliness, immediately prepared to make a class heroine of her and lauded her performance to the skies.

But Eleanor would have none of all this "pleasant fuss," as Mary Brooks called it. Suddenly and most inexplicably she reverted to her sarcastic, ungracious manner of the year before. She either ignored the pretty speeches that people made to her, or received them with a stare and a haughty "I really don't know what you mean," which fairly frightened her admirers into silence.

"I hope," said Mary Brooks to Betty, after having received a particularly scathing retort, "that hereafter Miss Raymond can be induced not to approve of the lady Eleanor's themes. I've heard that prosperity turns people's heads, but I never knew it made them into bears. She's actually more unpleasant than she was before she reformed. And the moral of that is, don't reform," added Mary sententiously.

Betty Wales was completely mystified and bitterly disappointed by
Eleanor's strange behavior.

"Eleanor dear," she ventured timidly, "don't be so queer and—and disagreeable about your theme. Why, you even hurt my feelings when I spoke to you about it, and the other girls think it's awfully funny that you shouldn't be pleased, and like to have them congratulate you. The theme must have been good, you see. Miss Raymond knows, and she liked it ever so much. She told the class about your rushing over to get it that morning, and she thought it was such a good joke. Do cheer up, Eleanor. Why, I should be so proud if I were you!"

Eleanor was silent for a moment, then she smiled suddenly, her flashing, radiant smile. "Well, I'll try to be pleasant, Betty, if you want me to," she said. "There's no use crying over spilt milk. I am queer—you know that—but I hadn't meant to hurt people's feelings. You're going to the library, aren't you? Well, Dora Carlson's up there. Tell her, please, that I was tired when she came in just now—that I didn't intend to be disagreeable, and that I love her just the same. Will you?"

So when, just after Betty had left, Dorothy King came in and plunged at once into the familiar "I want to congratulate you on that story, Miss Watson," Eleanor smiled pleasantly and murmured, "It's nothing,—just a stupid little tale," in conventional college fashion.

"And of course," went on Dorothy briskly, "we want it for the 'Argus.' I'm not a literary editor myself,—just business manager,—but Frances West is so busy that she asked me to stop in and see you on my way to a meeting of the Editorial board. Frances is the editor-in-chief, you know."

A dull red flush spread itself over Eleanor's pale face. "I'm sorry, Miss King, very sorry, but—but—I can't let the 'Argus' use my story."

Dorothy stared. "We can't have it? Why—well, of course it's very good. Were you going to try to sell it to a regular magazine?"

Eleanor shook her head. "No," she said with an odd little laugh. "No, I'm not going to try to sell it."

Dorothy looked puzzled. "Most people are very glad to get into the 'Argus.' We don't often have to ask twice for contributions. And we want this very, very much. Miss Raymond likes it so well and all. Can't I persuade you to change your mind?"

"No," said Eleanor curtly.

In spite of her poise and her apparently even temper, Dorothy King was a rather spoiled young person, used to having her own way and irritable when other people insisted, without reason, upon having theirs. She disliked Eleanor Watson, and now Eleanor's manner nettled her beyond endurance. She rose suddenly.

"Oh, very well, Miss Watson," she said. "But I really don't understand why you should raise such a tempest in a teapot over a theme. You make me quite curious to see it, I assure you. It must be a very strange piece of work."

Eleanor's face went white instantly. "I beg your pardon, Miss King. I didn't mean to be either rude or disobliging or even—queer. Here is the story, and if the 'Argus' can really use it, I shall be delighted, of course."

On the campus Dorothy met Betty Wales. "I've got it," she cried, waving the theme aloft in triumph. "She didn't want to give it to me at first, and I lost my temper—she is so trying—but later she was lovely, and I apologized, and now we're fast friends."

Betty was on her way to gym, but she stole five minutes in which to run up and see Eleanor.

"Hurrah for you!" she cried. "I saw Dorothy and she told me the great news. Eleanor, you'll be on the Argus board yourself, if you're not careful."

"Would you mind not staying now, Betty?" asked Eleanor, who was lying buried among her pillows. "I have a dreadful headache, and talking makes it worse."

CHAPTER V

POINTS OF VIEW

During the first part of their year at the Chapin house Betty and her friends had taken very little interest in the Harding Aid Society. It had been to them only a name, about which Mary Brooks, who was a member of the aid committee of her class, talked glibly, and in behalf of which she exacted onerous contributions, whenever the spirit moved her. But at the time of the valentine episode, when Emily Davis and her two friends suddenly appeared upon Betty's horizon, Betty and Katherine realized all at once what the Aid Society must mean to some of their classmates. During the rest of the year they seconded Mary's efforts warmly, and the whole house got interested and plied Mary with questions about the work of the society, until, in sheer desperation, she admitted that she knew very little about it, and set herself to get some definite information. The head of the committee, pleased with Mary's sudden enthusiasm, sent her to one of the faculty trustees, and for a few days Mary, who was entirely a creature of impulse, could talk of nothing but the splendid work of the Harding Aid Society in helping the poorer members of the college to meet their expenses.

It was perfectly marvelous how little some girls got along on. To many of them a loan of twenty-five dollars actually meant the difference between going home and staying in college a year longer.

"Now fancy that!" interpolated Mary. "It would mean just about the price of a new hat to me."

And each dollar helped an endless chain of girls; for the society made loans, not gifts; and the girls always paid up the moment they could get the money together.

"One girl paid back two hundred dollars out of a five hundred dollar salary that she got for teaching, the year after she graduated. Imagine that if you can!" said Mary.

The Aid Society managed the bulletin boards in the gymnasium basement. It ran an employment agency, a blue-print shop, and a second-hand book- store. It was astonishing, said Mary, with a mysterious shake of her head, how many splendid girls—the very finest at Harding—the society was helping. Confidentially, she whispered to the valentine coterie that Emily Davis and her two friends had just been placed on the list of beneficiaries. Her eloquence extorted a ten dollar contribution from Roberta, and smaller amounts from the rest of the girls. But then came spring term, and the Harding Aid Society was forgotten for golf, bicycling, the bird club, and the other absorbing joys of the season.

But it was only natural that Mary, casting about for a "Cause," in behalf of which to exercise her dramatic talent, should remember the Aid Society, and the effort it was making to complete its ten-thousand-dollar loan fund before Christmas. Mary was no longer on the aid committee, but that was no reason why she should not help complete the fund, for which everybody,—alumnae, friends of the college, and undergraduates,—were expected to work. Mary was a born entertainer, never so happy as when she was getting up what in college-girl parlance is called a "show." She had discovered how to utilize her talent at Harding, at the time of the Sherlock Holmes dramatization. It had lain dormant again until the Hallowe'en party brought it once more to light, and the election parade kindled it into fresh vigor.

In all her enterprises Mary found a kindred spirit in Madeline Ayres.
Madeline had taken part in amateur theatricals ever since she could talk.

"And I've always been wild to do men's parts," she said. "I hope I can up here."

"Of course you can," returned Mary, promptly. "Do you know any actors or actresses?"

"Oh, two or three," answered Madeline, carelessly. "Or at least father does—he knows everybody that's interesting—and I've talked to them. And once I 'suped.' It was a week when I'd been to the theatre three times, and I didn't want to ask father for any more money. So I went to the manager and got a chance to be in the mob—that's the crowd that don't have speaking parts, you know. And the people who'd promised to take me home forgot and went off to supper without me, and the leading lady heard about it and took me home in her carriage. So mother asked her to tea, and she came, and was a dear, though she couldn't act at all. I forget her name. But the family wouldn't let me go on again. They said it wouldn't do, even in Bohemia."

"Goodness!" exclaimed Mary, excitedly. "Wasn't that a lark! Madeline, do let's get up a play."

"But how can we?" objected Madeline, lazily. "Hallowe'en is over, there aren't any more elections or holidays coming, and we're not either of us on the committee for house plays. We can't just walk in and offer our services, can we?"

Mary stared at her absently. "That's so," she said. "That's the bother of being on the campus, where they have committees for everything. Oh, dear! Isn't there something we can have a play for?" Then her face lighted suddenly. "The Harding Aid! The very thing!" she shrieked, and seizing the stately Madeline around the waist, she twirled her violently across the room.

"I haven't the ghost of an idea what you are talking about," said Madeline, gravely, when she had at last succeeded in disentangling herself from Mary's bearish embraces. "But I'm with you, anyway. What shall it be?"

"Why, a—a play."

"Don't you like vaudeville shows better?" inquired Madeline, "and circuses, and nice little stunts? Girls can do that sort of thing a lot better than they can act regular plays. And besides it brings in a bigger cast and takes fewer bothering old rehearsals."

This time Mary danced a jig all by herself.

"Come over to Marion Lawrence's," she commanded, breathlessly. "She's chairman of the big Loan

Fund Committee. She'll make us two a special entertainment committee, and tell the rest to let us go ahead and do what we please."

But Madeline shook her head. "I loathe committees," she explained. "You go along and see Miss Lawrence and be on your committee, if you like. And when you want some help with the stunts or the costumes—I have a lot of drapery and jewelry and such stuff—why, come and tell me, and I'll do what I can."

And no amount of persuasion on the part of Mary, Marion Lawrence, or the Loan Fund Committee *en masse*, could induce Madeline to change her mind. "Why, I can't be on a committee," she said. "I get around to recitations and meals and class meetings, and that's all I can possibly manage. You don't realize that I'd never had to be on time for anything in all my life till I came here, except for trains sometimes,—and you can generally count on their being a little late. No, I can't and won't come to committee meetings and be bored. But all that I have is yours," and Madeline tossed a long and beautifully curled mustache at Mary, and a roll of Persian silk at Marion. "For the circus barker," she explained, "and the Indian juggler's turban. I'll make the turban, if the juggler doesn't know how. They're apt to come apart, if you don't get the right twist. And I'll see about that little show of my own, if you really think it's worth having."

So, though her name did not appear on the list of the committee or on the posters, it was largely due to Madeline Ayres that the Harding Aid "Show" was such a tremendous success.

"The way to get up a good thing," she declared, "is to let each person see to her own stunt. Then it's no trouble to any one else. And you'd better have the show next week, before we all get bored to death with the idea."

These theories were exactly in accordance with Harding sentiment, so next week the "Show" was,—in the gymnasium, for it rapidly outgrew the Belden House parlors, where Mary and Madeline had at first thought of holding it. It was amazing how much talent Madeline and the committee, between them, managed to unearth. The little dressing-rooms at the ends of the big hall had to be called into requisition, and the college doctor's office, and Miss Andrews' room, and even the swimming tank in the basement (it leaked and so the water had all been drained off), with an improvised roof made by pinning Bagdad couch-covers together. All along the sides of the gymnasium hall there were little curtained booths, while the four corners of the gallery were turned respectively into a gypsy tent, a witch's den, the grotesque abode of an Egyptian sorceress, and the businesslike offices of a dapper little French medium, just over from Paris.

You could have your fortune told in whichever corner you preferred,—or in all four if your money lasted. Then you could descend to the floor below, and eat and drink as many concoctions as your digestion could stand, sandwiching between your "rabbits," Japanese or Russian tea, fudges, chocolate, and creamed oysters, visits to the circus, the menagerie, the vaudeville, and the multitude of side-shows. "Side-show," so the posters announced, was the designation of "a bewildering variety of elegant one-act specialties." Mary Brooks was very proud of that phrasing.

Mary herself was in charge of the menagerie. "Not to be compared for a single instant with the animals of the biggest show on earth," she shouted through her megaphone, accompanying her remarks with impressive waves of her riding-whip.

Then the white baby elephant walked forth from its lair. It was composed of one piece of white cheese-cloth and two of Mary's most ardent freshman admirers. There was a certain wobbly buoyancy in its gait and a jauntiness about its waving white trunk,—which was locked at the end, as Mary explained, to guard against the ferocious assaults of this terrible man-eater,—which never failed to convulse the audience and put them in the proper humor for the rest of the performance. The snake-charmer exhibited her paper pets. The lion, made up on the principle of the one in "Midsummer Night's Dream" pawed and roared and assured timid ladies that she was not a lion at all, but only that far more awful creature, a Harding senior. And finally Mary opened the cage containing the Happy Family, and there filed out a quartette of strange beasts which no Harding girl in the audience failed to recognize as the four "class animals,"—the seniors' red lion, the juniors' purple cow, the green dragon beloved by the sophomores, and the freshmen's yellow chicken.

"They dance" announced Mary in beatific tones, and the three four-legged creatures stood on their hind legs and, joining paws and wings with the chicken, went through a solemn Alice-in-Wonderland-like dance. This was always terminated abruptly by some animal or another's being overcome by mirth or suffocation, and rushing unceremoniously back into the cage to recuperate. When the Happy Family was again reunited, Mary announced that they could also sing, and, each in a different key, the creatures burst forth with the "Animal Song," dear to the hearts of all Harding girls:

"I went to the Animal Fair; the great Red Lion was there.
The Purple Cow was telling how
She'd come to take the air.
The Dragon he looked sick, and the little Yellow Chick,
Looked awfully blue, and I think, don't you,
He'd better clear out quick—quick!"

At the end of this ditty, the chick hopped solemnly forward, gave vent to a most realistic cluck, scratched vigorously for worms, and the Happy Family vanished amid an uproar of applause, while Mary piloted her audience into the circus proper, managed by Emily Davis.

Here Mlle. Zita, beautiful in pink tarleton,—only her skirt had been mislaid at the last moment and she had been compelled to substitute the Westcott House lamp shade,—Mlle. Zita balanced herself on a chair, and gave so vivid an imitation of wire-walking, on solid ground all the time, that the audience was actually fooled into holding its breath. Then Bob's pet collie did an act, and the juggler juggled, in his turban, and some gym "stars" did turns on bars and swings. And there was an abundance of peanuts and pink lemonade, and a clown and a band; and Emily's introductions were alone well worth the price of admission.

At the end of her performance Emily stated that this circus, being modern and up-to-date in all respects, had substituted for the conventional after-concert, "a side-splitting farce which would appeal to all intelligent and literary persons and make them laugh and cry with mirth." So everybody, wishing to appear intelligent and literary, went in to see the little play which Madeline Ayres had written. It was called "The Animal Fair," and three of the class animals appeared in it. But the mis- en-scene was an artist's studio, the great red lion was a red-faced English dramatist, the chick a modest young lady novelist attired in yellow chiffon, and the dragon a Scotch dialect writer. The repartee was clever, the action absurd, and there were local hits in plenty for those unliterary persons who did not catch the essential parody. Everybody was enthusiastic over it, and there were frequent calls for "Author!" But nobody responded.

"Who wrote it? Oh, some of the committee, I suppose," said the doorkeeper, carelessly. "Perhaps Marion Lustig helped—they didn't tell me. No, the actors don't know either. Did you give me fifty cents or a quarter? Please don't crowd so. You'll all get in in a minute."

Meanwhile Madeline, having seen through the first performance of her farce, in her capacity of stage manager, had left the actors to their own devices, and wandered off to explore the other attractions. Betty met her at the vaudeville.

"Come and get some fudge and see the sleight-of-hand stunts in the swimming tank," whispered Madeline. "These songs are all too much alike."

It was half-past nine. The sleight-of-hand performance was being given for the tenth and last time to an audience that packed the house. When it was over Betty, who had been a ticket-taker at the circus all the afternoon and evening, hurried Madeline back to see how much money Emily had made.

"Fifty dollars," said Emily, with shining eyes. "Think of it! I've helped to make fifty dollars for the Aid Society that's helping me through college."

"Splendid!" said Betty, too tired to be very enthusiastic over anything that night.

Madeline led her to a deserted corner of the gallery, and they sank down on a heap of pillows that had composed the gypsy queen's throne.

"I suppose I ought to care about the money," said Madeline, when they were seated, "but I don't much. I care because it's all been so funny and jolly and so little trouble. We can help to make money for good causes all our lives, but most of us will forget how to make such good times out of so little fuss and feathers when we leave here."

Betty looked at her wonderingly. Madeline's philosophy was a constant source of interest and amazement to all her friends. She had a way of saying the things that they had always thought, but never put into words.

"That's so," she agreed at last, "but I don't see how you knew it. You haven't been here a term yet. How do you find out so much about college?"

Madeline laughed merrily. "Oh, I came from Bohemia," she said, "and the reason I like it up here is because this place isn't so very different from Bohemia. Money doesn't matter here, and talent does, and brains; and fun is easy to come by, and trouble easy to get away from. But not for everybody," she

ended quickly.

Eleanor Watson, still in her gypsy fortune-teller's costume, was hurrying up to the big pile of pillows, six devoted freshmen following close at her heels.

"Hop up, girls," she called gaily to Betty and Madeline. "My faithful slaves have come to empty the throne room."

"Aren't you tired, Eleanor?" asked Betty. "You've been at it since three o'clock, haven't you? I should think you'd be dead."

Eleanor shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, I'm a bit tired," she answered, indifferently, "But I couldn't stop. The girls simply wouldn't let me, though Blanche Norton was willing to take my place. I was a goose to tell them that I could read palms. Look out for that white satin pillow, Maudie. Yes, the yellow one is mine, but I can't carry it. I'm too done up to carry anything but myself."

"Now that," said Madeline, decidedly, as soon as Eleanor was out of hearing, "that is all wrong,—every bit of it. It's not the fun she wants. She doesn't even care about the money for the good cause. It's the honor and the chance to show off her own cleverness that she's after." Madeline waited a moment. "Is she so clever, Betty?"

"Oh, yes," cried Betty eagerly. "Don't you remember her theme?"

"To be sure." Madeline's eyes twinkled. "I'd forgotten her wonderful theme. Oh, well, then I suppose she is clever—but I'm sorry for her."

"Why?" asked Betty quickly. Surely Madeline could not know anything about Eleanor's stepmother, and nowadays her career at Harding was a series of delightful triumphs. More reason why Madeline should envy, than pity her, Betty thought.

"Oh, for lots of reasons," answered Madeline easily, "but chiefly because she's so anxious about getting things for herself that she can't enjoy them when she's got them; and secondly because something worries her. Watch her face when she isn't smiling, and when she thinks nobody is noticing her. It's so wonderfully sad and so perfectly beautiful that it makes me pity her in spite of myself," ended Madeline with a sudden rush of feeling. "But I can't love her, even for you, you funny child," she added playfully, pulling one of Betty's curls.

"I'm not a child," retorted Betty, with great dignity. "I'm a sophomore and you're only a little freshman, please remember, and you have no business pulling my hair."

"Lights out in two minutes, young ladies," called the night-watchman from below, and freshman and sophomore raced for the stairs.

CHAPTER VI

ON AMBITION

"It was awfully good of you to come and take me out for a walk, little sister. My head ached and I knew I ought to get some fresh air, but I hadn't the resolution to start off alone."

Betty and Miss Hale, the "faculty" who was an intimate friend of Betty's older sister, had been for a long, brisk tramp through the woods. Now they were swinging home in the frosty December dusk, tired and wind blown, and yet refreshed by the keen air and the vigorous exercise.

Betty turned off the path to scuffle through a tempting bed of dry leaves. "I think it's you who are awfully good to let me come for you," she said, stopping to wait for Miss Hale at the end of her run. "I do get so tired sometimes of seeing nobody but girls, and such crowds of them. It's a great relief to have a walk and a talk with you. It seems almost like going home."

"But you still like college, don't you, Betty?"

"Oh, yes!" assented Betty eagerly. "I just love it." Then she laughed merrily. "You and Nan told me the

summer before I came here that all nice girls liked college, so it's hardly polite of you to ask me now if I like it, Ethel."

Then Miss Hale laughed in her turn. "And who are your friends this year?" she pursued. "Has your last year's crowd broken up?"

"Oh, no! We're all too fond of one another for that. Of course we're in different houses now, some of us, and we've all made lots of new friends down on the campus. Do you know Madeline Ayres?"

Miss Hale nodded. "I'm glad you know her, Betty; she's a splendid girl.
And how is your protege, Miss Watson, getting on nowadays?"

"Beautifully." Betty launched into an enthusiastic account of Eleanor's literary triumph, her softened manner, her sudden popularity, and her improved scholarship.

Miss Hale listened attentively. "That's very interesting," she said. "I had no idea that Miss Watson would ever make anything out of her college course. And do you see as much of her as ever, or has she dropped her old friends now that she has so many new ones?"

"Oh, dear!" said Betty sadly. "You don't like her one bit, do you, Ethel? I'm so sorry. Nan didn't like her either. Of course I know she has her faults, but I do love her so—"

"I'm glad of that," broke in Miss Hale heartily. "She would have left Harding in disgrace last June, if she hadn't had such a loyal friend in you. We can't help people unless we care for them, Betty,—and sometimes not then," added Ethel soberly. "The only way is to take all your opportunities, and then if you fail with one, as I did with Miss Watson, you may succeed with some one else. And it's the finest thing in college, Betty, or in life,—the feeling that you really mean something to somebody. I wish I'd learned to appreciate it sooner."

They walked on for a while in silence, Betty wondering if she did "really mean something" to Eleanor or to Helen Adams, Miss Hale harking back to her own college days and questioning whether she and her set had ever spared a thought for anything beyond their own fun and ambitions and successes. She blushed guiltily in the dark, as she remembered how they had snubbed Nan Wales, until Nan actually forced them to recognize her ability, and later to discover that they all wanted her for a friend.

"I wonder if Nan's forgotten," she thought. "I wonder if she's told Betty anything about it, and if that's why Betty is so different."

Thinking of Nan finally brought Miss Hale out of her reverie. "Little sister," she said, "I mustn't forget to ask you about Nan. Isn't that European trip of hers almost over? She wrote me that she should surely be back in time for Christmas."

"Yes," assented Betty, "she will. Her steamer is due on the eighth."

"The eighth—why that's to-day," said Miss Hale. "Isn't she going to stop here on her way west?"

"I'm afraid not," answered Betty, sadly. "Will is going to meet her in New York, and when I wrote home and wanted them to stop, he wrote back that he didn't propose to come up here to be the only man among a thousand girls. And I suppose Nan will be so tired of traveling around sight-seeing that she won't care about stopping, either."

They had reached Miss Hale's boarding-place by this time, and Betty said good-night and hurried back to the campus, full of excitement over Nan's return.

"Just think," she told Helen, as she dressed for the Hilton House dance to which Alice Waite had invited her that evening, "Nan's ship came in to-day, and I pretty nearly forgot all about it. Oh, dear! it seems as if I must see her right off, and it's two whole weeks to vacation."

Just as she spoke, there was a knock at the door, and a maid held out a telegram. "For Miss Wales," she said.

"Oh, it's from Nan," cried Betty, snatching at the bit of yellow paper. "And she's coming to-night," she shrieked so loudly that the whole third floor heard her and flocked out into the corridor to see what in the world was the matter.

The message was provokingly short:—

"Meet the 7:10 to-night.
"WILL."

"Oh, I wonder if he's going to stop too," said Betty, dropping the telegram into the wash-bowl and diving under the bed for her gold chain, which she had tossed there in her excitement. "How long do you suppose they'll stay?"

"I don't see that you can tell about that till they come," said Helen, practically. "Are you going to wear that dress to the station to meet them?"

Betty stopped short in her frantic efforts to fasten her belt, and stared blankly at her filmy white gown and high-heeled satin slippers. Then she dropped down on the bed and gave a long despairing sigh. "I haven't a bit of sense left," she said. "Tell me what else I've forgotten."

"Well, where are they going to sleep?"

"Goodness!" ejaculated Betty. "I ought to go out this minute and hunt for rooms."

"And what about the Hilton House dance? Oughtn't you to send word if you're not going?"

"Gracious!" exclaimed Betty. "Of course I ought. Alice has a card all made out for me."

Just then Mary Brooks and Madeline Ayres sauntered in. "Don't worry, child. You've got oceans of time," said Mary, when she had heard the great news. "We'll get you some rooms. I know a place just around the corner. And Helen can go and tell the gentle Alice Waite that you'll be along later in the evening with your family. If you want your brother to fall in love with Harding, you must be sure to have him see that dance. Men always go crazy over girl dances. And if I was offered sufficient inducement," added Mary, demurely, "I might possibly go over to the gallery myself, and help you amuse him—since none of my Hilton House friends have invited me to adorn the floor with my presence."

So Mary and Madeline departed in one direction and Helen in another, while an obliging senior who roomed across the hall put Betty's half of the room to rights—Helen's was always in order,—a freshman next door helped Betty into a white linen suit, which is the Harding girl's regular compromise between street and evening dress, and somebody else telephoned to Miss Hale that Nan was coming. And the pleasant thing about it was that everybody took exactly the same interest in the situation as if the guests and the hurry and excitement had belonged to her instead of to Betty Wales. It is thus that things are done at Harding.

As a matter of fact, Will did not wait until he had seen the Hilton House dance to become enamored of Harding College. When he and Nan arrived they announced that they had only stopped over for the evening, and should go west on the sleeper that same night. But as they were sitting in the Belden House parlor, while Nan and Betty discussed plans for showing Will as much as possible of the college in one evening, Mary Brooks sauntered through the hall, ostensibly on her way to do an errand at the Westcott House. Of course Betty called her in, and five minutes later Will announced that he couldn't think of not occupying the room which Miss Brooks had been good enough to engage for him; and he and Mary went off to the gymnasium gallery, which is as near as man may come to the joys of a "girl dance" at Harding. There Betty promised to join them as soon as Miss Hale arrived to spend the evening with Nan. And Miss Hale had no sooner appeared than Nan telephoned for her trunks and made a dinner engagement that would keep her until the next night at least. In the morning Will remembered that John Parsons was still at Winsted, and announced that he should spend the following day on an exploring tour over there. And Mr. Parsons insisted that you could not see Winsted properly unless you had some Harding girls along, and as the first snow of the season had just fallen, he organized a sleighing party, with Nan and Miss Hale as chaperons. Then Will gave a return dinner at Cuyler's, which took another day, so that a week sped by before Betty's guests could possibly get away from Harding.

"And now," said Betty to Will on the afternoon before the one set for their departure, "I think you'd better stay another week and see me."

"Wish we could," said Will absently. "I haven't had time to call on Miss Waite. I've only been snow-shoeing once with Miss Ayres, and I've got to have another skate with Miss Kittredge. She's a stunner on the ice. I say, Betty, you don't suppose she'd get up and go before breakfast, do you? I'd ask her to cut chapel, only I promised to take Miss Brooks."

"Indeed!" said Betty, with feigned indignation. "I guess that on the whole it's a good thing you're going to-morrow."

"Now why do you say that? Haven't I behaved like a scholar and a gentleman?" demanded Will gaily.

"It's your conduct as a brother that I object to," returned Betty severely. "Nobody pays any attention

to me. Nan's gone off sleighing with Roberta, and you're only enduring my society until Dorothy King finishes her Lab, and you can go off walking with her. Then I shall be left to my own devices."

"To your studies you mean, my child," corrected Will. "Do you think that Nan and I would be so inconsiderate as to come down here and break up the regular routine of your college work?"

"How about the regular routine of Dorothy King's work?" inquired Betty saucily. "And Mary Brooks's?"

Will took out a card from his pocket and consulted its entries industriously. "I have only one date with Miss Brooks to-morrow, and none at all with Miss King, more's the pity."

"It's queer," said Betty reflectively. "You never can prophesy what girls men will take to. Now I should have supposed that you'd like Nita Reese and Eleanor Watson best of all the ones you've met. They're both so pretty."

"That's all right," said Will severely. "We men don't go so much by looks as some of you think we do. And anyhow Miss Brooks and Miss King are good-lookers too. Miss Reese is a nice girl, but she's a little too quiet for me, and Miss Watson—let's see, she was at that dance the first night, wasn't she? I didn't see much of her, but I remember she's a stunner."

"She's one of my best friends," said Betty, proudly. "Oh, here comes Dorothy," she added, glancing out the window. "I hope you'll have a nice walk."

"See here, little sister," began Will, blocking Betty's progress to the door. "You weren't in earnest about my having run off and left you so much?"

Betty laughed merrily. "I should think not," she said. "If you must know it, I'm awfully proud of my popular family. I hope you understand that Mary Brooks and Dorothy King don't take the trouble to entertain everybody's brother. Now hurry up, or she'll get way into the house before you can catch her."

"Wait a minute," commanded Will. "Have we anything on for to-night?"

"Nan has, but you and I haven't."

"Then let's eat a nice little dinner at Cuyler's," suggested Will. "Just you and I and one more for variety. You ask any one you like, and I'll call for you at six."

"Lovely! Don't you really care whom I ask?"

"Pick out a good-looker," called Will, striding off to meet Dorothy.

Betty had no trouble in choosing the third person to make up the dinner party. It should be Eleanor Watson, of course. Will would like her—men always did. She had been tired and not in a mood to exert herself the night of the Hilton House dance; and one thing or another had interfered with her joining in any of the festivities since.

"But she'll be all ready for a celebration to-day, with her story just out in the 'Argus,'" reflected Betty, and started at once for the Hilton House.

Eleanor was curled up in her easy chair by the window, poring over a mass of type-written sheets. "Studying my part for a little play we're giving next Saturday night," she announced gaily, as Betty came in. "So remember, you're not to stay long."

"I don't believe there's anything you can't do, Eleanor," declared Betty, admiringly. "I'm awfully proud of knowing such a star. I read your story in the 'Argus' the first thing after lunch, and I thought it was perfectly splendid."

"Did you?" said Eleanor, carelessly. "Well, I suppose it must be good for something, to have so much said about it; but I for one am thoroughly tired of it. I'm going to try to act so well on Saturday that people will have something else to talk to me about."

"You will," said Betty, with decision. "You made a splendid leading lady last year in Sherlock Holmes, and you didn't try at all then. Well," she added quickly, "you said I mustn't stay long, so I must hurry and tell you what I came for. I want you to have dinner with Will and me to-night at Cuyler's."

"That's very good of you," said Eleanor formally, "and I'm sorry that I can't come. But it's quite impossible."

"Oh dear!" There was nothing perfunctory about Betty's regret. "Couldn't you learn your part this evening? It won't take you any longer to eat at Cuyler's than it would here, and you can come right back."

"Oh, it's not the play," said Eleanor. "I could manage that; but Beatrice Egerton is going to be here for dinner."

"Oh, of course if you've asked any one to dinner—" began Betty.

"No," broke in Eleanor, impatiently, "I haven't asked her, but Lil Day has. She's invited me to sit with them, and she'd be awfully vexed if I ran off. You know," went on Eleanor, impressively, "Beatrice Egerton is the most prominent girl in the senior class."

"Oh!" said Betty, blankly.

"And I barely know her," continued Eleanor, "so this is my opportunity, you see. Lil thinks she'll like me. She's very influential, and she doesn't seem to have any particular friends in our class. Do you know her at all?"

Betty shook her head.

"But you're so solid with Dorothy King," said Eleanor. "She's just about as prominent as Bess Egerton. We have to look out for those things, don't we, Betty?"

"If you mean," began Betty, slowly, "that I like Dorothy King because she's an influential senior, why, please never think so again, Eleanor. I like her just as I like any one else, because she's so dear and sweet and such a fine, all-around girl."

Eleanor laughed scornfully. "Oh, of course," she said, "but you have your little plans, I suppose, like all the rest of the world. Anyhow, if you haven't, I have; and I put future honors ahead of present bliss, so I can't go with you to Cuyler's. Please tell your brother that I'm very sorry."

"Yes," said Betty. "He will be sorry, too. Good-bye, Eleanor."

It seemed a long walk back to the Belden House. The snow had turned to slush, and Betty sank into it at every step. The raw wind blew her hair into her eyes. The world looked dull and uninteresting all of a sudden. When she reached home, Helen was getting ready for gym.

"Helen Chase Adams," began Betty, savagely. "Do you see any use in ambition?"

"Why, yes," gasped Helen.

"What?" demanded Betty.

"Why—it helps you to get things," ventured Helen.

"May be they're not worth getting," snapped Betty.

"Well, isn't it better to try to get foolish things than just to sit around and do nothing?"

"No," answered Betty with emphasis. "People who just sit around and do nothing, as you call it, have friends and like them, and aren't all the time thinking what they can get out of them."

"I'm sorry, but I have to go to gym," said Helen. "I don't think ambitious people always depend on their friends."

Left to herself, Betty came to a more judicial state of mind. "I suppose," she said to the green lizard, "I suppose I'm the kind that just sits around and does nothing. I suppose we're irritating too. It makes Helen mad when I write my papers any old way, while she's toiling along, trying to do her best. And she makes me cross by fussing so. She has one kind of ambition and Eleanor has another. I haven't any, and I suppose they both wish I'd have some kind. Oh, dear! I don't believe Madeline Ayres is ambitious either, and Ethel Hale called her a splendid girl. I'll go and ask her to come to dinner with us."

CHAPTER VII

Exactly a week after Nan and Will left Harding, Betty herself was speeding west, with Roberta Lewis as traveling companion. Nan had discovered that Roberta's father was in California, and that she was planning to spend her Christmas vacation in solitary state at Mrs. Chapin's, without letting even her adored Mary Brooks know how matters stood. But Nan's arguments, backed by Betty's powers of persuasion, were irresistible; and Roberta finally consented to come to Cleveland instead.

It was amusing, and a little pathetic too, to watch the shy Roberta expand in the genial, happy-go-lucky atmosphere of the Wales household. A lonely, motherless child brought up by a father who loved her dearly, treated her as an equal, and was too absorbed in his own affairs to realize that she needed any companionship but his own, she had been absolutely swept off her feet by the rush of young life at Harding. The only close friend she had made there was Mary Brooks; and, though Mary fully reciprocated Roberta's fondness for her, she was a person of so many ideas and interests that Roberta was necessarily left a good deal to herself. During her first year, the sociable atmosphere of the Chapin house had helped to break down her reserve and bring her, in spite of herself, into touch with the college world. But now, in a house full of noisy, rollicking freshmen, who thought her queer and "stuck-up," she was bitterly unhappy. So she shut herself in with her books and her thoughts, wondered whether being on the campus would really make any difference in her feelings about college, and stayed on only because of her devotion to Mary and her unwillingness to disappoint her father, who was very proud of "my daughter at Harding."

Roberta loved children, and she and the smallest sister instantly became fast friends. Will frightened her dreadfully at first, but before the week was out she found herself chatting with him just as familiarly as she did with her Boston cousin, who was the only young man she knew well. And after she had helped Mrs. Wales to trim the smallest sister's Christmas tree, and been down town with Mr. Wales to pick out some books for him to give Nan,—"Because you and Nan seem to be cut out of the same piece of cloth, you see," explained Mr. Wales genially,—Roberta felt exactly like one of the family, and hoarded the days, and then the hours, that remained of this blissful vacation.

"It seems as if I couldn't go back," she told Betty, when the good-byes had all been said, and the long train was rumbling through the darkness toward Harding.

"I'm sorry to leave too," said Betty dreamily. "It's been a jolly old vacation. But think how we should feel if we couldn't go back at all—if the family fortune was swept away all of a sudden, or if we were sick or anything, and had to drop out of dear old 19—."

"Yes," said Roberta briefly.

Betty looked at her curiously. "Don't you like college, Roberta?" she asked.

"Betty, I can't bear it," declared Roberta in an unwonted burst of confidence. "I stay on because I hate people who give things up just because they don't like doing them. But it seems sometimes as if I couldn't stand it much longer."

"Too bad you didn't get on the campus. Perhaps you will this term." suggested Betty hopefully, "and then I know you'll fall absolutely in love with college."

"I don't believe that will make a bit of difference, and anyway Miss Stuart said I hadn't the least chance of getting on this year."

"Then," returned Betty cheerfully, "you'll just have to make the best of it where you are. Some of the Chapin house freshmen are dear. I love that cunning little Sara Westervelt."

"Isn't she pretty?" Roberta's drawl was almost enthusiastic. "But she never speaks to me," she added sadly.

"Speak to her," said Betty promptly. "You probably frighten her to death, and freeze her all up. Treat her as you did the smallest sister."

Roberta laughed merrily. "It's funny, isn't it, that I can get on with children and most older people, but not at all with those of my own age."

"Oh, you only need practice," said Betty easily. "Go at it just as you go at your chemistry problems. Figure out what those freshmen like and give it to them. Have a party and do the Jabberwock for them. They'd be your slaves for life."

"Oh, I couldn't," protested Roberta. "It would seem so like showing off."

"Don't think about yourself; think about them. And now," added Betty yawning, "as we were up till two last night, I think we'd better go to bed, don't you?"

"Yes," said Roberta, "and—and thank you for telling me that I'm offish, Betty. Could you come to the Jabberwock party Monday night, if I should decide to have it?"

Though Rachel was off the campus, her room was far and away the most popular meeting place for the Chapin house crowd. Perhaps it was because the quiet of the little white house round the corner was a relief after the noisy bustle of the big campus dormitories. But besides, there was something about Rachel that made her quite indispensable to all gatherings of the clan. Katherine was fun when you were in the mood for her; Roberta, if she was in the mood for you. Betty was always fascinating, always responsive, but in many ways she was only a pretty child. Helen and Eleanor, unlike in almost everything else, were at one in being self-centred. Rachel was as jolly as Katherine, as sympathetic as Betty, and far more mature than either of her friends. As Katherine put it, "you could always bank on Rachel to know what was what."

So it was no unusual thing to find two or three of the "old guard" as Rachel dubbed them, and perhaps two or three outsiders as well, gathered in her tiny room, in the dark of the afternoon, talking over the happenings of the day and drinking tea out of the cups which were the pride of Rachel's heart, because they were all pretty and none of them had cost more than ten cents.

One snowy afternoon in January Betty walked home with Rachel from their four o'clock class in history.

"Come in, children" called a merry voice, as they opened Rachel's door. "Take off your things and make yourselves at home. The tea will be ready in about five minutes."

"Hello, Katherine," said Betty, cheerfully, tossing her note-book on the bed and shaking the snow off her fuzzy gray tam.

"Isn't it nice to come in and find the duties of hostess taken off your shoulders in this pleasant fashion!" laughed Rachel. "I hope you've washed the cups," she added, settling herself cozily on the window seat. "They haven't been dusted for three weeks."

"Indeed I haven't washed them," answered Katherine loftily. "I'm the hostess. You can be guest, and Betty can be dish-washer."

"Not unless I can wiggle the tea-ball afterward," announced Betty firmly.

Katherine examined a blue and white cup critically. "I think you must be mistaken, Rachel," she said. "These cups don't need washing. They're perfectly clean, but I'll dust them off if you insist."

Then there was a grand scramble, in the course of which Betty captured the tea-ball and the lemons, and Katherine the teakettle, while Rachel secured two cups and retired from the scene of action to wash them for Betty and herself. Finally Katherine agreed that Betty might "wiggle the tea-ball" provided that she—Katherine—should be allowed two pieces of lemon in every cup; and the three lively damsels settled down into a sedate group of tea-drinkers.

"Do you know, girls," said Katherine, after they had compared programs for midyears, and each decided sadly that her particular arrangement of examinations was a great deal more onerous than the schedules of her friends,—"Do you know, I was just beginning to like Eleanor Watson, but I wash my hands of her now."

"Why? What's she done lately?" inquired Rachel.

"Oh, she hasn't done anything in particular," said Katherine. "It's her manner that I object to. It was bad enough last year, but now—" Katherine's gesture suggested indescribable insolence.

Betty said nothing. She was thinking of her last interview with Eleanor, whom she had not seen for more than a casual moment since the day of Will's dinner, and wondering whether after all Ethel Hale was right about her, and she was wrong. It did seem amazingly as if Eleanor was giving up her old friends for the new ones.

"But Katherine," began Rachel soothingly, "you must remember that her rather dropping us now doesn't really mean much. We should never have known her at all if we hadn't happened to be in the house with her last year. It was only chance that threw us together, so there really isn't any reason why she should keep up the acquaintance unless she wants to."

"Oh, no, not the slightest reason," agreed Katherine, wrathfully. "And on the same principle let us all

proceed to cut Helen Chase Adams. She isn't exactly our kind. We should never have known her if we hadn't happened to be in the house with her last year. So let's drop her."

"Oh, you silly child," laughed Rachel. "Of course I don't approve of Eleanor Watson's way of doing things. I only wanted to explain what is probably her point of view. I can understand it, but it doesn't follow that I'm going to adopt it."

"I should hope not," snorted Katherine. "I met my lady this afternoon at Cuyler's. I was buying molasses candy for this function—by the way, I forgot to pass it around. Do have some. And she was in there with that high and mighty senior, Beatrice Egerton, ordering a dinner for to-morrow night. I had on my green sweater and an old skirt, and I don't suppose I looked exactly like a Fifth Avenue swell. But that didn't matter; the lady Eleanor didn't see me."

Rachel laughed merrily. "So that was it," she said. "I knew there was something personal behind your wrath, and I was waiting for it to come out. Never mind, K.; Betty and I won't cut you, even in your green sweater."

"That's good of you," said Katherine, spearing a thick slice of lemon for her third cup. "Seriously though, my green sweater aside, I do hate such snobbishness."

"But Eleanor Watson isn't exactly a snob," objected Rachel. "There's Dora Carlson."

"Dora Carlson!" repeated Katherine, scornfully. "You don't mean that she's taken you in with that, Rachel? Why, it's nothing but the most transparent sort of grand-stand play. I suppose the lady Eleanor had more sense than to think that the Dora Carlson episode would take in any one."

Betty had been sitting quietly in her corner of the window seat, not taking any part in the discussion, because there was nothing that she cared to say on either side of it. Now she leaned forward suddenly. "Oh, Katherine, please don't say that," she begged. "Indeed it isn't so! I know—Eleanor told me herself that she is awfully fond of Dora Carlson,— that she appreciates the way Dora feels toward her, and means to be worthy of it if she possibly can."

"Then I'm sure I beg her pardon," said Katherine heartily. "Only—when did she tell you that, Betty?"

"Oh, back in the fall, just a little while after the sophomore reception."

"I thought so, and I don't doubt that she meant it when she said it. But she's completely changed since then. Don't you remember how we used to count on her for all our little reunions? Why, she was quite one of the old guard for a month or two. But ever since that wonderful story of hers came out in the 'Argus,' she's gone in for the prominent sophomore act with such a vengeance—" Katherine stopped suddenly, noticing Betty's distressed expression. "Oh, well," she said, "there's no use going over it again. I suppose you and Rachel are right, and I'm wrong."

"Only you do resent the injustice done your green sweater," said Rachel, hoping to close the discussion with a laugh.

But Katherine was in deadly earnest. "I don't care how the lady Eleanor treats me and my green sweater," she said, "but there are some people who've done too much for her—Well, what I mean is, I hope she'll never go back on her real friends," she finished lamely.

"Well, if one prominent sophomore snubs us, we can always comfort ourselves with the thought that another is going to love us to the end," said Rachel, reaching over a mound of pillows to squeeze Betty's hand. "Did you know you're a prominent sophomore, Betty?"

"I'm not," said Betty, indignantly. "I wouldn't be such a thing for the world. I hate the word prominent, the way we use it here."

Katherine exchanged rapid glances with Rachel. "Something personal behind that, too," she reflected. "If the lady Eleanor dares to go back on Betty, I shall start out after her scalp."

So it was fortunate that Betty and Eleanor did not meet on their respective homeward ways until Katherine was well inside the Westcott House, out of hearing of their colloquy. Between the darkness and the flying snow the two girls were close together before they recognized each other. Then Eleanor was hurrying on with some commonplace about "the beastly weather," when Betty stopped her.

"We were just talking about you," she said, "Rachel and Katherine and I, over in Rachel's room, wondering why you never meet with the old guard any more."

"Why, I'm busy," said Eleanor, shortly. "Didn't you know that it's less than a week to midyears?"

"But all this term—" protested Betty, wishing she had said nothing, yet reluctant now to let the opportunity slip through her hands.

"Well, to tell the truth," broke in Eleanor, impatiently, "our interests are different, Betty,—they have been from the first. You like to be friends with everybody. I like to pick and choose. I don't really care anything about the rest of the Chapin house girls, and I can't see you without seeing them too."

"But this fall," began Betty.

"Well—the truth is this fall—" said Eleanor, fiercely, "this fall I forgot who I was and what I was. Now I've come to my senses again." And without giving Betty time to reply she swept off into the darkness.

Betty wasn't very hungry for dinner. As soon as possible she slipped out of the noisy dining-room, up to the silence of the deserted third floor.

"What I can't understand," she told the green lizard, "is the way her voice sounded. It certainly broke just as if she was trying not to cry. Now, why should that be? Is she sorry to have come to her senses, I wonder?"

The green lizard had no suggestions to offer, so Betty put on her new kimono with butterflies in the border and a bewitching pink sash—it was real Japanese and the envy of all her friends—and prepared to spend the evening cramming for her history exam, with Nita Reese.

CHAPTER VIII

THE "FIRST FOUR"

Midyears were safely over, and schedules for the new term more or less satisfactorily arranged. It was Saturday night—the gayest in all the week—and up on the fourth floor of the Belden House Nita Reese was giving a birthday spread. Until she came to Harding, Nita's birthday had always been in August. At the beginning of her sophomore year she announced that she had changed it to February ninth.

"I told the family," explained Nita, "that just because I happened to be born in August they needn't think they could get out of sending me a birthday box. Father wanted to know if that let him off from giving me a sailing party next August, and I said that I'd leave it to him. I knew he wouldn't miss that sailing party for anything."

Nita disappeared behind a screen, where, on the wash-stand, in lieu of a buffet, the good things from the birthday box were arranged on tin-box covers and wooden plates. There were nine china plates for the twelve guests, and a cup and a sherbet glass apiece, which is an abundance for any three-course supper, however elaborate.

"Girls, do you realize what's happening to-night?" said Nita, emerging from behind the screen with a plate of sandwiches in one hand and a tray of cake in the other. "Here, Betty Wales, have some cake. Or are you still on salad and sandwiches?"

"I'm still on salad and sandwiches, but I do want that big piece of chocolate cake before Madeline Ay—Oh, Madeline, aren't you ashamed? You've made me spill coffee on Nita's Bagdad."

"I can't help that," said Madeline Ayres, composedly. "You were implying that I'm a pig. I'm not; I'm only devoted to chocolate."

"What's happening to-night, Nita?" demanded Bob, popping up like a Jack- in-the-box from behind Madeline's back.

"There!" exclaimed Betty, resignedly. "I've spilled it again! Where have you been, Bob?"

"Oh, I've just been resting back there between the courses," said Bob, edging herself to the front of the couch and beginning on the nearest dish of strawberry ice. (The strawberry ice was not, strictly speaking, a part of the birthday box.) "I feel quite hungry again now. What's to- night, Nita?"

"Why, society elections, of course, goosie," answered Christy Mason from the window where she was cooling a pan of fudge. "Girls, this fudge is going to be elegant and creamy. Reach me the marsh-mallows, Babe, that's a dear. Shall I make it all over marsh-mallows, Nita?"

"Yes!" chorused the occupants of the couch, vociferously.

"To hear the animals roar, you wouldn't think they'd been eating steadily for an hour, would you, Nita?" laughed Christy, sticking in the marsh- mallows in neat, even rows, like white tents pitched across the creamy brown field of chocolate.

"It's not that we're hungry, Nita, dear, but we all like it better that way, because it's newer," explained Alice Waite, who never took a joke and couldn't bear to have Nita's feelings hurt.

"Hungry!" groaned Rachel, from her corner. "I don't believe I shall ever be hungry again. Who do you suppose will go in tonight?"

"Go in where, Rachel?" asked Bob, dropping back again on the pillows behind Madeline and Betty.

"Aren't you a sweet little innocent, Bob Parker?" mocked Babe, derisively. "As if you hadn't betted me six strawberry ices and three dinners at Cuyler's that you go into the Dramatic Club to-night, your ownself."

"When I get you alone," began Bob, wrathfully. Then her tone changed instantly to one of honeyed sweetness. "No," she said, "you're such an artistic prevaricator that I'll give you one dinner at Cuyler's as your well-earned reward."

Christy Mason dropped her pan of fudge, seized a candle from the chiffonier and held it close to Bob's prostrate form. "Girls," she shrieked, "it's true. Bob's blushing. She hasn't blushed since the president spoke to her about spilling salad all over the night watchman."

Then there was a scene of wild commotion. Shouts and laughter drowned out Bob's angry protests, until in despair she turned her attention to Babe, who took refuge on the fire-escape and refused to come further in than the window-seat even when order was partially restored.

"Girls," shouted Katherine Kittredge, as soon as she could make herself heard, "let's drink to the success of Bob's bet!"

There were clamorous demands for hot coffee, and then the toast was drunk standing, amid riotous enthusiasm.

"Speech!" called somebody.

"Speech! Speech!" chorused everybody.

"I never bet any such thing," responded Bob, sulkily. "You all know I didn't—and if I did, it was in fun."

"Never mind, Bob," said Nita, consolingly. "We won't tell any of the Dramatic Club girls about it. We're all sophomores here, but Madeline Ayres, and she's as good as a sophomore; so don't worry. You can trust us."

"What I object to," put in Katherine Kittredge, solemnly, "is the principle of the thing. It's not true sport to bet on a certainty, Bob. You know that you're sure to go in to-night, and it's a mean trick to deprive Babe of her hard-won earnings."

This sally was greeted with shrieks of laughter, for it was a standing joke with 19— that Babe was supposed by her adoring mother to be keeping a French maid at Harding. In October of her freshman year she had packed the maid off to New York and engaged Emily Davis to do her mending. But the maid's board and wages were paid unquestioningly by her mother, who lamented every vacation that she could get no such excellent seamstresses as her daughter was always able to find at Harding. Meanwhile Babe rented a riding horse by the term, reveled in dinners at Cuyler's, and stilled her conscience with the thought that Emily Davis needed the money more than any maid.

"I wish," said Madeline Ayres, when the tumult had subsided again, "that you'd explain something to a poor, benighted little freshman. There's just one thing about Harding that I don't understand. Why should Bob mind having you know that she hopes she's going into the Dramatic Club?"

"Suppose she doesn't go?" suggested Christy. "Of course there's always a chance that she won't."

"Seems so nervy, anyhow," muttered Bob, who was still in the sulks.

"I don't see why," persisted Madeline. "When you all say that she's perfectly certain to go in. But in general, I mean, why will you never admit that you want a certain thing, or hope to get a certain thing?"

"It is funny, isn't it?" said Rachel. "Wild horses couldn't drag it out of any junior that she hopes for a place on the 'Argus' board, or the Senior Play committee."

"Nor out of any sophomore that she hopes to make a society," added Christy Mason.

"I suppose," said Babbie, "that it's because nothing is competitive here. You just take what people think you ought to have. You stand or fall by public opinion, and of course you are never sure how it will gauge you."

"College men aren't that way," said Katherine. "They talk about such things, and discuss their chances and agree to help one another along where they can. And if they lose they never seem to care; they joke about it."

"But we never admit we've lost, because we never admit we were trying for anything," put in Nita.

"I like the men's way best then," said Madeline decidedly.

"Let's try it," suggested Christy. "Girls, who of us here do you think will make Dramatic Club in the first two elections?"

There was an awkward silence, then a general laugh.

"It won't work, you see," said Christy. "Well, of those who aren't here, Marion Lustig will go in to-night of course,—she's our bright particular literary star. And what do you think about Eleanor Watson?"

"Wouldn't she be more likely to go into the Clio Club next week?" asked Nita Reese.

"Oh, no," objected Christy. "Didn't you know that Beatrice Egerton is rushing her? And she's the president of the Dramatic Club."

"I don't care," insisted Nita. "I think Eleanor Watson is more the Clio Club kind."

"That's another thing I want to know about," broke in Madeline Ayres. "What is the Clio Club kind? You say the Dramatic Club isn't particularly dramatic nowadays, but just amusing and literary, and the Clio Club is the same. Why aren't the members the same sort too?"

"They're not, exactly," answered Christy. "I can't describe the difference, but you'll notice it by the time you're a sophomore. The Clio girls—oh, they have more executive ability. They're the kind that know how to run things—all-around, capable, splendid girls. The Dramatic Club is more for the stunty, talented, artistic sort."

"But Dorothy King is vice-president of the Dramatic Club," objected Betty.

"She's the exception."

"Well, I still think," insisted Christy, "that which society a girl goes into simply depends on where her friends are. Both societies want executive ability, and they both want people who can write and act and sing and do parlor stunts. I don't know Eleanor Watson very well, but I have an idea that after her story in the 'Argus' the Dramatic Club will be afraid of losing her to Clio, and so they'll take her to-night."

"Oh, I hope so," said Betty Wales under her breath to Madeline.

Later in the evening she told Helen all about the spread.

"It was so exciting," she began.

"How can a spread be exciting?" demanded Helen, sceptically.

"Oh, in lots of ways," responded Betty. "There's excitement about whether the fudge will be done in time, and whether it will be good, and who's going to be there, and how much of a box it is. But the

most excitement to-night was about society elections."

"Were they to-night?"

"Dramatic Club's was. It has first choice of the sophomores this year, you know, and Clio Club has second; and we were guessing who would go in to-night among the first four."

"Well, you know now, don't you?"

"Know? I should think not," said Betty impressively. "Helen Chase Adams, haven't you noticed that society elections aren't announced till the next Monday morning? Don't you remember last year how all that crowd of girls came up to Mrs. Chapin's after Mary Brooks, and she'd gone down-town to breakfast with Roberta, and was going to cut chapel; and how we all rushed down after her, and how I stayed at the Main Street corner, in case she'd left Cuyler's before the girls got there and come up the back way? And she did just that, and what a time I had keeping her till the girls got back!" Betty laughed heartily at the recollection.

"I didn't go down, but I do remember about it," admitted Helen. "Do they always do it that way?"

"Always, only the four girls who go into each society first—they elect only four at a time, you know—have about sixty times as much fuss made over them as the ones who go in later."

"Then you'd better put your part of the room in order to-morrow," said Helen significantly, glancing at the disorderly pile of books and papers on Betty's desk, and at the pictures which she had brought back at Christmas time and which still lay on the floor beside her couch, waiting for her to find time to hang them.

Betty's glance followed Helen's to the desk and down to the floor. "I'll hang those pictures this minute," she said, jumping up and rummaging energetically through her desk drawer. "That is, if I can borrow some picture wire" she added. "I remember now that mine is all gone. That's why I've left them on the floor so long. But somebody must have some." At the door she turned back suddenly. "But, Helen," she said, "I'm not fixing up for society elections. I shan't go in this time—not for a long while, if I ever do. And Helen—you know the girls never talk about going in themselves."

"All right," said Helen submissively. "Who do you think was taken in to-night?"

"Oh, the girls with one big talent. Didn't I tell you last year that every Harding girl has to find out her one talent before she can amount to anything? We think Bob will go in; she can do such beautiful pantomimes, and she's such a prod. and such jolly fun too. Then Marion Lustig because of her writing. Writing counts more than anything else, and so I'm hoping for Eleanor Watson. I can't even guess who the fourth one will be."

All day Sunday Mary Brooks and the other Dramatic Club juniors and seniors in the Belden House went about wearing a tantalizing, don't-you- wish-you-knew air, and after dinner when the whole house assembled in the parlors as usual for coffee and music, they gathered in mysterious little groups, which instantly dissolved at the approach of curious sophomores.

It seemed to Betty and Nita, interested on account of Eleanor and Bob, that Monday morning would never come. But it did dawn at last, and after an unconscionable delay—for the announcement committee went up to Marion Lustig's first, and she boarded away off on the edge of the meadows, and then to Emily Davis's, which was half a mile from the college in quite another direction—the committee and its escort finally reached the campus, and, gaining recruits at every step, made its picturesque and musical way to the Westcott House after Bob. At this point Betty and Nita joined it, and they had the exquisite pleasure of seeing Bob blush so red that there was no need for a candle this time, then turn very white, and clinging to the chairman's arm insist that there must be some blunder—it couldn't be she that they wanted. Finally, assured that the honor had indeed fallen to her, she broke into a war-whoop which shook the house to its foundation and brought the matron on the run to her door.

"Now Mrs. Alison, aren't you proud of your holy terror?" cried Bob in tremulous, happy tones, holding out her tie with the Dramatic Club pin on it. And in spite of the lateness of the hour and the wild desire of the procession to know where it was going next, Mrs. Alison's delight over the honor done her "holy terror" was well worth waiting to see.

And then—Betty squeezed Nita's hand till it ached. No—yes—they were going to the Hilton! They weren't stopping on the second floor. Then it must—oh, it must be Eleanor! And it was.

Margaret Payson was chairman of the announcement committee, but almost before she could give Eleanor her note of invitation to the society Beatrice Egerton had pressed forward and fastened her pin

on Eleanor's shirtwaist.

After seeing Bob's frenzied excitement it was amusing to watch Eleanor Watson. She was perfectly composed. "Just as if she'd been expecting it," said little Alice Waite, who had joined the procession as it passed through her corridor. "But she was pleased—I never saw her so pleased before—and didn't it make her look lovely!"

As soon as the pin was safely fastened and the note read, there was another tumult of congratulations. Then Beatrice Egerton took off the great bunch of violets she was wearing,—"just till I could bring them to you," she explained,—and carried Eleanor off to sit among the seniors at chapel. Just opposite them was Emily Davis, with Dorothy King. Emily was also wearing violets, and her plain face was almost pretty, it was so full of happiness.

"Just to think," she whispered to Dorothy, "that you picked out me, when you could have any one in 19—. I can't realize it!" She glanced at her shabby coat, made over from Babe's discarded golf cape, and then at Eleanor Watson's irreproachable blue walking suit and braided toque to match. "Here all girls are really created free and equal, aren't they, Miss King?"

"Of course. Don't be silly," said Dorothy, with a queer little catch in her voice. Dorothy King was not at all sentimental, but the splendidly democratic spirit of her college sometimes brought a lump into her throat.

Only once that morning did the radiant smiles leave Eleanor Watson's lovely face. That was when Katherine Kittredge, on the way out of chapel, rallied her about her famous theme.

"Now aren't you glad Miss Raymond got up early that morning?" she said.

It was the first time that any one had referred to the story in connection with her election to the Dramatic Club. Eleanor frowned and turned to Beatrice Egerton, who was standing close beside her.

"Bess," she said, pouting, "did you run me in because of that footless little story? Wasn't it for myself that you wanted me? Do say that it was."

Miss Egerton smiled her lazy, enigmatical smile, which her admirers considered the secret of her tremendous popularity. "Of course we wanted you for yourself," she said, "but that footless little story, as you call it, is a rather important asset. We expect you to keep on writing footless little stories, remember."

"How tiresome!" said Eleanor, with a shrug of her shoulders. "That's the bother of doing anything up here. What you do once, you are expected to repeat indefinitely. Now my method is to do one thing as well as I can, and then go on to something else."

"Just do them all as well as you did the story, and we shan't complain," said Miss Egerton. "And now, Eleanor, I must be off to Psychology One. Do you suppose anybody will give a dinner for you to-night?"

"Yes, Miss Egerton," called Jean Eastman, appearing around the corner. "Kate and I are giving one, and we want you to come, of course. And Eleanor," she went on, after Miss Egerton had left them, "we want you to answer to a toast—'My Story and How I Wrote It.' Now be just as clever and amusing as you can. I thought I wouldn't spring it on you—"

"Jean," Eleanor broke in suddenly, "I won't answer to anything of the sort. And if you have that story mentioned—even mentioned, remember—to- night, I shall get up and leave. Give me your word that I shan't hear of it in any way,—or give up the dinner."

Jean stared in astonishment. "Why certainly, Eleanor," she said, "but I thought you had given up being so absurd. Is there any one in particular that you want asked tonight?"

"Dora Carlson," flashed Eleanor, and hurried off, murmuring something about a nine o'clock recitation at the other end of the main building.

Jean looked after her for a moment, her mouth twisted into a funny grimace, and then pursued her way to the college library. At the door she met Betty Wales. "Your face is one big smile," she said.

"Of course," laughed Betty. "Isn't it perfectly splendid about Eleanor and Emily?"

Jean grinned cheerfully. "Considering last year I thought it was more or less amusing to see the two of them sitting up there together on the front row at chapel. I wonder if Eleanor remembers any of the remarks she used to let drop about the genius of 19—. See here, Betty," she added quickly, "have you any idea why Eleanor is so touchy about that story? She won't even have it toasted tonight at the

supper."

"No," said Betty. "I asked her, but she didn't tell me anything except that she didn't care for it."

"Well, most people would begin to care for it a little, after it had pulled them into the Dramatic Club among the first four," said Jean, opening the library door and tiptoeing over to the anthropological alcove. There she spent the hour, busily engaged in making out a new list of toasts, that should avoid all mention of the objectionable story.

"But they must have some point," reflected Jean, sadly, as she ran her pen through "My Story and How I Wrote It," and "The Rewards of Literature" and "Our Rising Young Novelist," which she had intended for herself and Kate Denise.

"Bother Eleanor's tantrums!" muttered Jean, as the ten o'clock gong rang, and she picked up her books and hurried off to recite a French lesson that, because of Eleanor's "tantrums," she had not learned.

And for Betty Wales Eleanor's election to the Dramatic Club also brought disappointment. She had hoped that once Eleanor's ambition was gratified and all her hard work and careful planning rewarded, the anxious lines would leave her face and the sweeter, softer expression that she had worn in September would come back. But though Eleanor professed the greatest pleasure in the election, it did not seem to make her any less haughty or capricious, or any better content with life. She still snubbed or patronized her train of adoring freshmen by turns, according to her mood. She was still a devoted admirer of Beatrice Egerton, and a member of her very exclusive set. She received Betty's congratulations just as cordially as she had every one's else,—it was one of Beatrice's principles to treat everybody well "up to a certain point,"—but she did not come to the third floor of the Belden House except on errands.

CHAPTER IX

THE COMPLICATIONS OF LIFE

By the middle of February basket-ball practice was in full swing again. The class teams had not yet been chosen, but every Wednesday and Saturday afternoon 19—'s last year's "regulars" and "subs" met in the gymnasium to play exciting matches. Of course there were some changes in the make- up of the teams. Two of the "sub" centres and a "regular" home had left college; the guard who sprained her ankle in the great game of the year before and whose place Katherine Kittredge had taken in the second half, was not allowed to risk another such injury; and one or two other players had lost interest in basket-ball and were devoting their energies to something else. So there was a chance for outsiders, and Betty Wales, who had almost "made" the freshman sub-team, was one of the new girls invited to play in the practice matches.

Helen Adams had cut basket-ball all her freshman year, because Miss Andrews never called the roll on basket-ball days. Now she could not get enough of it, nor of regular gym. On Wednesday and Saturday afternoons there were no classes, so she used to put on her gym. suit and go over to watch the teams. And if some player failed to appear or was late in arriving, T. Reed or Betty would suggest calling Helen down to take the absentee's place. Helen was painfully awkward and not very strong, but she had acquired T. Reed's habit of slipping under the outstretched arms of the enemy and T. Reed's fashion of setting her teeth and getting the ball in spite of opposition; and some of her plays were remarkably effective.

"I believe," Betty said to her one day, as they lay side by side in a sunny spot on the gym. floor, resting between the halves, "I believe, if you'd begun last year when the rest of us did, you might have been on one of the teams yourself."

Helen laughed a pleased little laugh. "Oh, no!" she said. "But I love to play with you sometimes, and I love to watch Theresa."

"Isn't she a wonder?" said Betty dreamily. "Do you remember that game, Helen? Wasn't it the most exciting thing? And this year it will be our turn to win. Bob Parker has seen the picked freshman teams play, and she thinks they haven't a chance against us."

"I hope you can be on the sub-team, Betty," said Helen.

"And I hope you can write your song for 19— to sing to its team," returned Betty gaily. "You haven't forgotten about our talk the day of the game, have you, Helen?"

"Oh, no!" said Helen, quickly. Not for worlds would she have let Betty know how much she counted on that song. She had written another little verse for her theme class, and that very morning it had come back with "Good work—charming lilt," scrawled across the margin. So Helen had high hopes for the song.

Just then the door of the gym. opened, and Lucy Merrifield, the president of 19—, came in.

"Hello, Lucy," chorused the group of sprawling figures nearest the door.

"You're just in time to see us do up the regular team," called Elizabeth
West, who captained the "subs."

"Thank you," returned Lucy, "but I can't stay to see you do any such unbecoming thing. I came on an errand to Betty Wales. Isn't she here?"

"Here I am," called Betty, scrambling upright and brushing the hair out of her eyes.

"I came to tell you that you've been appointed to the Students'
Commission, to serve until Christy Mason gets back," explained Lucy.

"Till Christy gets back?" repeated Betty in bewilderment.

"Yes, she's been called home very suddenly. Her mother is ill, and Christy is going to keep house and see to the children. She'll be away a month anyhow and perhaps all this term. And as there are a lot of important matters coming up just now, we decided that we would better appoint a substitute on the commission."

"I'm afraid I can't be much help," began Betty, doubtfully.

"Oh, yes, you can," declared Lucy. "Come to the meeting to-morrow at two, and we'll give you plenty to help about."

"Time's up," called the captain of the regulars, and Lucy ran for the door, leaving Betty in a state of pleased excitement. Dorothy King was president of her class this year, and therefore also president of the Students' Commission. Marion Lawrence was a representative from the junior class. To be even a temporary member of so august an assembly seemed to Betty a very great privilege. She was so busy wondering who had chosen her,—whether Lucy or the whole commission,—and what to-morrow's meeting would be like, that she deliberately threw the ball twice toward the wrong basket and never discovered her mistake until Elizabeth West begged her please to "come to" and help her own side a little just for variety.

On the way home Betty met Miss Ferris. "Come and have tea with me, little girl," she said.

"Could I, like this?" asked Betty wistfully, pulling back her rain-coat to show her gym. suit and the tightly braided pig-tails tucked inside.

Miss Ferris laughed. "I shouldn't mind, but some one else might drop in.
It takes me ten minutes to make tea. Now run!"

Exactly nine minutes and a half later. Betty, looking very slender and stately in a clinging blue gown and a big plumed hat, her cheeks pink with excitement and her hair blown into fascinating ringlets from her brisk run across the campus, knocked timidly on Miss Ferris's door.

"Come in," called Miss Ferris. "You're early. The water hasn't boiled."

"It used to take me half an hour to dress, at the very fastest," said Betty, slipping into a low chair by the fire, where she could watch Miss Ferris making tea in a fat little silver pot, and pouring it into cups so thin and beautiful that Betty hardly dared touch hers, and breathed a deep sigh of relief when it was safely emptied and out of her hands.

Just as she was leaving, she told Miss Ferris about her appointment to the Students' Commission.

"Well," said Miss Ferris, "that won't be new work for you. You were an ex-officio member last year."

Betty looked puzzled.

"What you did for Miss Watson was Students' Commission work," explained Miss Ferris. "And judging by the position Miss Watson seems to be taking this year, I should call it very good work indeed."

[Illustration: "WELL," SAID MISS FERRIS, "THAT WON'T BE NEW WORK"]

"But you did it, not I," protested Betty.

"I did my part, you did yours," corrected Miss Ferris. "To be successful nowadays, you know, you must not only work yourself, but you must get other people to work for you."

"Yes," said Betty, vaguely. Then she laughed. "I'm afraid that I do the second more than the first, Miss Ferris. My roommate thinks that I get a great deal too much out of other people. And when I was at home Nan used to tell me to be more independent and see how I could get along if I were left on a desert island."

Miss Ferris smiled across the fire at her dainty little guest. "The best things in the world,—which fortunately isn't a desert island,—come about by cooperation," she said. "Be independent; think for yourself, of course, but get all the help you can from other people in carrying out your thoughts."

The dinner-bell began to jangle noisily in the hall and Betty rose hastily. "I've stayed too long," she said, "but I always do that when I come to see you. I shall tell my roommate what you said. Do you suppose I shall ever learn to think up arguments for myself?"

"Of course," said Miss Ferris, encouragingly. "That's one thing you're here for—to learn to argue and to dress in a hurry and to work on Students' Commissions. You'll master them all in time. Good-bye."

When Betty got back to the Belden House the bell had rung there too, and as the girls stood about in the halls and parlors waiting for Mrs. Cass, the matron, to lead them in to dinner, they were all discussing what Mary Brooks could mean by a "hair-raising."

"It sounds like a house-raising," said a girl from Nebraska. "I mean the sort of thing they have away out west, where laborers are scarce and the whole town turns out to help a man get up the timbers of his house."

"But there's no sense to that kind of a hair-raising," objected the Nebraskan's roommate, who was from Boston. "I think that Mary has invented a hair tonic and is going to try it on us before she has it patented."

"I'm sure I hope so," said Madeline Ayres, patting her diminutive twist of hair tenderly.

"Why, it's some kind of party she's giving for her mother," announced a stately senior, authoritatively.

"I don't see how that tells what it is, though," said Betty. "Am I invited?"

"Yes," explained Helen Adams. "Mary came in while you were out and asked us."

"But she hasn't said anything about expecting her mother."

At this everybody laughed and Marion Lawrence explained that Mary, being a very busy person, had a habit of putting away her letters unopened, until she found time to read them.

"And somehow she thought this was a book-bill from Longstreet's—you know how near-sighted she is—so she stuck it into her desk until she got her next month's allowance. But to-day she found some money that she'd put in her collar-case for safe-keeping and forgotten about; so she got out the bill to pay it, and it turned out to be a letter from her mother, saying she was coming up tonight. Mary wouldn't have her know for anything, so she decided to give a hair-raising to-night, as if she'd planned for it days ahead."

"But what is it?" demanded Betty.

If Miss Lawrence was in Mary's confidence she had no intention of betraying it; and there was nothing to do but wait for eight o'clock, the hour which Mary had mentioned in her invitations. Promptly on the moment all those bidden to the hair-raising made a rush for Mary's room.

"She hasn't come back from taking dinner with her mother," said Helen.
"Her transom is dark."

But "come in, children," called Mary, sociably, and opening the door just wide enough to admit one girl at a time she disclosed a room absolutely dark save for a gleam of light from a Turkish lantern in one corner.

"Goodness!" cried Betty, who went in first. "What am I running into? Oh, it's a skeleton."

"I'm all mixed up with a snake," added Katherine. "I feel my hair rising already."

"Girls, I want you to meet my mother," said Mary, briskly.

"Here I am," called a sweet voice from the shadows. "Wouldn't you better turn on the lights for a moment, daughter?"

"No, indeed," retorted Mary, firmly. "They're nothing to see, dear, I assure you, but if you insist on seeing them you can all go across to Laurie's room and come back after you've had a general inspection."

So everybody filed over to Marion Lawrence's room, where it was discovered that Mary's mother was, as Betty Wales put it, "a perfect little darling." She was small, like Mary, and she looked so young that Katherine gravely asked Mary if she was quite sure she wasn't palming off a sister on them instead of a mother. She entered into all the absurdities of the hair-raising, which proved to be only a particularly diverting sort of ghost party, with as much zest as any of the girls, and her ghost stories were the feature of the evening.

"You see, dear," explained Mary, when the lights were finally turned on and the hair-raising had resolved itself into a spread, "you see I had a hair-raising because you tell ghost stories so well. Why, ever since I read your letter I've been planning how I should show you off—Oh, mother, it's too good to keep." And Mary regaled her mother with the story of the neglected book-bill.

"Speaking of lost letters," said Marion Lawrence, "there's a letter for Frances West over on the zoology bulletin board in Science Hall. It's been there for two weeks."

"What a funny place for it!" said Mary. "Frances never as much as sticks her head inside Science Hall. She thinks it's wrong to cut up frogs and angle-worms. How did it get there, Laurie?"

"Postman dropped it, probably, and somebody who didn't know any better stuck it up there—the janitor, maybe."

"Perhaps Frances dropped it herself," suggested Madeline Ayres.

Marion shook her head. "Anyhow if she did, she hasn't read it. I noticed that it hadn't been opened."

"Perhaps it's a letter like Mary's, saying that her mother is coming," suggested Helen Adams.

"Guess again. It can't be that, because her mother wouldn't direct a letter to the editor-in-chief of the 'Argus.'"

"Hear that, Dottie," called Mary Brooks to Dorothy King, who was sitting
on the divan below the Turkish lantern, talking busily with Mrs. Brooks.
"There's a letter for your chief over on the zoology bulletin board.
You'd better stop in and get it for her."

"Isn't it funny," said Rachel Morrison, "that, as well as Frances West is known in college and as many juniors and seniors as look at that bulletin board, nobody has thought to take her the letter."

"Why didn't you take it to her, Laurie?" asked Mary severely.

"Oh, because I wanted to see how long it would stop there if I didn't take it," returned Marion easily. "I'm writing a theme on 'What's everybody's business is nobody's business,' and I want to get the psychology right. Oh, Mrs. Brooks," she called, getting up and going over to the divan, "did you know that Mary had set a fashion up here? Ever since her 'Rumor' story, we're all racking our brains to see if we can't get up some psychological experiments that will make Professor Hinsdale think we're clever too."

"And most of you," said Mary loftily, "just succeed in making your friends uncomfortable. I hope Frances' letter won't upset her the way mine did."

"Oh, I guess it isn't a hair-raiser," said Marion easily. "It's probably a bill for printer's ink or paper, or whatever they buy for the 'Argus.' You get it to-morrow, Dottie, and then you can tell us what is in it."

"I will," said Dorothy.

Just as she spoke the twenty-minute-to-ten bell clanged suggestively in the corridors, and the hair-raising came to an abrupt end.

"I don't think I care much for hair-raisings," said Betty, as she and Helen made hasty preparations for bed. "I think you have enough to worry about and be frightened over, without getting up a lot of extra things on purpose. I can hear that blood-hound panting under the window this very minute. Isn't Mrs. Brooks a wonderful story-teller?"

"Yes. I didn't suppose you were ever worried or frightened over things," said Helen.

"Well, I am," returned Betty. "I'm worrying this very minute about my to- morrow's recitations. I'd planned to study tonight but how could I hurt Mary's feelings by not going to the hair-raising? I suppose," went on Betty, when Helen did not answer, "I suppose you want to ask why I don't sit up to study? But if I did I should be breaking a rule, and besides," concluded Betty, yawning prodigiously, "I am altogether too sleepy to sit up, so I am just going to sleep and forget all my troubles." And Betty suited the action to the word.

A few moments later she roused herself. "Life is just full of things to decide, isn't it, Helen? And so often you can't tell which one is best— like me going to the hair-raising to-night, or Marion Lawrence and that letter."

"I think she ought to have delivered the letter," said Helen.

"But it was such fun not to," objected Betty. "And probably it was only an advertisement. Now I'm really going to sleep."

CHAPTER X

IN THE "ARGUS" SANCTUM

Dorothy King hurried down the steps of Science Hall and across the campus to the main building, carrying Frances West's belated letter in her hand. She stopped for a moment in Miss Stuart's office to tell her that the Students' Commission wanted to hold a mass-meeting of the whole college at the end of the month, and waited while Miss Stuart, who was an enthusiastic supporter of the commission, obligingly hunted up an available date for the meeting, and promised to hold it open until the final arrangements could be perfected. Outside the office door Dorothy hesitated and looked at her watch. Quarter past four; laboratory work was over for the afternoon, and there would be ten girls to one copy of Ward's "Poets" in the library.

"I'll go up there this evening," she decided swiftly, "and now for a skate before dinner," and she swung off toward the Hilton House to get her skates and her sweater. As she put out her hand to open the door, she suddenly noticed that she was still carrying Frances' letter, and gave an impatient little exclamation. "All out of my way," she thought, "so I might as well take it back now and get rid of it."

The editorial office of the "Argus" was in the Students' Building, over behind the gym. As she went, Dorothy congratulated herself that it was this errand, and not the one to Miss Stuart, which she had forgotten; for the main building was twice as far away. She wondered idly whether Frances would be in the "sanctum"; she often spent her free afternoons there, for the big building, which was used chiefly in the evening for club meetings, plays, and other social and semi-social functions, was generally silent and deserted earlier in the day; and the quiet and the view over Paradise river from the west windows of the sanctum appealed to the poetic soul of the chief editor. Dorothy, who was a very practical person herself, had a vast admiration for Frances' dreamy, imaginative temperament, and enjoyed her work as business manager of the "Argus" chiefly because it brought her into close contact with Frances; while Frances in her turn admired Dorothy's executive ability, and depended on her to soften the hearts of obdurate printers, stir the consciences of careless assistant editors, and in short to stand as a sort of buffer between her beloved "Argus" and a careless world. Dorothy hoped that Frances would be in the sanctum; it would be fun to tell her about the letter. But if not, all responsibility could be fulfilled by dropping it and a note of explanation into the editorial mail-box.

But Frances was there, and also Beatrice Egerton, who, as exchange editor of the "Argus," Dorothy had come to know well and to like for her quick wit and her daring, piquant ways, while she thoroughly disapproved of her worldly, self-seeking attitude toward college life.

"Hello, Dottie," called Beatrice, when Dorothy opened the door. "We thought you weren't coming, Frances and I."

"Why should I be coming?" inquired Dorothy curiously, tossing the letter into Frances' lap.

"Proof!" exclaimed Beatrice, with a funny little grimace.

Dorothy sank down on the long window seat, which ran across two sides of the sanctum, with a groan and a gesture of despair. "I entirely forgot," she said. "I was going skating. Could it possibly wait till to-morrow?"

Frances West looked helplessly at Beatrice. "I'm sure I don't know," she said. "You told me that to-day was the time. I always depend on you to keep track."

Beatrice laughed gaily. "I'm so glad I happened in," she said. "It's such a lovely spectacle to see the methodical Dottie King trying to persuade the poetical and always-behind-time Frances to put off till to-morrow what she ought to have done day before yesterday. Come, Dottie, take off your coat and go to work."

"I'm sorry I'm always late," said Frances, sweetly. "I've decided to try to be on time now that we've got our new rugs and these lovely green curtains. So I bought a calendar pad and put down my date for reading proof with you last week, when you first reminded me of it."

Dorothy had followed Beatrice's instruction to take off her coat. Now she sat down resignedly before the writing-table, pulled a long strip of printer's proof off the spindle, and dipped her pen in the ink, ready for work. "How do you happen to be here, Bess?" she asked.

"Came to read my mail," said Beatrice. "Some of the best exchanges are out about this time in the month. When you didn't come, I tried to correct proof with Frances, but we couldn't either of us remember the printers' marks; and our Webster's dictionary, that has them in the back, got lost in the shuffle of house-cleaning last vacation."

"Then if the dictionary is lost, you must stay," said Dorothy, "because I can correct proof, but I can't spell, and neither can Frances. Come, Frances, here's the copy for you to read."

Frances West's voice had a peculiarly charming quality, and her manner of reading was so absorbed and sympathetic that she never failed to interest her auditors; so that even the mechanical drudgery of correcting proof was endurable with her help. The work went on rapidly, Dorothy bending over the long printers' galleys, adding mysterious little marks here and there in the wide margins, Frances reading as expressively as though she were doing her best to entertain Beatrice Egerton, who curled herself up on the window-seat, listened, made flippant comments, perused her exchanges when the "Argus" articles did not interest her, and when appealed to by Dorothy, acted as substitute for the missing Webster's dictionary.

"Well, that's over," said Dorothy, at last, straightening in her chair and stretching out her cramped arms over her head. "Next month will be Laura Dale's turn again. I wonder if she'll do it."

"Poor Dottie!" mimicked Beatrice. "'Could you do it just once more? I can't seem to learn the marks.' That's what she'll say. You shouldn't be so capable, Dottie, and then you could go skating afternoons instead of doing your own work and the assistant business manager's too."

"Oh, I don't mind," said Dorothy, who was really very tired indeed, and so preferred not to talk about it. "Laura is a great deal of help with some parts of the work, and I don't blame any one for not wanting to correct proof—though I don't mind doing it so long as Frances will read for me. Aren't our new curtains lovely?"

"Such a cool, woodsy green," said Frances.

"Just right for poets to write behind," supplemented Beatrice, who loved to tease Frances, though in her heart she admired her as much as Dorothy did.

"Girls, it's long after six," said Dorothy, rising abruptly, "and I must go. I have an evening's work still before me."

As she picked up her gloves, she noticed Frances' letter still lying neglected on the window-seat. "Here, Frances," she said, "do just open this letter, and tell me that it's dreadfully important. I want to bother Laurie about it. She saw it on the zoology bulletin board last week and didn't trouble herself to bring it to you."

"Oh, I presume it's nothing," said Frances, dreamily. She was watching the sunset glowing gold and scarlet between the green draperies.

"Here, Frances," laughed Beatrice, thrusting the letter into her hands. "Read it by the light of the dying sun, if you prefer that to good green- shaded electricity. You owe it to Dorothy to take an interest when she bothered herself to bring it to you, and so got caught and deprived of her afternoon's fun. Poor Dottie! can't you go skating tomorrow?"

They were animatedly discussing the possibility of Miss Mills's neglecting to call for a recitation on Ward's "Poets" the next day, when Frances gave a little exclamation.

"Why, girls," she began, excitedly. "I don't understand. Isn't to-day the twentieth of February?"

"Yes, dear," said Beatrice. "You knew from that wonderful calendar pad, didn't you?"

Frances disregarded the question. "Then—Why, this letter is dated February second. Where has it been all the time?"

"I just told you," repeated Dorothy, "that Laurie saw it on the zoology bulletin board last week. Perhaps it was there a week or two before she saw it. Is it really important, Frances? Laurie supposed from the direction that it was just a bill or an advertisement. She'll be very sorry."

"Oh, I don't know what it is," declared Frances, in bewilderment. "Read it," and she held out the letter to Dorothy.

"Read it aloud," suggested Beatrice.

"Yes, do," added Frances. "I haven't any idea what it means."

"'The Quiver' Offices,
"—Fulton St., New York,
"Feb. 2, 19—.

"MISS FRANCES WEST,
"Editor-in-Chief of Harding
"College 'Argus':

"DEAR MADAME:—It always gives me great pleasure to see the merits of 'The Quiver' recognized, particularly in haunts of high culture, like your alma mater. Nevertheless, you will readily understand that the little tribute to the genius of one of our contributors, contained in your December number, which, owing to my prolonged absence from the city, has just now come under my observation, is, to speak bluntly, deserving of some return from me. I have no doubt that you will be glad to offer the proper explanation. If, however, you insist upon leaving the matter in my hands, I assure you that I shall not mince matters. College honor is a point about which I am very sensitive. We go to press on the twentieth inst. Until that time I am

"Yours confidentially,
"RICHARD BLAKE."

"Well," said Dorothy, folding the letter carefully and putting it back in its envelope, "what do you make of that, Bess?"

"Nothing," said Beatrice, "nothing at all. Who in the world is Richard Blake?"

"I don't know. Don't you, Frances?"

Frances shook her head. "But 'The Quiver' is a magazine. I've seen a copy once or twice."

"Then," said Dorothy, promptly, "Richard Blake must be the editor, or one of them."

"Well, did we say anything about him in the December number?" pursued Beatrice. "Or anything about his magazine?"

"No," declared Dorothy, "of course not. 'The Quiver' isn't a college magazine, is it, Frances? It couldn't be on the list of exchanges?"

"Oh, no," said Frances, wearily. "'The Quiver' is a real magazine, Dorothy. It's new, I think, but I know Miss Raymond considers it very clever. I saw a copy once in her room."

"Clever or not clever," said Beatrice, calmly, "I'm sure this editor must be insane. There is absolutely no sense to his letter."

Dorothy unfolded Mr. Richard Blake's missive, read it through once more, and passed it without comment to Beatrice. Meanwhile Frances was rummaging through the files of the "Argus."

"Here it is," she said at last. "Didn't he say the January number?"

"No, December," corrected Beatrice, joining-Frances in her search for the missing magazine.

"There," said Frances, at last, reading down the table of contents. "'The Self-government System at Harding'—he wouldn't be mentioned in that. My poem is next—he certainly isn't in that. Then that story of Eleanor Watson's, and an essay on 'Sweetness and Light.'"

"Perhaps he's in that," suggested Dorothy, hopefully. "It sounds as if it might mean almost anything."

Beatrice Egerton giggled. "You didn't take the course in nineteenth century essayists, I guess, Dottie. He's not in 'Sweetness and Light,' unless Richard Blake is an alibi of Matthew Arnold's."

"And he couldn't possibly be in any of these sketches," went on Frances, anxiously, "nor in the editorials, nor in the alumnae notes."

"Of course not," agreed Beatrice, scornfully. "See here, girls," she added, referring again to the note, "he doesn't tell us the name of his contributor—the simpleton! That's what we ought to look for. He says we printed a tribute to the genius of one of his contributors."

"I have it!" declared Dorothy, pulling the December "Argus" out of Frances' hands. "The contributor is a member of the faculty, and the article is spoken of in the faculty notes. That's it, of course."

But diligent search of the faculty notes failed to unearth any item about an article in "The Quiver."

"Besides," added Beatrice, who had returned to the note once more, "that wouldn't explain what he says about college honor. And what is this about 'offering the proper explanation'? Are people supposed to explain compliments?"

"I don't know," said Frances. "I suppose I've made some dreadful blunder, and he noticed it. And to-day is the twentieth; he evidently wanted an answer by that time. Do you think I ought to telegraph?"

"No," said Dorothy, after a moment's thought "It wouldn't be any use. If he went to press—or 'The Quiver' went to press—to-day, it's gone hours ago. You'd better write him to-night. He'll get your letter in the morning, and then he'll understand."

"But what am I to write?" asked Frances, helplessly.

"Tell him to study Genung on clearness," suggested Beatrice, flippantly.

"Don't, Beatrice," broke in Dorothy. "This is evidently a serious matter. I should tell him that you didn't know what he meant by his letter, Frances, and of course explain why you haven't written before."

"Will you two stay while I write it?" asked Frances. "I should never dare to take the responsibility alone."

Dorothy sat down on the window-seat in silence, and Beatrice followed her example. There was no sound in the sanctum but the scratching of Frances' pen, moving swiftly over the paper. When the brief note was finished, the editor-in-chief handed it to her colleagues.

"That's all right," said Dorothy, reading it through.

"Infinitely better than his," added Beatrice. "His reminds me of that verse of Marion Lustig's that was more obscure than Browning—the one we persuaded you not to print."

"Don't you think," began Dorothy hesitatingly, "that, until we know exactly what Mr. Richard Blake means, it would be better not to mention his letter?"

"Not even to the rest of the 'Argus' board?" asked Beatrice, who had been anticipating the sensation that the story of the mysterious letter would create. "Dottie," she went on, looking keenly at Dorothy, "I believe you have another idea about what that note means."

"I know just as little about it as you do," said Dorothy quietly, "but I think eight girls are too many to keep a secret and—it's Frances' letter. She must decide."

"I think Dorothy is right," agreed Frances. "I believe that we would

better wait before telling the others. If it's some dreadful blunder that
I have made, perhaps I could correct it if only we three knew of it.
Though I don't know whether that would be quite honest," she added sadly.

Beatrice put her arm around Frances' waist and led her to the door.

"You old dear," she said, "you're so proud of your beloved 'Argus.' I believe you worry over every word that goes into it."

"And over every s that is upside-down and isn't detected by my eagle eye," laughed Dorothy, locking the door and carefully hiding the key in the place where half the college knew it was kept.

It was seven o'clock—no use going home to dinner. Dorothy decided to get an early start with Ward's "Poets," and to dine later in the evening on ship's biscuit and a glass of milk. The library was very quiet. She read busily, concentrating her attention upon the pages before her, oblivious of her surroundings, forgetful even of the mysterious letter and the theory, which, despite her declaration to Beatrice Egerton, she had formed concerning it.

Presently some one tiptoed up behind her and clasped two hands tightly across her eyes.

"Who is it?" whispered a laughing voice.

"I don't know," answered Dorothy a trifle irritably.

"Did you give it to her?" demanded the voice imperturbably.

"Give what to whom?"

"The letter to Frances West."

"It's Mary Brooks," said Dorothy, pulling away the hands and turning to find Mary and Marion Lawrence standing behind her chair.

"Aren't you nearly through with that book?" asked Marion.

Dorothy nodded. "Leave me in peace for ten minutes and you may have it."

"Well, tell us first about the letter," demanded Mary. "Was it a hair- raiser?"

"Oh, no," answered Dorothy calmly. "It was—oh, a note of thanks, or something of the sort from some magazine that the 'Argus' had spoken of."

"Bother!" said Marion. "That's no good for an ending to my theme."

"No good at all," agreed Dorothy. "I shouldn't use it if I were you."

"I certainly shan't," said Marion. "I can invent a nicer ending than that. Come, Mary, leave her alone, so that I can have Ward. Oh, dear! I'm dreadfully disappointed about my theme."

The reply to Mr. Richard Blake, presumably editor of "The Quiver," had been dispatched on the evening of the twentieth. Two days later Frances, looking as if she had seen a ghost, stopped Dorothy on her way from morning chapel to her first recitation.

"Can you come to the sanctum right after lunch?" she asked. "Beatrice can come then."

"Yes," returned Dorothy. "You've got his answer?"

Frances nodded. "And oh, Dorothy, it's just dreadful!"

When Dorothy reached the sanctum that afternoon she found Beatrice and
Frances there before her. Without a word Frances handed her the letter.

"MY DEAR MISS WEST—" it ran:

"Your note is received and the delay in sending it fully explained. I am sorry you could make nothing of my first letter. I intended to be vague, for I wanted to test your knowledge of the episode in question; but it seems I overshot the mark. So let me say, please, since you and your colleagues evidently do not read 'The Quiver' that a story in your December number by a Miss Eleanor Watson is practically a copy of one that appeared in our November issue, which I am sending you under separate cover. All I ask is that some public acknowledgment of the fact shall be made, either by you or by me. I have delayed the notice I intended to insert in our next number, until I hear from you.

"Let me say that I blame neither you nor your associates in the matter. 'The Quiver' is young, and plagiarists will happen.

"Yours very truly,
"RICHARD BLAKE."

"Has the magazine come?" asked Dorothy, without exhibiting the least surprise at Mr. Blake's startling announcement.

"Yes," said Frances. "There must be some dreadful mistake."

"Can't you find the story he means?"

"Yes, but of course Eleanor Watson didn't copy it. No Harding girl would do such a thing."

"Eleanor Watson is different," said Dorothy.

"You mean you think she did it?" asked Beatrice Egerton. "You don't think it was a coincidence? Frances knew of something like it happening once, entirely by chance."

"This wasn't chance," said Dorothy slowly. "Oh, Beatrice—you know Eleanor Watson better than I—I don't want to be uncharitable. That was why I didn't tell you girls the other day, when it occurred to me that this was what Mr. Blake meant. Can't you see that it explains everything? Don't you remember I told you how queer she was about giving me the story; and before that, just after she handed it in, she went over to get it back."

"Yes," said Frances eagerly. "I remember. We thought it such a good joke. Oh, let us go and ask her how it was. She will surely be able to explain."

"But Frances," began Dorothy and stopped, glancing uncertainly at Beatrice.

"Oh, you needn't mind me," said Beatrice calmly. "If this is true, I wash my hands of Eleanor Watson." She turned to Frances, and her face softened. "You dear old idealist," she said, pulling Frances down on the seat beside her. "Can't you see that appealing to Eleanor Watson wouldn't do at all? Can't you see that if she is mean enough to plagiarize 'The Quiver's' story, she is probably capable of lying out of it? And how should we know whether or not she told the truth?"

"Or suppose that she did convince us," said Dorothy gently, "you see there is still Mr. Blake. I don't believe Eleanor's denial would satisfy him."

"Well," said Beatrice resignedly, "next to Eleanor Watson herself, I suppose I am the person who would profit most by having this whole affair hushed up. It's going to be mighty unpleasant for me, what with my having put her up for Dramatic Club and all that. But frankly, I don't see what there is to do but let Mr. Richard Blake go ahead and say what he pleases. Eleanor Watson will probably leave college. Some people will believe the story and some won't. Some won't even hear it—'The Quiver' seems to be a very obscure magazine. And in nine days every one will forget all about it."

"But Eleanor Watson will never forget," added Frances softly. To her art was sacred and the idea of stealing it horrible.

There was a silence broken at last by Dorothy.

"Frances," she said, "you're right, you always are. You divine things that the rest of us have to reason out. This affair is unpleasant for everybody concerned, but it isn't a vital matter to us or to Mr. Blake. The only person to be considered is Eleanor Watson. If the matter is made public—"

"It would serve her right, and it might be the best thing in the world for her," broke in Beatrice, who was growing more angry with Eleanor the longer she thought of the intimacy between them.

"That," said Dorothy, "is the question we have to decide. I for one am not at all sure what to think. Being publicly humiliated might be a good thing for her, or it might ruin her whole life."

"Oh, I can't bear to have people know about it," said Frances, her face white with horror. "Let us go home now and think it over, and let us be oh! so careful not even to hint at what has happened. We may have to confide in some others, but let us not give up the chance of keeping our secret by telling the wrong people now. And let us meet again tomorrow afternoon."

"In your room," suggested Beatrice. "This place is too conspicuous."

The three editors crept down the stairs like so many conspirators, separated with soft good-byes in the lower hall, and went their several ways, each feeling that the weight of the world rested on her shoulders. To Beatrice the affair was a personal one, involving her judgment and her status in the college world; Frances mingled pity for Eleanor with jealousy for the fair name of the "Argus"; Dorothy was going over the career of Eleanor Watson since she entered Harding, wondering whether it would be possible, by any method of treatment, to make her over into a trustworthy member of the student body, and whether she would ever be worth to the world what her evil influence had cost her college. All at once a bitter thought flashed upon Dorothy. She herself was partly responsible for Eleanor's downfall; for had she not persuaded her, against her will, to give the story to the "Argus"?

CHAPTER XI

A PROBLEM IN ETHICS

Betty Wales sat in Dorothy King's big wicker easy chair, an expression of mingled distress and perplexity on her usually merry face. Dorothy had sent word that she was ill and wanted to see her little friend, and Betty had hurried over in her first free period, never guessing at the strange story that Dorothy had summoned her to hear. The story was told now. It remained only for Betty to decide what she should do about it.

"It's the most annoying thing," Dorothy was saying from the bed where she lay, pale and listless, among the pillows. "I've heard of girls being ill from overwork, and I always thought they were good-for-nothings, glad of an excuse to stay in bed for awhile. But I can't get up, Betty. I tried hard this morning before the doctor came, and it made me so sick and faint—you can't imagine. So there was nothing to do but submit when she insisted upon my going to the infirmary for two weeks."

"I'm so sorry," murmured Betty sympathetically.

"She tried to make me promise not to see any one except the matron before I was moved," went on Dorothy, "but I told her I must talk to you for half an hour. I promised on my honor not to keep you longer than that, and we haven't but ten minutes left. Now won't you decide to go and see Mr. Blake?"

"Oh, I don't know what to decide!" cried Betty in despairing tones. "It's so dreadful that Eleanor should have done it. That's all I can think of."

"But listen to me, Betty," began Dorothy patiently. "Let me show you just how matters stand. Frances can't go down to New York alone—you can see that. She doesn't know the city, and she'd get lost or run over, and ten to one come home without even remembering to see Mr. Blake. You can't believe how absent-minded she is, till you've worked with her as I have. Besides, she is too dreamy and imaginative to convince a man of Mr. Blake's type.

"And Bess Egerton mustn't go; Frances and I are agreed about that. She's too flighty. She'd be angry if Mr. Blake didn't yield his point immediately, and say something outrageous to him. Then she'd go off shopping and come back here in the best of spirits, declaring that there was nothing to be done because Mr. Blake was 'such a silly.' And I can't go."

"If you only could!" broke in Betty. "Then it would be all right. Isn't there any chance that you might be able to by the end of next week?"

Dorothy shook her head. "I couldn't get leave, on top of this two weeks' illness, without telling Miss Stuart exactly why I needed to go, and I don't want to do that. Miss Raymond knows all about it and approves, and we don't want to confide in any one else. Besides, I doubt if Mr. Blake will wait so long."

"Well then, Dorothy, why not write to him?"

Dorothy shook her head again. "We tried that. We wrote one letter, and when his answer came we tried again, but eight pages was the least we could get our arguments into. No, it's a case where talking it out is the only thing to do. You could take him unawares and I'm sure you'd bring him round."

"That's just it," broke in Betty eagerly. "I know you're mistaken, Dorothy. I couldn't think of a thing to say to him—I never can. It would be just a waste of time for me to try."

Dorothy took a bulky envelope from under her pillows and held it out to Betty. "Here," she said.

"These are the letters we wrote. We all three tried. Here are arguments in plenty."

"But I should forget them all when I got there."

"You mustn't."

"Besides, it would look so queer for me to go, when I'm not on the 'Argus' board, and have nothing to do with the trouble."

"Didn't I tell you why we chose you?" exclaimed Dorothy. "No? I am so stupid to-day; I put everything the wrong way around. Why, there were two reasons. One is because you are so fond of Eleanor and understand her so well. Nobody on the 'Argus' staff, except Beatrice and myself, has more than a bowing acquaintance with her, whereas you can tell Mr. Blake exactly what sort of girl she is, and why we want to save her from this disgrace. The other reason is that, while Christy is away, you are one of the two sophomores on the Students' Commission; Eleanor is a sophomore and either you or Lucy Merrifield is the proper person to act in her interests in a case of this kind. Because you know Eleanor best, we chose you—and for some other reasons," added Dorothy, truthfully, remembering the confidence they had all felt in Betty's peculiar combination of engaging manner and indomitable pluck and perseverance, where a promise or a friend was concerned.

"Oh, Dorothy!" sighed Betty, feeling herself hopelessly entangled in the web of Dorothy's logic.

"There is a third reason," went on Dorothy, inexorably, "just between you and me. Of course you understand that I feel personally to blame about this trouble. If I hadn't lost my horrid temper and said something disagreeable to force her hand, Eleanor Watson might never have allowed the story to be printed and the worst complications would have been avoided. Now I personally ask you, as the person I can best trust, to go to Mr. Blake for me. You know Eleanor. You agree with us that it is very likely to spoil her whole life if this is made public—"

"But, Dorothy, I'm not sure it's right to keep it a secret," broke in Betty.

"I believe you will feel sure when you have had a chance to think over all sides of the question," resumed Dorothy, "and to see how much to blame I am. Then you are a typical Harding girl, the right sort to represent the college to Mr. Blake, who seems to be very much interested in knowing what sort of girl Harding turns out."

"Oh, no!" demurred Betty. "I'm not the right kind at all."

"Besides, you have a way of getting around people and persuading them to do what you want," concluded Dorothy.

"Never," declared Betty.

Dorothy smiled faintly. "You have the reputation," she said. "Of course I don't know how you got it; but now that you have it you're bound to live up to it, you know. And if you don't go, we shall have to risk writing and I am perfectly certain that no letter will keep Mr. Blake from publishing his notice next month, whereas I think that if he were to talk over the matter with you, he might very easily be persuaded to give it up."

Dorothy lay back on her pillows and closed her eyes. "It does certainly seem like shirking to be ill just now," she said.

Betty rose hastily and came over to the bed. "Dorothy," she began, "I must go this minute. You are all tired out. I wish I could promise now, but I must think it over—whether I can do what you want of me and whether I ought. I'll tell you what," she went on eagerly, "I can't see you again, but I'll send you a bunch of violets the first thing in the morning, and I'll tuck in a note among the flowers, saying what I can do. And it will be the very best I can do, Dorothy."

"I know it will," said Dorothy. "Don't think that I don't realize how much we're asking of you."

"I like to be trusted," said Betty, ruefully, "but it seems to me there are hundreds of girls in college who could do this better than I. Good- bye—and look out for the violets, Dorothy."

A moment later she opened the door again. "Of course Eleanor doesn't know that you've found out?"

"No," said Dorothy. "We've told no one but you and Miss Raymond. We thought it would only complicate matters and hurt her needlessly to tell her now. I suppose she will have to know eventually, to guard against a repetition of the trouble, if for no other reason; but we haven't looked so far ahead

as that yet."

It was fortunate that Betty was not called upon to recite in her next class. Refusing the seat that Bob Parker had saved for her between herself and Alice Waite, she found a place in the back row where a pillar protected her from Bob's demonstrations, and leaning her head on her hand she set herself to work out the problem that Dorothy had given her. But the shame of Eleanor's act overcame her, as it had in Dorothy's room; she could not think of anything else. She woke with a start at the end of the hour to find the girls pushing back their chairs and making their noisy exit from the room, and to realize that she might as well have learned something about Napoleon's retreat from Moscow, since she had decided nothing about her trip to New York.

"I say," said Bob, joining her outside the door, "why are you so unsociable?"

"Headache," returned Betty, laconically, and with some truth.

"Too bad." Owing to the fact that she had never had a headache in her life, Bob's sympathy was somewhat perfunctory.

"When you have the written lesson to study for, too," mourned Alice.

"Written lesson?" questioned Betty, in dismay.

"Yes. Didn't you hear Professor White giving it out for to-morrow? All of Napoleon—that's five hundred pages."

Betty gasped. "I suppose he made a lot of new points to-day. I didn't hear a word."

"Next time," said Bob, severely, "perhaps you'll be willing to sit down among people who can see that you keep awake."

"Don't tease her," begged Alice. "She must have an awful headache, not to have heard about the written lesson. What did you think we were all groaning so about, Betty?"

"I didn't hear that, either," said Betty, meekly. "Will one of you lend me a notebook?"

Betty could have hugged Helen Adams when immediately after luncheon she announced that she was going down to study history with T. Reed and should stay till dinner time. Betty hung a "Busy" sign on her door—the girls would think that she too was studying history madly—and set herself to read over the original of Eleanor's story in "The Quiver" that Dorothy had lent her. It was the same and yet not the same. Plot and characters had been taken directly from the original, but the phrasing— Betty knew Eleanor's story almost by heart—was quite different, and a striking little episode at the end that Miss Raymond had particularly admired was Eleanor's own.

"I like hers best," thought Betty, stoutly. "I wonder if the resemblance couldn't have happened by chance. Perhaps she read this story a long while before and forgot that she had not thought it up herself."

Betty looked at the date of the magazine and then consulted her calendar. The November "Quiver" had come out just two days before the afternoon of the barge ride, which had also been "theme afternoon." Betty remembered because her monthly allowance always came on the third. She had borrowed her quarter for the ride of Helen and paid her out of the instalment that arrived the very next morning. That settled it,—and as Dorothy had pointed out, all Eleanor's seemingly inexplicable queerness about the story was now explained.

Betty threw the magazine on the table and going to the window gazed drearily out at the snow-covered campus. The next thing to settle was whether it were right to help Eleanor to cover up her deceit? Dorothy felt, from the little she knew of Eleanor, that open disgrace would take away her last chance of being honest and upright. "She is terribly sensitive," Dorothy argued, "and if she feels that nice people don't trust her, she will go as far as she dares to show them that they are right. Perhaps she can be led, but she certainly can't be driven. She isn't strong enough to meet disgrace and down it." That might be true, but there was the mathematics examination of the year before. Miss Hale had argued as Dorothy did. In the hope of ultimately winning Eleanor by kindness, she had not let Miss Meredith know that Eleanor had told her an untruth. For a while afterward Eleanor had been scrupulously honorable, but now she had done something infinitely more dishonest than the deception of Miss Meredith. No doubt Dorothy regarded the affair of the story as a first offense, and Betty could not tell her that it wasn't. She had been glad enough to help save Eleanor from the consequences of her foolish bragging, the year before; but saving her from the consequences of deliberate dishonesty was a different matter. Betty had been taught to despise cheating in any form, and to avoid the least

suspicion of it with scrupulous care. And now Dorothy wanted her to aid and abet a—a thief. Betty flushed hotly as she applied the hard name.

All at once the memory of her last interview with Eleanor flashed upon her. "I was an idiot last fall. Now I have come to my senses—" that was what she had said. When her voice broke, it must have been because she was sorry for the change—sorry that the old, shifty, unreliable self had come back to take the place of the strange new one whose ideals had proved too hard and too high to live by. The sad, hunted look that Madeline had spoken of was explained too. Eleanor was sorry. But was she sorry, as she had been in the case of the mathematics examination, only because she was afraid of being found out, or did she honestly regret having taken what was not her own, and used it to gain honors that she had not earned?

There was another point that Dorothy had not spoken of—perhaps had not thought of. What about the Dramatic Club election and the other college honors that had come or would come to Eleanor, one after another, all because, at the beginning of her sophomore year, she had made a reputation for brilliant literary work? Eleanor had been right, when she was a freshman, in insisting that it was the start which counted. Then, despite her first abject failure, she had compassed the difficult achievement of a second start. How proud Betty had been of her! And now all her fair hopes and high ambitions had crumbled to dust and ashes. Was it right to help her cover up the ruin? Was it fair to girls like Helen Adams, who worked hard and got no recognition, that Eleanor should get recognition for work which was not her own?

Anyway, she was not going to New York. Those three editors could choose some one else. And yet if she refused—oh, it was all dreadful! Betty flung herself on the couch and buried her face in the pillows. A moment later the door opened stealthily, and Madeline Ayres stuck her head in. In spite of her caution, Betty heard her and sat up with a nervous start.

"I hope you weren't asleep," said Madeline, settling herself comfortably at the other end of the couch. "I didn't mean to wake you; that was why I came in without knocking."

"I wasn't asleep," returned Betty faintly. "I was just resting."

"You look as if you needed to," said Madeline cheerfully. "Does your head ache now?"

"Not—not very much," stammered Betty.

"Have you read over all this?" Madeline reached out a long arm for the life of Napoleon that lay on the table.

"No, hardly any of it," confessed Betty, reddening as she remembered the "Busy" sign.

But Madeline remarked briskly, "That's good. Neither have I. I don't feel a bit like cramming, so I shall bluff. When father was studying art in Paris, he knew a man who had been one of Napoleon's guards at St. Helena. He was old and lame and half blind and stunningly homely then, and an artist's model. He used to tell merry tales about what a tiger of a man—" Madeline stopped short in the act of replacing the life of Napoleon on the table and stared at Betty in unfeigned admiration.

"Betty Wales," she said at last, "you are certainly a splendid actress. I never dreamed that you knew."

Betty's eyes followed Madeline's to the table, and then to "The Quiver," lying in full view where she had dropped it an hour before. There was one chance in a thousand that Madeline meant something besides Eleanor's story, and Betty resolved to make sure.

"Knew what, Madeline?" she asked steadily, trying not to blush but feeling the tell-tale red spread over her cheeks in spite of all she could do.

It was no use. Madeline picked up the magazine and flipped over the pages carelessly till she came to Eleanor's story. "That," she said, holding it out for Betty to see. Their eyes met, and at sight of Betty's frightened, pleading face, Madeline's hand dropped to her side.

"I beg your pardon," she said quickly. "I didn't mean to hurt you, Betty. I see now how it is. You didn't know before; you've just found out, and when I came in you were mourning for your fallen idol. Shall I go?"

Betty stretched out a detaining hand. "No," she said, "tell me,—quick before Helen comes,—how did you know?"

"Read it in 'The Quiver,' away back last fall, before Miss Watson's story came out in the 'Argus.' It's

been—oh, amusing, you know, to hear people rave over her wonderful theme."

"Does any one else know?"

"I doubt it. 'The Quiver' isn't on sale up here. Father thinks it's clever and he sends it to me. I suppose he knows the editor. He's always knowing the editors of little, no-account magazines and having to sit up nights to do them cover-designs or something; and then they send him their magazines."

"But—I mean—you haven't told any one?" stammered Betty.

Madeline shook her head. "It wouldn't make a pretty story, do you think?"

"Madeline"—Betty's voice thrilled with earnestness—"did you ever think you ought to tell?"

Madeline stared at Betty for a moment in silence. Then her gray eyes twinkled. "You absurd little Puritan," she said, "is that what you're bothering your head about? I know you don't want to tell. Why aren't you satisfied to let matters take their course?"

"Because," Betty hesitated, "because if they take their course,—suppose, Madeline, that somebody else knows and wants to tell? Ought I to interfere with that?"

Madeline spread out her hands with a gesture that suggested helpless resignation. "My dear, how should I know? You see in Bohemia we're all honest—poor, but honest. We never have anything like this to settle because we're all too busy enjoying life to have time to envy our neighbors. But I think"—Madeline paused a minute—"I think if a man stole a design and got, say a medal at the water-color exhibit, or a prize at the Salon, I'd let him have it and I'd try to see that he kept it in a conspicuous place, where he'd be sure to see it every day. I think the sight of his medal would be his best medicine. If he was anything of a man, he'd never want another of the same sort, and if he was all cheat, he'd be found out soon enough without my help. So I'd give him the benefit of the doubt."

"And you think that would be fair to the one who ought to have had the medal?"

"If he was much of a man he didn't paint just for the medal," returned Madeline quickly. "He painted because he couldn't help it,—because he meant to make the most of himself,—and a medal more or less —what's that to him?" She turned upon Betty suddenly. "Don't you see that the great fault with the life here is that we think too little about living and too much about getting? These societies and clubs and teams and committees— they're not the best things in life; they're nothing, except what they stand for in character and industry and talent. No, I shouldn't worry because Eleanor Watson got into Dramatic Club, if that's what you mean, and may get into other things because she cribbed a story. That very fact will take all the fun out of it, unless she's beneath caring,—but she isn't beneath caring," Madeline corrected herself swiftly. "No one with a face like hers is beyond caring. It's the most beautiful face I ever saw—and one of the saddest."

"Thank you very much, Madeline," said Betty, soberly. "I'm so glad I could talk it over with you."

Madeline was never serious for long at a time. "I've been preaching regular sermons," she said with a laugh. "The thing I don't understand is why this editor of 'The Quiver' hasn't jumped on Miss Watson long ago. Editors are always reading college magazines—hoping to discover a genius, I suppose."

"Are they?" said Betty.

A tap sounded on the door.

"Don't worry, whatever else you do,—and hide your magazine," said Madeline, and was off with a cheerful greeting for Helen Adams, who had come back from her afternoon at T. Reed's crammed full of Napoleonic lore and basket-ball news.

"Theresa had made a table of dates and events," said Helen eagerly. "I copied it for you—it's lots of help. And Betty, she says the teams are going to be chosen soon, and she is almost sure you will be on."

Madeline Ayres wondered idly, as she dressed for dinner, how Betty Wales had come into possession of a four months' old magazine which was not to be had at any library or book-store in Harding. Then, being a person born, so she herself asserted, entirely without curiosity, she ceased wondering. By the time dinner was over and she had related a budget of her Napoleonic stories to a delighted group of anxious students, she had actually forgotten all about Eleanor's affairs.

CHAPTER XII

A BRIEF FOR THE DEFENSE

"DEAR DOROTHY— "I have thought and thought all the afternoon and I can't do it. I should only—"

"DEAR DOROTHY—
"If you are perfectly sure that there is nobody else to go—"

"DEAR DOROTHY— "Don't you think that Mary Brooks or Marion Lawrence would be a lot better? Mary can always talk—"

"Oh, Dorothy, I don't know what to say—"

Betty had slipped up-stairs to her room the minute dinner was over. The rest of the Belden House girls still lingered in the parlors, talking or dancing,—enjoying the brief after-dinner respite that is a welcome feature of each busy day at Harding. Ida Ludwig was playing for them. She had a way of dashing off waltzes and two-steps that gave them a perfectly irresistible swing. As Betty wrote, her foot beat time to the music that floated up, faint and sweet and alluring, through her half-open door. The floor around her was strewn with sheets of paper which she had torn, one after another, from her pad, and tossed impatiently out of her way.

"Such a goose as I am, trying to write before I've made up my mind what to say!" she told the green lizard, as she sent the seventh attempt flying after the others. "And I can't make it up," she added despondently, and shut her fountain pen with a vicious little snap. She would go down and have a two-step with Roberta, who had been Mary's guest at dinner. Roberta could lead beautifully—as well as a man—and the music was too good to lose. Besides, Roberta might feel hurt at her having run off the minute dinner was over.

A shadow suddenly darkened the door and Betty turned to find Eleanor
Watson standing there, smiling radiantly down at her.

"Eleanor!" she gasped helplessly. Somehow the sight of the real Eleanor, smiling and lovely, made the deceit she had practiced seem so much more concrete and palpable, the penalty she must pay at best so much more real and dreadful. Betty had puzzled over the rights and wrongs of the matter until it had come to be almost an abstraction—a subject for formal, impersonal debate, like those they used to discuss in the junior English classes, in high school days—"Resolved: that it is right to help plagiarists to try again." Now the reality of it all was forced upon her. In spite of her surprise at seeing Eleanor, who almost never came to her room now, and her dismay that she should have come on this evening in particular, she found time to be glad that she had not yet refused Dorothy's request—and time to be a little ashamed of herself for being so glad.

Her perturbation showed so plainly in her face and manner that Eleanor could not fail to notice it. Her smile vanished and a troubled look stole into her gray eyes. "May I come in, Betty?" she asked. "Or are you too busy?"

"No-o," stammered Betty. "Come in, Eleanor, of course. I—I was just writing a note."

Eleanor glanced at the floor, littered with all Betty's futile beginnings, and her smile came flashing back again. "I should think," she said, "that you must be writing a love letter—if it isn't a sonnet—judging by the trouble it's making you. They told me downstairs that you were cramming history, but I was sure it would take more than a mere history cram to keep you away from that music. Isn't it lovely?"

"Yes," said Betty. "Would you like—shan't we go down and dance?" It would surely be easier to talk down there, with plenty of people about who did not know.

Again her embarrassment and constraint were too evident to be ignored, and this time Eleanor went straight to the heart of the matter.

"Betty," she said, "don't tell me that you're not glad to see me back again after all this time. I know I'm queer and horrid and not worth bothering about, but when you find it out,—when you give me up—you and Jim—I shall stop trying to be different."

For an instant Betty hesitated. Then the full import of Eleanor's words flashed upon her. There was no mistaking their sincerity. She knew at last that she did "really mean something" to somebody. Ethel

Hale had been wrong. Eleanor had not forgotten her old friends—and Betty would go to New York. With a happy little cry she stretched out her arms and caught Eleanor's hands in hers.

"I'm so glad you feel that way," she said, "and I shall never stop caring what you do, Eleanor, and neither will Jim. I know he won't."

"He gave me up once before, and if you knew something—" She broke off suddenly. "Betty, Jim is coming Friday night. That's one reason why I'm here. I didn't want him to miss seeing you just because I'd been disagreeable and was too proud to come and say I'm sorry. I am sorry, Betty,—I'm always sorry when it's just too late."

"Oh, that's all right. I knew you didn't mean anything," said Betty, hastily. Apologies always made her nervous, and this particular one was fraught with unpleasant suggestions little guessed at by its maker. "You'll be awfully glad to see your brother, won't you?"

Eleanor's assent was half-hearted. "To tell the truth, I'm too tired to care much what happens."

"Oh, you won't feel tired when he gets here," suggested Betty, cheerfully.

Eleanor shook her head. "I'm tired all through," she said. "I don't believe I shall ever be rested again."

"What are you going to do to entertain him?" asked Betty, wishing to change the current of Eleanor's thoughts, since she did not dare to sympathize with them.

Eleanor detailed her plans, explained that Judge Watson had suddenly been called home from Cornell and so was not coming with Jim, according to the summer plan that Betty remembered, and rose to go. "I know you'll like Jim, Betty," she said, "and he'll like you. He's your kind."

The moment she was left alone, Betty sat down again at her desk and dashed off her note to Dorothy.

"Dear Dorothy:

"I have thought it over and seen Eleanor. I am the one to go, and I'll do my best.

"Yours ever,

"Betty.

"P.S.—I can't start till Wednesday."

She twisted the note into a neat little roll, and slipping out the back way went down to leave it at the florist's, to be sent to Dorothy— securely hidden in a big bunch of English violets, lest any martinet of a nurse should see fit to suppress it—the very first thing in the morning. On the way back to her room she danced up the stairs in her most joyous fashion, and when Mary Brooks, coming up from escorting Roberta to the door, intercepted her and demanded where she had been all the evening, she chanted, "Curiosity killed a cat," and fled from Mary's wrath with a little shriek of delight, exactly as if there were no such things in the world as plagiarism and hard-hearted editors. For had not Eleanor come back to her, and was not the difficult decision made at last?

And yet, when Betty was a senior and took the course in Elizabethan tragedies, she always thought of the visit of Jim Watson as a perfect example in real life of the comic interlude, by which the king of Elizabethan dramatists is wont to lighten, and at the same time to accentuate, his analyses of the bitter consequences of wrong-doing. For close upon her first great relief at finding her decision made, followed a sudden realization that the incident was not yet closed. Madeline had read the November "Quiver"; some less charitable person might have done likewise. If she had been careless in leaving her magazine in sight, so might one of the three editors have been careless, with disastrous results. Mr. Blake might write to the college authorities. Everything, in short, might come out before Jim Watson had finished his week-end visit to Harding. Helping to entertain him seemed therefore a good deal like amusing oneself on the verge of a crackling volcano.

Jim's personality made it all the harder; he was so boyishly light- hearted, so tremendously proud of Eleanor, so splendid and downright himself, with a flash in his fine eyes—the only feature in which he resembled Eleanor—and a quiver about his sensitive mouth, that suggested how deep would be his grief and how unappeasable his anger, if he ever found out with what coin his sister had bought her college honors.

He "blew in," to use his own phrase for it, on an earlier train than Eleanor had expected, and marched up to the Hilton House with a jaunty air of perfect ease and assurance. But really, he confided to Eleanor, he was in a "blooming blue funk" all the way.

"And what do you think?" he added ruefully, "somehow I got mixed up with the matron or whatever you call her. I thought, you see, that this was like a boarding-school, and that I'd got to have some gorgon or other vouch for me before I could see you. So I asked for her first, and she's invited me to dinner. Did you say there were thirty girls in this house? Sixty! I see my finish!" concluded Jim, dolefully.

Nevertheless he rose to the occasion and, ensconced between Eleanor and the matron he entertained the latter, and incidentally the whole table, with tales of mountain-climbing, broncho-busting and bear-hunting, that made him at once a hero in the eyes of the girls. But Jim disclaimed all intention of following up his conquest, just as he had, though ineffectually, disclaimed any part in the thrilling escapades of his stories.

"I can talk to a bunch of girls if I have to, but if you leave me alone with one, I shall do the scared rabbit act straight back to Cornell," he warned Eleanor. "I came to see you. Dad and I compared notes and we decided that something was up."

"Nonsense!" laughed Eleanor, but her eyes fell under Jim's steady gaze, and her cheeks flushed. "Well then, I'm tired," she admitted. "I suppose I've done too much."

"I should think so," retorted Jim, savagely. "Quit it, Eleanor. If you break down, what good will it do you to have written a fine story? I say"—his tone was reproachful—"one of those girls at the dinner you gave last night said your story was printed somewhere, and you never sent it to dad and me. You never even told us about it."

"It wasn't worth while."

"You might let us decide about that. The girl at the dinner said it was a corker, and got you into some swell club or other. That's another thing you didn't write us about."

"No," said Eleanor, wearily. "You can't expect me to write every little thing that happens, Jim."

Jim, who remembered exactly what his fair informant had said regarding the importance of a Dramatic Club "first election," knit his brows and wondered which of them was right. Finally he gave up the perplexing question and went off to order a farewell box of roses for his sister.

It was at about this time that Betty Wales, going sorrowfully to pay a book bill that was twice as large as she had anticipated, heard swift, determined steps behind her, and turned to find Jim Watson swinging after her down Main Street.

"I say, Miss Wales," he began, blushing hotly at his own temerity, "Eleanor is off at a class this hour. I'm such a duffer with girls—is it all right for me to ask you to go for a walk?"

"Of course," said Betty, laughing. "And if you ask me, I'll go."

"Then," said Jim, "I do ask you. You'll have to pick out a trail, for I don't know the country."

"Let's walk out to the river," suggested Betty. "It's not so very pretty at this season of the year, but it's our prize walk, so you ought to see it anyhow."

Silently Jim fell into step beside her.

"Have you had a good time?" inquired Betty, who had decided by this time that Jim really enjoyed talking, only he couldn't manage it without a good deal of help. She had seen more of him in the three days of his visit than any one else but Eleanor, but this was their first tete-a- tete. Hitherto, when Eleanor was busy Jim had gone on solitary tramps or sought the friendly shelter of his hotel.

"Great," replied Jim, enthusiastically. "Harding College is all right.
I'm mighty glad Eleanor wanted to stay on here."

"You're very fond of Eleanor, aren't you?" asked Betty, sure that this topic would draw him out.

"You bet." Jim's eyes shone with pleasure. "Eleanor's a trump when she gets started. She was splendid at home this summer. Of course you know"— Jim flushed again under his tan—"my mother—I'm awfully fond of her too, but of course her being so young makes it queer for Eleanor. But Eleanor fixed everything all right. She made dad and me, and mother too, just fall dead in love with her. You know the way she can."

Betty nodded. "I know."

"And I guess she's made good here, too," said Jim, proudly, "though you'd never find it out from her.

Do you know, Miss Wales, she never wrote us a word about her story that came out in the college magazine."

"Didn't she?" said Betty, faintly.

"Nor about getting into some club," continued Jim, earnestly. "I forget the name, but you'll know. Isn't it considered quite an honor?"

"Why, yes," said Betty, in despair, "that is, some people consider it—
Oh, Mr. Watson, here's the bridge!"

Poor Jim, unhesitatingly attributing Betty's embarrassment to some blunder on his part, was covered with mortification. "It's evidently a secret society," he decided, "and that other fool girl didn't know it, and got me into this mess."

So he listened with deferential attention while Betty tried to tell him how lovely the snowy meadows and the bleak, ice-bound river looked on a bright June day, and carefully followed her lead as she turned the conversation from river scenery to skating and canoeing; so that they reached home without a second approach to the dangerous topics.

Jim was going back to his work that evening. As he said good-bye, he crushed Betty's hand in a bear-like grip that fairly brought tears to her eyes.

"I'm awfully glad to have met you," he said, "though I don't suppose you'd ever guess it—I'm such a duffer with girls. Eleanor told me how you stuck by her last year and helped her get her start. I tell you we appreciate anything that's done for Eleanor, dad and I do."

As Betty watched him stride off to the Hilton House, she remembered Madeline's advice. "I guess she isn't enjoying her honors very much," she thought. "Imagine getting into Dramatic Club and not writing home about it! Why, I should telegraph! And if I had a thing in the 'Argus'"—Betty smiled at the absurdity of the idea—"half the fun would be to see Nan's face. And if I was ashamed to see her face!"

Betty gave a sigh of relief that the comic interlude was over. Under ordinary circumstances the entertaining of Jim would have been the height of bliss. Just now all she wanted was to go to New York and get back again, with her errand done and one source of danger to Eleanor, if possible, eliminated.

Jim left Harding on Tuesday evening. Wednesday morning bright and early, Betty started for New York. She went by the early train for two reasons. It was easier to slip away unquestioned during chapel-time, and furthermore she meant to reach New York in time to see Mr. Blake that same afternoon and take the sleeper back to Harding. She thought that spending the night with any of her New York cousins would involve too much explanation, and besides she could sleep beautifully on the train, and she wanted to be back in time for the Thursday basket-ball practice. The girls played every day now, and very often Miss Andrews dropped in to watch them and take the measure of the various aspirants for a place on the official teams, which it would soon be her duty to appoint.

CHAPTER XIII

VICTORY OR DEFEAT

During the first part of her journey Betty busied herself with reading over Mr. Blake's two letters and the lengthy replies that the editors had composed. These last were as totally unlike as their writers, and Betty thought that none of them hit the point so well as Madeline's suggestions, and none was so cogent as the plea that Eleanor and Jim between them had unconsciously made; but they might all help. From Mr. Blake's two letters she decided that he must be a very queer sort of person, and she devoutly hoped that his conversational style would be less obscure than that of his first letter to Frances West; for it would be dreadful, she thought, if she had to keep asking him what he meant.

"Well, I guess I shall just have to trust to luck and do the best I can when the time comes," she decided, putting the letters back into her suit-case with a little sigh. She admired Helen Adams's way of deliberately preparing for a crisis, but in her own case it somehow never seemed to work. For example, how could she plan what to say to Mr. Blake until she knew what Mr. Blake would say to her? It would be bad enough to try to answer him when the time came, without worrying about it now.

After a brief survey of the flying landscape, which looked uniformly cold and uninviting under a leaden sky, and of her fellow-travelers, none of whom promised any possibilities of amusement, Betty remembered that she had intended to study all the way to New York, and accordingly extracted Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" from her bag. For half an hour she read the Knight's tale busily. But the adventures of Palamon and Arcite, deciphered by means of assiduous reference to the glossary, were not exciting; at the end of the half hour Betty's head drooped back against the plush cushions, her eyes closed, and her book slid unheeded to the floor. Regardless of all the elegant leisure that she had meant to secure by a diligent five-hour attack upon "The Canterbury Tales," Betty had fallen fast asleep.

Some time later the jolt of the halting train woke her. She glanced at her watch—it was twelve o'clock—and looked out for the station sign. But there was no station sign and no station; only snowy fields stretching off to meet wooded hills on one side and the gorge of a frozen river on the other. It had been a gray, sunless morning; now the air was thick with snow, falling in big, lazily-moving flakes which seemed undecided whether or not the journey they were making was worth their while. All this Betty saw through small bare spots on the heavily frosted car windows. She picked up "The Canterbury Tales" from the floor where they had fallen, found her place and sat with her finger in the book, anxiously waiting for the train to go on. But it did not start. The other passengers also grew restless, and asked one another what could be the trouble. There were plenty of guesses, but nobody knew until Betty managed to stop a passing brakeman and asked him if they were going to be late into New York.

"Oh, my, yes, ma'am," he assured her affably. "We're about an hour late now, and there's no tellin' how long we'll stand here. There's been a big blizzard and an awful freeze-up in the west—" he waved his hand at the frosty window. "We do be gettin' a bit of it now ourselves, you see—and the connections is all out of whack."

This was a cheerful prospect. The train was due in New York at half past one. Allow half an hour for the present delay and it would be fully half past three before Betty could reach Mr. Blake's office. Besides, she had brought nothing to eat except some sweet chocolate, for she had planned to get lunch in New York. It was most provoking. She settled herself once more, a cake of chocolate to nibble in one hand and her book in the other, resolved to endure the rest of the journey with what stoicism she might.

Finally, after having exhausted the entire half hour that she had allowed it, the train started with a puff and a wheeze, and ambled on toward its destination, with frequent brief pauses to get its breath or to accommodate the connections that were "all out of whack," and a final long and agonizing wait in the yards. That was the last straw—to be so near the goal and yet helplessly stranded just out of reach. Wishing to verify her own calculations, Betty leaned forward and asked a friendly-looking, gray-haired woman in the seat ahead if she knew just how long it would take to go from the Forty-second Street station to Fulton Street.

The woman considered. "Not less than three-quarters of an hour, I should say, unless you took a Subway express to the bridge, and changed there. Then perhaps you might do it in half an hour."

Betty thanked her and sat back, watch in hand, counting the minutes and wondering what she would better do if she had to stay in New York all night. In spite of some disadvantages, it would be much the best plan, she decided, to go to her cousins. But never thinking of any such contingency as the one that had arisen, she had left her address book at Harding, and she had a very poor memory for numbers. She remembered vaguely one hundred twenty-one, and was sure that cousin Will Banning lived on East Seventy-second Street. But was his number one twenty-one, or was it three hundred forty-something, and Cousin Alice's one twenty- one on One Hundred and Second Street? Was that east or west, and was it Cousin Alice's address before or after she moved last? The more Betty thought, and the more certain it seemed that she could not reach Mr. Blake's office by any route before five o'clock, the more confused she became. She had never been about in New York alone, and she had a horror of going in the rapidly falling dusk from one number to another in a strange city, and then perhaps not finding her cousins in the end. Then there was nothing to do but stay at a hotel. Luckily Betty did remember very distinctly the name of the one that Nan often stopped at alone. She leaned forward again and asked the lady in front to direct her to it.

"Yes, I can do that," said the lady brightly, "or if you like I can take you to it. I'm going there myself. Aren't you a Harding girl?"

Betty assented.

"And I'm the matron at the Davidson," said the gray-haired lady.

"You are!" Betty's tone expressed infinite relief. "And I may really come with you? I'm so glad. I never went to a hotel alone." And she explained briefly why she was obliged to do so now.

The snow was still falling softly when they finally reached New York and boarded a crowded car to ride the few blocks to their hotel. It seemed that Betty's new friend had come down to visit her son, who was ill at a hospital. She helped Betty through the trying ordeal of registering and getting a room, and they went to the cafe together for a little supper. Then she hurried off to her son, and Betty was left to her own devices. She despatched a special-delivery letter to Helen, explaining why she could not take the sleeper—Helen had the impression that Betty had gone to New York to have her hair waved and was ashamed to confess to such frivolity. Then she yawned for a while over "The Canterbury Tales," and went to bed early, so as to be in perfect trim for the next day's interview. She intended to see Mr. Blake as early as possible in the morning and take a noon train for Harding.

"And I do hope there isn't going to be a blizzard here," she thought, as she fell asleep to the angry howling of the wind, which dashed the snow, now frozen, into tiny, icy globules, against her window panes.

But her hope was not destined to be realized. When she woke later than usual the next morning, with a queer feeling of not knowing where she was nor what had happened, the storm was still raging furiously. The street beneath her windows was piled high with impassable drifts, which were getting higher every minute, while on the opposite side a narrow strip of roadway was as clean as if it had been swept with the proverbial new broom. It was snowing so hard that Betty could not see to the corner of the street, and the wind was blowing a gale.

"I don't care," said Betty philosophically. "Here goes for seeing New York in a blizzard. I've always wanted to know what it was like." And she began making energetic preparations for breakfast.

When she got down-stairs she found a hasty note from her friend of the day before, explaining that her son was worse and she had gone as early as possible to the hospital. So Betty breakfasted in solitary state on rolls and coffee,—for her exchequer was beginning to suffer from the unexpected demands that she had made upon it,—paid her bill, and bag in hand sallied forth to meet the storm. Before she had plowed her way to the nearest corner, she decided that a blizzard in New York was no joke. While she waited there in the teeth of the wind, bracing herself against it as it blew her hair in her eyes, whipped her skirt about her ankles, and swept the snow, sharp and cutting as needle-points, pitilessly against her cheeks, she was more than half minded to give up seeing Mr. Blake altogether and go straight to the station. But it was not Betty's way to give up. She brushed back her flying hair, held up her muff as protection against the wind, and when her car finally arrived, tumbled on with a sigh of relief and then a laugh all to herself at the absurdity of the whole situation.

"Mr. Blake will want to laugh too when he sees me," she thought, "and perhaps that will be a good beginning."

In this cheerful mood Betty presently arrived at the door of "The Quiver" office. She made a wry face as she shook the snow out of her furs, straightened her hat and smoothed her hair. It was too bad to have to go in looking like a fright, after all the pains she had taken to wear her most becoming clothes, so as to look, and to feel, as impressive as possible. As a matter of fact, she had never looked prettier than when, having done her best to repair the ravages of the wind, she stood waiting a moment longer to get her breath and decide how she should ask for Mr. Blake and what she should say when she was summoned into his awful presence. Her cheeks were glowing with the cold, her eyes bright with excitement, and her hair blown into damp little curls that were far more becoming than any more studied arrangement would have been. Mr. Richard Blake would indeed be difficult to please if he failed to find her charming.

She gave a final pat to her hair, loosened her furs, and knocked boldly on the office door. There was no answer. Betty had reached out her hand to knock again when it occurred to her that people who came to her father's office walked right in. So she carefully opened the door and stepping just inside, closed it again after her. She found herself in a big, bare room, with three or four desks near the long windows and a table by the door. Only one desk was occupied—the one in the farthest corner of the room. The young man sitting behind it—he was very young indeed, smooth-shaven, with expressionless, heavy-lidded eyes, and a mouth that drooped cynically at the corners,—barely glanced at his visitor, and then dropped his eyes once more to the papers on his desk. Betty waited a moment, while he wrote rapidly on the margin of one sheet with a blue pencil, and then, seeing that he apparently intended to go on reading and writing indefinitely, she gave a deprecating little cough.

"Is Mr. Richard Blake in?" she asked.

"Yes," answered the young man behind the desk, without so much as glancing in her direction.

"Can—may I see him, please?"

"You can," returned the young man, emphasizing the word can in what Betty thought an extremely disagreeable way.

He made no move to go and get Mr. Blake, and Betty, knowing nothing else to do, awaited his pleasure in silence.

"Is it so very important as all this?" asked the young man at last, tossing aside his papers and coming toward Betty with disconcerting suddenness. "You know," he went on, "I can't possibly read it to-day. I'm desperately busy. I shall put it in a pigeon-hole and I shan't look at it for weeks perhaps. So I can't see that it was worth your while to come out in a storm like this to bring it to me."

"Are you Mr. Richard Blake?" demanded Betty, wishing to get at least one thing definitely settled.

The young man nodded. "I am," he said, "but pray how did you arrive at your conclusion—so late?"

"Because," said Betty promptly, "you talk exactly as your letters sound."
"That's interesting," said the young man. "How do they sound?"

"I mean," said Betty, blushing at her own temerity, "that they are hard to understand."

The young man appeared to be considering this remark with great seriousness. "That implies," he began at last very slowly, "that you must have had either a letter of acceptance or a personal note of refusal from 'The Quiver.' So perhaps your story is worth coming out in a blizzard to bring after all. Anyway, since you have brought it out in a blizzard, I'll just glance over it, if you care to wait."

Betty stared at Mr. Richard Blake in growing bewilderment. "I think you must have mistaken me for some one else," she said at last. "You don't know me at all, Mr. Blake, and you never wrote to me. The letter that I saw was written to some one else."

"Indeed! And am I also mistaken in supposing that you have brought me a story for 'The Quiver'?"

"I brought you a story for 'The Quiver'!" gasped Betty. Then all at once she took in the situation and laughed so merrily that even the blase, young editor of "The Quiver" was forced to smile a little in sympathy. "I see now," she said, when she could speak. "You thought I was a writer—an authoress. I suppose that most of the people who come to see an editor are authors, aren't they?"

"Yes," said the young man gravely. "The only possible reason that has ever brought a pretty young woman to 'The Quiver' office is the vain hope that because I have seen that she is pretty, I shall like her story better than I otherwise would."

"Well," said Betty, too intent upon coming to the point to be either annoyed or amused by Mr. Blake's frank implication, "I haven't come about a story. Or—that is, I have too. I came to see you about Eleanor Watson's story—the one that is so like 'The Lost Hope' in the November 'Quiver.'"

"Indeed!" The young man's face grew suddenly sombre again. "Won't you have a seat?" He led the way back to his desk, placing a chair for Betty beside his own. "Let us make a fair start," he said, as he took his seat. "You mean the story that was copied from 'The Quiver,' I suppose."

"Yes." Betty hesitated, wondering if she was being led into some damaging confession. But she had not come to palter with the truth. "I'm afraid there is no doubt that it was copied from 'The Quiver,' Mr. Blake."

"Did you know that it was a better story than the one in 'The Quiver'?"

[Illustration: "LET US MAKE A FAIR START," HE SAID]

Betty's eyes sparkled with pleasure. "Do you really think so?" she asked eagerly. "I'm so glad, because I did, too, only I was afraid I might be prejudiced. But you wouldn't be." Betty stopped in confusion, for Mr. Blake had abruptly turned his back upon her, and was staring out the nearest window at the mist of flying snow.

There was a long pause, or at least it seemed oppressively long to Betty, who had no idea what it meant. Then "To whom have I the honor of speaking?" asked Mr. Blake in the queer, sarcastic tone that had annoyed Betty earlier in the interview.

As briefly as possible Betty explained who she was, and why she had come as special envoy from the editors. She was relieved when Mr. Blake turned back from his survey of the landscape with another faint suggestion of a smile flickering about his grim mouth.

"You relieve me immensely, Miss Wales," he said. "I was quite sure you were not an editor of the

'Argus,' because you seemed so totally unfamiliar with the machinery of literary ventures; and so I supposed, or at least I feared, that Miss Watson had come to speak for herself."

Betty flushed angrily. "Why, Mr. Blake, do I look—"

"No, you don't in the least," Mr. Blake interrupted her hastily. "But unfortunately, you must admit, appearances are sometimes deceitful. Now suppose that your friend Miss Watson had come herself. Does she look or act like the sort of person that she has shown herself to be?"

Betty smiled brightly. "Of course not," she said. "She doesn't at all. But then she isn't that sort of person. I mean she never will be again. If she was, I can tell you that I shouldn't be here. It's just because she's so splendid when she thinks in time and tries to be nice, and because she hasn't any mother and never had half a chance that I'm sorry for her now. And besides, it's certainly punishment enough to see that story in the 'Argus,' and know she didn't write it, and to get into Dramatic Club partly because of it, and so have that spoiled for her too, and not to be able to let her family be one bit proud of her. Don't you see that an open disgrace wouldn't mean any more punishment? It would only make it harder for her to be fair and square again. It isn't as if she didn't care. She hates herself for it, Mr. Blake, I know she does."

Betty paused for breath and Mr. Richard Blake took the opportunity to speak. "What, may I ask, is the Dramatic Club?"

"Oh, a splendid literary club that some of the nicest girls in college belong to," explained Betty impatiently, feeling that the question was not much to the point.

"Do you belong to it?" demanded Mr. Blake.

"Oh, no," said Betty, with a laugh. "I'm not bright enough. I hate to stick to things long enough to learn them."

"That's unfortunate, because I was hoping you were a member," said Mr. Blake, inconsequently. "But to return to the story, do you think that Miss Watson was so very much to blame for copying it?"

"Of course I do," said Betty, indignantly, wondering what Mr. Richard Blake could possibly be driving at now.

"But consider," he pursued. "Miss Watson is a very clever girl, isn't she?"

"Yes, indeed," assented Betty, eagerly.

"She finds this story—an unusual story, rather badly written, with a very weak ending. It strikes her as having possibilities. She puts on the needed touches,—the finish, the phrasing and an ending that is almost a stroke of genius. Isn't the story hers?"

Betty waited a moment. "No, Mr. Blake," she said decidedly, "it isn't. Those little changes don't make any difference. She took it from 'The Quiver.'"

"But how about Shakespeare's plays? Every one of them has a borrowed plot. Shakespeare improved it, added incidents and characters, fused the whole situation in the divine fire of his genius. But some characters and the general outline of the plot he borrowed. We don't say he stole them. We don't call him a plagiarist, Miss Wales."

"I don't know about that," said Betty, doubtfully. "I never understood about Shakespeare's plots; but I suppose it was different in those days. Lots of things were. And besides he was a regular genius, and I know that what he did hasn't anything to do with Eleanor. She oughtn't to have copied a story. I don't see how she could do it; but I wish you could feel that it was right to overlook it."

"Miss Wales," said Mr. Blake, abruptly, "I'm going to tell you something. I don't care a snap of my finger for Miss Watson. I don't really believe she's worth much consideration, though her having a friend who will go around New York for her on a day like this seems to indicate the contrary. But what I'm particularly interested in is the moral tone of Harding College. That's a big thing, a thing worth thought and effort and personal sacrifice to maintain. Now tell me frankly, Miss Wales, how would the Harding girls as a whole look at this matter?"

"If you knew any," returned Betty, swiftly, "you wouldn't ask. Of course they'd feel just the way I do."

"Perhaps even the way I do?"

"Y-yes," admitted Betty, grudgingly. "But I believe I could bring them round," she added with a mischievous smile.

"Then how did Miss Watson happen to do such a thing?"

"Because," explained Betty, earnestly, "she doesn't feel the way the rest of the girls do about such things. I'm awfully fond of her, but I noticed the difference almost the first time I met her. Last year she—oh, there was nothing like this," added Betty, quickly, "and after she saw how the other girls felt, she changed. But I suppose she couldn't change all at once, and so she did this. But she isn't a typical Harding girl, indeed she isn't, Mr. Blake."

"And yet she is a member of the Dramatic Club," said Mr. Blake, taking up a telegram from his desk.

"Don't you suppose she wishes she wasn't?" inquired Betty.

Mr. Blake made no answer. "Well, Miss Wales," he said, at last, "I fancy we've talked as much about this as is profitable. I'm very glad to have seen you, but I'm sorry that you found us in such disorder. The office boy is stuck in the drifts over in Brooklyn, and my assistant and the stenographer are snowed up in Harlem. I only hope you won't get snowed in anywhere between here and Harding. You're going back to-day, you said?"

Betty nodded. "And I should like—"

"To be sure," Mr. Blake took her up. "You would like to know my answer. Well, Miss Wales, I really think you deserve it, too; but as it happens, I find I'm going up to Harding next week, and I want to look over the ground for myself,—see what I think about the moral tone of things, you know."

"You're coming up to Harding!" said Betty, ruefully. "Then I needn't have come down here at all."

"Oh, but I didn't know it till to-day," explained Mr. Blake, soothingly. "I got the telegram while I was breakfasting this morning. I can't telegraph my answer, because the wires are all down, so you might tell them I've written, or you might post my answer for me in Harding. I have the greatest confidence in your ability to get through the drifts, Miss Wales."

"Are you"—Betty hesitated—"are you coming up about this, Mr. Blake?"

For answer he passed her the telegram. It was an invitation from the newly-elected president of the Dramatic Club—Beatrice Egerton had gone out of office at midyears—to lecture before an open meeting of the society a week from the following Saturday.

"Goodness!" said Betty, returning the telegram. "I didn't know you were a lecturer too, Mr. Blake."

"Oh, I'm not much of one," returned Mr. Blake, easily. "I suspect that the man they had engaged couldn't come, and Miss Stuart—you know her, I presume—who's an old friend of mine, suggested me as a forlorn hope. You see," he added, "'The Quiver' is a new thing and doesn't go everywhere yet, as your friend Miss Watson was clever enough to know; but before I began to edit it, I used to write dramatic criticisms for the newspapers. Some people didn't like my theories about the stage and the right kind of plays and the right way of acting them; so it amuses them now to hear me lecture and to think to themselves 'How foolish!' 'How absurd!' as I talk."

"I see," laughed Betty. "I'm afraid I don't know much about dramatic criticism."

"Well, it doesn't amount to very much," returned Mr. Blake, genially. "That's why I stopped doing it. Shall you come to hear me lecture, Miss Wales?"

Betty laughed again. "I shall if I can get an invitation," she said. "I suppose it's an invitation affair."

"And Miss Watson will be there?"

Betty nodded. "Unless, of course, she knows that you are the editor of 'The Quiver.'"

"She won't," said Mr. Blake, "unless you or the editors of the 'Argus' tell her. Miss Stuart doesn't know, and she is probably the only other person up there who's ever heard of me. Good-bye, Miss Wales, until next week, Saturday."

Betty got her bag from the elevator boy, into whose keeping she had trustfully confided it, and went out into the snow. She was very much afraid that she had not done her full duty. Dorothy had told her to be sure to pin Mr. Blake down to something definite. Well, she had tried to, but she had not

succeeded. As she thought over the interview, she could not remember that she had said anything very much to the point. It seemed, indeed, as if they had talked mostly about other things; and yet toward the last Mr. Blake's manner had been much more cordial, if that meant anything. Anyway it was all over and done with now, and quite useless. Dorothy and Beatrice and Frances could do their own talking next week. And—she had stood on the corner for ten minutes and still there was no car in sight. A few had crawled past on their way to the Battery, but none had come back. It was frightfully cold. Betty stamped her feet, slapped her arms, warmed first one aching ear and then the other. Still no car. A diminutive newsboy had stopped by her side, and in despair she appealed to him.

"Isn't there some other way to get up town?" she asked. "These cars must have stopped running, and I've got to get to the Central station."

"Take de L to de bridge and den de Subway. Dat ain't snowed in," suggested the little newsboy. "C'n I carry your bag, lady?"

It was only a few blocks, but it seemed at least a mile to Betty, too cold and tired to enjoy the tussle with the wind any longer. When she had stumbled up the long flight of stairs and dropped herself and her bag in the nearest corner of the waiting train, she could scarcely have taken another step.

The Central station, like the whole city, wore a dejected, deserted appearance. Yes, there would be a train for Harding some time, a guard assured Betty. He could not say when it would start. Oh, it had been due to start at ten-thirty, and it was now exactly twelve-five. There was nothing to do but wait. So Betty waited, dividing her time between "The Canterbury Tales"—she had not money enough to dare to waste any on a magazine—and a woman, who was also waiting for the belated ten-thirty. Her baby was ill, she told Betty; she feared it would die before she could get to it. Betty's own weariness and discouragement sank into insignificance beside her companion's trouble, and in trying to reassure her she became quite cheerful herself.

At half past eleven that night Madeline Ayres heard something bang against her window and looked out to find Betty Wales standing in the drifts, snowballing the front windows of the Belden House with an impartiality born of despair.

"I thought I should never wake any one up," she said, when Madeline had unlocked the door and let her into the grateful warmth of the hall. "The bell wouldn't ring and I was so afraid out there, and I've been ten hours coming from New York, and I'm starved, Madeline."

When, after having enjoyed a delicious, if not particularly digestible supper of coffee and Welsh rarebit in Madeline's room, Betty crept softly to her own, and turned up the gas just far enough to undress by, Helen woke and sat straight up in bed.

"Why, Betty!" she said, "I'm awfully glad you've come. We all worried so about you. But—why, Betty, your hair isn't waved a bit. Didn't you have it waved?"

"Helen, were you ever in New York in a blizzard?" enquired Betty, busily unlacing her shoe-strings.

"No," said Helen. "Did it take out the curl?"

"Would it take out the curl!" repeated Betty scornfully. "It would take out the curliest curl that ever was in thirty seconds. It was perfectly awful. But, Helen, don't say anything about it, but I didn't go to New York for that."

"Oh!" said Helen.

The next day Betty woke up with a splitting headache and a sore throat. The day after the doctor came and called it a mild case of grippe. It was a week before she felt like playing basket-ball, and that very day the teams were chosen and Babbie had the position as sub-centre that Betty had coveted. One thing she gained by being ill. By the time she was able to be up and out even Mary Brooks, with her "satiable curiosity," had forgotten to ask why she went to New York.

CHAPTER XIV

A DISTINGUISHED GUEST

"It's going to be lots of fun. They can't any of them act at all, of course, and their plays are the wildest things, Babe says. She and Bob went once last winter. This one is called 'The Hand of Fate'—doesn't that sound thrilling? I say, Betty, I think you might be a true sport and come along. You know you don't care a straw about 'The Tendencies of the Modern Drama.'"

Katherine Kittredge sat cross-legged on Betty's couch, with Betty's entire collection of pillows piled comfortably behind her back, while she held forth with eloquent enthusiasm upon the charms of the "ten-twenty- thirty" cent show which was giving its final performance that evening at the Harding opera house.

"I don't know anything about them, so how can I tell whether I care or not?" retorted Betty, who was sitting before her desk engaged in a desperate effort to bring some semblance of order out of the chaos that littered its shelf and pigeon-holes.

"Well, even if you do care, you can probably read it all up in some book," continued Katherine. "And, besides," she added briskly. "you would get a lot of points to-night. Isn't 'The Hand of Fate' a modern drama, I should like to know?"

Betty gave a sudden joyous exclamation. "Why, I'm finding all the things I've lost, Katherine. Here's my pearl pin that I thought the sneak thieves must have stolen. I remember now that I put it into an envelope to take down to be cleaned. And,"—joy changing abruptly to despair,— "here's my last week's French exercise, that I hunted and hunted for, and finally thought I must have given to some one to hand in for me. Do you suppose mademoiselle will ever believe me?"

Katherine chuckled. "She would if she knew your habits better. Now listen, Betty. Nita's coming to-night, and Babe and Babbie—Bob would, only she doesn't dare cut the lecture when she's just gone into Dramatic Club—and Rachel and Roberta, and I've about half persuaded Mary Brooks. We're going to sit in the bald-headed row and clap all the hero's tenor solos and sob when the heroine breaks his heart, and hiss the villain. How's that for a nice little stunt?"

"I just love ten-cent plays," admitted Betty, obviously weakening.

"Then come on," urged Katherine.

Betty shook her head. "No, I don't believe I will this time. You see
Emily asked me to the lecture, and I accepted."

"Well, so did most of us accept," argued Katherine. "You needn't think we weren't asked. Emily won't care. Just give your ticket away, so there won't be too many vacant seats, and come along."

"But you see," explained Betty, "I really do want to hear the lecture, and I can go off on a lark with you girls almost any time."

"I never knew you to be so keen about a lecture before," said Katherine indignantly. "I believe Helen Adams is turning you into a regular dig."

"Don't worry," laughed Betty. "You see one reason why I—"

There was a tap on the door, and without waiting for an answer to her knock Eleanor Watson entered. She was apparently in the best of spirits; there was no hint in face or manner of the weariness and nervous depression that had been so evident at the time of Jim's visit.

"Have you both tickets for Mr. Blake's lecture?" she asked with a careless little nod for Katherine. "I have one left and Beatrice has one, and she sent me out hunting for victims. I've asked you once already, haven't I, Betty?"

"Yes, you did," said Betty, "but Emily asked me before that."

"And I'm going to 'The Hand of Fate,'" said Katherine stiffly, picking up a book from the table and turning over its pages with an air of studied indifference. She had no intention of being patronized by Eleanor Watson.

"But she's given away her ticket, Eleanor," said Betty pacifically, "so you needn't worry about empty seats."

"Oh, we're not worrying," returned Eleanor loftily. "The subject is so attractive"—Katherine winked at Betty from behind the shelter of her book. "And then Miss Stuart knows Mr. Blake, and she says that he's a splendid speaker. Miss Stuart is ill to-day, so Miss Ferris is going to have Mr. Blake up to dinner. Of course we Hilton House girls are dreadfully excited about that."

"Of course," said Betty, with a little gasp of dismay which neither of her friends seemed to notice.

"Miss Ferris has asked the Dramatic Club girls to sit at her table," went on Eleanor impressively, "and she wants me to be on her other side, right opposite Mr. Blake. Just think of that!"

"Splendid!" said Betty, feeling like a traitor. And yet what else could she say, and what difference would it make, since Eleanor did not know that Mr. Blake was the editor of "The Quiver," and Mr. Blake, in the general confusion of introductions, would probably not catch Eleanor's name.

"I hope you know a good deal more about the tendencies of the modern drama than I do," said Katherine drily, "if you're in as deep as all that." She slid off the couch with a jerk. "Good-bye, Betty. Are you sure you won't change your mind?"

"I guess not this time, Katherine," said Betty, following her guest to the door.

Eleanor went off too, after a moment, and Betty was left free to bestow her undivided attention upon the rearrangement of her desk. But even several "finds" quite as important and surprising as the pearl pin and the French theme did not serve to concentrate her thoughts upon her own affairs. The absorbing question was, what did Mr. Blake mean to do, and how would a dinner with Eleanor in the seat opposite affect his intentions? He had said that he wasn't interested in Eleanor, but he couldn't help being influenced by what she said and did, if he knew who she was. For the hundredth time Betty questioned, did Eleanor deserve the consideration that was being asked for her? Was it fair to set aside the gay, self-absorbed Eleanor of to-day in favor of the clinging, repentant Eleanor of the week before? Why, yes, she thought, it must be fair to judge a person at her best, if you wanted her to be her best. She sighed over the perplexities of life, and then she sighed again, because of her tiresome desk and the Saturday afternoon that was slipping away so fast. It was half-past four already, and at five she had promised to meet Madeline Ayres in the college library for a walk before dinner.

She put the papers that she had sorted into their proper pigeon-holes, swept the rest of the litter into a pile for future consideration, and made a hasty toilette, reflecting that she should have to dress again anyway for the lecture. As she put on her hat, she noticed the ruffled plume and smoothed it as best she could. "That blizzard!" she thought ruefully. Reminded again of Mr. Blake, she wondered if he had taken an early train from New York. If so he must have reached Harding long ago. Perhaps he was closeted with the editors—Frances hadn't heard from him about an interview when Betty saw her last. Or perhaps he was investigating the moral tone of the college. Betty wondered smilingly how he would go about it, and looked up to find Mr. Richard Blake himself strolling slowly toward her from the direction of the front gateway. At the same instant he saw her and came quickly forward, his hat in one hand, the other stretched out for Betty to take.

"So you didn't get stuck in the snow," he said, gravely.

"Not so deep that I had to stay stuck for a week," laughed Betty.
"Haven't the office-boy and the stenographer got out yet?"

"Yes, but they didn't have so far to go," returned Mr. Blake, calmly.
"May I walk on with you?"

"Of course," agreed Betty, "but you weren't going my way, were you?"

Mr. Blake smiled his slight, cynical smile. "To tell the truth, Miss Wales, I haven't the least idea which way I am going—or which way I ought to be. I'm supposed to turn up for five o'clock tea with one Miss Raymond, who lives at a place called the Davidson House. My friend Miss Stuart is ill, and I escaped the escort of a committee by wickedly hinting that I knew my way about."

"Well," said Betty, "you were going the right way when I met you. The
Davidson is straight down at the other end of that row of brick houses."

"Thank you," said Mr. Blake, making no move to follow Betty's directions. "I detest teas, and I'm going to be as late as I dare. But perhaps I shall be in your way."

Betty explained that she was bound for the college library to meet a friend.

"Ah," said Mr. Blake, "I think I should like to see that library. You know I have theories about libraries as well as about plays. Is this a nice one?"

"Of course," said Betty. "Everything at Harding is nice. Don't you think so?"

Mr. Blake shook his head uncertainly.

"I hardly feel competent to speak of everything yet, Miss Wales."

"Well, how about the moral tone?" inquired Betty demurely. She had a feeling that more direct questions would not help Eleanor's cause.

Mr. Blake shook his head again. "I haven't gone very far with that yet, Miss Wales. I mean to make them talk about it at the tea."

They had climbed the stairs to the library and Betty pushed back the swinging doors and stepped inside, wondering vaguely whether she should call the librarian or take Mr. Blake from alcove to alcove herself, when Madeline Ayres looked up from her book, and catching sight of them started forward with a haste and enthusiasm which the occasion, Betty thought, hardly warranted.

"I'm afraid I don't know enough about the books to take you around," she was saying to Mr. Blake, when Madeline descended precipitately upon them and, paying not the slightest attention to Betty, said in a loud whisper to Mr. Blake, "Dick, come outside this minute, where we can shake hands."

"Come on, Miss Wales," whispered Mr. Blake. "It will be worth seeing," and Betty, not knowing what else to do, followed him into the hall.

"Why, Dick Blake," Madeline went on enthusiastically, "you don't know how good it seems to see one of the old Paris crowd again. Have you forgotten how we used to hunt chocolate shops together, and do the Latin Quarter at night, and teach my cousins American manners?"

"Hardly," laughed Mr. Blake. "We were a pair of young wretches in those days, Madeline. But I thought you were all for art and Bohemia. What on earth are you doing up here?"

"Completing my education," returned Madeline calmly. "The family suddenly discovered that I was dreadfully ignorant. What are you doing up here yourself, Dick?"

"Helping to complete your education," returned Mr. Blake serenely. "Is it possible that the fame of my to-night's lecture hasn't reached you, Madeline?"

Madeline laughed merrily. "To think that we've come to this, Dick. Why, I never dreamed that was you. I've been refusing tickets to that lecture all day—I abhor lectures—but of course I shall go now." She turned to Betty. "Why didn't you tell us that you knew Mr. Blake, Betty?"

Betty blushed guiltily. "Why, I—because I don't know him much," she stammered.

"To be exact, Madeline," interposed Mr. Blake, "this is only our second meeting, and of course Miss Wales didn't want to stand for me in the critical eyes of the Harding public."

"Well, but—" Madeline looked from one to the other sharply. "Dick, whom are you writing for now?" she demanded.

"For myself. I'm running a magazine."

"'The Quiver'?"

Mr. Blake nodded. "Yes, have you seen it? I've sent one or two numbers to your father on the chance of their finding him in some far corner of the earth."

"So that's it," said Madeline enigmatically, ignoring the question. "Now I understand. I—well, the point is, Dick, do whatever Betty Wales wants you to. You may depend upon it that she knows what she's about. Everything she tells you will be on the straight."

Mr. Richard Blake threw back his head and laughed a hearty, boyish laugh. "You haven't changed a bit, Madeline," he said. "You expect me to be your humble chessman and no questions asked, exactly as you did in the old days. I can't promise what you want now," he added soberly, "but I heartily subscribe to what you say about Miss Wales. See here"—he reached hastily for his watch—"I was going to a tea, wasn't I? Do I dare to cut it out?"

Betty hesitated and looked at Madeline, who shook her head decidedly. "Never. This isn't Bohemia, you know. Run along, Dick. I'll see you to-night if I can get a chance, and if not you'll surely be round at Easter?"

"Rather," said Mr. Richard Blake, striding hurriedly down the hall.

Madeline watched him go with a smile. "Nice boy," she said laconically. "We used to have jolly times together, when he was Paris correspondent for the something or other in New York. Have we time to take our walk, Betty?"

"Madeline," said Betty solemnly, "you are a jewel—a perfect jewel. Do you think he'll do it?"

"Of course," said Madeline coolly. "He'll keep you on tenter-hooks as long as he can, but his bark is always worse than his bite, and he'll come round in the end."

"Oh, I hope so," said Betty anxiously.

Madeline smiled lazily down at her. "It's no good worrying, anyhow," she said, "You can't pursue him to his tea. Besides, ten minutes before you met him you'd almost decided that it would be better to let the whole thing out, and be done with it."

"Madeline," demanded Betty in amazement, "how do you guess things?"

"Never mind how," laughed Madeline. "Come and dress for the lecture."

Betty answered Helen's eager questions about the discovery of the pearl pin in absent-minded monosyllables. After all, things were turning out better than she had hoped. Indirectly at least the trip to New York had counted in Eleanor's favor. She need not reproach herself any longer with carelessness in letting Madeline into the secret, and she could feel that it was not for nothing that she had lost her chances of being on the "sub" team.

As she entered the lecture hall that evening with Helen and Alice Waite, Dorothy King, who was standing by the ticket taker, accosted her.

"I wanted to tell you that Christy is coming back before long," she said.

Having drawn her aside on that flimsy excuse, Dorothy grew suddenly earnest.

"What's he going to do, Betty?" she demanded.

"Why, I don't know," said Betty, blushing at thought of Madeline, "any more than you do. Haven't you seen him?"

"No," explained Dorothy. "He wrote to say that it would be wasting time to argue any more—that he was sure he understood our point of view from you, and now he meant to see for himself and decide."

"Then I suppose he'll tell Miss West tonight."

"We hoped he'd told you this afternoon."

"How did you know I'd seen him?" inquired Betty evasively.

"Eleanor Watson told me that she saw you together in the library."

Betty gave a little cry of dismay, then checked it. "But she doesn't know who he is," she said.

"Yes, she does know now," said Dorothy quickly.

"How?"

"He told her himself. He was at dinner this evening with Miss Ferris, you know. Eleanor sat up at his end of the table looking like a perfect queen, and she talked awfully well too—she is certainly a very brilliant girl. He talked to her a good deal during dinner and as we were leaving the table he asked Miss Ferris again who she was."

"What did he say when she told him?"

"He just said 'Indeed!' in that queer, drawling voice of his. Afterward Miss Ferris made coffee for us, and what do you suppose he did? He began to ask everybody in the room about the code of honor at the college."

"Well?"

"After one or two of the girls had said what they thought, he turned straight to Eleanor Watson. 'And you, Miss Watson,' he said, 'what do you think? Is this fine moral feeling strong enough to stand a strain? Would you be willing to risk one thoroughly dishonest student not to overthrow it?' She got

awfully white, and I could see her cup shake in her hand, but she said very quietly, 'I quite agree with what has already been said, Mr. Blake.'"

"And then?"

"Then he said 'Indeed!' again. But when the girls got up to go and he bid them each good-bye, he managed to keep Eleanor on some pretext about wanting to finish an argument that they'd begun at dinner. Miss Ferris kept me to know about a Hilton House girl who was down at the infirmary when I was and finally had to be sent home; and as we stood talking at the other side of the room, I distinctly heard Mr. Blake say, 'The editor of "The Quiver," Miss Watson.'"

"Did Miss Ferris hear it too?"

"Probably not. Anyway it wouldn't mean anything to her. The next minute Eleanor Watson was gone, and then I went too. Betty, we must run back this minute. He's going to begin."

As far as her information about "The Tendencies of the Modern Drama" was concerned, Betty Wales might quite as well have been enjoying herself at "The Hand of Fate." She sat very still, between two girls she had never seen before, and apparently listened intently to the speaker. As a matter of fact, she heard scarcely a word that he said. Her thoughts and her eyes were fixed on Eleanor, who was sitting with Beatrice Egerton, well up on the middle aisle. Like Betty, she seemed to be absorbed in following the thread of Mr. Blake's argument. She laughed at his jokes, applauded his clever stories. But there was a hot flush on her cheeks and a queer light in her eyes that bore unmistakable evidence to the struggle going on beneath her forced attention.

After the lecture Betty was waiting near the door for Helen and Alice, when Eleanor brushed past her.

"Are you going home, Eleanor?" she asked timidly, merely for the sake of saying something friendly.

Eleanor turned back impatiently. "You're the tenth person who's asked me that," she said. "Why shouldn't I be?"

"Why, no reason at all—" began Betty. But Eleanor had vanished.

Once in her own room she locked the door and gave free rein to the fury of passion and remorse that held her in its thrall. Jim's visit had brought out all her nobler impulses. She had caught a glimpse of herself as she would have looked in his eyes, and the scorn of her act that she had felt at intervals all through the fall and winter—that had prevented any real enjoyment of her stolen honors and kept her from writing home about them,—had deepened into bitter self-abnegation. But Jim had come and gone. He still believed in her, for he did not know what she had done. Nobody knew. Nobody would ever know now. It was absurd to fear discovery after all these months. So Eleanor had argued, throwing care and remorse to the winds, and resolving to forget the past and enjoy life to the full.

Then, just at the moment of greatest triumph, had come Mr. Blake's startling announcement. He had not told her what he had done or meant to do, nor how he had found out about the story, nor who shared his secret; and Eleanor had been too amazed and frightened to ask. Now, in the solitude of her room, she drew her own swift conclusions. It was a plot against her peace of mind, his coming up to lecture. Who had arranged it? Who indeed but Betty Wales? She knew Mr. Blake intimately, it seemed, and she had such horribly strict ideas of honesty. She would never forgive her own sister for cheating. "She must have seen 'The Quiver' on my table," thought Eleanor, "and then to use it against me like this!" No doubt she or Mr. Blake had told that hateful Madeline Ayres, who knew him too. No doubt all the editors had been told. It was to be hoped that Dorothy King, with her superior airs, realized that it was mostly her fault. A dull flush spread over Eleanor's pale face, as it suddenly flashed upon her that Beatrice Egerton was an editor.

Well, if Beatrice was in the secret, there was no telling how many she had confided in. Eleanor's devotion to Miss Egerton had been utterly without sentiment from the first. She realized perfectly that Beatrice was flippant and unprincipled, swayed only by selfish considerations and by a passion for making a sensation. If she did not mind being associated with the story, she would tell it; only regard for her own reputation as Eleanor's "backer" might deter her.

Swiftly Eleanor laid her plan. After all, what did it matter who knew? Mr. Blake, Betty and Dorothy, Beatrice—the whole college—what could they prove? Nothing—absolutely nothing, unless she betrayed herself. No doubt they thought they had brought her to bay, and expected her to make some sort of confession. They would find there was no getting around her that way. There was no danger of discovery, so long as she kept her head, and she would never show the white feather. She would write another story—she could do it and she would, too, that very night. But first she would go back to the

Students' Building. The Dramatic Club was giving a reception to Mr. Blake and the members of the faculty. She had been unpardonably stupid to think of missing it.

As she crossed the shadowed space in front of the big building, she caught sight of three dimly outlined figures clustered about one of the pillars of the portico, and heard Frances West's voice, so sweet and penetrating as to be quite unmistakable.

"Yes, he leaves it entirely to us," she was saying. "He said he thought we could be trusted to know what was best."

"I wish he hadn't made the condition that no one should say anything to her," objected a second speaker. "It doesn't seem to me quite wise to let things just drift along the same as ever."

"Nonsense," broke in a third voice, sharp with irritation. "You know perfectly well—"

Eleanor had walked as slowly as she dared. Now there was nothing for it but to open the door without waiting to find out the identity of the last two speakers, or risk being caught eaves-dropping.

She hurried on up the stairs to the society rooms on the second floor, and devoted herself for the rest of the evening to the dullest and most unpopular members of the faculty with an ardor that won her the heart- felt gratitude of the president of the club.

"I can be agreeable," she thought, as she sat down at her desk an hour later. "I can do whatever I make up my mind to. I'll show them that I'm not going to 'drift along!'"

It was six o'clock in the morning when, stiff and heavy-eyed, she turned off her light and crept into bed.

"I've driven a coach and four through their precious ten o'clock rule," she thought, "but I don't care. I've finished the story."

The story was a little sketch of western life, with characters and incidents drawn from an experience of Jim's. Eleanor was an excellent critic of her own work, and she knew that this was good; not so unusual, perhaps, as the other one had been, but vivid, swinging, full of life and color, far above the average of student work. It should go to Miss Raymond the first thing in the morning. She would like it, and the "Argus" perhaps would want it—Eleanor closed her tired eyes, and in a moment was fast asleep.

CHAPTER XV

DISAPPOINTMENTS

It was the day of the great basket-ball game. In half an hour more the gymnasium would be opened to the crowd that waited in two long, sinuous lines, gay with scarfs, banners and class emblems, outside the doors. Now and then a pretty girl, dressed all in white, with a paper hat, green or yellow as the case might be, and an usher's wand to match, darted out of one of the campus houses and fluttered over to the back door of the gymnasium. The crowd watched these triumphal progresses languidly. Its interest was reserved for the other girls, pig tailed and in limp-hanging rain-coats, who also sought the back door, but with that absence of ostentation and self-consciousness which invariably marks the truly great. The crowd singled out its "heroes in homespun," and one line or the other applauded, according to the color that was known to be sewed on the blue sleeve beneath the rain-coat.

The green line was just shouting itself hoarse over T. Reed, who had been observed slinking across the apple orchard, hoping to effect her entrance unnoticed, when Eleanor Watson hurried down the steps of the Hilton House, carrying a sheet of paper in one hand. Hearing the shouting, she shrugged her shoulders disdainfully and chose the route to the Westcott House that did not lead past the gymnasium doors. As she went up the steps of the Westcott, she met Jean Eastman coming down, her white skirts rustling in the wind.

Jean looked at her in surprise. "Why, Eleanor, you're an usher too.
Aren't you going to dress? It's half past two this minute."

"Yes," said Eleanor curtly, "I know. I'm not going to usher. I have a headache. Jean, where is my

basket-ball song?"

"How should I know?" said Jean, smoothing the petals of the green chrysanthemums that were festooned about her wand. "On the paper with the rest, isn't it?"

[Illustration: THE GREEN LINE WAS SHOUTING ITSELF HOARSE]

"No," said Eleanor, "it's not. I didn't go to the class 'sing' last night, but this noon somebody left a song sheet in my room. You said they chose mine, Jean."

"I said," corrected Jean, "that I thought they chose it. I was on the song committee, but I didn't go to the meeting. From your description I thought it must be one of those that Kate said was taken."

Eleanor held out the paper to Jean. "Whose are these?"

Jean glanced hastily down the page. "Why, I don't know," she said, "any more than you do—except that first one to the tune of 'St. Louis.'" She hummed a lilting measure or two. "That's our prize song all right, and who do you think wrote it?"

"Who?" demanded Eleanor fiercely.

"That little Adams girl—the one who rooms with Betty Wales. T. Reed told me she'd been working on it for weeks."

Eleanor's eyes flashed scornfully. "I should think it ought to be fairly decent then," she said.

"Well, it's considerably more than fairly decent," said Jean cheerfully. "I'm freezing here, Eleanor, and it's late too. Don't bother about your song. Come over to the gym. with me and you can go in the back way."

"No, thank you," said Eleanor in frigid tones, and went back as she had come.

To be beaten, and by Helen Chase Adams, of all people! It was too humiliating. Six basket-ball songs had been printed and hers rejected. No doubt the other five had been written by special friends of the committee. She had depended on Jean to look after hers—although she had not doubted for a moment that it would be among the very best submitted— and Jean had failed her.

Worse yet, the story on which she had staked her hopes had come back from
Miss Raymond, with a few words of perfunctory, non-committal criticism.
Miss Raymond had not read it to her class, much less sent the "Argus"
editors after it.

"Does she know, too?" questioned Eleanor. "Does she think that because I've cheated once I can't ever be trusted again, or is it just my luck to have them all notice the one thing I didn't write and let alone the things I do?"

It was two weeks since Mr. Blake's lecture, and in that time she had accomplished nothing of all that she had intended. Her idea had been to begin over—to blot out the fact that once she had not played fair, and starting on a clean sheet, repeat her triumph and prove to herself and other people that her position in college affairs was no higher than she deserved. But so far she had proved nothing, and every day the difficulties of her position increased. It was almost more than she could manage, to treat the girls whom she suspected of knowing her secret with exactly her accustomed manner. She had not been able to verify her suspicions except in the case of Beatrice Egerton. There was no doubt about her. When the two were alone together she scarcely took pains to conceal her knowledge, and her covert hints had driven Eleanor into more than one outburst of resentment which she bitterly regretted when it was too late. It was absolutely impossible to tell about Betty. "She treats me exactly as she did when Jim was here," reflected Eleanor, "and just as she did last year, for that matter. If she doesn't know it's no particular credit to her, and if she does—" Eleanor could not bear the idea of receiving kindness from people who must despise her.

Jean ran on to the gym., shivering in her thin dress, and muttering savagely over Eleanor's "beastly temper."

As she passed the sophomore-senior line, one and another of her friends shouted out gay greetings.

"Hurry up, Jean, or we shall get in before you do."

"You sophomore ushers look like a St. Patrick's Day parade."

"Tell the people in there that their clocks are slow."

"All right," said Jean, hanging on to her unmanageable paper hat.

As she passed the end of the line, Beatrice Egerton detached herself from it, and followed her around the corner of the gym. "Oh, Miss Eastman," she coaxed. "Won't you let me go in with you? I shall never get a place to see anything from way back there in the line."

Jean eyed her doubtfully. She wanted to oblige the great Miss Egerton.
"I'm afraid all the reserved seats are full by this time," she objected.

"Oh, I don't want a seat," said Beatrice easily. "I'll stand on the steps of the faculty platform. There's no harm in that, is there?"

"I guess not," said Jean. "Come on."

The doorkeeper had gone up-stairs for a moment, and the meek little freshman who had her place only stared when Jean and Miss Egerton ran past her without exhibiting their credentials.

"Thanks awfully," said Miss Egerton, sitting down on a pile of rugs and mattresses that had been stacked around the fireplace. Jean went off to get her orders from the head usher. There was really nothing to do but walk around and look pretty, the head usher told her. The rush to the gallery had begun, but the janitors and the night-watchman were managing that. Of course when the faculty began to come—

"Oh, yes," said Jean, and hurried back to Beatrice.

"Good-looking lot of ushers," she said.

Beatrice nodded. "You have a lot of pretty girls in 19—."

"To say nothing of having the college beauty," added Jean.

"Of course," said Beatrice. "Nobody in college can touch Eleanor Watson for looks. There she is now, talking to Betty Wales and Kate Denise."

"No," chuckled Jean, "that's Laura Perkins. Their back views are amazingly alike, but wait till you see Laura's face. No, the lady Eleanor wouldn't come to the game. She's in the sulks."

"Seems to be her chronic state nowadays," said Beatrice. "Talking to her is like walking on a hornet's nest. What's the particular cause of grievance to-day?"

"Oh, the committee didn't accept her basket-ball song," said Jean, "and I was on the committee."

Beatrice lifted her eyebrows. "She actually had the nerve to write—to hand one in?"

"Oh, that wasn't nervy," said Jean. "The girls wanted her to—l9— is awfully shy on poets. What I don't admire is her taste in fussing because it wasn't used."

Beatrice smiled significantly. "Did she tell you about her story?"

"What story?"

"Oh, a new one that she handed in for a theme a week or so ago."

"What about it?"

"Why, Miss Raymond didn't notice it particularly, and Eleanor was fussed to death—positively furious, you know. I was with her when she got it back."

"How funny!" said Jean. "But don't they say that Miss Raymond is pretty apt to like everything a girl does, after she's once become interested? I suppose Eleanor was taking it easy and depending on that."

Beatrice's face wore its most inscrutable expression. "But, my dear," she said, "if you knew all about that other wonderful story—the famous one—"

There was an unusual commotion at the door opposite them. By flower- bedecked ones and twos the faculty had been arriving, and had been received with shouts and songs from the galleries and escorted by excited ushers across the floor to their seats on the stage. Miss Egerton had stopped in the midst of her sentence to find out whose coming had turned the galleries into pandemonium and brought every usher but the phlegmatic Jean to the door.

"Oh, it's Prexy and Miss Ferris and Dr. Hinsdale, all in a bunch," she said at last. "How inconsiderate

of them not to scatter the fireworks!" She turned back to Jean. "As I was saying, if you knew all about that wonderful story—"

Betty Wales, hurrying to help escort her dear Miss Ferris to the platform, caught sight of the two on the mattresses, noticed Jean's look of breathless interest and Beatrice's knowing air, and jumped to exactly the right conclusion. With a last despairing glance at Miss Ferris she turned aside from the group of crowding ushers, and dropped down beside Jean on the mattings.

"Have you heard the latest news?" she asked, trying to make her tone perfectly easy and natural. "The freshman captain was so rattled that she forgot to wear her gym. suit. She came in her ordinary clothes. They've sent an usher back with her to see that she gets dressed right this time. Isn't that killing?"

"Absurd," said Beatrice, rising. "Jean, you haven't done anything yet; you're too idle for words. I'm going up to jolly Dr. Hinsdale."

In her heart she was glad of the interruption. She had said just enough to pique curiosity. To tell more would have been bad policy all around. Betty Wales had arrived just in the nick of time.

But Jean was naturally disappointed. "Betty Wales," she said, "do you know what you interrupted just now? Beatrice Egerton was just going to tell me the inside facts about Eleanor's story in the 'Argus.'"

"Was she?" said Betty steadily. "If there are any inside facts, as you call them, don't you think Eleanor is the one to tell you?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Jean carelessly. "Eleanor's so tiresome. She wants to be the centre of the stage all the time. Shouldn't you think she'd be willing to give other people a little show now?"

"Why, she is," returned Betty vaguely.

"Not much," asserted Jean with great positiveness. "She's sulking in her tent this very minute because the girls aren't singing her basket-ball song. Anybody who wasn't downright selfish would be glad to have girls like Helen Adams get a little chance."

"Eleanor's tired and doesn't think," suggested Betty.

"You'd better go down to the door," said the head usher. "The 'green' faculty are coming in swarms."

The game went on much as last year's had done. First one gallery shook with forbidden applause, then the other. Sophomores sang paeans to their victories, freshmen pluckily ignored their mistakes. T. Reed appeared as if by magic here, there, and everywhere. Rachel Morrison played her quiet, steady game at the sophomore basket. Katherine Kittredge, talking incessantly to the bewildered freshman "home" whom she guarded, batted balls with ferocious lunges of her big fist back to the centre field, where a dainty little freshman with soft, appealing brown eyes, half hidden under a mist of yellow hair, occasionally managed to foil T. Reed's pursuit and sent them pounding back into the outstretched arms of a tall, ungainly home who tossed or dropped them—it was hard to tell which—into the freshman basket. It was a shame to let her play, the sophomores grumbled. She was a giantess, not a girl. But as the score piled up in their favor, they grew more amiable and laughed good- humoredly at the ineffectual attempts of their guards to block the giantess's goals.

Betty watched it all with keen interest and yet with a certain feeling of detachment. It was splendid fun, but what did it matter after all who won or lost? The freshman centres muffed another ball. Up in the "yellow" gallery she saw a tall girl standing behind a pillar unmistakably wink back the tears. How foolish, just for a game!

It was over at last. Miss Andrews announced the score, congratulating victor and vanquished alike on clean, fair play. Betty joined in the mad rush around the gym., helped sing to the team and to the freshman team and finally retired to a quiet corner with Christy Mason, who had come back to see the game and get a start with her neglected work before vacation. Betty gave her the Students' Commission key with a little sigh of satisfaction.

"It's a good deal of responsibility, isn't it?" she said.

Christy nodded. "If you take it seriously. But then isn't life a responsibility?"

Helen was sitting alone in their room when Betty got back, her eyes shining like stars, her plain, angular little face alight with happiness.

"I say, Helen," began Betty, hunting for the hat-pins that still fastened a remnant of her once

gorgeous paper hat to her hair, "your song was great. Did the girls tell you?"

"Some of them," said Helen, shyly. "Some of them didn't know I wrote it.
One asked me if I knew."

Betty laughed. "Did you tell her?"

"No, I didn't," said Helen, blushing. "I—I wanted to, awfully; but I thought it would seem queer."

"Well, plenty of them knew," said Betty, mounting a chair to fasten her wand over a picture.

"Of course,"—Helen's tone was apologetic,—"it's a very little thing to care so much about. I suppose you think I'm silly, but you see I worked over it pretty hard, and I don't have so very many things to care about. Now if I were like you—"

"Nonsense!" said Betty, descending suddenly from her lofty perch. "I couldn't write a line of poetry if I tried from now till Commencement."

"Oh, yes, you could," said Helen, eagerly. "Well, if I were like Eleanor
Watson then—"

"Helen," said Betty, quickly, "you're not one bit like her."

Helen waited a minute. "Betty," she began again shyly.

"Yes," said Betty, kindly.

"I'm awfully sorry you couldn't have your wish, too."

"My wish!" Betty repeated. "Oh, you mean about being on the team. I don't mind about that, Helen. I guess I was needed more just where I was."

Helen puzzled over her answer until the supper-bell rang.

Betty's problem stayed with her all through the bustle of last days and on into the Easter vacation. Even then she found only a doubtful solution. She had thought that Mr. Blake's decision, of which Dorothy had told her as soon as possible, would close the incident of the story. Now she saw that the affair was not so easily disposed of. Beatrice Egerton was an incalculable source of danger, but the chief trouble was Eleanor herself. Somehow her attitude was wrong, though Betty could not exactly tell how. She was in a false position, one that it would be difficult for any one to maintain; and it was making her say and do things that people like Jean, who did not understand, naturally misinterpreted. Why, even she herself hated to meet Eleanor now. There was so much to hide and to avoid talking about. And yet it would certainly be worse if everybody knew. Betty puckered her smooth forehead into rows and rows of wrinkles and still she saw no way out. She thought of consulting Nan, but she couldn't bear to, when Nan had always been so pessimistic about Eleanor.

It was not until the vacation was over and Betty's train was pulling into Harding that she had an idea. She gave a little exclamation. "I've got it!"

"Got what?" demanded her seat-mate, who was a mathematical prodigy and had been working out problems in calculus all the way from Buffalo.

"Not one of those examples of yours," laughed Betty, "only an idea,—or at least about half an idea."

"I don't find fractions of ideas very useful," said the seat-mate.

"I never said they were," returned Betty irritably.

It had occurred to her that if there was any way to get Eleanor to confide in Miss Ferris, perhaps matters might be straightened out.

The missing half of the idea, to which Betty had not the faintest clew, was—how could it be done?

CHAPTER XVI

Dora Carlson pulled back the heavy oak door of the Hilton House and stepped softly into the hall. With bright, darting glances, such as some frightened wild creature might bestow on an unfamiliar environment, she crept past the parlor doors and up the stairs. Dora was not naturally timid, and her life on a lonely farm had made her self-reliant to a degree; but there was something about these big campus houses that awed her—mysterious suggestions of a luxurious and alien existence, of delightful festivities and dainty belongings, that stimulated her imagination and made her feel like a lawless intruder if she met any one in the passages.

Of course it was foolish. Nettie Dwight, who lived next door to her on Market Street, had not a single friend on the campus, and yet she had been into every one of the dwelling houses and explored them all from top to bottom. Where was the harm, she asked. All you had to do was to step up and open the door, and then walk along as if you knew where you were going. When you had seen as much as you wanted to, you could stop in front of some room of which the door stood open so that you could tell from the hall that it was empty, and turn around and go away again. Everybody would think that the person you had come to see was out. It sounded perfectly simple, but Dora had never been anywhere except to Eleanor's room at the Hilton House and once, at Betty Wales's invitation, to the Belden.

She hated to hurry through the halls. She would have liked to turn aside and smell the hyacinths that stood in the sunny bay-window of the long parlor; she wanted desperately to read through all the notices on the house bulletin-board at the foot of the stairs; but instead she fled up the two flights and through the corridor, like a criminal seeking sanctuary, and arrived at Eleanor's room in a flurry of breathless eagerness. The door was open and Eleanor sat by the window, staring listlessly out at the quiet, greening lawns. The light was full on her face and Dora, who had had only a passing glimpse of her divinity since before the spring vacation, noticed sadly how pale and tired she looked.

"May I come in, Miss Watson?" she asked.

"Of course, but you mustn't call me that," said Eleanor, turning to her with a charming smile. Beatrice Egerton had said that she should be over in the course of the afternoon, and Eleanor had been dreading her coming. The necessity of keeping up appearances with Beatrice and the rest was wearing Eleanor out. It was a distinct relief to talk to Dora, with whom no artifices were necessary. Whoever else knew her secret, Dora certainly did not; she was as remote from the stream of college gossip as if she had lived in another world.

"I am so glad to see that you're resting," said Dora brightly. "I take it as an omen that perhaps you'll be able to do what I want."

"I hope I can," said Eleanor. "What is it?"

"Why, I'm going to have a sugaring-off tonight," announced Dora impressively, "and I should be very pleased to have you come."

For a moment Eleanor hesitated, then her better nature triumphed. This was the first thing the child had ever asked of her, and she should have it, even at the cost of some trifling annoyance.

"How nice," she said cordially. "I shall be delighted to come. Just what is a sugaring-off, Dora?"

Dora laughed gleefully. "It's amazing to me how few people know what it is. I'm not going to tell you the particulars, but I will excite your interest by saying that it has to do with maple sugar."

"How did you happen to think of having one?" inquired Eleanor curiously.

"Why, you see," explained Dora, "we have a sugar orchard on our farm.
Ohio is a great maple-sugar state, you know."

"Oh!" said Eleanor. "No, I didn't know."

"Sugaring time used to be the delight of my childish heart," went on Dora quaintly. "So many people came out to our farm then. It was quite like living in the village and having neighbors. And then I do love maple sugar. My father makes an excellent quality."

"And he's sent you some now?"

"Yes," assented Dora eagerly, "a whole big pailful. I suppose my dear father thought it would console me for not having been home for my spring vacation. It came this morning, and yesterday Mrs. Bryant went to pass a week with her son in Jersey City, and she told me I could use the kitchen for a sugar-

party if I wanted to while she was gone—I told her that I was expecting to have a party—and this is the only night for a week that Nettie Dwight can come, because she teaches in a night-school." Dora paused for breath.

"Who is Nettie Dwight?" asked Eleanor idly.

"Oh, she is a Market Street girl. There will be three Market Street girls and you and Miss Wales, if she can come. Miss Wales asked me to a play at her house last fall and I am so glad to have a chance to return it. I was afraid I never could."

"Hello, Eleanor. Good-afternoon, Miss Carlson." Beatrice Egerton threw her books and then herself unceremoniously on to Eleanor's couch.

Beatrice could hardly have told why she persisted in inflicting her society upon Eleanor Watson. In her shallow way she was fond of her, and she felt vaguely that considering her own careless code of morals it would be inconsistent to drop Eleanor now, just because she had followed similar standards. At the same time she was angry at what she looked upon as a betrayal of her friendship, and considered that any annoyance she might inflict on Eleanor was no more than she deserved. As for Dora Carlson, she amused Beatrice, who, being thoroughly self-seeking herself, could not imagine why the exclusive Eleanor should choose to exhibit a freakish tendency toward philanthropy in this one direction. Beatrice would have liked, for the satisfaction there is in solving a puzzle, to get at the root of the matter. Accordingly she always took pains to draw Dora out.

"I've met you before this afternoon, Miss Carlson," she said, thumping a refractory pillow into place. "What are you doing up on the campus?"

It was the most casual remark, but Dora answered it with the naive frankness that was her peculiar charm.

"I am giving out my invitations for a sugaring-off," she said.

"A sugaring-off!" repeated Miss Egerton gaily. "Now I haven't the faintest idea what that is but it sounds very festive."

Dora looked at her questioningly and then at Eleanor. "Miss Egerton," she said at last, "I should be very pleased to have you come too, because you are Eleanor's dear friend."

Beatrice gave a little shriek of amusement. "Are you really going,
Eleanor?"

Eleanor nodded.

"Then I shall certainly come too," declared Beatrice, merrily, "to see that you don't eat too much sugar."

As Dora danced down the Belden House steps a few moments later, her face was wreathed in smiles. Miss Wales was coming too. They were all coming. "I guess my father would be pleased if he could look in on us to-night," thought the little freshman happily. Then, as the college clock chimed out the hour, her brow wrinkled with anxiety. The kitchen must be swept, —Dora had decided views about Mrs. Bryant's housekeeping,—and the "surprise," which was to eke out the entertainment afforded by the sugaring-off proper, had yet to be prepared. The unaccustomed responsibilities of hostess weighed heavily upon Dora Carlson as she traversed the long mile that stretched between the campus and 50 Market Street.

It was an odd little party which gathered that night in Mrs. Bryant's dingy kitchen. The aggressive Nettie Dwight, two hopelessly commonplace sophomores, cousins, from a little town down the river, and Dora composed the Market Street contingent. They were all very much in awe of Eleanor's beauty, and of Beatrice's elaborate gown and more elaborate manner. Betty Wales, enveloped in one of Mrs. Bryant's "all-over" kitchen aprons, vigorously stirring the big kettleful of bubbling, odorous syrup, tried her best to put the others at their ease and to make things go, as affairs at the college always did. But it was no use. Everything progressed too smoothly. Nothing burned or boiled over or refused to cook,—incidents which always add the spice of adventure to a chafing dish spread. Nobody had come in a kimono. There was no bed to loll back on, no sociable sparcity of plates, no embarrassing interruptions in the way of heads of uninvited guests poked in the door and apologetically withdrawn; and the anxious pucker of hospitality on the face of the little hostess imposed an added restraint and formality upon the oddly assorted company of guests. Beatrice Egerton played with her rings, yawned without dissimulation, and wished she had stayed at home; Eleanor bravely parried Nettie Dwight's incisive questions about "her set"; and Betty, stirring and talking to the cousins and Dora, had time to admire

Eleanor's self-control and to wonder pityingly if there were many girls in Harding College so completely "out of it" as these four seemed to be. And yet they were not unhappy; they were enjoying Dora Carlson's sugaring-off as though it had been a delightful college spread instead of a dull and dreadful party.

When the biscuits, that Dora had made herself, were done and the sugar boiled to the right consistency, everybody began to brighten up, and the refreshment feature bade fair to be a real success. It was too late in the spring for snow, so Dora had provided some little cakes of ice on which to wax the sugar. They were not quite so good a substitute as might have been desired, for they had a fashion of slipping dangerously over the plates, and then the hot sugar slipped and spread on the ice and had to be dexterously coaxed to settle down in one place and melt out a cool bed for itself, as it does easily enough in snow. But all this only added to the interest of the occasion. One sophomore cousin lost her cake of ice on the floor, and she showed more animation than she had in all the rest of the evening together, in spite of Betty's valiant efforts. Then Nettie Dwight suggested that they grain part of the sugar, so, when everybody had eaten as much as possible of the waxed variety, spread on as many crisp little biscuits as Dora could force upon them, Dora brought saucers full of the hot syrup and there was a stirring contest, with results in the shape of creamy maple candy, which Dora put out to cool, ready to be eaten later.

"And now," she said, with a little quiver of eagerness in her voice, "there is one course more. Look under your plates."

Search revealed a carefully folded square of white paper at each place. Beatrice got hers open first and muttered, "What perfect nonsense!" before Eleanor could stop her with an imploring glance.

"Such a bright idea!" cried Betty Wales, hurrying to the rescue. "They're fortunes, aren't they? Oh, dear, I'm afraid mine doesn't fit. It's much too grand."

Dora laughed gleefully. "That's the fun, you see,—to notice how they fit."

"How'd you ever think of it?" giggled one of the cousins. "There's a man in mine all right."

"Oh, I didn't think of it myself," explained Dora, modestly. "I found it in a magazine. I don't suppose any of you see the 'Farmer's Friendly Counsellor.'"

"No," said Betty, quickly, "I don't believe we do."

"It's a fine magazine," continued Dora, "with quantities of good reading matter of all kinds. There's always one page for farmers' wives, with recipes and hints for home dressmakers. Last winter I read about giving a luncheon, and it sounded so pretty that I cut it out, though I never expected to use it. Right in the middle of it was one course like these fortunes, only they were to be put into stuffed peppers, instead of stuffing, and when the guests took the covers off their peppers, there they would find their fortunes."

"But Miss Carlson," began Beatrice, impatiently, "don't you see that the whole point—"

"I like this way just as well," broke in Betty Wales. "What you really care about is the fortune, and it doesn't matter whether it's in a pepper or under your plate."

"Not a bit," agreed Eleanor, crumpling up her fortune nervously.

"And now," said Dora, "we'll all read them out loud and see how they fit. I put them around without looking at them, and I didn't know where any of you were going to sit."

"I guess mine fits pretty well," said the giggling cousin, whose fortune had a man in it.

"Then why don't you begin?" suggested Betty, and the cousin began with avidity. Dora had absolutely no literary ability; the spontaneous gaiety that bubbled up in all that she said and did was entirely lacking in the stiff, sentimental little character-sketch, but it pleased its reader, and Betty and Eleanor joined in declaring it very interesting.

"Now, Eleanor," said Betty, "you come next."

Eleanor shook her head. "I'm sorry, but I tore mine up before I knew we were to read them." She held up the crumpled ball of paper.

"Oh, you can smooth that out," said Betty, noticing Dora's disappointment. "Here, give it to me."

Eleanor surrendered the paper in silence, and without glancing at the contents Betty smoothed it out and passed it back.

"Now, Eleanor."

Eleanor looked around the table. Everybody was waiting. There was no escape. Resolutely she pulled herself together and plunged in.

"You are the soul of truth and honor and generosity. You never think of yourself, but are always trying to make other people happy. Your noble nature is shown in your beautiful—" Eleanor's voice faltered and she flushed painfully. "I can't go on," she said. "It's so—so—" She stopped in utter confusion.

Dora had been listening with shining eyes. "Oh, please go on," she begged. "That's the very one I wrote for you. I didn't plan it a bit, but I hoped you'd get that one."

The matter might have been adjusted easily enough, if Beatrice, who was sitting between Betty and Dora, had not turned to Betty with her oracular smile, and murmured, "A keen sense of irony for one so young, isn't it?" behind her hand.

Betty flushed in spite of herself and looked up to find Dora staring at them with wide, startled eyes. She had caught the word irony, and distinctly remembered the succinct definition that she had learned years before at school—"saying the opposite of what you mean." She looked at Eleanor who was struggling to regain her composure and attacked the situation with simple directness.

"Miss Egerton," she said, "I couldn't avoid overhearing you just now. I don't see why any one should think I didn't mean what I wrote about Eleanor. Of course I meant it. You know I did, don't you, Eleanor?"

"Of course you meant it," repeated Eleanor, with an unsteady little laugh. "If you hadn't, I shouldn't have minded reading it. Please forgive me."

It was all over in a moment. Before the three strangers had had time to wonder what the trouble was, Betty had plunged gaily into her fortune. Nettie followed eagerly, and Beatrice had the grace to bring up the rear. There was the candy to eat after that and the party broke up with a fair semblance of mirth. But as she washed up the big pile of sticky dishes, Dora's face was troubled. What could Miss Egerton have meant? Why should Eleanor's dearest and most intimate friend have said such a thing? How could she have thought it?

Eleanor walked home wrapped in a silence which Betty's most vigorous sallies could not penetrate. Long after Dora had finished her dishes and gone to bed, she sat in her Morris chair in the dark, wide-awake, every nerve throbbing painfully. She had failed Dora Carlson, spoiled the party that the poor child had so counted on, made her Beatrice Egerton's butt and laughing stock. Dora would never wholly trust her again. She would wonder what Beatrice had meant. By and by she would guess, and the friendship that Eleanor had meant should brighten her college course, would be turned to a bitter memory. Whether or not she ever knew the whole miserable story would make small difference. She, Eleanor Watson, had made Dora waste her love on a cheat—a thief; she had made Betty Wales and Miss Ferris help a cheat.

Eleanor's face softened. Betty had been awfully good to Dora. Perhaps, after all, she had not been the one to tell Mr. Blake. But Betty's disappointment was not the worst thing. Betty would make other friends— find other interests. Dora Carlson was different; she had not the talent for making many friends, and in losing Eleanor she would lose all she had. For the first time Eleanor realized how mean and contemptible her action had been, because it did not concern herself alone, but involved every one of the people who cared about her—Jim and her father, Dora, Betty, Miss Ferris. It was a short list; perhaps Jean and Kate Denise cared a little too. She felt no resentment against Beatrice. There was no room for it in the press of deeper emotions. Her one idea was that she must do something to save them all. But what? Creep away like a thief in the night—let them forget that she had ever been a disgrace to them and to 19—? Eleanor's pride revolted against such a course, and yet what else was there to do? She had not even arrived at Betty's half answer to the problem when she undressed in the silence of the great, sleeping house and, thoroughly tired with her long vigil, forgot the difficult tangle until morning.

CHAPTER XVII

A MAY-DAY RESOLUTION

The spring had been a late one at Harding, but it had come at last with a sudden rush and a glare of breathless midsummer heat. The woods of Paradise were alive with fresh young green, gay with bird songs, sweet with the smell of growing things. The campus too was bright in its new livery. The tulips in front of the Hilton House flaunted their scarlet and gold cups in the sunshine. The great bed of narcissus around the side entrance of college hall sweetened the air with its delicate perfume, and out on the back campus the apple-trees, bare and brown only a day or so before, were wrapped in a soft pink mist that presaged the coming glory of bud and blossom.

It was there, in the square of dappled sunshine and shadow under the apple-trees, at once the loveliest and most sequestered spot on the campus, that the Harding girls were holding a May-day fete. It was a strictly impromptu affair. Somebody had discovered at breakfast the day before that to-morrow would be May-day, and somebody else had suggested that as it was also Saturday, there ought to be some sort of celebration. A May queen was decreed "too old"; a May masque too much trouble. Then somebody said, "Let's all just dress up as little girls and roll hoops," and the idea met with instant favor. It was passed along at chapel and morning classes, and at three o'clock the next afternoon the whole college, its hair in waving curls or tightly braided pig-tails, its skirts shortened, its waists lengthened and encircled by sashes, had gathered in the space under the apple-trees, carrying hoops, dolls and skipping ropes, intent on getting all the fun possible out of being little once more.

There were all sorts of children there; little country girls with checked gingham aprons and sunbonnets, demure little Puritan maids with cork- screw curls and pantalets, sturdy little girls in sailor suits, sweet little girls in ruffled muslins, tall little girls, all arms and ankles. There was even a Topsy, gay in yellow calico, and an almond-eyed Japanese whose long kimono and high-piled hair prevented her taking part in the active American games of her mates. The taller girls were necessarily absurd. Some of the smaller ones were surprisingly realistic. And all, big and little, danced and laughed and squabbled, tripped over their skipping ropes, pursued their hoops or played with their dolls under the apple-trees in true "little girl" fashion and with the utmost zest and abandon.

Miss Ferris's room at the Hilton House overlooked the apple orchard, and presently she and Miss Raymond strolled out together to see the fun. They were greeted with a shout of joyous welcome from a noisy group in the farthest corner of the lawn, who immediately joined hands and came in a long, wavering line, "hippity-hopping" to meet them.

"Oh, Miss Ferris," called Dorothy King from one end of the line, "we want you and Miss Raymond to be judge. Which of us looks the youngest?"

"We've been disputing about it all the afternoon," added Mary Brooks breathlessly from the middle of the line. "You see we're all dressed alike in white muslin and blue sashes. Now Miss Raymond, don't I look lots younger than Dottie?"

"Stand in a row," commanded Miss Ferris laughingly, and the chattering group straightened out demurely, with much nudging of elbows and planting of feet on an imaginary line. Miss Raymond and Miss Ferris considered a moment, and then held a brief consultation.

"We both decide in favor of Betty Wales," announced Miss Ferris. "She looks about nine and none of the rest of you are under twelve."

"There! What did I tell you!" shrieked Betty gaily, her curls bobbing, her sash ends flying.

"I protest," called Katherine Kittredge. "Betty doesn't look over twelve any of the time, and the rest of us look twenty. We've taken off eight years and she's only dropped five. 'Tain't fair!" and Katherine burst into a beautiful "little girl" boohoo.

"Don't you wanter hold my dollie?" said Mary Brooks, tendering a handkerchief puppet to Miss Raymond with a perfect imitation of childish innocence.

"Oh, no, come an' tell us a story," begged Babbie, twisting her white apron into a roll.

"You'd ruther roll hoops, hadn't you?" said Katherine to Miss Ferris.

"Please tie on my hair-ribbon," demanded Bob, who in spite of a much beruffled dress and a resplendent array of doll and sash-ribbon, looked exactly as tomboyish as usual.

Miss Ferris and Miss Raymond appeared to be properly amused by all this nonsense, and Miss Raymond, escorted by a little crowd of her special admirers, went on to the crest of the hill to see Alice Waiters doll party, which was being held on the grass at the top of the dust-pan slope. But Miss Ferris refused all the invitations. She had only come out for a moment, she said, and must go straight back to her work.

Betty and Mary Brooks walked over to the Hilton House with her. When she had gone in Betty seized Mary's hand and pulled her around the corner of the house. "Let's trill up to Eleanor," she said. "I don't think she's been out at all."

Mary looked longingly back at the May party. "I believe—yes, they've found a hurdy-gurdy, Betty. What's the use of bothering if she doesn't know enough to come down?"

"Just a minute," pleaded Betty. "Here she is. Oh, Eleanor, come out and watch, even if you haven't dressed up. It's piles of fun."

"Is it?" said Eleanor uncertainly, touched by Betty's constant thoughtfulness. "Well, perhaps I will come later. I must finish a letter first."

"Finish a letter," echoed Mary, "with that hurdy-gurdy going! I admire your concentration. Betty, truly I can't stand it another minute. I'm going back."

"All right. Good-bye, Eleanor. Hurry up and come," called Betty, flying after Mary down the path.

Eleanor Watson looked after them for a moment and then with a little despairing sigh sat down again at her desk. She was writing to Jim. It was almost a month since she had sent off her last letter to him and yet there seemed to be nothing to say. She added a line or two, dropped her pen and went back to the window. The girls were dancing to the music of the hurdy-gurdy. Alice Waite was standing on the edge of the crowd, hugging a huge rag-doll in her arms as if it was her dearest treasure. Eleanor shrugged her shoulders impatiently. The whole affair was perfectly absurd. She had told Alice Waite so at luncheon, in her haughtiest manner. She picked up a book from the table and began to read, but in spite of her determination to ignore it, her thoughts would wander to the pretty picture outside her window. The shouts and laughter, the gay babel of talk with the undertone of droning music rang in her ears. She slammed down her window, but still she could hear them.

What a good time they were having! Yes, they were absurd, with the absurdity that belongs to youth—happy, light-hearted, inconsequent youth. Eleanor Watson felt that she had left that sort of thing far behind her. Before the summer when Judge Watson had brought home a gay young wife to take his daughter's place at the head of his household, before the night on the river when she had seen herself as Harding college saw her, before the Indian summer afternoon when she had fought and lost her battle on the stairway of the main building,—before those crises she could have been a happy little girl with the rest of them, but not now. Her heart was full of bitter, passionate envy. How easy life was for them, while for her it seemed to grow harder and more impossible every day. In the week that had passed since the sugaring-off she had seen Dora once, and she had been more hurt by the restraint and embarrassment that the child could not hide than by all that had gone before. How was she to win back Dora's confidence and change Betty's pity to respect?

She could not stand that music another minute. She would go for a long walk—far enough at least to escape from hurdy-gurdies and chattering girls. She got her hat, pulled on a light silk coat, for in spite of the unseasonable heat the late afternoon would be cool, and hurried down- stairs. Hastening through the lower hall she almost ran into Miss Ferris, the last person she wanted to meet.

"My dear," Miss Ferris cut short her apology, "we evidently have too much to think about, both of us." She looked at Eleanor keenly. "Why aren't you out being a little girl with the rest of them?" she asked.

"I didn't feel like it, Miss Ferris," said Eleanor, turning away from the searching gray eyes, "I was going for a walk instead."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"Then"—Miss Ferris hesitated—"may I come too, or don't you want me?"

For an astute person Miss Ferris developed all at once an amazing density. She did not seem to notice the ungracious stiffness of Eleanor's assent.

"Good!" she cried enthusiastically, running off like a girl to get ready. Eleanor waited, her face set in hard lines of resentful endurance. She could not openly insult Miss Ferris, who had been kindness itself to her all the year, but she would be as cold and offish as she pleased.

"Now which way shall we go?" asked Miss Ferris eagerly as they started off.

"It makes no difference to me, Miss Ferris." Eleanor's tone was frigidly courteous.

"Then suppose we go to Paradise. It's always lovely there."

Almost in silence they climbed down the steep slope that leads to the water path, crossed the sunny stretch of meadow land and came out into the dim, silent wood beyond. Here the path widened and Miss Ferris, who had led the way, waited for Eleanor to come up with her.

"Isn't it beautiful?" she said with a little catch in her voice. "There's nothing quite like the woods in spring, is there? Oh, I'm so glad I ran away!"

"Ran away?" questioned Eleanor.

"Yes, from my work and my worries and myself out into this big, beautiful, new world. Doesn't it make you wish you could send out fresh shoots and blossoms yourself, and help make the world glad?"

"I'm afraid not," said Eleanor coldly, and again she felt the gray eyes, keen and yet very kindly, fastened on her face.

A turn in the path brought the end of the grove into view. "Oh, dear!" exclaimed Miss Ferris sadly. "I'd forgotten that Paradise was so very small. Let's go back to that big pine-tree with the great gnarled roots and sit down by the water and forget that we aren't lost in a lovely primeval wilderness."

Eleanor followed her in silence and they found seats on the roots of the big tree, Eleanor choosing one as far as she dared from her companion.

"And now," said Miss Ferris, as soon as they were settled, "tell me all about it."

"About what?" inquired Eleanor steadily.

"What you were running away from."

Eleanor flushed angrily. "Miss Ferris, did any one ask you to—"

"No," said Miss Ferris quickly. "No one told me that you were in trouble. I wish some one had. I'm afraid I've been very blind. I've let you worry yourself almost ill over something and never asked you if I could help. I've been so busy being proud of you this year that I've never even noticed how tired and worn out you were getting."

"Proud!" repeated Eleanor, scornfully.

"Yes," said Miss Ferris, firmly, "proud. You've made a splendid record,
Miss Watson,—a remarkable record, considering last year."

"Please don't. You wouldn't say that if you understood."

Miss Ferris looked puzzled. "Don't tell me anything that you'd rather not," she said, "but there is one thing that a friend always wants to know. Do you see your way out, Miss Watson?"

"There isn't any way out."

"Oh, but I think there is always one somewhere," said Miss Ferris, brightly. "You're quite sure we couldn't find it between us?"

"Quite sure."

"If you ever change your mind—"

"Thank you," said Eleanor, curtly.

There was a little silence. "We runaways mustn't be gone too long. Have you any idea what time it is?" asked Miss Ferris.

Eleanor did not answer, and Miss Ferris looked up to find her crying softly, her face hidden in one hand, her shoulders shaking with suppressed sobs. For a moment Miss Ferris watched her without speaking. Then she moved nearer and stretched out her hand to take Eleanor's free one.

"I'm very, very sorry," she said kindly. "I wish I could have helped."

[Illustration: ELEANOR DID NOT ANSWER]

To her surprise Eleanor's sobs ceased suddenly. "I'd rather tell any one else," she said wearily. "I hate to have you despise me, Miss Ferris."

For answer Miss Ferris only gave the hand she held a soft, friendly little squeeze.

Then it came out—the sad, shameful story in a fierce, scornful torrent of words. When it was told, Eleanor lifted her head and faced Miss Ferris proudly. "Now you know." she said. "Now you can see that I was right— that there isn't any way out."

Miss Ferris waited a moment. "Miss Watson," she said at last, "I can't feel quite as you do about it. I think that if you honestly regret what you did, if you are bound to live it down, if you know that in all your life long you are never going to do anything of the sort again,—never going to want anything badly enough to play false for it,—why then the way out is perfectly plain. That is the way out—to let this time teach you never to do anything of the sort again."

Eleanor shook her head hopelessly. "But don't you see that I can't put it behind me—that I can't live it down, as you say. The girls won't let me forget that I was taken into Dramatic Club the first time. They won't let me forget that I am the only sophomore who is practically sure of a place on the 'Argus' board. I tried—" Eleanor gave a pitiful little history of her efforts to establish her literary reputation on a fair basis with the song and the story.

"I see," said Miss Ferris, thoughtfully. "Miss Watson, if I understand you correctly, you find yourself in the position of a man who, having stolen a precious stone, repents and strains every nerve to pay for his treasure. But as he is commonly supposed to be the lawful owner of the stone, his neighbors naturally resent his eagerness to gain more riches and consider him grasping. It's going to be very hard for you to earn that stone, isn't it?"

"The thing to do," said Eleanor with quick decision, "is to give it back."

Miss Ferris waited.

"I don't know that you will believe me," Eleanor went on after a minute, "because it seems so unlikely; but this is the first time I ever thought of resigning from Dramatic Club."

"You must remember," said Miss Ferris, quietly, "that if you should resign now, you would never be voted into the society again, no matter how much your work might deserve recognition."

"Yes," said Eleanor.

"And that so unusual a proceeding will create comment. People who don't understand will be likely to say unpleasant things."

"I don't believe I should mind—much," said Eleanor, unsteadily. "It's the people who do understand that I care about—and myself. I want to feel that I've done a little something to repair damages. Of course this won't make things just right. Some other girl in 19— ought to have been in the first four, but it will be something, won't it?"

"Yes," said Miss Ferris, soberly. "I should say it would be a great deal."

The walk back through the green aisle of wood and thicket was almost as silent as the walk out had been, but there was a new spring in Eleanor's step and an expression of resolute relief on her face that had not been there an hour before.

As they turned into the campus Eleanor broke silence. "Miss Ferris, if the man should return the stone, do you think he ought to confess to having stolen it?"

Miss Ferris looked up at the orchard on the hill where the girls were dispersing with much talk and laughter, with gay good-byes and careless snatches of song, and then back to the girl beside her. "No," she said at last. "If we were all old in the ways of this world and wise and kind enough, it might do, but not now, I think. I agree with the girls who have been keeping your secret. I believe you can accomplish more for others and for yourself, in the large sense, by stating no reason for your action. I know we can trust you."

"Thank you," said Eleanor. Then all at once a strong revulsion of feeling overcame her. "But I haven't promised to resign. I don't believe I can do it. Think what it will mean to drop out of things—to be thought queerer than ever—to—"

"Caught red-handed!" cried a mocking voice behind them, and three stealthy figures bounded out from a tangle of shrubbery. Betty, Madeline and Mary Brooks had come down the hill by the back path and, making a detour to leave Rachel at the gate nearest her "little white house round the corner," had discovered the truants and stolen upon them unaware.

"We're sorry you both had so much to do," said Betty, demurely.

"And that you don't appreciate May parties," added Mary.

"And haven't a proper feeling for hurdy-gurdies," finished Madeline.

"Ah, but you can't tell what deep philosophical problems we may have been working out answers for down in Paradise," said Miss Ferris, playfully.

Betty slipped a soft arm around Eleanor's waist. "I'd rather go for a walk with her than to any May party that was ever invented," she whispered. "Isn't she just splendid?"

"Yes," agreed Eleanor, solemnly, "so splendid that I guess I can't live up to her, Betty."

"Nonsense! That's the very reason why she is splendid—that she makes people live up to her, whether they can or not."

And then, feeling that she was treading on delicate ground, Betty hastily changed the subject.

"I wonder," she asked the green lizard that night, "I wonder if she could have been telling Miss Ferris about it, and if they were talking it over when we three big blunderers rushed up to them. Oh, dear!"

Then she added aloud to Helen, who was vigorously doing breathing exercises before her mirror, "I guess I'll go and see Mary Brooks. I feel like being amused."

Helen let her breath out with a convulsive gasp. "I saw her go out," she said. "She went right after supper."

"Then," said Betty, decidedly, "you've got to stop breathing and amuse me yourself."

CHAPTER XVIII

TRIUMPHS AND TROUBLES

"Aren't you going to have any breakfast, Betty?" Helen Chase Adams coming up from her own hasty Monday morning repast, paused in the door to stare at her roommate, who stood in a cleared space in the middle of the floor with diaphanous clouds of beflowered dimity floating about her feet.

"Breakfast!" repeated Betty, mournfully. "It just struck eight, didn't it? I don't know how I'm going to have any now unless I cut chapel and go down town for it. On Mondays I have classes all the morning long, and I haven't half studied anything either, because of that hateful May party."

"Then why did you begin on your dress?" inquired Helen with annoying acuteness.

"Helen," said Betty, tragically, "I haven't a single muslin to my name, since I tore my new one and the laundry tore my old one, and I thought if I could only get this hung then I could be putting in the tucks at odd minutes, when people come in, you know. I didn't think it would take a minute and I've been half an hour just looking at it."

"Isn't it rather long?" asked Helen, with a critical glance at the filmy pile on the floor.

"Why, that's the tucks," explained Betty, impatiently. "And the only reason I had tucks instead of ruffles was because I thought they'd be easier. Shouldn't you have thought tucks would be easier, Helen?"

"I shouldn't have known."

"Well, I guess they're both bad enough," agreed Betty, gloomily. "I was foolish to try to make a dress, but I thought if Nita and the B's could, I could. The waist wasn't any trouble, because Emily Davis helped me, but it isn't much use without a skirt."

"Let me know if I can do anything," said Helen, politely, opening the volume of Elizabethan lyrics which had succeeded "The Canterbury Tales" as pabulum for the class in English Literature II.

Betty kicked at the enveloping cloud savagely. "If only it would stay down somewhere, so I could tell

where the bottom ought to be." She gave a little cry of triumph,—"I have it!" and reaching over to her bookshelves she began dropping books in an even circle around her feet. An instant later there was a crash and the thud of falling books.

"There!" said Betty, resignedly. "That bookcase has come to pieces again. It's as toppley on its legs as a ten-cent doll. Never mind, Helen. I can reach them beautifully now and I will truly pick them all up afterward." She dropped a Solid Geometry beside a "Greene's History of the English People," and stooped gingerly down to move "Alice in Wonderland" a trifle to one side, so that it should close the circle.

Then she looked doubtfully at Helen, who was again deep in her lyrics.

"Helen," she said at last, "would you mind awfully if I asked you to put in some pins for me? If I stoop down to put them in myself, the books move and I can't tell where the pins ought to go."

Helen had just put in the last pin with painful deliberation, and was crawling around her necessarily immovable model to see that she had made no mistakes, when the door opened with a flourish and Mary Brooks appeared.

"What in the world!" she began, blinking near-sightedly at Betty in her circle of books, at the ruins of the "toppley" bookcase lying in a confused heap beside her, and at Helen, red and disheveled, readjusting pins. Then she gave a shriek of delight and rushing upon Betty fastened something to her shirt-waist.

"Get up!" she commanded Helen. "Hurry now, or you'll certainly be killed."

In a twinkling the room was full of girls, shrieking, laughing, dancing, tumbling over the books, sinking back on Betty's couch in convulsions of mirth at the absurd spectacle she presented and getting up to charge into the vortex of the mob and hug her frantically or shake her hand until it ached. It was fully five minutes before Betty could extricate herself from their midst, and with her trailing draperies limp and bedraggled over one arm, make her way to Helen, who was standing by herself in a corner, quietly enjoying the fun.

"Helen," she cried, catching the demure little figure in her arms, "Helen, just think of it! I'm in Dramatic Club. Oh, Helen Chase Adams, how did it ever happen?"

The room cleared out gradually after that, and the nicest part, Betty thought, was having the people you liked best tell you in intelligible English and comparative quiet how very glad they were.

"I never in all my life saw anybody look so funny as you did when we came in," said Mary Brooks at last. "What were you doing, anyway?"

"Hanging a skirt," explained Betty, with great dignity.

"Was it going to have a court train all the way around?" inquired Mary.

"Tell her, Helen," commanded Betty.

"That was tucks, Mary," repeated Helen, obediently, and then everybody laughed.

Under cover of the mirth Betty sought out Dorothy. "Where's Eleanor?" she whispered.

"She went off for Sunday with Polly Eastman," Dorothy explained. "And Betty, she's a trump after all. She—but I think perhaps she'd rather tell you herself."

"Betty," broke in Nita Reese, "you must hurry and get dressed. You'll have to appear at chapel, if you never get that skirt hung."

"Yes," said Betty, meekly.

"And I'll go and bribe the new maid, who hasn't learned the rules yet, to send you up some breakfast," put in Madeline, the watchful.

Nita went off to make her bed and Dorothy to see Mary's prom. dress which had just been sent on from home. Presently the new maid appeared with toast and coffee and regrets that "the eggs was out, miss," and Betty sat down at her desk to eat, while Helen, the Elizabethan lyrics quite forgotten, rocked happily beside her.

"Helen," said Betty, a spoonful of hot coffee held aloft in one hand, consternation hiding her dimples, "what in the world shall I do? I told you I hadn't studied anything, and I can't flunk now."

"Oh, they won't call on you to-day," said Helen hopefully, counting the Dramatic Club pins that made Betty's shirt-waist look like a small section of a jeweler's window.

"Aren't they pretty?" said Betty, touching them lovingly. "I hope the girls know which is which, because I don't. The one with the pearl gone is Bob's, of course, and Dorothy's is marked on the back, and that's Mary's, because she always pins it on wrong side up. One of the others is Christy's, and one is that sweet Miss West's—she writes poetry, you know, and is on the 'Argus.' Wasn't it lovely of her to pin it on me?"

"I should think anybody would be glad to have you wear their pin," said Helen loyally, if ungrammatically.

"But to think the society wanted me!" said Betty in awe-struck tones. "Helen, you know they never do take a person unless she amounts to something, now do they? But what in the world do I amount to?"

"Does being an all-around girl count?" asked Helen. "Because the senior that is such a friend of Eleanor Watson's said you were that, and that's what you wanted to be, isn't it? But I think myself," she added shyly, "that your one talent, that we used to talk about last year, you know, is being nice to everybody."

The journey to chapel was a triumphal procession. The girls said such pleasant things. Could they possibly be true, Betty wondered. Nan would be pleased to know that she was somebody at last, even if she had missed the team both years, and was always being mistaken for a freshman. Sitting beside Dorothy, with the eight pins on her shirtwaist, and a guilty consciousness that Miss Mills, who taught "Lit. II" was staring at them from the faculty row, Betty resolved that she was going to be different—to keep her room in order, not to do ridiculous things at ridiculous times, and always to study Monday's lessons.

"I have tried harder lately," she thought, but it was reassuring outside chapel to have Miss Mills stop to shake hands and Miss Hale say something about being glad that Betty had turned out a thoroughly good student.

Mary Brooks said the same thing. "It's funny, Betty, how your innocent, baby airs belie you. If we'd guessed what a splendid record you'd made this year, we'd have taken you in even sooner."

Wherefore Betty was glad that she had looked up all the history references and stayed at home from the Westcott House dance to write a zoology report that Professor Lawrence himself had called excellent, and done her best with the "Canterbury Tales."

"I have done better than I used to last year," she thought happily, "but it wasn't for this, not one bit. It was because a person is ashamed not to do her best up here."

"Will you take a few notes, please?" said Miss Mills in crisp, businesslike tones, and Betty woke up to the fact that she had not answered to her name in the roll.

"She saw you, though," whispered Christy, "and she was properly amused."

Miss Mills had finished her lecture and the class in "Lit. II" was making its leisurely exit, when Jean Eastman caught up with Betty.

"Glad you've gone into the great and only," she said with a hearty hand- shake. "And what do you think about the Lady Eleanor's latest escapade?"

"I don't know what you mean, Jean," said Betty quickly, remembering Dorothy's hint, and wondering why Eleanor hadn't come to chapel, since Polly was there, and she and Eleanor would surely have come back together.

"Why, resigning from Dramatic Club, of course. Didn't she consult you about it?"

"Jean, do you mean that Eleanor—has resigned—from Dramatic Club?" Pleasure and bewilderment struggled for the mastery of Betty's face.

"Yes," said Jean carelessly. "Funny you hadn't heard of it, because it's the talk of the whole college. She sent a note in Saturday night, it seems, but nobody outside heard of it till this morning, and now we're all speculating over the whys and wherefores. The Clio girls say that if she did it because she thought she'd rather go into that, she will be doomed to everlasting disappointment. For my part I don't think that was her reason." Jean's tone hinted of deep mysteries.

"Of course not," said Betty indignantly. "Can't they see, Jean, that a girl has got to have a big, splendid reason for doing a thing like that?"

"A big reason all right, but I don't know about the splendor," returned Jean cheerfully, shouldering her way across the stream of girls in the hall to join Beatrice Egerton.

To Jean's disappointment Beatrice had nothing to say about the resignation, except that it was Eleanor's own affair and that all the talk about it was utter nonsense. Then Jean, warming to her work, ventured a direct attack.

"But Miss Egerton, wasn't there something queer about that story of Eleanor's—the one that got her in? You were going to tell me once, but you never did."

"I was going to tell you once, but I never did?" repeated Beatrice with an extreme affability which those who knew her better than Jean would have recognized as dangerous. "Go and ask Eleanor Watson that question if you care to, Miss Eastman. I admire her far too much to wish to discuss her private affairs with you. Thank you, I should like to go to your house-play, but I have another engagement. The night isn't set? But really, I'm so busy just now I can't promise, you know."

Beatrice Egerton had not spent four years at Harding College for nothing. She was incapable of heroism herself, but she could appreciate certain types of it in others, and she was bitterly ashamed of the part she had played in Eleanor's affairs.

"Miss Wales," she said an hour later, when her path from class to class crossed with Betty's, "where is Eleanor? I can't wait another minute to see her."

Betty explained that Eleanor had not appeared at chapel or morning classes.

"Then I suppose," said Beatrice impulsively, "that I am one of the people she's trying to avoid. Go and see her the first chance you have, Miss Wales, and tell her that I admire her grit—and that I'm too much ashamed of myself to come and say so. Now don't forget. Did you ever see such duds as the pickle heiress wears? Perfect rags!"

The mocking, insolent Beatrice was back again, the more debonnaire for the effort that her confession had cost.

Betty meditated cutting her eleven o'clock class, decided that with those eight pins on it would never do, and tried not to be glad that a severe headache prevented Mademoiselle from meeting her French division at twelve. She walked down to the Hilton House with a chattering little freshman, one of Polly Eastman's chums and a devoted admirer of Eleanor's.

"It's too bad that Eleanor Watson felt she ought to give up Dramatic Club, isn't it?" said the girl. "Some of the girls think it was an awfully queer thing to do, but I think it's fine to put your work first when you don't feel strong enough to do everything."

"Yes, indeed," agreed Betty cordially, glad to be able to meet her on her own ground.

"Polly is afraid," volunteered the little freshman, "that Eleanor is going to break down. She's had to drop themes, too, you know. Polly said they almost missed their train Saturday night because Eleanor would wait to write to Miss Raymond about it, when anybody could see that Monday would have done just as well. And she was so tired that she cried while she was writing the note."

Betty shook off her loquacious companion by stopping on the second floor to see a girl who was sure to be out, and went on up the back stairway to Eleanor's corner.

There was no answer to her knock, and after a second trial she deliberately opened the door and went in. Eleanor lay in a forlorn disheveled little heap on her couch. Her cheeks were flushed with crying, her eyes rimmed with dark circles that made them look bigger and brighter than ever.

"Oh, I thought the door was locked," she cried, when Betty appeared.

"But luckily for me it wasn't." Betty took her up brightly, dropping sociably down to the couch beside her. "You dear old Eleanor," she went on quickly, "I've come to tell you that Dorothy thinks you're a trump and Beatrice Egerton thinks you're a brick and I'm so proud of you I don't know what to do. There now!"

"Oh, Betty, you can't be, after everything." Eleanor shook off the clinging arms and sat up among the pillows. "Listen," she commanded. "It isn't fair for me to take anything from you after what I've thought. I had a letter from Mr. Blake this morning. He has been very nice to me about the story, Betty. And he

said he felt that he ought to tell me what good friends I had here. So now I know all about it, but oh, Betty! I'd thought such horrid things—"

"Never mind that now," said Betty. "Please don't tell me. It would only hurt both of us, and it wouldn't be any use that I can see."

[Illustration: "NEVER MIND THAT NOW," SAID BETTY]

"I'm a coward, too," Eleanor went on steadily. "I was afraid to see Beatrice, and now I'm afraid to see Jean and all the rest of them. Oh, Betty, I can't bear to have people think I'm a freak. If I could take those two notes back I would this minute. I hate giving things up. There, now you know just how mean I am."

"No," said Betty, gently, "I only know how tired you are and how much you needed some one to come in and tell you that we are all ready to stand by you."

Eleanor waited a minute before she answered. "Betty," she said at last, an uncertain little smile fluttering about her mouth, "shall you be glad when you've got me through college?" Then she straightened with sudden energy. "This is your day, Betty,"—she pointed to the pins,—"and I won't spoil another minute of it. Of course there isn't any use in hiding up here. I promise to go down to lunch and to take what's coming to me, and do the best I can. Now run and let the rest of the college congratulate you."

"And if the Chapin house girls should have a spread to-night over at
Rachel's—" began Betty, doubtfully.

"I'll come. I'll even be the life of the party. Only you're not to worry about me one instant longer."

Eleanor kept her word to the letter for the rest of the day, but the weeks that followed were necessarily full of ups and downs, of petty humiliations and bitter discouragements, and Betty uncomplainingly shared them all. The editors did what little they could, and Madeline and Miss Ferris and Katherine and Rachel helped without understanding anything except that Betty wanted them to; but the brunt of it all fell on her.

"I can't bother Miss Ferris with my blues," said Eleanor one afternoon, "and I know I oughtn't to bother you with them."

"Nonsense!" laughed Betty. "I like being bothered," and did not mention that she had given up the golf tournament because the practice would have interfered with her position as Eleanor's confidante.

There were nice things to share too. Miss Raymond wrote a prompt and cordial answer to Eleanor's note about the theme course. "After your action of last week, I see no reason why you should not continue in my classes on the old, pleasant footing. Please don't deprive me of the privilege of seeing your work."

There was a note from the Dramatic Club too. Dorothy had managed to get herself and Beatrice and Frances made a special committee to consider the resignation—the first in the annals of the society,—and they decided to accept it for one year from its date. After that, they said, they saw no reason "to deprive the society of a valued member."

Betty was delighted, but Eleanor shook her head. "I may not have earned it even then," she said gloomily.

"Leave it to Miss Ferris," suggested Betty. "She'll be a perfectly fair judge. If she says you can take it then, you will know it's all right."

And to this arrangement, after some hesitation, Eleanor consented.

A week or two later Bob came to Eleanor, in a sad state of embarrassment. "It's about the basket-ball song, Eleanor. The committee never saw it. Babe was chairman, you know, and she put her shoulder out of joint playing hockey the day the songs were called in, so I emptied the box for her. I remember I stopped in my room on the way back and I must have dropped yours there. Anyhow it turned up to-day in my top drawer. I'm awfully sorry."

Eleanor took the song and read through a stanza or two, while Bob wriggled, blushed and waited for the storm to burst. She had heard a good deal about Eleanor Watson's uncertain temper.

But at first Eleanor only laughed. "Goodness! What jiggly meter! It's lucky you lost it, Bob."

"No," said Bob, sturdily. "It was a dandy song, one of the best that came in. Babe said so too. I am

really awfully sorry. I'm too careless to live."

"Well, you were lucky not to have found it a month ago," said Eleanor, with a sudden flash of anger, and Bob departed, wondering.

"Little things do make a big difference," said Betty, when she heard the story. "If they'd chosen it and everybody had said how clever it was—"

"I should have felt that I'd squared my account—proved that I could do what I hadn't done, and I should never have owned up to anybody."

"Then you really ought to have been nicer to Bob," laughed Betty, "because she helped you to come to the point."

"Yes, that helped," Eleanor admitted, soberly, "just as Dora helped and Beatrice in her way and Jim in his; but you were the one who meant to help, Betty. You got me the chance to begin over, and you made up my mind for me about taking it, and you've kept me to it ever since."

"But El—"

"Now let's not argue about it," laughed Eleanor. "I only wanted to say that I'm going to try to be nice to you to the extent of 'staying put' this time. I don't mean that you shall have to waste your junior year over me."

CHAPTER XIX

GOOD-BYES

"Oh, Betty Wales, what's your hurry?"

Betty, who had strolled up Main Street with Emily Davis and now was walking back alone, turned to see Eleanor and Dora Carlson coming down the steps of the house behind her.

"We're hunting rooms," explained Eleanor, gaily, "the most systematic hunt you ever heard of. We went to every possible house on the other side on the way up, and then we came back on this side, doing the same thing. So if you want any pointers—"

"But you're not going off the campus, Eleanor," asked Betty anxiously.

"Oh, no, it's a room for me," interposed Dora, with an adoring glance at Eleanor. "I've always longed to live up among the elm-trees of Main Street, but I knew its glories were not for me until—"

"Dora," warned Eleanor, laughingly, "I told you not to mention elm-trees again this afternoon." She turned to Betty. "They all come down to two possibilities. Which should you prefer, a big room with a microscopic closet or a microscopic room with an enormous closet?"

"Oh, the one with the big closet," said Betty, decidedly. "I've tried the other, you know."

"And unknown horrors are always preferable to familiar ones," laughed Eleanor.

Dora left them at the next corner and as soon as she was out of hearing Betty turned upon Eleanor. "Well," she said, "I've caught you in the act, and I think it's perfectly lovely of you. College will be a different place to her if she can live up here somewhere near things."

"It will be nicer for her, I think," said Eleanor, simply. "But Betty, I'm not doing much,—just making her a little present of the difference between Mrs. Bryant's prices and the very cheapest ones up here. I can do as much as that, I hope, after spoiling her sugaring-off party; and I really don't need that extra-priced room again."

"You mean," said Betty, in amazement, "that you're going to give up your corner-room with the three windows and the lovely burlap hangings?"

Eleanor nodded. "It wouldn't be much of a present from me if I just asked father for the money."

"Eleanor," said Betty, solemnly, "I don't believe I could do it."

"But it's really all your doing, Betty. If it hadn't been for you, I shouldn't have known Dora Carlson, and I shouldn't be here now. Besides, you set the example with Helen. So if you don't like it, there's only yourself to thank, you see," ended Eleanor, playfully.

"No, I don't see,—not one bit," declared Betty. "You'll be telling me that I'm responsible for the way you recite next."

"Well, you are, partly," laughed Eleanor, turning off to the Hilton.

Betty went up-stairs behind two strange girls who were evidently expecting to be in the Belden House next year.

"Of course the fourth floor is a long way up," one was saying, "and I suppose it's hot sometimes. But if I can get a single room there, I'd rather have it, wouldn't you?"

"Well, perhaps," answered the other doubtfully.

"No perhapses about it, my friend," thought Betty, turning off to her own quarters. Rooms and roommates—the air was full of them! And to-morrow was the day that the Belden House matron had appointed for settling all such matters. Betty could have a single room, if she wanted it, on the other side of Madeline Ayres, and she had almost made up her mind to take it. To be sure, it did seem a little hard on Helen. Nobody in the house had approached her on the subject of roommates, Betty felt sure of that; she would have to be "assigned" with some outsider. Well, why not? If she didn't take the trouble to make friends, of course she would have to suffer the consequences. And yet—if Eleanor had really been influenced by what she had tried to do for Helen, wouldn't it be mean to back out now? "But Eleanor has decided already," thought Betty, "and there's no reason why I should keep on bothering with Helen forever. I don't believe she's one bit happier for it."

Helen looked up expectantly when Betty came in. After all she was a sweet little thing; her face lighted up wonderfully at times.

"What's the news, Helen?" Betty asked. "You look as if something extra nice had happened."

"Why no," answered Helen, "unless you count that I've learned my Latin for tomorrow."

The answer was just like her, Betty reflected with a sigh. She might improve a great deal, but she would be a "dig" to the end of the chapter. As she dressed, Betty tried to lead up gradually to the subject of rooms by telling about the two strange girls she had met in the hall. But it was no use; Helen preserved the same gentle, obtuse silence that had kept Betty from opening the subject before. Little by little her courage oozed out, and with the ringing of the supper-bell she surrendered.

"I can't do it," she told the green lizard savagely. "She thinks we're settled here forever and I can't bear to disappoint her. It's not generosity though; it's just hating to make a fuss."

At supper all the girls were talking about rooms. "I'm first on the waiting list for singles," Nita Reese announced, "but I might as well be first on the waiting list for a trip to the moon, I suppose. Nobody ever gives up a chance at a single."

Betty opened her mouth to tell Nita the sad truth, saw Helen looking at her queerly, and shut it again. It would be time enough for Nita to hear of her good fortune to-morrow.

After supper Helen hurried back to her work and Betty joined a merry party on the piazza, went for a moonlight stroll on the campus, helped serenade Dorothy King, and finally, just as the ten o'clock bell was pealing warningly through the halls, rushed in upon Helen in a state of breathless excitement.

"Helen," she cried, "T. Reed's coming into the Belden and you never told me."

"I didn't know till this afternoon."

"Then that was the piece of news I saw in your face. Why didn't you tell it?"

"Why, I don't know—"

"Helen," cried Betty, with a sudden inspiration, "you and T. Reed want to room together."

"Oh, Betty, Theresa couldn't have gone and said so!" Helen looked the picture of distress.

"Nobody went and said so till you did just now," laughed Betty. "Oh, Helen, why didn't you tell me?"

"Why didn't you tell me that you'd rather room alone?"

Then they both laughed and, sitting close together on Helen's bed in the dark, talked it all over.

"You've been just lovely," Helen said. "You've given me all the good times I've had—except Theresa. But you couldn't make it any different from what it is. I never shall know how to get along the way other girls do, and Theresa is a good deal the same way, except that she can play basket-ball. So I guess we belong together."

"You needn't think you'll be rid of me," said Betty. "I shall be just two doors away, and I shall come in and bother you when you want to work and take you walking and ask you to hook up my dresses, just as I do now. Helen, how fast things are getting settled."

"They'd better be," said Helen. "There's only two weeks left of our sophomore year."

For a long time Betty lay awake, staring at the patch of moonlight on the floor beside her bed. "How mean I should have felt, if I'd told her when she wouldn't tell me," she thought. "I wonder if it's all right now. I wonder if next year is going to be as perfect as it seems. I wonder—" Betty Wales was asleep. Five minutes later she woke from a cat-nap that had turned her last thoughts into a very realistic dreamland. "No," she decided, "it won't be quite perfect. Dorothy will be gone."

Those are the good-byes that count—the ones you must say to the seniors. Dorothy would come back to visit the college, of course, and to attend class reunions, but that would not be the same thing as living next door to her all through the year. Betty was not going to stay to Commencement. Sophomores were only in everybody's way then, she thought, and she preferred to say good-bye to Dorothy before the onslaught of families, alumnae and friends should have upset the regular routine of life and made the seniors seem already lost to the college world. Packing was worse than ever this year, and examinations could not have been more inconveniently arranged, but in spite of everything Betty slipped off on her last evening for a few minutes with Dorothy.

The Belden House was a pandemonium, the piazzas deserted, the hot rooms ablaze with lights, the halls noisy with the banging of trunk-lids and the cries of distracted damsels; but the Hilton, either because it had more upper-class girls who were staying to Commencement, or because its freshmen and sophomores were of a serener temperament, showed few signs of "last days." The piazza was full, as it always was on warm nights, and a soft little crooning song was wafted across the lawn to Betty's ears. Dorothy was singing. Her voice was not highly cultivated, but it was the kind of voice that has a soul in it—which is better than much training. As Betty stole softly up to the piazza, so as not to interrupt the song, and found a place on the railing, she remembered her first evening in Harding. How forlorn and frightened she had been, and how lovely Dorothy was to her. Well, she had been just as lovely ever since.

Dorothy's song stopped suddenly. "Girls, I can't sing to-night," she said. "It's—so—warm. And besides, Betty Wales has come to see me on a very particular errand, haven't you, Betty, dear?"

Up in Dorothy's room, in the dusk, nobody said much of anything. There is never much left to say at the last. But Dorothy had a way of putting things and of looking at things that was like nobody's else, Betty thought; and when she said, "I know I can trust you to work for the democratic, helpful spirit and to keep down cliques and snobbishness and see that everybody has a fair chance and a good time," Betty felt more pleased than she had about her election to Dramatic Club. She had been Dorothy's lieutenant. Now she must be Dorothy's successor, and it was a great honor and a greater responsibility—but first she must pack her trunks.

On the way home she overtook Roberta. "I'm in the Belden, Betty," she announced, breathlessly, "and there are a lot of things I want to ask you and Mary about, but I can't stay long, because those dear little freshmen are going to give me a good-bye spread."

"Those snippy freshmen?" laughed Betty.

"Oh, but they came around after the Jabberwock party, just as you said they would. It was an impromptu party, Betty. I did it the night Sara Westervelt was there, and somebody stole the ice cream. That's why you weren't invited."

Up-stairs the rest of the "old guard" were sitting on boxes, trunks and the floor, waiting to say good-bye to Betty and meanwhile being entertained by Madeline Ayres, who was giving a lively account of her experience with a washwoman.

"She said, 'It's twinty white skirruts Oi have to do up now, me dear,' and I said, 'But I can't go without a skirt, Mrs. Mulvaney, and everybody who doesn't wear white to chapel will be expelled, and then where will your goose that lays the golden eggs be?' 'Shure, I kape no geese, me dear,' said she, and—oh, here's Betty."

"Finish up," demanded Katherine.

"Oh, there isn't any more," said Madeline, "except that she's just sent the skirt home, and it isn't mine, but it fits rather well, doesn't it, and I can't possibly return it before chapel, now can I?"

"Is that the way they do in Bohemia?" said Mary, severely. "Betty, I've got to have half your bed to-night. An alum, who came on from San Francisco got mixed in her dates and appeared a day too early. And as she is a particular pal of the matron and I am notoriously good-natured, she's got my room."

"To think of it," said Katherine, impressively, "and you a senior next week."

"And we juniors next week!" said Rachel. "It doesn't seem possible, does it? Here's to hoping we shall all be back next year."

"What a forlorn toast!" said Katherine, who knew better than the rest how hard it was for Rachel to make both ends meet. "Here's to hoping that we all go on as splendidly as we've begun!"

"You have done tolerably well so far, children," said Mary, beaming around the group.

"See the society pins bristle in our midst!" said Katherine, with melodramatic gestures in the direction of Mary, Betty, and of Rachel, who wore the Clio Club insignia proudly.

"And we've got the college beauty," added Betty quickly.

"And the Jabberwock," put in Eleanor.

"Please don't forget the basket-ball stars," suggested Katherine, with becoming modesty.

"Nor the basket-ball song," added Rachel, smiling at Helen.

"So many honors," laughed Betty. "Do you suppose we've left anything for next year?"

"The song of the classes talks about 'jolly juniors,'" said Rachel. "That sounds as if there would be plenty of fun in it."

"There is; junior year is the nicest one in college," declared Mary.

"It can't be," objected Katherine, "because each year has been as nice as it possibly could."

"Unless you were foolish enough to spoil it," whispered Eleanor in
Betty's ear.

Roberta suddenly remembered her waiting freshmen, Mary offered to escort her to Mrs. Chapin's, and the other three declared they must go home to their packing. Betty and the girl from Bohemia went to the head of the stairs to see them off. It was not exactly good-bye, because there were chances of meeting at chapel and the station, but it was near enough to it to be a little sad.

"Oh, dear, I hate endings," said Betty, waving her hand to Eleanor.

"Do you?" said the girl from Bohemia. "You'd get used to them if you lived my scrappy, now-here-and-now-there kind of life. You'd find out that one thing has to end before another can begin, and that each new one is too good to miss."

"Um—perhaps," said Betty, doubtfully. "Any how we've got to take the chance. So here's to junior year!"

THE END

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